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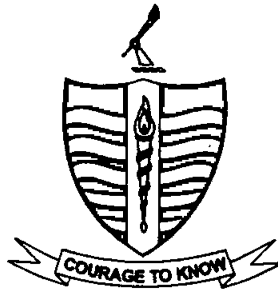

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Editorial

One has always felt inspired by the legend of a sculptor in ancient times. The story goes that there was a sculptor whose sculpting dexterity was matched by no one in his times, except for his young son who showed an extraordinary flair in his art. Interestingly, if ever the boy asked his father about the worth of his art, the sculptor appreciated him in a way which always surprised him. The boy would try to make as many pieces as possible to receive the desired appraisal from his father. However, after looking at every new piece created by his son, the sculptor told him that his work showed the mark of a true sculptor but still a little more could be done to create a masterpiece. The persistence in this attitude started frustrating the boy and he devised a scheme to read the real thoughts of his father on his art. He spent days and nights to create just one sculpture, and on its completion, he hid it at a place in the mountain wherefrom they would carve out fine stone for their sculptures. As a matter of routine, the father and son visited the place to fetch more stone. And lo and behold! What the father discovered there was a real masterpiece. He called out his son and said, 'Son, this is what I call a true masterpiece and I wish that you be a sculptor of this gifted artist's caliber'. The son looked at his father triumphantly and revealed that he was that gifted artist himself. The father paused and kept quiet. Then he retorted, 'Dear son! You did succeed in surpassing me in my art but I wish you had labored not for my sake but for your own sake. I knew it already that you had a long way to go. But now this injudicious pride of yours has stopped you where you are!'

If we look at the contemporary scene of research in the country, particularly in the disciplines of Social Sciences and Humanities collectively, the picture does not appear all too bleak – at least in statistics. So, one does not opt to harp on the oft repeated tune that 'nothing is happening!' We are trying to do much like the sculptor's son. But also like him, we are being unmindful of what is lacking. The same can be said about the arena of literature in the country. One cannot risk generalizing

this understanding for all literatures being produced in a linguistically diversified country. But this observation can hold some truth for the mainstream literatures being produced in the representative languages of the country such as Urdu and English. A minute scrutiny of the whole phenomenon of literary and research activities in these two languages can reveal that there is access without worth. There is this mad race for research without much inclination towards exploiting this madness for a greater scholarly and intellectual pursuit. There are researches being done without establishing a thriving culture for genuine inquiry. There are literatures being produced without feeling the need to re-interpret our aesthetic, intellectual and cultural temperament in a highly technological world. We are becoming researchers, without being inquisitive anymore. We are becoming writers, without being intuitive anymore. A march of literary and academic progress we witness, but what a march, that thrives by being penny wise and pound foolish!

What is direly needed is to look for and accordingly inculcate an intrinsic value in all the literary and research work we are producing. We need to do this if we want our work to be broad-based in terms of being socio-culturally relevant and genuinely engaging for a wider audience in the country or abroad. In terms of literary and research publications, we need to keep our numbers right; true! But all the same, there is also this need to keep right our objectives of intellectual inquiry and the likely outcomes. And for this, the foremost action we need to take is to come out of our self-congratulating stance for having multiple literary and scholarly accomplishments. More so, if we do not want our love's labor lost in the years to come.

Indeed one cannot turn a blind eye from those few writers, scholars and researchers who are trying to keep the flame of original inquiry lit in the best possible way, but still more is needed to establish and expand an inclusive culture of scholarship and literary rendering. In the understanding of this humble self, the measure to be taken is twofold. On one hand, the present researchers and writers of all sorts need to work with at least some measure of genuine inquiry and contemporary relevance alongside the monitory and professional up scaling.

As historically speaking, the necessity to be genuinely refined in socio-cultural thinking, sensibilities and practices has always weighed heavier than the necessity to be financially prosperous and remain merely so.

On the other hand, we need the hard task masters like 'the sculptor' in the arenas of language and literature and all related disciplines. The responsibility of seasoned academicians and literary critics is humongous in this regard. Only these are the people who can ensure what must be ensured in any pursuit of knowledge i.e. the intrinsic value of a literature or a research for a society. Neither a great literature nor a genuine research is devoid of a profound connection with the socio-cultural dynamics of its present and the likely value for its future. Had it been so, then the Shakespeares and Ghalibs of all ages would have merely talked about their self-complacent daydreaming and reveries without having any relevance to us today. Thus, a complete and healthy re-interpretation of our intellectual outlook is needed lest we continue contributing in a stagnant pool of redundant and clichéd ideas in the fields of literature and research alike.

We have got our work cut out for us and we need to realize that we have a long way to go. **Explorations2015** can be considered only one step in that direction, with a hope that we carry the torch and remain perseverant, so that the journey of *explorations* continues!

Mahrukh Nishat

23. 11. 2015

"The Demonic Angel Rises From Within the Angel in the House"[1]: Finding Mystery Women in Victorian Sensation Fiction

Neelam Jabeen

Abstract

Depiction of female characters in fiction is usually considered to be very typical, revolving around Mary/Eve dichotomy. This mythical construction of women is against the idea of what "actual" woman is. Mythical woman is the construct of a patriarchal society; she is an "absolute Other" and to be acknowledged as Woman, she has to remain so. There are some attempts at creating a third category of woman—"mystery," but as the work reaches the end, the mystery is resolved. This paper looks at the representative works of two Victorian female authors—Mrs. Henry Wood's East Lynne (1861) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862)—and one male author—George Moore's Esther Waters (1894), all sensation fiction writers. By closely reading the depiction of female characters in the chosen works of these authors, the paper tries to show that a third or a "mystery" category of women exists in literature, as De Beauvoir also asserts, but the paper also tries to prove that this "mystery" is not merely a "mirage," opposing De Beauvoir's claim.

Literature always fails in attempting to portray "mysterious" women; they can appear only in the beginning of a novel as strange, enigmatic figures; but

[1] The title is borrowed from Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon* (186)

> unless the story remains unfinished they give up their secret in the end and they are then simply consistent and transparent persons… Mystery is never more than a mirage that vanishes as we draw near to look at it. (De Beauvoir 1270-71)

De Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* devotes a chapter to the idea of "the myth of woman" and shows how this mythical woman is in contrast to the "flesh-and-blood" woman (1265). This contrast between the mythical woman and the "actual" (1265) woman creates the binaries of good/bad or angelic/monstrous. Mythical woman is the construct of a patriarchal society; she is an "absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being" (1266) and to be acknowledged as Woman, she has to remain so. De Beauvoir argues that the difference between man and woman is not the question—they are different and there is no denying the fact. The problem arises when the "actual" woman is judged against the mythical woman and on finding the contradiction between myth and reality; it is the woman who is thought to be wrong, not the myth. If a woman is true to the expectations of a patriarchal society i.e. she conforms to the myth, she is a good woman; anything contrary to this labels her as a "bad woman" (1266).

There is yet another myth related to women according to De Beauvoir—"feminine mystery." This mystery is an easy escape for man when he cannot or does not want to understand a woman. From her happiness, fears, joys to her menstruation anxiety and labor pain, everything is inexplicable for man, hence mysterious (1272). De Beauvoir asserts that a woman, similarly, cannot understand a man, he too is a mystery but in a patriarchal society there is no such thing as a "masculine mystery" (1270).

De Beauvoir very aptly reveals the difference between the mythical and "actual" woman. She asserts the reality that there are not only two fixed transparent categories of women—good or bad but there is another category that is neither extremely good nor bad. This is the "mystery" category, but her

claim is something that needs reconsideration when it comes to the literature, especially fiction, produced by the Victorian authors.

Victorian era was a time when the seeds of feminism as a movement were being sown. Two of the reasons of feminist issues being raised through literature in this particular time can be: 1) many women were writing novels, and 2) women were thought to be the major audience of the novels whether written by male or female authors. Considering their audience, the writers of both the sexes had to deal with the issues that were of particular interest to their target audience. As a result, the work being produced was essentially that which would attract its audience irrespective of authors' loyalties with the feminist movement or not, because like every other movement, feminism too had its anti and pro groups. Heilmann and Sanders in their article "The Rebel, the Lady and the 'Anti': Femininity, Anti-Feminism, and the Victorian Woman Writer" have amply discussed how even some female authors who claimed to be anti-feminist were in fact on the same grounds as feminist as both the groups were doing one and the same thing—"laying claim to an 'authentic' as opposed to the other camp's 'artificial', flawed, corrupted, or unsexed femininity" (290). It is not the scope of this paper to see who was claiming to be feminist or not; however, it can easily be observed that some writers of both the sexes were actually dealing with the representation of "actual" or "authentic" woman.

Nina Auerbach in her *Woman and the Demon* considers this phenomenon of men and women equally representing female issues as "incidentally feminist" since this act was not to bring forth the idea of underground female repression because "the subversive paradigms…pervade the Victorian imagination" (185-86). Queen Victoria's rule was enough for the Victorian men to see the relationship between women and power:

> In the nineteenth century the dialectic between womanhood and power was so central and general a concern, one so fundamental to literature, art and social thought of the period, that it is misleading to pigeonhole it

as "feminist" as though it were the concern of one interest group alone (188).

The representation of "actual" or "authentic" femininity as opposed to "'artificial', flawed, corrupted, or unsexed femininity" takes us back to De Beauvoir's claim of "Myth and Reality" (1265). It not only asserts the fact that there is a difference between mythical and actual woman; Victorian authors' commitment to an authentic representation also nullifies De Beauvoir's claim that "[l]iterature always fails in attempting to portray 'mysterious' women" (1270), as De Beauvoir asserts in the quoted excerpt that such female characters are found but only until the end of the story; the mystery is resolved when men want to understand the women eventually (1271).

In this paper I have tried to look at the representative works of two Victorian female authors—Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862)—and one male author—George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), all sensation fiction writers. By closely reading the depiction of female characters in the chosen works of these authors, I have attempted to show that a third or a "mystery" category of women exists in literature, as De Beauvoir also asserts, but opposing De Beauvoir's claim, I have also tried to prove that this "mystery" is not merely a "mirage" (1271).

Victorian sensation fiction is perhaps the best place to find the third, or "mystery" category of female characters. Natalie Schroeder in her article "Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism, and self-Assertion: M.E. Braddon and Ouida" states that the reason of sensation fiction being significant today is the fact that it highlights the unconventional attitude of the women of that time who rejected the socially prescribed feminine traits (87). This nonconformity on the Victorian woman's part holds a different status for the modern readers as they may see in this unconventionality an emancipated female; however, for the critic of that time, this was a threat to the Victorian society's ideals of femininity, what De Beauvoir would call "the myth of

woman." So when the Victorian authors created characters like Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* (by M.E. Braddon), Barbara and Isabel in *East Lynne* (by Mrs. Henry Wood), and Esther Waters in *Esther Waters* (by George Moore), these characters were received by many as 'unnatural.' Critics like E. S. Dallas considered depiction of such characters as the demand of sensation fiction because this was the only way the authors could create 'sensation' and attract the audience:

> The first object of the novelist is to get personages in whom we can be interested; the next is to put them in action. But when women are the chief characters, how are you to set them in motion? The life of women cannot well be described as a life of action. When women are thus put forward to lead the action of a plot, the must be urged into a false position. To get vigorous action, they are described as rushing into crime, and doing masculine deeds. Thus they come forward in the worse light, and the novelist finds that to make an effect he has to give up his heroine to bigamy, to murder...and to all sorts of adventures which can only signify her fall. The very prominence of the position which women occupy in recent fiction leads by a natural process to their appearance in a light which is no good. This is what is called sensation; but if the novelist depends for his sensation upon the action of a woman, the chances are that he will attain his end by unnatural means. (qtd. in Schroeder 89)

The complex representation of female characters by Victorian sensation writers is deemed "unnatural" by critics like Dallas as they fail to realize that woman is far more than either an extremely 'good' or extremely 'bad' creature. Goodness, according to such critics, is conformity to the social construct of 'femininity'; opposition to this model is evil and "false".

By depicting such so-called "unnatural" female characters, the authors are not only creating sensation but are also bringing forth the idea that extreme goodness is impossible and the idea of being 'natural' is also a construct of the

patriarchal society. A "flesh-and-blood" woman exists who can have both the traits—good and evil. This third category of women however is not as transparent as the "good" or "bad" category—hence mysterious. To depict characters that are a challenge to the norms of the society, are a challenge for the authors as well. Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* is certainly one of such challenging characters. "...a character who is simultaneously villain and victim, schemer and schemed against, was one of the reasons that some early reviewers greeted Braddon's novel as 'one of the most noxious book of the modern times'" (Pykett, Introduction to *Lady Audley's Secret* xix).

Lady Audley is described in the novel to be like an innocent child. The childish innocence reflecting through her face and manners is dubious and has multiple layers.

> That very childishness had a charm that few could resist. The innocence and candor of an infant beamed in Lady Audley's fair face, and shone out of her large and liquid blue eyes. The rosy lips, the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets, all contributed to her beauty the character of extreme youth and freshness. She owned to twenty years of age, but it was hard to believe her more than seventeen. Her fragile figure, which she loved to dress in heavy velvet and stiff rustling silks, till she looked like a child tricked out of a masquerade, was as girlish as if she had but just left the nursery. All her amusements were childish. She hated reading or study of any kind, and loved society (Braddon 50).

This elaborate description of the Lady is very significant in understanding her true character. The entire description frames her as innocence incarnate. The words like "childishness," "innocence," "infant," "fair," "freshness," "fragile" and, "girlish" invoke in the reader an extreme sense of purity that is the ultimate characteristic of a child. Convincing the reader of the purity and innocence of the character, the writer achieves twofold purpose. It may imply that the character in reality is as pure as described and it is the circumstances that eventually lead her to take extreme decisions, or that this

appearance is a façade. The word "masquerade" used in the description carries both the aforementioned potential qualities of the character. Considering its literal meaning, out of the context, it refers to Lady Audley's appearance as a sham. Reading between the lines reveals another understanding of the term "masquerade" that the reader becomes fully convinced of later in the course of the novel. Under the lady-like appearance is not an innocent child but a dangerously selfish woman who is capable of doing anything to save herself. Joan Reviere in her "Womanliness as Masquerade" brings up a similar theme of women wearing the mask of 'womanliness' to hide "the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it" (131). Lady Audley knows that to be approved and acknowledged as a 'Lady' she has to give a certain impression and if she fails to do that, there are fair chances that her true self will be revealed.Reading the word "masquerade" in the context it is placed in however reiterates her quality of innocence as the word there implies that her lady-like appearance is a "masquerade" because in reality she is like an "infant" just out of the "nursery." This ambiguity created through her description is proof enough of her mysteriousness.

Adding to Lady Audley's mystery is her four-layered role in the novel. She is Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham, Lady Audley, and Mrs. Taylor or "Madame." In each of her four different roles, she appears before audience as a new person. She is first introduced to the readers as Lucy Graham where among all her charm and beauty, she is "the sweetest girl that ever lived" (11). She is a housemaid of a respectable family and is loved and admired by everybody who comes across her, not merely because of her beauty but also for her good nature. Because of all her qualities, she is proposed to by Sir Michael Audley and the temptation of "no more dependence, no more drudgery, no more humiliation" is so great that she reconciles to erase "every trace of the old life... every clue to identity buried and forgotten" (16). By accepting Sir Michael's proposal she is not only assuming a new role of Lady Audley but is also committing bigamy. Tara MacDonald in her article "Sensation Fiction, Gender and Identity" refers to this act of assuming a different personage as "step[ping] out of one's character" that

provides women "possibilities of empowerment" (128). Originally Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham already has shunned her real identity. As Helen, being deserted by her husband and chained by the responsibility of a son, she cannot get out of the miserable situation. Her physical beauty and a desire to lead a happy and comfortable life let her 'step out of her character' and become Lucy Graham, a housemaid. Although this act is deception in the eyes of the society, whenever exposed, but in reality she is doing no harm to anybody around her as long as she is left alone. Even after being caught of all the treachery and deception, she muses: "'I was not wicked when I was young…I was only thoughtless. I never did any harm, at least never willfully. Have I ever been really *wicked,* I wonder? …My first wickednesses have been the result of wild impulses, and not of deeply laid plots" (253). Her real "wickedness" arises out of the circumstances that she cannot handle. Her survival depends on her 'secret' remaining a secret and that can be done only when her real identity is not revealed. To achieve this end, she attempts to murder both George (her first husband) and Robert (Mr. Audley's nephew and George's friend). MacDonald in the aforementioned article while quoting Jonathan Loesberg states: "the sensation novel locates anxiety about identity via its legal and class aspect rather than any psychological aspect" (129). Lady Audley's crimes are result of her acute desire to spend a comfortable life of luxuries and riches—economic factor, not of her 'madness'—psychological factor.

While seeing sudden shifts in her attitude in different circumstances, a modern psychoanalyst may read her character suffering form Multiple Personality Disorder, which in lay man's term may be referred to as a type of madness. A close study of the character however reveals other facts. She is not a 'mad' woman but a very complex character that does not fit into the "good" or "bad" category of females. Robert is unable to understand her countenance: "'what does it mean?'…She is altogether a different being to the wretched, helpless creature who dropped her mask for a moment, and looked at me with her own pitiful face, in the little room at Mount Stanning, four hours ago. What has happened to cause the change?'" (127). She is intelligible to Robert when she poses as he expects her

to; when she is different from his expectation, he is bewildered. It is this "mystery" about her that leads Robert to declare her "mad." It is also in his interest to declare her "mad" because he knows that if he does not do that, she will 'use her influence to place him in a mad-house' (233).

When she became Lucy Graham, she had intentions of being a good maid and she proved that. After accepting Sir Michael's proposal, she intended to prove to him a good wife: "...I became your wife, Sir Michael, with every resolution to be as good a wife as it was in my nature to be. The common temptation that assail and shipwreck some women had no terror for me. I would have been your true and pure wife to the end of time" (301). She can be good when circumstances allow her and she chooses to be, but when her existence as she wishes it to be is in danger, she uses all the means to protect her. Her to and fro movements from a "good" to "bad" person maker her an unusual character who does not fit into the ideals of 'femininity." Thus this beautiful and innocent character, who apparently has all the qualities of being an 'angel in the house' has "secret[s]" to carry that make her a mysterious character—neither an angel, nor a demon.

The Lady's confession of her "secret" is another tactic on her part to save herself. It cannot be understood in terms of De Beauvoir's claim of 'giving up the secret at the end.' She does give justification for her crimes that were all based on a 'secret' that her mother was a mad woman and that she being the daughter had the propensity to inherit her madness. She might have a conviction that she may go insane someday but all her actions, as already mentioned are not result of some psychological derangement. All of her actions are well-planned and organized. The aggression, intellect and strategy on her part are inexplicable for Robert. She takes advantage of Robert's bewilderment and becomes an accomplice in proving her 'mad' for the doctor also declared that "she has the cunning of madness with the prudence of intelligence" (323).

Her eventual confession in front of Robert in the madhouse adds to her power and mystery that she invokes. She

tells him that she had killed George (as she did not know that he had survived) and this confession could still not be used against her for Robert would not want to bring more grief and shame to his uncle, and even if he used it against her, the law could not give a sentence worst than she had already accepted—feigned madness in a madhouse (336). This confession on her part makes Robert realize that she was beyond ordinary. Declaring her mad and getting rid of her was in fact an implied confession on Robert's part that he did not know how to handle this half angel-half demon character. "Surely it is a small atonement which I ask you to render for your sins. A light penance which I call you to perform. Live here and repent" (333). This is proof of Victorian male's inability to cope with the women who are criminal or dangerous—mysterious. Instead of treating her as any male criminal would be treated, she is sent to the asylum. Even the reviewers of the novel at that time noted that "a woman 'so depraved and devilish as Lady Audley' is an impossibility" (qtd. in Schroeder 100). They considered her an impossibility because they cannot understand her; she does not fit in their transparent category of the 'woman myth.' It is remarkable that here too, she 'steps out of her character' once again, hence more 'empowered.' She achieves this empowerment by escaping the law, and still spending a comfortable life in the asylum as the doctors there were committed to "the comfort of the English lady" (331).

Emotions are a significant ingredient of sensation fiction. Heidi Hansson and Catherine Norberg in their "Storms of Tears: Emotion Metaphors and the Construction of Gender in *East Lynne*" notes that female character's emotional behavior is usually the focus of the plot of sensation fiction because its purpose is to arouse in the audience sympathy or revulsion for the character (154). This definition, however, is too restrictive because in *Lady Audley's Secret* it is not merely emotion that the plot is based on. Lady Audley does show emotions like anger, aggression, fear, jealousy etc. but these emotions are not all that characterize her. *Lady Audley's Secret* is also based on the Lady's *actions*. Her extreme actions are that make her an extremely unconventional—mysterious character. Hansson and Norberg have also studied *Lady Audley's Secret* in "*Lady*

Audley's Secret, Gender and the Representation of Emotion." In this article, the writers focus on *Lady Audley's Secret* to probe into the constructed nature of the gender role. They observe that the emotions of "shame" and "anger" are conventionally attached to women and men respectively. But in the novel these emotions are juxtaposed as regards their legal subjects. Women are shown to be exhibiting "anger" while men are shown feeling "shame." These reversed roles show how women while going against their expected roles are reasons of bringing "shame" to their men.

Isabel and Barbara in *East Lynne* by Mrs. Henry Wood are two very significant characters in the Victorian female characterization. Depiction of these essentially very different characters simultaneously brings forth the contrast of the "woman myth" and the "actual" woman. By putting both the characters in the central position respectively, the author leaves it to the imagination of the reader to see whether either of these is 'the angel in the house,' 'demon' or 'angelic demon.' Sally Mitchell in her Introduction to *East Lynne* notes, while quoting Adeline Sergeant: "that *East Lynne* owed half its popularity to the reaction against 'inane and impossible goodness' as the only suitable characteristic for a heroine" (vii).

In *East Lynne* we may not find the type of *sensation* that we saw in *Lady Audley's Secret,* still, the novel in its own right depicts female characters that are unconventional. Both the major female characters—Isabel and Barbara are juxtaposed with each other by putting them in the central position one after the other. This provides the readers a chance to decide who possibly the heroine of the novel is. The title of the novel also does not help much in this regard as usually if there is one central character, the novels are named after that, *Esther Waters* and *Lady Audley's Secret* for instance. It is perhaps the place called East Lynne that determines when one assumes the status of the heroine while the other loses it.

As already mentioned, 'the impossibility of inane goodness' is an important theme of the novel and the author very carefully sketches the characters so that the reader may see

how one character be angelic at one time and evil on the other, or both at the same time. Lady Isabel is introduced in the novel in the beginning as nothing less than an angel:

> Mr. Carlyle looked, not quite sure whether it was a human being: he almost thought it more like an angel. A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty, beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter, dark shining curls falling on her cheeks and shoulders smooth as a child's, fair delicate arms decorated with pearls, and a flowing dress of costly white lace. Altogether the vision did indeed look to the lawyer as one from a fairer world than this (8).

In the description, use of the words "angel" and "child" refer to the fact that she is not only physically beautiful but innocent from inside too. Later in the description she is also said to have a "sad sorrowful look" (8). "Sorrow" and "suffering" are also feelings of those who are victims and not those who are evil and monstrous.

Barbara on the other hand is described differently: "a pretty girl, very fair, with blue eyes, light hair, a bright complexion and small aquiline features" (16). She does not invoke in the reader a sense of fantasy, as does Isabel. Further she is referred to be "impatient" (16, 20) and 'willful' (17). She is not "gentle" or "yielding" like her sister Anne (25). She is sensuous as she enjoys Carlyle's kiss (24). She truly loves Carlyle and the narrator's comment that "true love is never timid" (25) throws more light on Barbara's character. She is a total contrast to Isabel in her looks as well as character.

Isabel's fall rests on her jealousy that she feels for Barbara and she eventually leaves Carlyle and elopes with Levison, a renowned villain. It is significant that while everybody knows about his villainy, Isabel cannot see that and thinks that he truly loves her. This naivety on her part is also part of her character. Such 'angelic' and 'childish' characters are prone to folly. They are drawn by their creators in such a way that they appear neither victims, nor villains, or both at the same time. They arouse pity and anger in the audience

simultaneously and this aspect of their characters makes them the 'third or mystery category.' Nina Auerbach in her article "The Rise of the Fallen Woman" refers to 'demythicization of the "fallen woman"—a bad woman, where it has been realized that she is not always the agent, but victim too (31). This demythicization enables the authors of the Victorian sensation fiction to sketch women in a light that is neither too good, nor bad— namely mysterious. Barbara, on the other hand, is intelligent and strong—not befitting the Victorian ideals of 'femininity.' Isabel who is epitome of femininity in the beginning "falls" from her high pedestal. Barbara never quite reached that pedestal; hence never fell.

'Angelic' Isabel's fall reinforces the author's implied claim that there is no such category as an 'angelic woman' and that it is just a myth. Barbara's character on the other hand also reinforces the same point but from a different angle. She is already a person who is unconventional and so she remains till the end. After marrying Carlyle, she remains the same sensuous woman who even does not mind ignoring her children for the sake of her husband's company. She does not pose to be a perfect stepmother for Isabel's children because she is not. She was ambitious to prove her brother's innocence and she does not give up her ambition after her marriage.

Both Isabel and Barbara are "mystery" characters because both do not conform to the "woman myth." Barbara, as already mentioned was introduced as a mystery and remained so till the end. Isabel however was more complex a character in the sense that she was first depicted as conforming to the "woman myth" and then shown to be falling from her status of 'the angel in the house.' After taking the wrong decision of going away with Levison, she realizes her fault. She 'steps out of her character' to return to East Lynne and in that new personage in the form of Madam Vine, she regains everybody's respect and love. The myth that Isabel deconstructs is that of extreme goodness. Her 'stepping out of her character' makes her a 'mystery' but her eventual recognition by Carlyle is not 'giving away the secret' but proving the fact that it is the same woman

who was once 'an angel in the house,' fell, and rose again, against the mythical standards of Victorian femininity.

Afy Hallijohn is another unique low class female character in *East Lynne*. She may be considered an extremely unconventional character that might not be as important as Isabel and Barbara but plays an important role in understanding the ideals of femininity in the Victorian society. She can well be discussed in comparison to Isabel and Barbara. Like Barbara, she is sensuous and ambitious, like Isabel, she falls prey to Levison. Despite all her shortcomings, she finds a mate towards the end and may continue to live her life. Her wedding and Isabel's burial took place simultaneously (522) to signify that "fall" happens when one is already on too high a pedestal; for those who are unconventional, there is no "fall."

Esther Waters in George Moore's *Esther Waters* is another very unique and unconventional character. Among all the characters discussed so far, she is perhaps the most complex and "mysterious" character.

> A girl of twenty, short, strongly built, with short, strong arms. Her neck was plump, and her hair of so ordinary a brown that it passed unnoticed. The nose was too thick, but the nostrils were well formed. The eyes were grey, luminous, and veiled with dark lashes. But it was only when she laughed that her face lost its habitual expression, which was somewhat sullen; then it flowed with bright humour. (1)

Her description is very unusual for a heroine as the audience of this time is used to seeing beautiful, fragile and angelic girls. Not only her physical appearance, her very existence as the protagonist of the story is unusual because she is a 'scullery maid'. To have a maid as the heroine and write her story must have been a challenge for Moore, as Freud fourteen years after the publication of *Esther Waters* still thought that servant girls did not have a story. Annette Federico in her article "Subjectivity and Story in George Moore's *Esther Waters.*" studies Moore's *Esther Waters* in contrast to Freud's assertion that he made in 1907, about servant girls: "...we can tell these

persons their story without having to wait for their contribution" (qtd. in Federico 142). Federico also observes that Moore's own views about art and women in his pamphlet *Literature at Nurse* are quite similar to what Freud said more than a decade after. However the "scullery maid" Esther Waters does seem to have a "story to tell" (146).

Putting her in the role of a maid, Moore is able to show her as a practical character who not only knows the ways of the world but is also aware of her responsibilities. She is not a naïve young girl like Isabel who would fall victim to circumstances. Esther does "fall" but her fall is where she starts her story. She does not consider her life to end when she was seduced; on the contrary her story begins from that moment: "you was the father of my child and it all dates from that" (Moore 195). Esther is a very strong woman who can fight the circumstances instead of succumbing. From the beginning till the end, she is fighting for her survival.

After being seduced by William, she does not regret the loss of virginity as much as she regrets his desertion: "It's always a woman's fault, ma'am. But he should not have deserted me, that's the only thing I reproach him with" (75). Although she appears to be a religious girl but we do not find any discourse of sin/repentance in the novel. Had she truly realized that she had sinned, and repented, she would never consent to go with William again. Her religion is a very personal matter with her. She follows it as long as she can but when she thinks that she is pressed by the circumstances, she makes choices. "Ah religion is easy enough at times, but there is other times when it don't seem to fit in with one's duty" (201). When she tries to explain this to Fred, he refuses to listen to an explanation saying: "how can such things be explained?" (201). Fred cannot understand her because once he has seen her a woman who seems to have sought penance but now when she shows her intention of going back to William, she is a "mystery" to him.

Esther is not only a mystery for Fred and other characters but also for the readers. Like every "fallen woman"

discourse, a fallen woman wants a respectable man to marry her without ever letting him know her past. What is strange and mysterious about Esther is that she not only tells her story to everybody, including Fred who wants to marry her, she also rejects Fred's marriage proposal. Her decision of accepting Williams proposal again is an attempt to continue her struggle because accepting Fred would be a "closure" to her story where she could see her life "from end to end" (qtd. in Federico 149).

Readers anticipate that after having settled down with William, Esther's troubles would end but they are disappointed because her story is not as simple as readers are used to reading. William loses everything in betting and eventually dies and Esther is again back to where she started. This circularity of her circumstances denounces closure and end. Unlike other "fallen women," Esther does not die. She continues to live with her son who grows up to be a "young soldier" (326). Esther decision not to tell her story to her son adds to her mystery because she has started a new life that she wants to build on her own principles and on her son's future, and not on her past. Despite her difficulties, her status as an unmarried mother, Esther does not 'step out of her character.' Where stepping out of character empowered some female characters like Lady Audley and Isabel, Esther's insistence on her true self shows her extreme power to fight. In her case, 'stepping out of the character' would be more like an escape, last thing that Esther would do.

Moore's act of bringing such a character as Esther has been viewed differently by different critics. Molly Youngskin in her "George Moore's Quest for Canonization and *Esther Waters* as Female Helpmate" sees introduction of a female central character as following the footprints of Richardson. Moore used the female character so that like Richardson, who had female central characters, he could also create a piece that would help him enter the canon. Annette Federico, on the other hand, suggests that the female audience can be the reason why Moore wrote such a novel (143). Whatever the reason be, Moore being a male author has created a female character that is one of the most complex female characters in Victorian sensation fiction. She is an epitome of struggle against the harsh circumstances.

Through her, Moore has challenged the Victorian myth of womanhood.

Women's transgression from their prescribed roles on the one hand *relegates* them from the status of a "good woman" and "femininity," on the other hand, if this transgression is praiseworthy, they are *elevated* to the status of "masculinity." Karen Horney pertinently reveals this fact in her essay "The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity-Complex in Women, as Viewed by Men and by Women:"

> [I]n the most varying fields, inadequate achievement are contemptuously called "feminine," while distinguished achievement on the part of women are called "masculine," as an expression of praise." (qtd. in Horney 99)

Horney has critiqued Freudian concept of 'penis envy' while arguing that this is only men's viewpoint. Men think that when women are trying to do something bold and courageous, this is an attempt to be masculine. Victorian sensation fiction also seems to contest this claim because the female characters, although are shown to depart from "femininity" which is a social construct, but are never shown as being masculine. This is where their "mystery" lies. They are women, yet unique and different that they challenge the Victorian myth of womanhood. Emily Steinlight in "Why Novels are Redundant: Sensation Fiction and the Overpopulation of Literature" comes up with another reason of the unique and unconventional female characters in Victorian sensation fiction. She asserts that the routine female characters were so redundant in fiction "that the paradigm of the redundant woman allowed novels to incorporate specters of mass population into an ungovernable female body" (503).

In all the female characters discussed so far, we have seen that not only these characters were "mysterious"—belonging to a third category of women, neither "good" not "bad," these characters remained a mystery even after the story ended. Going back to De Beauvoir's claim of 'giving away the secret' and finding the characters as 'merely a mirage', all these female characters seem to reject this claim. Finally finding her

last resort in a lunatic asylum under a new name is not Lady Audley's defeat. She would only cease to be mysterious had she died. Her bigamy, deceit, attempts at murder, and feigned madness all make her an enigmatic character and to send her away from the family and society is the acknowledgement of her "mystery." Isabel after her fall suffers and does die, like a typical fallen woman but the acceptance and acknowledgement of others like Corny and Carlyle prove the author's point that extreme goodness is impossible. There are no transparent "good" or "bad". women. Isabel existed like an "actual" character who can be an angelic demon or demonic angel. Barbara is, through and through, an unconventional third category woman who never conforms to the feminine ideals of the society. Esther is the extreme example of the "mystery" category who keeps moving between convention and unconventionality. She is a good wife, a good mother and in attempt to being so, she can succumb to all unconventional means. According to Auerbach, such are not "good women" but "mermaids" who "submerge their powers, not to negate it but to conceal it:"

> The mermaid is a more aptly inclusive device than the angel, for she is the creature of transformations and mysterious interrelations, able to kill and regenerate but not to die, unfurling in secret her powers of mysterious, pre-Christian, pre-human dispensation...Fathomless and changing, she was an awesome threat to her credulous culture. (*Woman and the Demon* 7-8)

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The Orient: A Gendered Narrative for Identity

Sana Haque

Abstract

A common interpretation of the oriental space in Western discourse is based on a geographical referent in order to produce a rhetoric of difference and Otherness and thereby bring to life Western identity. However, as we study this discourse it becomes relevant that there is a heterogeneous nature to the material produced, and one can perceive the oriental space using a gender referent. This paper proposes to examine the Orient as a gendered space to constitute the rhetoric of difference and the Self/Other binary, where the native woman stands for the Other and is viewed in paradoxically valuable and derogatory terms. Through the gaze of the occident, the oriental space is given the same regard as that given to the indigenous woman; the latter personifies the oriental space, and their narratives are implicated in a dynamic correspondence. As a result the narrative of the native woman is not subsumed but, as it performs both as a cultural and sexual referent for the Other, it in itself is transformed and displaced, consequently transforming the narrative of oriental space. This paper aims to track the trajectory of these dual narratives across the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to uncover their transformation with time, their empowerment and de-familiarization, as they perform to ferment an identity for the western occident. Thereby a divided and heterogeneous oriental discourse arises in a dialogue with and

> *against the native woman, no longer to be perceived as a mere imparter of a narrative of silence.*

A common interpretation of the oriental space in Western discourse is based on a geographical referent in order to produce a rhetoric of difference and Otherness. This serves to create Western identity, which relies on the Other to determine its own nature. However, upon further study of the discourse, a new perspective arises with 'gender' as the privileged field of reference. This paper will employ Montague's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, Flaubert's *Flaubert in Egypt* and Forster's *A Passage to India* to establish a certain archive of the Orient as a gendered space, and the correspondence of its narrative to that of the oriental woman, implicated through the gaze of the occident. This archive marks a trajectory across the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the oriental space undergoes a rise-and-fall transformation. What is underscored here is that the narrative of the native woman is not subsumed. As it performs both as a cultural and sexual referent for the Other, it in itself is transformed and displaced. Consequently it transforms the narrative of oriental space, for either narrative informs the other's.A divided and heterogeneous oriental discourse arises in a dialogue with and against the native woman, who must no longer be perceived as imparting a narrative of silence.

The rise in power and value of the female figure and orient begins with Montague in the eighteenth century. During her travels to Turkey, she produced a varied discourse that both contradicts and supports the conventional tropes on the Oriental woman. The exploration of space and woman, which by the twentieth century becomes an occupation, is imperative in developing Western identity according to the binary of Self/Other. What must be noted is how such invention and performance were involved in creating these discourses and identities. That will allow us to proceed to Montague's own work at making space and women perform even as she debunks old stereotypes for realism.

Meyda Yegenoglu posits that the matter of identity rests on invention and construction, inclusive of fantasy and desire, to generate a binary of Self and Other on imagined geographical and hierarchal planes. The West comes into being when "members imagine themselves as western" (3); their identity relies on "a specific inhabiting of a place" (3). It is similar to the purpose behind their imposition on the Orient – the creation of the Other resides in the project to attribute him/her a "sexualized nature" (2).

Unconscious and imagined, these desires for the (spatial) Other take on a gendered nature in European discourse as "a fantasy built upon sexual difference" (11). Yegenoglu invokes that the "'veiled Oriental woman' has a particular place in these texts, not only as signifying Oriental woman as mysterious and exotic but also as signifying the Orient as feminine, always veiled, seductive and dangerous" (11). This hidden exotic is depicted as a damsel needing visibility and salvation from the confines rendered upon her in the form of a Western hero. The unveiled orient and oriental fastens "not only to the discourse of Enlightenment but also to the scopic regime of modernity which is characterized by a desire to master, control and reshape the body of the subjects by making them visible" (13). Manifesting from fantasy and riddled with desirous relation between the Self and the Other, such discourses constructed the world as territory needing the "conquest of the 'rational' and 'civilized' European man" (11). It is on the basis of a fantasized truth behind the veil that the "Western/Colonial and the masculine subject construct their own identity…the structural homology between the Orient, veil and feminine" (11). Herein there is a dynamic interplay between the sexualized oriental female, the space in which she resides and the masculine gaze that constructs and unveils the Other for the sake of mastery and identity.

Lady Mary Montague joined the league of travel writers with her exploration of and work on the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. She has since then been hailed for debunking the various stereotypes produced on Turkish and Oriental culture "as alternately violent and barbaric, slovenly

and lascivious, or grotesque and incomprehensible." These were used prior to support the justification of "cultural subordination of the foreign and colonial cultures" (Hassan 37). Montague chartered a discourse that contradicted earlier narratives, including those on Turkish women that in many accounts were described as "entirely sexual" (Hassan 39) and inferior to their Western counterparts.

Her most notable response to these oriental figures is inscribed in her details of entry into their private baths. "Tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places" and on being prohibited, men would indulge themselves in its imagined unveiling (Montague 103). Montague, as a female, is the figure that truly exposes the native women just as she unveils this 'oriental' space: "it is built of stone, in the shape of a dome…five of these domes joined together…four fountains of water…so hot with steams of sulphur proceeding from the baths joining to it, 'twas impossible to stay there with ones clothes on" (Montague 101).

She is full of praise for the women before her, for "I was in my traveling habit…and certainly appeared very extraordinary to them, yet there was…none of those disdainful smiles or satiric whispers that never fail in our assemblies" (101). At this point Montague dismantles the rhetoric of difference: while indeed drawing a contrast between the women of the West and East, she inverts the hierarchy to favor the Eastern figure. "I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband" (103) furthers this cause to criticize her own society's lack of liberation. In fact, the writer is convinced the Oriental women are "the only free people in the Empire" (116). The native woman is free as her space is free to her; her veil is her "masquerade" (115) that contrives to grant her liberty without being discovered.

This rhetoric challenges "the orientalist discourse that proposes the enslavement of Turkish women as a sign for oriental barbarism" (*Critical Terrains* 43) to produce an "emergent discourse about female independence" (*Critical*

Terrains 33) which complicate the conventional narrative on the oriental woman. Montague ironically endorses the use of the veil as a source for freedom even as she unveils her. Western feminism and identity gain support from the narrative as the writer identifies herself with these figures through dress and shared custom.

However, upon further reading, Montague's descriptive terms allocated to these figures become "supportive of the differentiating rhetorics of culture that characterize orientalism" (*Critical Terrains* 40). Her description borders on categorization as she describes the women moving with a rare "majestic grace" (Montague 101), "their skins shiningly white, only adorned by their beautiful hair divided into many tresses...braided either with pearl or ribbon" (Montague 102). She turns a homoerotic gaze on the women, stating, "The finest skins and most delicate shapes had the greatest share of my admiration" (Montague 102). The occident's gaze transitions into possessiveness as she desires that the artist "Mr. Gervais" could capture them: "It would have very much improved his art to see so many fine women naked, in different postures" (Montague 102).

Narin Hassan lends her interpretation of the harem as a space that both sustains desire and authorizes access. In this confined "space of the harem or bath and the space beneath the veil" (Hassan 2) wherein her subjects lie, Montague creates "metaphors" for her own "confined authorial space" as well as the "notions of Eastern femininity which pervade her letters" (2). In this regard Hassan argues that a link exists between the oriental space in the form of the veil, the harem and the Eastern woman. That Montague centers her focus on this particular space may be innocent; on the other hand, it may have a higher purpose. Hassan argues that "harems and baths were and continue to be some the most sustained metaphors of Eastern sexuality and mentality" (6), bringing together "notions of pleasure and danger, desire and fantasy" (6) that fetishized this impenetrable space in the European imagination. Billy Melman endorses this supposition: "the *hamam* came to apotheosize the sensual, effeminate Orient...the women's public baths were

identified as the *loci sensuales* in the erotically charged landscape of the Orient" (Hassan 6).

Montague's 'niche feminist' perspective, even as it moves space away from the fantastical realm, endorses those very tropes so that her "constructions of these spaces continues to be influenced by the very representations she hopes to debunk" (Hassan 7). Examining the nude women in her own covered attire, Montague cannot help but employ a masculine gaze of superiority in her classifications, producing a homoerotic response towards the figures and their baths. Harem baths "become for Montague and others to follow, the most available signifiers of Turkish women, and by extension, of all Turkish life and activity" (Hassan 7).

The classification of the body and hence the space give momentum to the agenda of capture and possession of the said geographical and human bodies. Lady Mary Montague's seeming love for "the fair Fatima" (Montague 133) leads to pages of detail disclosing the exactness of this figures aesthetics: "that surprising harmony of features...her eyes! Large and black...nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous" (Montague 134). Homoeroticism indulges in a male-free space to destabilize the male discourse. However, at the same time, Montague's articulation of affection is restricted to "the established literary tradition that exists for the praise and regard of female beauty, a male tradition...means of aestheticizing and anatomizing gaze" (*Critical Terrains* 48).

Classification and subordination to stereotypical tropes is also found in her expression of space in the "inventory (of) the bizarre and unusual animals found in Adrianople, including camels, asses and buffaloes" which "are never thoroughly tamed...their heads ill-formed and disproportioned to their bodies" (Montague 127). For its coarseness, this 'space' shadows the distinction made "between the Turks, with their bizarre superstitions, and the English, with their more refined, rational tastes" (*Critical Terrains* 50). It creates a hierarchy that

underscores the naturalness of colonial order through the elements that define the oriental space.

Whether she intends it or not, Montague's rhetoric complies with a larger imperialist program to instill the natural order of colonialist rule over the barbaric or exotic others in need of refinement. Even as she praises the liberated Turkish woman and the veil that renders her space free, Montague operates on this notion of similarity and difference to analyze and stratify the figures and their space. Masculine tropes define and so expose and subordinate them; as such there is a lingering 'male' presence in her own gaze which "makes manifest the erotic and exotic charge of the space of the baths as the objects of a voyeur's gaze" (Hassan 8). The voyeur in Montague not only renders the space and its women visible but also sexual, thence demarcating identity through difference. It shapes the Western Self and legitimizes her authority even as it builds a heterogeneous narrative.

The Western discourse encourages a performance of the oriental woman and space, whereby a transformation is made manifest across temporal bounds. These metamorphosed representations expose "the changing historical circumstances, and the changing proximity and shifts in power, between western and non-western worlds" ("Orient as Woman" 1). While the eighteenth century engendered the discovery and eroticism of the Oriental woman and space, the nineteenth, with the "crisis of western European individualism in the age of industrialization and expansionism in the non-European world" ("Orient as Woman" 1) operated on a scientific scale. It served to objectify and 'consume' the woman and space, which were now present solely to serve rather than destabilize mainstream discourse.

The instability that fomented with the French revolution, the crises in family, gender and "national differences" with "escalating imperialism" in the "race for empire" ("Orient as Woman" 2) split identity asunder. Stability was sought through projecting authority; this included condensing tensions into the "*topos* of sexual difference between male and female" ("Orient

as Woman" 2). The eighteenth century, while sexualizing the female figure, also explored this figure to appreciate her superior beauty and freedom. As such, across 200 years, both sexual and cultural referents are utilized to define the Other; the "cultural Other of the Orient now becomes the 19th century's sexual Other" ("Orient as Woman" 2).

Flaubert's private compilation of letters in *Flaubert in Egypt* gives rise to the need for identity. It is implicated both in his implied sexual impotence as he engages with Egyptian whores, and in his longing for a home constituted in the orient. He is not a traveler but a 'belated traveler,' seeking in the familiar space something new to gain and, in this century, to consume. Similar to Montague's feminized space, it is the harem that invokes Flaubert's consumption and desire for identity. There is a sense of longing in his description of Egypt, the harem and the women it contains; prostitution for him holds "a particular mystique...one learns so many things in a brothel, and feels such sadness, and dreams so longingly of love!" (Steegmuller 9-10). The Orient with its beloved sun, antiquity and religiosity renders "Flaubert's Orient no more mere dreamlike décor...for Flaubert, the Orient gradually became a kind of homeland...that he had never seen" (Steegmuller 12).

His initial attitude toward Egypt is one of awe, expressing the Orient as being all he had imagined and more, for "it extends far beyond the narrow idea I had of it...as though I were suddenly coming upon old forgotten dreams" (Steegmuller 75). However, his later writing is deflated, even lackluster as he claims "anyone who is a little attentive rediscovers much more than he discovers...the old orient...is young because nothing changes" (Steegmuller 81). In this regard Flaubert becomes that very belated traveler seeking new and unfamiliar ground on known and classified soil.

A shifting attitude toward the space of the Orient also seemingly applies to the women he encounters. These women, specifically, are whores of the haram he enters. There is a nostalgia attached to this portrayal of the Oriental space and woman that is soon objectified for consumption. "Everything in

Egypt seems made for architecture – the planes of the fields, the vegetation, the human anatomy," (Steegmuller 58) Flaubert declares, and so utters truth at a level he has learned and re-appropriated. For as he is exposed to this space and its women, they are characterized in a similarly formulaic process that replaces sexuality to dissect their "anatomy."

In this regard we can draw comparison with Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* to Cairo in the same century; certain prevalent tropes are visible in both narratives. That Flaubert's letters aren't meant for the public further reveals the profound effect these tropes had on the subconscious. And yet, his letters often take on a performative role before the recipient with tantalizing details of his many conquests and findings – meaning his discourse may be performing to manifest a mainstream narrative fitting for that time. As belated travelers, both Flaubert and Nerval switch between "the unconscious desire for a phantasm and the conscious discovery of its emptied space" (Behdad 3), once they realize it hasn't much more to offer beyond what they already know. There is also a participation in "'Orientalist desire,' that is, the historical urge to 'capture' the Other through the official discourse" (Behdad 4), whose "differentiating function Europe has often defined itself" (Behdad 4) with.

Flaubert indeed struggles to capture the Orient with his many classified details, expressed with scientific terseness: "Effect: she in front of me, the rustle of her clothes, the sound made by the gold piastress of her snood...moonlight. She carried a torch....firm flesh, bronze arse" (Steegmuller 40). The experience passed, he notes a "demystification of the European myth of the harem" (Behdad 12) and its women. His details revert to call his sexual encounter "the effect of a plague victim or a leperhouse...her words...I did not understand...lovemaking by interpreter" (Steegmuller 40). His struggle to uphold the myth of the harem as a site of love juxtaposes its base reality as they must communicate with an 'interpreter.' As with Nerval, the writer is "divided into a critic of the tradition pale reception of Oriental culture and a nostalgic supporter of that myth" (Behdad 12). However, the post-journey letters eradicate the

"romance of the harem" (Behdad 12), oriental space and its women.

"On the stairs, opposite us, surrounded by light and standing against the background of blue sky, a woman in pink trousers" (Steegmuller 114); Flaubert's first meeting with the famed Kutchuk-Hanem maintains the very distance that perpetuates oriental fantasy. Initially perceived as "remote" ("Orient as Woman" 10), she too satisfies the illusion of "imagined exotic place of beauty and the infinite" ("Orient as Woman" 9). Describing her as "slightly coffee-coloured…her eyebrows black, her nostrils open and wide; heavy shoulders, full, apple shaped breasts" (Steegmuller 114), Flaubert is able to render her Other, strange, even calling her "creature" as though she is bestial. The writer utilizes this near proximity to "aestheticize her image, to reduce her as object" ("Orient as Woman" 10).

His desire to find love in her, as to find home in the Orient, is visible in his repeated habit when they sleep together: "I dozed off with my fingers passed through her necklace, as though to hold her should she awake" (Steegmuller 118). He reiterates, "I had slipped my forefinger under her necklace" (Steegmuller 130) as he watches her sleep. There is a desire to grow close to this woman, yet using her possessions to do so still alienates her even as she sleeps by his side. She is unreachable and objectified, even as he tries to reach her, claiming "How flattering it would be to one's pride if at the moment of leaving you would be sure…that you would remain in her heart!" (Steegmuller 119). This "infinite sadness" (Steegmuller 159), however, is soured by his description of their lovemaking as "coups" (Steegmuller 130). Flaubert's scientific details of her gestures, her anatomy, essentially objectify her in a failed attempt to possess her.

After his journey there is a notable shift in his attitude toward the Orient. Lowe in *Critical Terrains* argues that Flaubert utilizes the narratives of space and woman to make sense of his own contemporary period and identity. The woman, both "transcendent and material," evoking "ambivalence" (80),

relates to the rhetoric on space produced by Flaubert. Egypt is accused of creating inertia as Flaubert becomes "less and less covetous of anything at all" (Steegmuller 95). This befallen glory of the now unveiled space is applicable to the oriental woman as well: "As for Kutchuk-Hanem...correct your ideas about the Orient. Be convinced that she felt nothing at all: emotionally, I guarantee, and even physically" (Steegmuller 220). Disappointment relegates the "oriental woman" to being "no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man" (Steegmuller 220).

His nearly pornographic detail now "dehumanizes the Egyptian woman" ("Orient as Woman" 11) into an "exploited" machine producing "sexual pleasure for man to consume" who in lacking humanity lacks "fatigue" and "self-consciousness" ("Orient as Woman" 11). By using the industrial terms of the nineteenth century terms, he turns her and the orient into "the means of production, that bourgeois man masters, and this mastery becomes the foundation of individualism and subjectivity in the industrial age" (11). Speaking of Kutchuk's bedbugs, Flaubert proclaims "they were the most enchanting touch of all...a touch of bitterness in everything" (Steegmuller 220). Here he shows how, for him, woman compounds the "excessive and overwhelming nature against which the civilized man must distinguish himself" ("Orient as Woman" 11). He exposes "not only hatred of the Other as oriental, but hatred of the Other as woman" ("Orient as Woman" 11), figures that can provide, be bought and exchanged. In this sense, as with Nerval, Flaubert discontinues the dominant mode of representation as "the distinctions between the phantasmic vision of the Other and the scientific and institutional approaches to the Orient are collapsed" (13). The Orient and its women are no longer explored and attributed with power and mystery. Through authority and a sense of superiority, they are now classified, objectified and turned into a conquered product for consumption in the era of empire and identity.

With the twentieth century, the upsurge in nationalist ideology and struggle within the oriental space transforms the female narrative. Forster's *A Passage to India* tackles

imperialism, nationalism and homoeroticism all on the feminized space. Oriental India and the native woman, both silent and distant, are simultaneous recipients of power dynamics, interruptions to the homoerotic discourse and damsels that both ensure and needs independence.

Both India and its metonymy in the Marabar caves encapsulate the notion of space, which prevails "like some low but indestructible form of life indestructible form of life." This infinite expanse is "interrupted" by the Marabar caves, "a group of fists and fingers that are thrust up through the soil" (Forster 5-7). Eager to see "the real India" (Forster 21), Adela and Mrs. Moore are dismayed by the reality of the caves and India: "Nothing in India is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else" (Forster 78). The text shall firstly be utilized to inform on the role of women and power dynamics. Trapped within the caves, Adela believes she has undergone a rape and Mrs. Moore, hearing the "ou-boum" feels it has "in some indescribable way undermined her hold on life" (Forster ix) with its roaring meaninglessness. This is echoed in the very portrayal of the female figures in India: the "purdah women" veiled already are also isolated at the interracial party, "their backs to the company…an island bared by the turning tide, and bound to grow" (Forster 37).

These figures lack coherence and form as they cannot string words together without "making tiny gestures of atonement or despair" (Forster 38); Adela's attempts to communicate fail as she strives "in vain against the echoing walls of their civility" (Forster 39). Displaced, silenced, incoherent, "as if they sought for a new formula which neither East nor West could provide" (Forster 38), these women produce the selfsame echo found in the caves and India's own silence toward her colonizers. To Adela, India would slip by "unnoticed…colour would remain – the pageant of birds…brown bodies, white turbans…but the force that lies behind colour and movement would escape her" (Forster 42-3). In seeking out this force, she relies on Aziz to provide it over the silent women – this is her undoing, for it is the women's narrative that carries the narrative of India. Yet this too lacks

power for "no one could romanticize the Marabar, because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness" (Forster 139), rendering them little more than hollow shells.

The act of imagined rape within the space, then, becomes part of a "transgression of boundaries" (Silver 4). The narratives of all women overlap as sexuality is deployed "within a discourse of power that posits a complex network of sameness and difference" (Silver 4) based on race and gender. This 'masculine' system of power "makes sexuality a material reality of women's lives" (Silver 6); the women are relegated into objects for pleasure. They are essentially 'rapeable' so that "when Adela speaks rape…she speaks from within a discourse of sexuality that crosses racial lines and objectifies all women" (Silver 10). Perceiving this power as a masculine imposition allows the Englishwoman to register what the oriental figure, in her silence, cannot – that echo of being raped, the boom of violence upon it reflects the attack personified in Adela.

This transgression infiltrates the veil as Aziz's wife is made visible through her photo, first by Aziz, then McBryde, who proclaims "Wife indeed! I know these wives!" (Forster) as he confiscates the item. A simple photo implies "Indian women are whores" (Silver 14) and renders the invisible wife an emblem of "woman both as object of exchange and as object of violation" (Silver 14). For in 'knowing' her, McBryde subordinates the Indian woman under his power, and that too as a sexual object exposed before his eyes for possession. It is a violation, an act of rape itself, where the "woman in this photograph is twice named and twice silenced…as object of exchange, and later…as object of an object" (Silver 15) i.e. the objectified Indian male.

A dual narrative is at play that reveals the rape-able nature of both woman and space, constituted in their gendered form. By eliciting this rape – through the loud "ou-boum" (Forster 137) of the caves and the cry of rape by Adela, there is a resistance against it and against the hierarchy of power that allows men to impose themselves on images and spaces with preconceived ideas. No longer can they declare that "England

holds India for her own good" (Forster 102). And yet, there is resentment towards this female figure, the Englishwoman speaking for her silent Indian counterpart, because with her outcry "she creates another gap, one that disrupts rather than enabling the discourse of power and knowledge" and generates an opposing discourse undermining male control.

In this regard we come across the second 'element' of interruption by the woman in homoerotic discourse. The figure of Hamidulla Begum reminding Aziz of man's obligation to woman and nation with marriage and offspring are treated with disdain. Aziz's wife's face "he forgot…at times….the more he looked at the photograph the less he saw" (Forster 50-1). This erasure and silence of the woman is ironic as we proceed to discuss the matter of nationalism, but in this case, Forster "evokes a scenario in which a darker, more sensual, usually foreign and/or lower class character initiates the repressed, often intellectual English man or woman into an awareness of his or her sexuality" (Silver 4). In *A Passage to India,* the figure of Aziz becomes the source to waken Fielding's slumbering sexuality.

Any infiltration of this homoerotic discourse renders women the scapegoat, as when Aziz is annoyed at Adela and Mrs. Moore interrupting his conversation with Fielding, or when the latter thinks "I knew these women would make trouble" for being late. The "male bonding achieved in this novel, as in patriarchal societies in general" is conducted "through the exchange or mediation of women" (Silver 12). Aziz's exposure of his wife to Fielding effectively paints the latter as a voyeur in a domestic space that Aziz "feminizes" (Goodyear 143). Aziz's following dismissal of "put her away, she is of no importance, she is dead'" (Forster 107) does not take away from the fact that the ghost of the invisible woman lingers between them to demand "the necessary deferral of desire" (Goodyear 141). This barrier between Aziz and Fielding foments once he discovers that Fielding has taken a wife.

According to Sara Suleri, "The violence of sexual power that Forster associates with the composition of *A Passage to*

India manifests itself in the text as both an engagement with and a denial of a colonial homoerotic imperative" (147). It is within this denial that the woman is relegated to the role of a silhouette containing "constraints upon the operation of autonomous desires" (148) for male narratives. As the woman interrupts this discourse into which she cannot be subsumed entirely, so does the oriental space.

What dominates the discourse is an interruption by space, even as the novel concludes, of this homoerotic interaction and attempt at union: "But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it...the birds, the carrion...they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there'" (Forster 306). It reinforces the sundering of Britain from the Orient, which is "destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West." This estrangement is "inscribed in the woman who enters the caves and returns speaking rape" and the space that swerves them away from each other (Silver 16).

Against all the heterogeneous narratives at play is our final narrative, which brings together a collision between nationalism and imperialism over the freedom of the Orient; that very freedom, the novel argues, is only possible with the freedom of the woman. Struggling against "the net Great Britain had thrown over India" (Forster 14), Aziz speaks for the Indian males as he argues to dismantle the purdah, or veil: "His poems were all on one topic – oriental womanhood. 'The purdah must go' was their burden, 'otherwise we shall never be free'" (Forster 279). Meyda Yegenoglu stresses that "in the battle between nationalism and imperialism, it is the question of woman which is 'doubly in shadow'" (122). The discussions concerning nationalism all revolve around concerns raised by Hamidullah Begum: "Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house" (Forster 12) and education of citizens – such that the woman's part is central to the rise of the nation. There is an emphasis on "the emancipation of women as an indispensable precondition for the nation's civilization" (Yegenoglu 127), which means replacing the purdah that Aziz himself rails against, for "religion...was held responsible for keeping women

in the dark ages" (Yegenoglu 128). Male identity, be it imperialistic or nationalistic, now depends on the female and feminine space. As the men crow over possession, what remains in the shadows here is the woman herself, corresponded by the silence of Indian geography: "Over much of India the same retreat on the part of humanity was beginning...the sun was returning to his kingdom with power but without beauty...he was merely a creature, like all the rest, and so debarred from glory" (Forster 104-5).

Essentially what has emerged is an archive across a three-century trajectory that ferments and perpetuates a discourse of performance by the oriental space and woman. In doing so, it establishes the authority and identity of the figure that gazes upon them. *Turkish Embassy Letters, Flaubert in Egypt* and *A Passage to India* mark a transformation in the corresponding narratives of native space and woman, based on the historical circumstances of the time. Across the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is a transition from discovery, admiration and eroticization, to objectification and possession, concluding with incoherence and imposed silence. The silence that reigns is itself convoluted, for these narratives are perceived as threats or necessities for the male discourse of homoeroticism and nationalism. What is significant to note is how, even as the dual narratives of oriental space and woman perform to create the identity of the occidental – with Forster, the native male – these narratives contradict the common idea that the subaltern's narrative is solely one of silence. It is, instead, through the narratives of the supposedly subsumed and colonized that the Western identity is possible at all. The rhetoric develops as a heterogeneous archive that empowers the Oriental woman and space, even as it registers their withdrawal behind a figurative veil by the twentieth century.

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Problematics of Environmental Vision in *Cave Birds* (1978): A Study of Ted Hughes' Ideological Overtones

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Abstract

The environmental vision of Ted Hughes in Cave Birds (1978) demands a close examination of his poetic and ideological strategies. In order to achieve the self-sufficiency of his alternative view of the world, Hughes attempts to reinvent his own worldview in Cave Birds (1978). It is marked by the internal dynamics of his problematic readings of modern culture. Overtly, the poetic sequence progresses in its mythopoeic mode. However, along with it Hughes's intense awareness of environmental crisis is never absent. His vision of ecological balance is radical in the sense that he is opposed to the view that since environmental degradation has been caused by science and modernity, any viable solutions also lie therein. Ted Hughes is for making a definite exit from modern ways of living– both internal and external to humankind. The fate of the persona in Cave Birds depends upon the ambivalently benevolent force of Nature and its workings. Death and birth, violence and peace, are treated and trusted as indivisible and unavoidable. This poetic sequence defamiliarizes the moral and spiritual crisis of Western culture by placing the materiality of Mother Earth or Nature at the center. The environmental vision of the poet is ingrained in imaginative, spiritual and mythical sources.

Ted Hughes envisions a major advancement in his spiritual exploration in *Cave Birds* (1978). This popular but complex set of poems accompanied by Leonard Baskin's paintings, has an inherent unity of purpose. The main endeavor of the poet is towards the identification of a new kind of

spiritual source. As it is foregrounded in the course of the poetic sequence, it transcends the conventional images of religion, regeneration and subjective redemption. The poet's attitude towards the moral and philosophical foundations of the modern world is revealed through the paradoxical situations and statements that occur in richly symbolic contexts. The overall mood of *Cave Birds* is distinct as compared with other works of Ted Hughes. As the title conveys, these poems are about 'birds' but only apparently as the symbolic overtones are structural, immediate and deep in the character of the poems. The first impression the reader gets is that an internal drama of transformation is being enacted. Critics have rightly observed that Ted Hughes in *Cave Birds* intends to defamiliarize the recurrent theme of humankind-nature relationship with the symbolic 'Green Mother' gradually emerging to reclaim and transform the internal and external realm of nature. In a letter to Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford, Ted Hughes said that *Cave-Birds* was primarily about "the psychological crime, punishment and compensation of Socrates' (1981: 260). But this poetic sequence which has an internal continuity of thought and vision actually deals with the 'Socratic crime' only apparently. The central figure of the drama registers its/her presence when the contradictory journey begins to foreground the goddess of Nature – a reality or a thought with definite specifications of environmental awareness.

Cave Birds begins with a note of spiritual exploration within a subjective context. Without divorcing the subjective from the collective, Ted Hughes builds a common plain of symbolic narration of experience and its intricate dynamics. The persona in 'The Scream', 'After the first Fright', 'In These Fading Moments I Wanted to Say', 'The Accused' and 'First, the Doubtful Charts of Skin', clearly betrays the moral order of instrumental rationality and cultural modernism. With 'The Scream' Ted Hughes introduces the spiritual anxieties of *Cave Birds*. It begins like this: 'There was the sun on the wall - my childhood's/Nursery picture/And there my gravestone/Shared my dreams, and ate and drank with me happily/All day the hawk perfected its craftsmanship/And even through the night the miracle persisted' (Three Books 65, all subsequent textual

quotes also from TH). But this apparent tone of empathy with the surroundings is quite half-hearted. The persona is pleased that the worms in the 'ground were doing a good job' (65). When he sees the 'inane weights of iron / That come suddenly crashing into people, out of nowhere' (65), the indifference towards external landscape of natural elements remains stable. The character of the pleasure here is not a form of empathy with nature in its totality. It is on such occasions, when he has vivid glimpses of senseless violence in the universe, the persona feels 'brave and creaturely' (65). This persona, Stuart Hirschberg observes, is 'flamboyant yet enclosed, outwardly magnificent yet inwardly constricted, his arrogance translates itself into moral insensitivity' (165). Thus, the persona who represents the moral order of the modern world is totally devoid of the basic humility and sensitiveness that show a genuinely human relationship with the surrounding world. The 'self-satisfied cosmic generalization' which asserts its supremacy over the human as well as non-human world is an instance of narrow humanism (Gifford and Roberts 205). The 'I' of 'The Scream' becomes an accused in 'The Accused'. Emphatically asserting that the persona's outlook is a crime deserving severe punishment, this poem implicitly contends that rationality is a vicious instrument that suppresses the unconscious and natural drives. That is why, the accused has to accept that his body is a 'gripful of daggers' (76) - whose sole purpose is to homogenize the 'non-I' world. The tone of the poem assumes larger proportions: 'And his hard life -lust - the blind/Swan of insemination./And his hard brain - sacred assassin'(16). These are the lines where the poet's discontentment with the patterns of life and experience associated with the Enlightenment humanism is expressed with aggressive overtones. Ted Hughes' main contention in 'The Scream' and 'The Accused', as Keith Sagar observes in a different context, is: 'Humanism is the racial equivalent of solipsism. It consigns the human race to a sterile, completely insulated capsule, as in Beckett's 'The Lost Ones'. It hubristically assumes in the face of all the evidence that the human race is self-sufficient, that such powers as they are outside the human world can be safely either exploited or ignored'(209). Such a value-system, Ted Hughes feels, is a

kind of 'blood-aberration' with its 'atoms' which are 'annealed, as in X-rays' (76). These poems indicate that the spiritual transformation of the persona as variously envisaged by the poet at different stages of the poetic growth cannot coexist with the general moral order of the highly industrialized and scientifically truth-pursuing Western society.

'First, The Doubtful Charts of Skin' and 'In These Fading Moments I Wanted to Say' extend this spiritual quietude. These poems also mark subtle variations in the tone of the speaking voice. The persona, as his rationalist and humanist outlook demands, is quite determined to avoid any actual affinity with the non-human universe and the non-rational part of his own consciousness. In 'In These Fading Moments I Wanted to Say,' irony emanates from the falsity of the persona's humble assertions. The amalgamation of the modern and natural constantly exposes the gulf that the persona claims to have overcome.

> How I cry unutterable outcry
>
> Reading the newspaper and smell of stale refuse
>
> How I just let the excess delight
>
> Spill out of my eyes, as I walk along
>
> How imbecile innocent I am. (73)

The narrator-persona claims to be sensitively alive and attuned to some 'perfect stranger's maiming' or a 'dusty dead sparrow's eye'. The concluding lines of the poem witness the speaker's increasing obsession with his own perceptions of the external reality. The earlier emphatic tone gives way to a detached and emotionally unexcited description. The inherent irony in the evolution of the persona's attitude and claims awakens the reader to the fact that the apparent assertions are basically 'desperate exaggerations that betray their own falsity' (Gifford and Roberts 211).The 'fading moments' of the previous poem attain a new but ambivalently regenerative character in 'First, the Doubtful Charts of Skin': 'I came to loose bones/on a

heathery moor, and a rootless Church' (77). There are no overt claims but a daring confrontation and acceptance of a new reality, which, as implied in the 'blowing tails and manes' of wild horses, is nothing but his own suppressed unconscious. That is why, his 'finding weapons in his own grave suggests that he must discover his own subjection to death and that this knowledge strengthens his life' (Gifford and Roberts 213). But this 'death' is essentially metaphorical. The whole cultural order comprising the achievements of Enlightenment heritage is finally at stake.

The Ideological temper of *Cave Birds* marks a turn for alternative 'green' conscious in poems like 'The Summoner', 'The Interrogator', 'The Judge', 'The Plaintiff' and 'The Executioner'. These poems mainly muster signs of the character and workings of a new spiritual force imbued with futuristic concerns of ecological relevance. Its various forms include a female figure, some mysterious birds and the earth itself. While some poems bring out its intrinsically violent and authoritarian nature, others concentrate mainly upon its regenerative potential. The underlying irony in the title, as well as the structure of some of these poems, also reveals the poet's attitude towards the moral and intellectual orientation of the persona. Most of these poems are in third-person narrative mode. But the regeneration of the persona is dependent upon the ambivalent benevolence of this force in whose mode of working death and birth, violence and peace are simply indivisible and unavoidable, both as means and consequences. 'The Summoner', 'The Interrogator', 'The Judge' and 'The Baptist' mainly scrutinize the claims and counter-claims made in their own behalf by the conflicting voices of the drama. 'The Summoner' establishes the identity of an apparently 'gangster protectionist, a sinister protector, who sooner or later will demand his dues' (Gifford and Roberts 206).

Spectral, gigantified,

Protozoic, blood-eating

The carapace

Of foreclosure

The cuticle

of final arrest. (67)

Interestingly, 'The Summoner' and 'The Interrogator' are one. The use of judicial vocabulary in the title inverts the prevailing and dominant views of crime and punishment – negation of nature being the severest crime. In "The Interrogator', as Stuart Hirschberg relates, the "intellectual scrutiny of the victim is as merciless as the sun beating down on a corpse left for vultures in the desert' (Hirschberg 154). The interrogator is a bird: 'The bird is the sun's key hole/The sun spies through. Through her/He ransacks the camouflage of hunger"(69). This metaphorical bird is the 'blood-louse of Ether'. It is troubled by some "angered righteous questions" and is quite unmistakable with 'her eye on the probe' (69). Interrogated by such a figure, the assertive and complacent protagonist of "The Scream' is "as helpless as a skin-and-bone mule; trying to hide in a desert, but betrayed by the black shadow of its own inescapable physicality' (Sagar 174). 'The Judge' and 'The Baptist' are obscure variations on the preceding figures. Enjoying a "Cosmic equipoise", the judge is a 'hero of the unalterable' (71). Ted Hughes seems to contend that the persona has to admit and accept the "guilt and sentence" that his humanist and rationalist outlook invite for him from the forces of nature which get disturbed and annoyed by the workings of these despiritualized tendencies (Sagar 175).

'After There Was Nothing Came a Woman' and 'Bride and Groom Lie Hidden for Three Days' mark the culmination of the internal drama of *Cave Birds*. While celebrating the persona's wholeness of being, both these poems subvert modern world's preoccupation with the rationalistic modes of cognition. The poet in 'After There was Nothing Came a Woman' overtly dramatizes "the re-emergence of Nature as the Great Goddess of mankind, and the Mother of all life' (Faas 187). Here "she" is a modest version of the mysterious female figures in Ted Hughes's earlier poetry.

She looks at the grass trembling among the worn stones

Having about as much comprehension as a Lamb

Who stares at everything simultaneously

With ant-like head and soldierly bearing

She had made it but only just, just (93)

The poem, like the whole of *Cave Birds*, is essentially working at a symbolic level. The narrator who begins with the pretensions of a detached and calm commentator on the happenings in the objective world, as implied in the tone of the last lines, finally senses mystery and immensity in the actions and appearance of 'She'. The use of lamb and ant imagery for highlighting her innocence and distance from what is imagined to be the corrupted and decaying world of civilized and rational man indirectly asserts the continued primacy of the irrational and instinctual mode of existence in the poet's world-view. But as contrasted with this fantastic but emphatic revival of primitivism in symbolic terms, in 'Bridge and Groom', the poet mainly displays the physical union of the protagonist-lover with his beloved. The meanings are varied and deep : 'She inlays with deep-cuts scrolls the nape of his neck /He sinks into place the inside of her thighs/So, gasping with joy, with cries of wonderment /Like two gods of mud/Sprawling in the dirt, but with infinite care/They bring each other to perfection' (98). The imagery of sexual union reminds the reader of *Gaudete*. But the consummation of physical union actually carries within it a spiritual renewal and the most authentic expression of the 'phallic reality' which as implied in the ritualistic episodes of *Gaudete*, is merely a reflection of the highest form of consciousness. Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford observe: 'Sexual union is a metaphor for wholeness of being and oneness with the world; it is also both a cause and a consequence of wholeness and unity' (1981: 226). In 'Bride and Groom' the way Ted Hughes brings the 'moment closest to extinction turns out to be the creative moment' (Faas 193).

In *Cave Birds*, 'She Seemed So Considerate' and 'The Green Mother' take forward the internal drama and overall vision of the sequence. These poems highlight the transforming capabilities of the mysterious and regenerative 'female' figure. The incantation tone of the priestly voice constantly endows a mystic and visionary character to these poems. The plaintiff refers to the 'life-divining bush of your desert' and the 'heavy-fruited, burning tree/of your darkness' (72). The protagonist is left with the only option of listening to his own fate: 'Buried in your chest, a humbling weight/That will not let you breathe./Your heart's winged flower /Come to supplant you' (72). The revival of the 'heart's winged flower' which is essentially the suppressed non-rational and uncivilized principle of the protagonist's existence, is quite skillfully symbolized in 'She Seemed So Considerate'. It is a first person narrative. In boththese poems, the unconscious which makes the individual feel at one with nature in its wild processes comes to the fore. Neil Roberts and Terry Gifford also point out: 'Hitherto imprisoned in the darkness of the self unacknowledged by the protagonist, it has been roused by the trial' (45). In the latter poem, the persona is gradually overwhelmed by the paradoxical arguments of the bird-like deity: 'Then the bird came /She said: 'Your world has died' / It sounded dramatic' (70). However, it is confirmed when: 'But my potted pet fern, the one fellow spirit/I still cherished,/It actually had witnessed/As if Life had decided to desert me/As if it saw more hope for itself elsewhere'(70).

'The Green Mother' and 'The Executioner' awaken the reader to the material vastness and spiritual freshness of the deity. The force or state of consciousness celebrated in these poems is foreign to modern culture and subjectivities. 'The Green Mother' reveals that the 'earth is a busy hive of heaven'(87). This poem is primarily a celebration of the heterogeneity of life that earth fosters. The recurrence of the word 'heaven' in the context of flora and fauna demands a metaphorical reading. Although in the first person narrative and exceptionally emphatic in its convictions, the narrating voice is initially neither of the persona nor of the female or bird-like deity. The concept of a heaven beyond this life is apparently rejected. The trees, flowers, birds, beasts and fish-all have their

own heavens, but not altogether different from the one the persona has to strive for. The oracular voice tells him: 'These are only some heavens/Not all within your choice/These are also the heavens/of your persuasion/your candled prayers have congealed an angel, a star/a city of religions' (88). In 'Crow's Theology', the poet has demystified religion. Against Christian religiosity, which according to the poet, has suppressed 'an angel, a star - A city of religions' (88), this poem foregrounds the richness of life that the earth offers. But this over-emphasis on 'earth' as the sole originator of diverse sorts of heavens is not an affirmation of the modern conditions of life which basically constitute the present character of this planet, but of the inherent elements of mysticism and transcendentalism, which as envisaged by the poet put green earth and Nature at a single metaphysical plain of an alternative religiosity. That is why, in 'The Executioner': 'It feels like the world/before your eyes ever opened' (75). Both these poems are primarily critiques of non-religious humanistic orientation of modern culture. With a definite inclination towards mystic reality of life and universe, Ted Hughes celebrates the centrality of a non-human and sacredly mystified 'green' source of Nature: 'Fills up/Sun, moon, stars, he fills them up/With his hemlock/They darken/He fills up the evening and the morning, they darken/He fills up the sea'(75). Commenting upon this poem, Keith Sagar maintains that 'there is no cruelty in this hemlock execution rather a benediction' (176).But this filling up and darkening, even if it gives a rich sense of fullness to the persona in the poem, cannot legitimately be described as benediction. The executioner is essentially a personification of the 'elemental power circuit of the universe' which cannot co-exist with the rationalistic and humanistic patterns of modern life and thought. The main achievement of Ted Hughes in *Cave Birds* is the use of different strategies that help foregrounding 'green' consciousness of the poet as reflected in the transformation of the persona in this poetic drama. It is noteworthy that the imagery of these poems is directed towards this new awareness – the 'Socratic' psyche becomes a subsidiary to the imaginative union with Nature in its latest ideological manifestations.

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Paralingual Mode of Expression in Sylvia Plath's "Ariel" & Bee Poems

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Abstract

This paper aims at highlighting a distinctive feature of Sylvia Plath's verse, that is her adept use of kinetic imagery and connotative gestures, which help to explicate her basic intent. Since she finds language too contaminated to serve as an effective medium, her dependence on paralingual means becomes even more significant. Many of the important themes in her poetry have been conveyed through body language. Whether it is feeling of insecurity associated with virginity or the rebellious flight of the queen bee becoming a red scar and later a red comet in the sky; gestures rather than words fully capture her underlying message. It is this role of gestures and body language in her poetry that will be explicated in this paper.

The general belief about language as a transparent medium for conveying an individual's perception and interpretation of reality helped academics neatly sidestep various disturbing issues. These included issues like the relationship between the dominant and muted culture; the possibility/ impossibility of minor critical discourse to develop its own indigenous history and critical canons, instead of always being measured and judged by pre-existing dominant authority; and ultimately, the credibility and impartiality of the principles by and for the dominant group later arbitrarily being applied to the muted group. It was feminist theory that brought such questions to light. The myth about the impartiality and transparency of language was exploded by feminism. Catherine Belsey in the introduction to 'The Feminist Reader' observes

'language doesn't merely name male superiority, it produces it. The tendency of words to seem transparent, to appear simply to label a pre-existing reality, indicated to feminists the crucial role of language in construction of a world picture which legitimates the existing patriarchal order' (Belsey 4).

A writer expresses his/her intentions not only through the thematic contents aided by subversive linguistic techniques like sarcastic innuendoes and ironic intonations, but also through the gestures and body language of the persona/ characters presented in a poem/ play. The very way in which a persona behaves or is expected to behave by others around her/him, his/her body movements, the roles and poses s/he adopts, and last but not the least, each one of his/her gestures, all supplement the basic intent of a poem. The physical language works more effectively than actual words and forms the sub-text of a poem. The reliance on gesture without any verbal commentary equips the poet with an added tool to explore new dimensions.

Sylvia Plath also makes use of gestures and body actions in order to elucidate the underlying concerns. It seems that she finds verbal expression inadequate for her use. Language, being subject to gender discrimination for such a long time, has become so contaminated that she discovers it to be an unfit medium to give an unbiased expression to her feminist thoughts. Therefore, she heavily relies on nonverbal means to fully capture the essence of her feelings. This preference for gestures and nonverbal expression is quite obvious in the bee poems. 'The Bee Meeting,' which is full of action, presents the enigmatic bedecking of a virgin by her fellow villagers for some special occasion. However, the details reported by the apprehensive and bewildered virgin are so mixed up that it is difficult to decide whether it is a bride who is being decorated and dressed up for her bridegroom or a sacrificial virgin being taken for some ancient ritual.

The first pose in which one sees this speaker is her semi-naked condition in which she meets her 'gloved and covered' fellow country folks. Her extreme discomfort, caused by this

state, is evident from her statement regarding her nakedness: 'I am nude as a chicken neck.' This image is befitting not only for her present condition but the feeling of insecurity, the repulsive shrinking from being exposed, and her vulnerability, defined by the very state of virginity itself.

Males have in fact propagated the concept of virginity. By lauding this state of sexual inexperience in women, they have not only deprived them of equal sexual freedom but also burdened the female mind with constant fear regarding the loss of this state. While Hardy has raised the question of the 'pure woman' in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* through thematic means, Plath has articulated her criticism of this concept through the physical depiction of this virgin.

The poem 'Bee Meeting' dramatizes a female stepping into the unknown and frightening world of sexuality and her subsequent response to this new and painful experience. But this experience has not been presented from a single center of consciousness and the beehive, with its clear-cut demarcation between the virgins and the sexually experienced bee queen, provides another set of reference to further elucidate Plath's feminist concern.

In the bee world, virginity has been presented as a better-protected and more independent state of being: 'The hive is snug as a virgin/Sealing off its brood cells, her honey, and quietly humming' (Plath 34-35). Nevertheless, certain parallels are to be found between the bee and the human world. In both cases, virginity is an ephemeral state that implies certain innocence and a definite ignorance, as shown by the virgin bees who think that by sealing off their hive they are safe from any unwanted intrusion. However, this lulled sense of safety is only temporary, as their hive is about to be penetrated whether they allow it or not.

In spite of these similarities, the dissimilarities are more apparent. In the human world the speaker's first step into sexuality means pain, a sense of loss, and an overwhelming feeling of entrapment:

I cannot run, I am rooted and the gorse hurts me

With its yellow purses, its spiky armory

I could not run without having to run forever. (31-33)

The gorse is a phallic symbol and the female, in spite of experiencing pain, feels imprisoned within the hurtful snare of sexuality. She is also aware of the bitter fact that her future life is going to be synonymous with pain and misery, but if she tries to flee one painful situation this vicious circle will be repeated throughout her life.

Sexual life in the bee world is equivalent to movement, freedom and ultimate victory through experience:

While in their finger joint cells the new virgins

Dream of a duel they will win inevitably

A curtain of wax dividing them from the bride flight

The uplift of the murderess into a heaven that loves her (45-48)

Contrary to the ‘spiky armory’ of gorse that means pain and hurt for the virgin, the virgin bee is going to dominate and ultimately oust her male partner in their sexual encounter. In the bee world, it is the drone, the male partner, who loses his life once the act is consummated– hence the title ‘murderess.’ The virgin bee is found to be superior to a human female because the very environment she lives in and the scheme of nature both side with her (a heaven that loves her), while in the human world the woman finds herself entrapped: ‘By a sky /Palely and flamily/ Igniting its carbon monoxide.’(51)

This contrast between their lives and the very nature of their sexual exposure has been presented through gestures and actions. Where this initiatory step for the virgin bee means a liberating flight from the dark, constricting brood cells into heaven itself, for a girl it means the loss of freedom and subsequent bondage; if she tries to gain liberty from this

weighty yoke, like a runway prisoner, the other alternative is an unending search for refuge met with one betrayal after another. The second pose in which this speaker imagines herself is that of a magician's girl: 'I am exhausted/Pillar of white in a blackout of knives/ I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.' (51-53)

This pose is symbolic and speaks volumes about the derogatory and secondary status awarded to women. The constant fear of exposure before the magician's knife, again a phallic symbol, marks the psyche of this girl. She must silently and unflinchingly look at the dangerous game that may claim her life any moment. In spite of being the central character of this show, exposed to the utmost risk, she is not permitted to have a say in the ploy.

During the whole show it is the magician who holds attention, doing the talk and maneuvering things, while the magician's girl is relegated to a secondary status. She is present at the back of the stage, silently smiling without having a say in the whole proceeding. All applause, all praise is reserved for the intelligence and expertise of the male magician and this girl who exposes herself to the greatest danger is often neglected by the audience. She is introduced only as a decorative accessory or a helping hand that obeys and does her master's biding, handing him various things, adjusting his apparatus or smilingly lying under his threatening knife. This whole sub-text has been suggested by the single pose in which the persona imagines herself.

Nevertheless, she is also aware of the fact that adherence to this stance for long will sap all her vitality, as she feels exhausted towards the end. By constantly remaining in this state of anticipation, fear and anxiety, she has almost lost interest in the course her life takes. 'Led through' the maze of existence by someone else, she is completely disoriented and has become almost oblivious to the activities carried out before her very eyes. It is with a sudden and startled jolt that she notices the whole ceremony was in fact only a prelude to her own death.

'The Arrival of The Bee Box' again presents the inquisitive gestures of a female who having ordered a bee box, is appalled by the furious din it makes. Her simultaneous repulsion and attraction towards this box is obvious from her body language: 'I have to live with it overnight/ and I can't keep away from it.' (Plath 7-8) Typical curiosity is reflected in every gesture of this speaker. Though she is frightened by the noise these bees make and is also conscious of the danger, she puts herself into by remaining close to the box; the urge to know is so overpowering that it makes her ignore all possible dangers. Unable to satisfy her curiosity by outwardly examining the box, the persona says: 'I put my eye to the grid.' (11) What this box contains is overwhelmingly 'dark, dark.' It is not only the physical darkness that her eyes detect inside, but also the moral and cultural darkness. Having been exploited, she has an instinctive affinity with other victims of exploitation. It is because of this empathy that she has been afforded a peep into the annals of history itself and becomes aware of 'the swarmy feeling of African hands/Minute and shrunk for export.' (13-14)

But a woman cannot be satisfied with just a peep. She must also hear what is being said inside: 'laid my ear to furious Latin/I am not a Caesar' (21-22). This physical move reminds her of another exploitative dictator from history but her instinctive response towards him is to disavow any link, any affinity with him. However, the next imagined movement, 'If I just undid the locks and stood back and turned into a tree' (28), takes one further back into ancient history and reminds one of another sad example of exploitation- this time the sexual exploitation of a defenseless girl by a lascivious male. Apollo, the sun god, felt attracted to the beautiful wood nymph Daphne. She, however, was not enamored with him, so using her right to choose, she did not encourage his amorous advances. But a male cannot be dissuaded from the object of his desire so easily; one day, finding the circumstances favorable, he chased her across the jungle to capture and rape her. When Daphne saw that she would not be able to save herself from his ravishing embrace, in desperation she prayed to Zeus to turn her into a tree- a fate preferable to being sexually molested by an undesirable male. Such miraculous transformation was possible

only in ancient times; now the female can only change her outwardly appearance. The inner vitality, the essence of her being has been sapped, as she sadly draws attention to her rather awkward physical appearance, 'In my moon suit and my funeral veil/I am no source of honey.' (32-33)

'Stings,' which can also be called a brief and compact drama in its own right, hints at a number of themes through the actions and gestures of the characters introduced therein. 'Bare handed, I hand the comb/The man in white smiles, bare-handed.' The daring spirit of this speaker is evident from her very first act when without any protective glove or covering, she decides to hold the honeycomb in her bare hands. The bee man smiles, as he seems to be rather amused by this unique show of courage by a woman, since what is expected of a woman is fear, timidity and compliance with the conventional model.

The actions of this speaker show a split within the psyche. Part of herself complies with traditional expectations. Like an ordinary housewife, happy and content with her house chores, she enamels the hive 'Thinking sweetness, sweetness.' But the other half of her personality revolts against the demeaning sort of life as she remembers her past life with bitterness: 'I am no drudge/Though for years I have eaten dust? And dried plates with my dense hair' (34). This act of drying plates with 'dense hair' has deep undercurrents. Hair has always been associated with fertility, life force and sexual potential. However, this misuse of hair shows the wrongly channeled sexuality of women in wedlock. Marriage, instead of sublimating women's sexual potential, proves a drain for their vitality. The humiliating role etched for women as housewives with its demeaning and thankless chores has subtly been hinted at through the symbolic acts of 'eating dust' and 'drying plates with dense hair.' Housewives usually devote their whole lives to tending domestic affairs yet their services are invariably taken for granted and hardly ever acknowledged by the other members of the family.

The persona, in spite of her rigorous work routine, feels superior to the ordinary woman whom she equates with worker bees. She identifies with the queen bee, which even after losing the outward luster and glory, is still different from less intellectual and less sophisticated women, due to her unique mental approach: 'Will they hate me/These women who only scurry/Whose news is the open cherry, the open clover?'(35) Butscher has interpreted these actions as referring to the crude talk of Plath's rural neighbors in Devon, 'Open thighs, open bodies, internal organs'- the conversational topics of her female neighbors are castigated (Butscher 344).

People interested in beekeeping know that the queen bee's life is riddled with paradoxes. Though she is the central source of procreation and productivity, ensuring the continuity of hive life, she has to give up a lot of other activities in order to keep up this status. Except during the bride flight she does not see day-light, she has no say in the major decisions of apiary such as swarming, collection of nectar, defending the hive against any possible intrusion, and sometimes matters concerning her own life and death. Thus she becomes appropriate symbol for a housewife who in spite of being a backbone of her household, a means of production and nurturance of life, literally becomes the prisoner of the whole set-up. This parallel between the women and bees continues throughout the poem and next it is the hive itself that has been described in human terms: 'Opening in spring, like an industrious virgin/To scour the creaming crests/As the moon for its ivory powders scours, the sea' (35-37). The image of the women again presented through gestures in these lines, combines the twin roles of the virgin (industrious virgin) and the housewife (scours the crests). The moon with Diana as its ruling deity, has also been seen as a virgin who in order to enhance her beauty needs the ocean's light reflecting help. These comparisons also show that the speaker still relies on traditional actions and gestures, as she has not attained complete liberation from the bonds of orthodox thought.

If female activity, even in the bee world, has been equated with domestic chores, the body language of men tells

another story: 'A third person is watching/...Now he is gone/In eight great bounds, a great scapegoat/Here is his slipper; here is another' (37-41). Men are found to be deserters. They are the ones who instead of sharing the burden of life watch distantly and when worst comes to worst they silently depart, leaving the woman alone to cope with the ordeal. The feminist protest against the selfish attitude of men has been registered by mentioning a few of their simple gestures. The 'man' in this poem is slinking away. His legs carrying him away and his features misshapen by the stinging bees which cling to his lips like lies; not only reveal the male tendency of shirking responsibility but also give voice to a bitterness a woman feels at his show of meanness. But in 'Stings' the speaker is no longer concerned with the issue of male irresponsibility, since she is more interested in attaining a new identity for herself. This new self has been delineated through physical gesture.

> More terrible than she ever was, red
>
> Scar in the sky, red comet
>
> Over the engine that killed her-
>
> The mausoleum, the wax house (Plath 56-60)

The sudden and the dazzling movement of the comet, which disturbs the heavenly order aptly sums up the nature of this revolutionary step. Likewise, "red scar in the sky" is again redolent of the overt rejection of the older status quo. For Plath, the sky, due to its association with a male presiding deity, symbolizes sternness, relentlessness and rigidity. Her sudden upward movement in the role of a self-sufficient being shows that her new identity has caused a rupture, burnt a hole, tearing and lacerating the conventional hierarchy by its speed, movement and fiery energy.

Another important aspect of this physical gesture is its simultaneous release from and rejection of previous conventional roles reserved for women. No longer is she a dependent virgin or a captive housewife, nor, like the moon, needs another medium for reflecting its light but has become a

source of light herself-- a red comet which in a flash enlightens the whole sky. The house, which kept the queen bee/housewife as its prisoner for so long, has been left behind as she has risen much above it. Mary Lynn Broe in the 'The Bee Sequence: But I Have Self to Recover' states:

> Queen ship is a double-bind situation where the physical category carries with it the threat of fossilization. The hive killed the queen by entombing her powers in its sealed waxen brood cells. She became a narrowly defined reproductive symbol and suffered a kind of death-in-life, the feminocidal hazard of "specialness" (Broe 104).

Another such leap has been presented through the kinetic imagery of 'Ariel'. On a literal level this poem is about a horse ride that a woman enjoys in the pre-dawn darkness, while her horse is racing headlong towards the rising sky. But its numerous images of movement and freedom can be accorded a feminist interpretation as well.

The poem records a woman's breaking through the passivity imposed on her by social norms. One has a sense of movement, as she gathers speed in the surrounding darkness '...the substance less blue/Pour of tor and distances' (2-3). But this journey forward is not a blind leap taken into the dark, it is a definite, guided action; like the flight of an arrow, which is a shot from a definite spot, heading towards a certain target. This swift, arrow-like flight takes her through and out of the male - dominated world. As she rushes through the old conventions on her journey forward, 'Hooks' impede her progress. These hooks symbolize various hurdles she comes across and needs to master before she can break free from the orthodox order. The dark 'shadows' cast by these hooks hint to their sinister effect upon a woman's life. It is to escape from their lethal shade, and have a clearer view of the world around her that she is heading towards 'the red eye' of morning. This union has been dramatized by the obsessive 'I' sounds in the last three stanzas, which 'connect the personal pronoun (I/white/Godiva) to both action (flies/drive) and its ultimate, obliterating end (suicidal, red/eye). Person, act

and end are swept into one driving force by the poet's aural strategy' (McKay 20).

Thus 'Ariel' can be categorized as a poem that presents a readjustment of the values of life. A woman, after living too long under the restricting shadows of patriarchal canons and customs decides to cast off this gloomy shroud entwining her existence and takes a hazardous journey towards a new morn, a morning full of light, that will dispel the old gloom and enable her to look at things with fresh eyes. The reference to 'Godiva' with whom the speaker identifies holds great significance. It not only serves to place a certain distance between the poet and the persona but it also draws the reader's attention to the poem's feminist intent.

Godiva, a woman who rode naked through the streets of the town in order to relieve it of an unjust tax is a prototype female figure of defiance, revolt and ultimately sacrifice. By taking this decision to expose herself before the eyes of the whole town she had not only taken a bold step of defiance but also one that involved sacrifice. Since, by this single gesture she cast off her repute, her grace and lastly her respectable lady-like image. By identifying with this historical figure, the Plath's speaker is highlighting the sacrificial aspect of her gesture. She knows that by casting off the 'dead hands, dead stringencies' of past traditions, she is taking a 'suicidal' step, like the dew flying straight into the 'cauldron of morning'. Yet at the same time it is also an act of freedom, an unpeeling of the older self though the process cost her, her life.

The speaker intends to assume a new identity and this new self has been described in terms of a phallic symbol, an arrow flying into the cauldron. The very choice of this symbol for a female is significant and shows a complete rejection of older conventions. Traditionally, movement, energy and the right to explore are reserved for males who are therefore, assigned the symbols of arrow and knife, while a female's life is invariably linked with the household, rootedness and hence static. The same dichotomy has been hinted at in Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* where a male chauvinist describes the difference

between male and female nature in this way: 'What a man is an arrow into the future and what a woman is the place the arrow shoots off from.'(Plath 80) It is precisely this contrast from their assigned roles, which awards mobility and freedom to one and relegates the other gender to an inert status that has been questioned by Plath. By allowing the female rider, the speed and mobility of an arrow she has turned the conventional hierarchy completely topsy-turvy.

The selection of an arrow as an image to depict this bold step of revolt is also appropriate in the sense that it fully captures its true spirit. This poem reflects an intellectual rather than a physical revolt. Physically the poet has merely written a poem that is only a means of giving vent to her rebellious thoughts, which provide the basic impetus. But the speed of her reflections, the agility of her response to the existing order, and subsequent effect this poem is going to make on the emotions of its readers - all have been encapsulated within this single but powerful image of a flying arrow.

For Plath Movement, flight and escape are not the only gestures through which a woman may cope with the ordeals of life but she has also investigated the worth of passivity with the gestures of defiance. It is 'wintering', the one observes that one observes how the bees pass through the trying months of winters by dint of their determination, solidarity and patient wait for spring. The process of wintering involves the double challenge for the bees since they have not only been exposed to the natural threat of winter in the form of its freezing cold but also deprived of the honey; their sole means of subsistence by the human beings. Thus, incapacitated both physically and materially it is only through a strong feeling of mutual solidarity that they are able to subsist.

Their positive qualities of patience, unity, determination, forbearance in the face of suffering and death have again been presented through their action. The speaker imprisoned within her house due to harsh winter season, is compelled to live with these bees, which to her represent a feminine force as she says, 'The bees are all women', who 'have got rid of the men'(22).

Cheated out of the fruit of their labour in the most arduous season of year, they teach her a new lesson of endurance through passivity.

The first gesture that attracts the attention of their slow yet disciplined approach for Lyle and Tate, which they have been provided with as a replacement for their honey, is 'Filing like soldiers/ To the syrup tin' (24-25). Like the phallic image in 'Ariel', soldierly qualities like determination, hard-work and survival under unsuitable circumstances - qualities thought to be prerogatives of males have been accorded to these women. Deprived of any possibility for decisive action due to extreme cold, they can express their anger through a gesture of potential threat. 'Now they ball in a mass/Black/Mind against the White' (31-33). This pose of uniting the shape of a poisonous and deadly black ball against their assailants is symbolic of their unity and self-defensive impulse. Though severely restricted and incapacitated by the ravages of winter, they still express their resilient spirit through a gesture of solidarity as: 'The smile of snow is white /.....Into which, on warm days/They can only carry their dead' (34-37). Even death has failed to separate them or to breach their unity. Their affinity with each other is something beyond the bounds of life and death; hence, their gestures of reverence for their dead mates.

Emotions expressed through various gestures of these bees bring the speaker to her final conclusion that, 'Winter is for women--- / The woman still at her knitting / --- / Her body a bulb in the cold, too dumb to think' (42-45). The final image is also a kinetic one, where the physical posture tells the whole story. The lonesome story of a silent woman, by her fireside completely engrossed in her knitting becomes symbolic figure for the strength and fortitude of the whole womanhood. Deserted and left alone, to face the trials of nature, she tries to forget the wrongs done to her by concentrating on her handwork. It is only through endurance and depending upon her physical reserves (Her body a bulb in cold) that she is able to subsist through this strenuous phase of life.

This detailed study of Plath's poetry shows the various means and techniques she has employed to give expression to her feminist concerns. She has not only pointed out the biased attitude of society which results in maltreatment and objectification of women, but through her use of kinetic imagery has also shown the alternative ways of dealing with this dilemma. While poems like 'Ariel', 'Stings', and 'Purdah' advocates an overt flouting of traditional restrictions, one must also keep in mind 'The courage of Shutting Up' and 'Wintering' which highlight the greater worth of silence, endurance and subsistence under most trying conditions.

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Metaphysical Overtones in Acceptance of Suffering in Eugene O'Neill's Tragic Characters

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Abstract

Eugene O'Neill has always tried to bring to light individuality and intensity as the permanent features of his characters. The suffering his characters go through is not only physical but marks their elevation to a higher metaphysical plane. These implications of tragedy can be observed while closely studying his characters that are the individuals with a heroic readiness to accept their suffering as a consequence of their choices. This paper argues that the quest of his characters for a metaphysical essence is satiated only when they are cleansed through the dearth of physical existence in order to comprehend their actual purpose and meaning in life. In this process they undergo a tragic experience which is something beyond physical in terms of bearing the odds, experiencing pain and eventually attaining metaphysical transcendence.

The magnificence of tragedy lies in man's falling again and again to attain the wisdom he requires to rest in solace. It lies in the bearing of odds and to face death with dauntless and unfaltering courage. No other term like Felix Culpa[1] can aptly

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[1]Felix culpa is a [Latin] phrase that comes from the words felix (meaning "happy," "lucky," or "blessed") and culpa (meaning "fault" or "fall"), and in the Catholic tradition is most often translated "happy fault," Latin expression felix culpa derives from the writings of [St. Augustine] regarding the [Fall of Man], the source of [original sin]: "For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist." The medieval theologian [Thomas Aquinas] cited this line when he explained how the principle that "God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom". In a literary context, the term "felix culpa" can describe how a series of unfortunate events will eventually lead to a happier outcome.

define this characteristic of tragedy where man sweats his heart out to be purged from the choices he made in life. The good comes out of evil, the best comes out of worst, and understanding comes out of hamartia[2] . Accordingly, a man needs to be in a state where his volitional choices bring the drought of suffering to him. O' Neill's idea of tragedy is analogous to Greek and Shakespearean tragedy depicting a man's continual effort to redeem himself by grasping the essence of suffering. His characters understand and eventually realize their meaning in life, which leads them to a higher metaphysical plane. This paper makes a study of metaphysical suffering in O Neill by stressing on the metaphysical overtones of disproportionate human pairing which exhibits sheer determination in the face of death. In order to explore this idea it is important to define and explain the word 'metaphysical' and the context in which it will be explored. Metaphysicality here is interpreted in terms of Aristotelian[3] essence of suffering. Aristotle defines metaphysics as "the knowledge of immaterial being." (Smith 60) As such, it is concerned with explaining the features of reality that exist beyond the physical world. It represents as meaning 'the science of things transcending what is physical'."[4] Consequently this Aristotelian understanding of metaphysicality helps to formulate an exegesis which locates the proposed 'metaphysical overtones' in O Neill as the implications in the text that relate to spiritual inclination and dwell in something beyond physical. Thus paradoxically suggesting implications of being extraordinary in mundane; focusing on those actions that are performed in ordinary course

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(Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_culpa>

[2]Hamartia, also called tragic flaw, (hamartia from Greek *hamartanein*, "to err"), inherent defect or shortcoming in the hero of a tragedy, who is in other respects a superior being favored by fortune. (Encyclopaedia Britannica) <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/253196/hamartia>

[3]The term relates to Aristotle or to his philosophy. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/>

[4] (Oxford English Dictionary) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/metaphysics> and (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>

of life by more than humble characters but are significantly heroic in essence.

O'Neill's characters' premeditated indulgence in disproportionate pairing, their consequent suffering and their search for eventual redemption yields them to metaphysical elevation. They move from the plane of physical excursions to the one that is spiritually regarded as metaphysical plane. They grasp the knowledge beyond physical limits and transcend to a vantage ground where they show the manifestations of metaphysical overtones in the acceptance of suffering. This idea tends to develop, support and explain the spiritual elevation of characters on the basis of their stoic perseverance[5] during the time of difficulty. This not only cleanses their souls but also redeems them by giving spiritual consolation. Their restitution is the outcome of the price they paid to indulge in a disproportionate association. Since their attitude towards suffering does not encompass any religious and predestined elements, the metaphysical overtones are simply extracted on the basis of these characters' choice to suffer and then to come out of the quagmire of suffering by facing it. Therefore, it is neither truly Greek nor essentially Shakespearean in essence. It is rather modernistic; secular[6] and mundane in character, yet heroic.

In O'Neill's plays, the metaphysical overtones transpire when his disproportionately joined characters comply with the offer for self-deterioration. In his play *Beyond the Horizon,* the traces of metaphysical overtones are in the suffering of Robert, Ruth and Andrew. Robert's misinterpretation of dreams in marrying Ruth, sacrifice made by Andrew to see his brother's happiness and implorations of Ruth to make Robert stay,

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[5]Endurance, sobriety, and patience explored by Stoics, a philosophical school of Athens.
< http://thesaurus.com/browse/stoicism>
[6]One manifestation of secularism is asserting the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people. (Wikipedia, the Free encyclopedia)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism>

erupted the lava of pain and hardship for them. Robert was never meant for the mundane life and farmhouse; his dreams were to discover the secrets beyond the horizon. On the contrary, Andrew's yearnings were for Ruth and the farm. He was as deeply rooted in farm as Robert was in hankerings of seeing the faraway lands. The barter of Ruth and Sea made them go into the oubliette of devastation, where the turmoil became essential to them. Robert wishes to possess the beauty of horizon because the sight of it promises a more lively and refined life for him. It assures him the world beyond constrictions and morbidity of life. He aspires to have freedom from pain, strangulation, and sickness of this life and therefore acknowledges his aspirations in these words, "What I want to do now is to keep on moving so that I won't take root in one place." (O'Neill 83) His pronouncement is indicative of his intimations to ramble the world in search of the magnetic force he is attracted to. His freedom, solace, felicitation lies in far off lands and he is enthralled by the luring appeal of the horizon. His desire to possess the beauty hidden from his eyes can be realized by understanding the significance of these words:

> Supposing I was to tell you that it's just Beauty that's calling me, the Beauty of the far off and unknown, the mystery and the spell of the East which lures me in the books I've read, the need of the freedom of great wide spaces, the joy of the wandering on and on- in quest of the secret which is hidden over there, beyond the horizon? (O'Neill 85)

These words describe Robert's quest to achieve the symbol of freedom hidden in the veil of unknown. So his yearning for life beyond horizon was the source of his spiritual satisfaction. Robert even explains the nature of his yearning to Ruth and shares his comfort that he feels while looking towards the beauty of nature. This serves as a liniment to his pains: "So I used to stare out over the fields to the hills, out there- (he points to the horizon) and somehow after a time I'd forget any pain I was in." (O'Neill 89) But suffering becomes essential when Robert acquiesce to Ruth and misinterprets his longing and solace as Ruth's love. He satisfies himself by giving a reluctant

justification of his decisions to stay in the farmhouse and to terminate his excursion of three years at ship by comprehending love of Ruth to be the ultimate comfort for him. He does not perceive that he has bid farewell to his dreams in order to consummate his physical relationship. His physical love makes him ignorant of the fact that this action will lead him to a labyrinth of failure and the resulting pain. Thus, he will not be able to come out of the constricting walls of this entanglement, which will strangle him to death.

> I think love must have been the secret- the secret that called to me from over the world's rim- the secret beyond every horizon; and when I didn't come, it came to me. (He clasps Ruth to him fiercely) oh, Ruth our love is sweeter than any distant dream!" (O'Neill 90)

This commitment emanates him to go in the maze of sterility, where he is deprived of the very imaginative essence he had. He gets deeper and deeper into that web of unyielding potential. All he is left with is destruction, his creativity leaves him. His threshold becomes the herald of poverty, disaster and failure. The walls of farmhouse to which he once subdued become the presage of his dying freedom and lost sensibility: "They're like the walls of a narrow prison yard shutting me in from all the freedom and wonder of life." (O'Neill 126). This realization of his debacle makes him yearn for his consolation, which is concealed under his propensity towards horizon. Moreover, he rediscovers that he can only achieve solace outside the shackles of farmhouse. His true essence was in his ramblings to discover the happiness hidden under the veil of far off lands. But all the same, the fiasco he faces after misconstruing his dreams does not make him quit his desire for beauty and peace. He realizes that this suffering will polish his essence and yield to him what he was unable to achieve through his actions otherwise. He realizes that his physical torment will make him trek towards the world unknown. By accepting his physical degeneration he will be able to grasp his ascend towards a higher plane.

> All our suffering has been a test through which we had to pass to prove ourselves worthy of a finer realization. (Exultingly) and we did pass through it! It hasn't broken us! And now the freedom is to come true! Don't you see? (O'Neill 150)

He is able to envision that he must suffer to capture the very freedom he craved for. He perceives that his fault was in consummating his physical love and hence, he needs to face his physical turmoil with determination to be purged out of his physical boundaries. These implications are the reflection of metaphysical essence. When Robert realizes that his health is deteriorating, he does not resign rather perceives it as the solace he had always envisioned. He submits himself to the physical degeneration in order to elevate and grasp the knowledge, he was unable to achieve while living a life away from imaginative suffering. He understands that death is the only parameter to attain eternal comfort which will unshackle him from the restrictions of the farmhouse. He smiles and accepts it with a patient attitude. His sobriety in the face of calamity is his victory. His 'happy fault' makes him go beyond the profane life. Bigsby has aptly recorded his suffering and his metaphysical elevation in these words:"this suffering is offered as a form of grace by the dying Robert." (52) Robert dies with this realization but he leaves the mourners with the similar understanding of redeeming themselves through the test of time.

> (There is a pause during which he breathes heavily, straining his eyes toward the horizon) the sun comes so slowly. (With an ironical smile) The doctor told me to go to the far off places- and I'd be cured. He was right.
>
> That was always the cure for me. It's too late- for this
>
> life- but- (in a voice which is suddenly ringing with happiness of hope)
>
> You mustn't feel sorry for me. Don't you see I'm happy at last-free-free-freed from the farm- free to wander on and on-eternally! (He raises himself on his elbow, his

> face radiant, and points to the horizon) Look! Isn't it beautiful beyond the hills?
>
> I can hear the old voices calling me to come-(Exultantly) and this time I'm going! It isn't the end. It's a free beginning-the start of my voyage! I've won to my trip- the right of release- beyond the horizon! Oh, you ought to be glad-glad-for my sake! (O'Neill 167-8)

This marks the metaphysical elevation of all. Robert leaves them with grasping the very essence of suffering and afflictions. Andrew and Ruth, as mourners of Robert, too clasp the quintessence of turmoil. Andrews' last words on Robert's death signify this realization that they have to dwell to be purged from the suffering and to emerge as heroic characters. They need to submit in order to experience transcendence from physical plane to metaphysical plane.

> (Then he glances down at his brother and speaks brokenly in passionate voice) Forgive me, Ruth- for his sake- and I'll remember- (Ruth lets her hands fall from her face and looks at him uncomprehendingly. He lifts his eyes to hers and forces out falteringly) I-you-we've both made a mess of things! We must try to help each other-and- in time-we'll come to know what's right-(Desperately) And perhaps we… (O'Neill 168-9)

O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* is yet another study of characters thrown in the trench of devastation to suffer and experience physical and mental deterioration in order to emerge as metaphysically ascended characters. The protagonists Eben and Abbie suffer from mental and physical degradation concomitantly. They fail to materialize their wishes to snatch Ephraim Cabot's farm because of the fact that they indulge in coveting physical satisfactions. They fall prey to the monster of incestuous lust that makes them suffer unceasingly. They do notbridle their lustful attractions towards each other and make themselves conquered by strong physical desire to consummate. They stand as epitomes of intense passions. Thus, they exhibit fierce desire to consummate their relationship. Their carnal

association in a disproportionate pairing makes them damned forever. The initiation of unconventional suggestion by Abbie, makes both of them heave to the pit of damnation. The concoction of Abbie's lust and maternal love for Eben worsens the situation. They become a disproportionate pair and invite unusual calamity for each other.

> I'll sing fur ye! I'll die fur ye! (In spite of her overwhelming desire for him, there is a sincere maternal love in her manner and voice- a horribly frank mixture of lust and mother love) Don't cry, Eben! I'll take yer Maw's place! (O' Neill 193)

Eben submits to Abbie's advances and eventually, consummates his relationship with her. But this synthesis consequently brings the catastrophe upon them. In spite of the fact that they feel something magical about this union, the devastation is heading towards them: "Eben: 'T ain't likker. Jest life." (O'Neill 195)This physical desire produces pernicious effects on every single character of the play. The impending disaster is even hinted at the very beginning of the play, which accurately defines the suffering they experience later on.

> Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity n their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house. They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof , and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot in the shingles. (O'Neill 158)

These lines are implicitly indicating the detrimental effects of incestuous relationship. They direct a reader or an audience to extract the playwright's intention to uncover the aftermaths of a relation that is considered disproportionate from sociological perspective. Their lust makes them consummate

their relationship and bear an illegitimate child. These carnal wishes lead them to the path of sin and crime where a mother smothers her child. The act of infanticide to remove the sign of their incestuous relationship proves to be ruinous for them. It throws them in a calamitous plane where they pay the price for crossing over the normative boundaries:

> Abbie: (slowly and brokenly) I didn't want t' do it. I hated myself fur doing' it. I loved him. He was so purty dead spit 'n' image o' yew. But I loved yew more-an yew was goin' away-far off whar I'd never see ye agen, never kiss ye, never feel ye pressed agin me agen an' ye hated me fur havin' him-ye said ye hated him and wished he was dead- ye said if it hadn't been fur him comin' it'd be the same's afore between us. (O'Neill 195)

This makes them understand that they should bear the odds, pay the price of their act and must submit themselves to suffering. They surrender themselves to the sheriff and put an end to their relation based on physical needs. It makes them understand that they should indemnify for their incestuous and criminal acts.

> Abbie: (Shaking her head) I got t' take my punishment; pay fur my sin.
> Eben: I'm guilty as yew be! He was child o' our sin.
> Abbie: No! I don't want yew t' suffer!
> Eben: I got t' pay for my part o' the sin! I'd suffer wuss leavin' ye, goin' West, thinkin' o' day an' night, bein' out when yew was in- (Lowering his voice) 'r bein' alive when yew was dead. (A pause) I want t' share with ye, Abbie- prison 'r death 'r hell 'r anythin'! (he looks into her eyes and forces a trembling smile) if I'm sharin' with ye, I won't feel lonesome, leastways. (O'Neill 214)

This realization checks their physical relationship and makes it something spiritual, happy and restitutes their lost essence. They accept their suffering as warriors with a smile and pledge to be on each other's side during the test of time. Hence, it lifts them and their relationship to a higher level, which will yield them peace for eternity: "They both stand for a moment looking up raptly in attitudes strangely aloof and devout."(O'Neill 216).

The rendering of suffering in *Mourning Becomes Electra* represents similar metaphysical lift as did the previously discussed plays. The suffering is ineluctable on the part of each and every character because somehow all characters are disproportionate pairs of each other; hence, they become harbinger of distress in their own lives and the lives of others. The adulteration by a mother, accusation by daughter, Captain Adam's vengeance, Ezra Mannon's murder, and a son who dwells in incestuous love, makes suffering to succumb to their essence. They make choices out of their free will and endure tragedy. The turmoil, sickness, nothingness and shallowness become their fate. The trinity of guilt, grief and confession become the residence of all. Each character, by going through the maze of complete perplexity realizes its fate, position and their purpose in life.

> Christine: If I could only have stayed as I was then! Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting? But God won't leave us alone. He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with other's lives until--we poison each other to death! (O'Neill 759)

Christine realizes that she has sinned by committing adulteration and murder; therefore, she understands that she needs to be purged from the plight in order to grasp her innocent and loving self. On that account she gives her life the way she took. Her son Orin, who is distant to his father, suffers extreme jealousy when Lavinia reveals to him about Christine's illicit relationship. He in a fit of fury murders Brant and marks for himself a dwelling in the ditch of disintegration. He unknowingly utters the following words when he kills Brant: "I had a queer feeling that war meant murdering the same man

over and over, and that in the end I would discover the man was myself!" (O'Neill 789).From this onwards, he becomes obsessed with his guilt because he witnesses the death of a person whom he loved a lot i.e. his mother. Due to this reason, he realizes that he should pay for his sins and for the death of his mother and expresses this to Lavinia by accepting his place in the darkness of suffering.

> I hate the daylight. It's like an accusing eye! No we've renounced the day, in which normal people live- or rather it has renounced us. Perpetual night-darkness of death in life- that's the fitting habitat for guilt! You believe you can escape that, but I'm not so foolish. (O'Neill 837)

Orin eventually feels that he should confess his crime in order to relieve himself from the burden of guilt: "guilt crowds up in my throat like poisonous vomit and I long to spit it out- and confess!" (O'Neill 839).But the conscious actions of characters and all the devastation which Mannons suffers change Lavinia's perspective of life; she becomes a person who has a Dionysian[7] experience on the Blessed Isles. She even elucidates her change to Peter in the following words:

> I loved those islands. They finished setting me free. There was something mysterious and beautiful-a good spirit-of love -coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death. There was no hereafter. There was only this world- the warm earth in the moonlight- the trade wind in the coco palms –the surf on the reef –the fires at night and the drum throbbing in my heart –the natives dancing naked and innocent –without knowledge of sin! (O'Neill 834)

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[7]Dionysus: God of Merry making, Intoxication, Fertility. Dionysian festival: where Greeks used to celebrate the birth of Dionysus by drinking and dancing. (Nietzsche 12).

The complete transformation of a lifeless Lavinia to a lively one makes her experience the true elements of her life till the end. She does not opt for resignation. She realizes that she has to live and bear the odds. The only redeeming feature of life is to stare in the eyes of death and defeat it. Even when she realizes that after Orin's suicide she is alone and Peter has denounced her, she does not opt for suicide rather she chooses to go through the pain in order to put an end to the suicides and suffering of Mannons. Her stoic perseverance exalts her stature and she becomes a true heroic character of the play. Her last words explain her grip on this very fact that one needs to confront the difficulties in order to be purged from the drought of disintegration and deterioration.

> Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there is no left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worst about of justice than death or prison! (O'Neil 84)

Concluding, it can be inferred that the characters of O'Neill are ordinary people but genuinely heroic in their spirit. Their constant effort to achieve solace and comfort by countering various miseries of life made them grasp the knowledge beyond physical limitations. They attain a higher stature through their stoic resignation for suffering. They face hardships in order to be cleansed from the mundane, sinful, and ordinary life. Their exuberance to stare in the eyes of death and turmoil yields them a Dionysian experience. They become a part of higher plane of existence through lifting the veil of Maja[8] and grasping reality hidden beneath the apparent life.

[8]Veil of Maja is a concept given by Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German Philosopher who used the phrase to describe a screen which exists between "the world inside my head and the world outside my head," that is, the world of human representation which has no true objectivity (Nietzsche 12).

They turn out to be, in their own way, as grand as the heroic figures such as Oedipus, Hamlet, Achilles[9] and Hector[10].

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[9] In Greek mythology, he was a Greek hero of the Trojan War and the central character and greatest warrior of Homer's Iliad. (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achilles>

[10] In Greek mythology, Hector was a Trojan prince and the greatest fighter for Troy in the Trojan War. As the first-born son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba, who was a descendant of Dardanus and Tros, the founder of Troy. (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hector>

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The 'Melancholic' Subjects in Mohammad Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

Maimoona Khan

Abstract

The world of Our Lady of Alice Bhatti is a world of conflicting ideals, lost centers and ambivalent relationships. Religious bent and sexual overtures highlight the structure of the novel. The characters oscillate between demands of the ego and the libidinal. It is in such a clash, that they attach themselves with what Freud identifies as the bane of 'melancholia'. As melancholic figures the characters, especially Alice and Teddy Butt, suffer from a low self-esteem. In a bid to recuperate from this loss of ego they resort to violence both in matters personal and public. Both Alice and Teddy are outcast within their own domains and in their own uniquely unsure loss; they indulge in self-deprecating activities. In a post-Derridean[1] world then, Hanif's characters hanker after centers no longer existent or are at least absent in a society they inhabit. Having lost what was virtually non-existent, the characters suffer from an irrevocable melancholia. Freud's model serves as the ultimate explanation of the existential distress they suffer from. The conflict between the libido and the ego results in the characters' aligning themselves to various modes of sham religiosity and even more pervert sexuality. Freud's melancholia highlights this ambivalence; the attachment and subsequent mourning for an unrealized object is what the characters manifest.

[1] Derrida indicates that postponement is the fate of all things promising reassurance; post-derridean implies not just postponement but the annihilation of consolation. Nothing can possibly save them.

Affecting the organically unified world, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* struggles to keep its center alive. On the fringes of losing its sense of proportion and absolute sanity, the inhabitants of this world struggle to adhere to the master-narratives in a bid to avoid absolute alienation. Ranging from finding solace in religion to pseudo-nationalism, from love to pervert sexuality, this urban populace of *Our Lady* vacillates and hankers after abstractions which in a post-Derridean world can no longer provide a sense of security. From the institution of religion to that of marriage, everything present in this urban setting has lost its fervor. Structured around this dwindling set-up the characters act in a vacuum. The irreplaceable essence, reduced to the status of an inanimate object, diminishes in size and fervor with each attempt to locate it. The effort to hold on to departing essences proves futile when the same ousts them as apostates. Any possible assimilation with the object of desire is further denied when the characters seek to destroy the same (unknowingly) through their volition.

Throughout the novel, Eros is constantly countered by Thanatos. The desire to preserve the integrity of long standing traditions is defied by an effort to establish self-will. While Alice, the central figure of the novel, strives for Eros to thrive, her life is constantly faced with the "destructive instinct". From her own criminal record to her eventual defacement punctuated by instances of love, her life moves between the love and death instinct. The absence of an ultimate center and abundance of anguish makes her fluctuate between pseudo-church rituals and a pretense of a marriage. Alice in her loss of reassurances is a victim of Freudian melancholia. Characterized by an "object-loss", Alice's state is that of complete hopelessness. Not only is her marriage in trouble, but she is also on the verge of losing her position as a devout catholic. Even as natural a thing as heterosexual desire, loses its eroticization when it comes in contact with the person in question. From her love affair with the 'communist doctor', to her being the object of longing for Noor and finally her marriage to Teddy Butt, Alice's intimacy is hardly touched by romanticization of sex. This deromanticization of sexual intercourse is another departure of the norm. Another object lost; another abstract and ideal almost

non-existent. With the eventual disappearance of the sexual instinct, what rises is the destructive impulse as "the destructive or aggressive instinct emerges as a force coequal with sexuality."(Breger 04) Alice's violent life in prison, her aggressive reaction to pervert sexual overtures, her subsequent marriage to the brutal Teddy Butt is the thriving of the thanatos. In her the death or destructive instinct survives even when she resists them. In her search for Eros, which is in her case the ultimate lost object, she invites upon her the banes of aggression. As a Freudian melancholic subject, she exhibits an "impoverishment of the ego" by becoming the 'abject'. This can be understood in terms of Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'abject':

> What is *abject*...the jettisoned object is radically excluded...a superego has flatly driven it away...and yet from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master...to each ego its object, to each superego its abject. (Kristeva 2)

The *Sacred Heart,* the Catholic Church all in chaos and dwindling to non-existence acts as the regulating force. The deeply critical religious watchdogs, in an attempt to direct libidinal forces, locate the absconder and oust it as the abject. Alice's relationship with the church marks this abjection. "You could not grow in French Colony and not have God shoved down your throat, His presence as pervasive as the stench from the open sewers." (Hanif, 177) In the final loss of her real self, she is neither the ego nor the libido. Having lost contact with both the object and the subject, the final aggressive action of which she is a victim transports her to the realm of the abject. Her acid ridden existence takes her to the "improper and unclean" of which she is by birth a part. In her being then, the 'abject' is not just the geographical space, the *choohra colony,* but her own ugly existence too. The decisive death instinct saps from her the libidinal forces till she is reduced to the inanimate, inorganic state.

If Alice's is a state of lost objects/abstractions (religion, love, marriage), Teddy Butt's state is of a "profoundly painful

dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment." (Freud243). From his traumatic childhood as a son of a PT teacher, to his nominal job in the G Squad, to his dirty work of execution Teddy incarnates destruction, aggression and death drive. Even as a love sick patient feigning ailments, his object of violence is not out of sight. His love confession to Alice is accompanied by his carrying his Mauser. Inherent in his love episode, destroyed by his sense of insecurity, is his inability to move to the organic world. He seeks aggression and aggression is what he gets. By defacing Alice he practices the repetition compulsion "in which passively experienced traumas are actively repeated". (Breger, 108). His obsession with violence is an effort to regain the lost object. The absence of a sound job with a secure income entails Teddy's anguish of a lost abstraction. In his violence ridden life love comes as a fleeting emotion which disappears at the very first signs of aggression and in doing so takes away all chances of life. His neurotic repetition of his childhood fears and the eventual return of death sever his ties from the object a` petit making him the Freudian melancholic subject.

Fraught with the post-modern distress, the world of *Our Lady* suffers from severe lack of stability. Both Alice's and Teddy's sense of proportion is threatened by constant dwindling of the norm. They experience a falling out with the institutional values. The so called establishments promising security provide little solace to Alice and Teddy. For Alice, religion acts as an inflated father figure. It acts as the prohibiting super ego causing the libido to stifle. Her gradual denigration is traceable through her gradual movement from the Catholic Church to the Borstal Jail and then finally to the *Charya ward*. From being a self proclaimed 'lover' of Jesus to being the bride of a 'musla', Alice falls out of favour with the object. Teddy's predicament is of a similar nature. His entire life is a hallmark of rejection. This phenomenon of being can be understood in Hall's depiction of an individual self in a decentred postmodern world. He articulates that, "Postmodern culture with its decentered

subject can be the space where ties are severed or it can provide the occasion for new and varied forms of bonding... (creating spheres which require) no meaningful connection to the world of everyday. (Hall 111-12)

Unlike Alice he fails to get acceptance with any institution from the onset. Fostered by a strict and violent parentage, what he chooses for himself is a life of aggression and violent misadventures. As a member of the so called police squad, Teddy Butt finds little acceptance with this institution of violence too. For both Alice and Teddy all totalizing notions stand suspended and consequently what they seek is a simulation of solace. Alice's transformation to a 'lady' and savior figure comes about in face of absence of god. Teddy's arrangement with the G squad is a result of absence of economic stability. As true melancholic subjects, they are completely divorced from objects that promise a place of metanarrative. With all objects lost, the characters' only hope is violence. It is through violence that they try to attain what is lost for good. Violence is the means of getting away from the sense of guilt and resultant anxiety. As melancholia takes over both, Alice and Teddy resort to violence as a means to recuperate the lost ego. In a world of dwindling ideals the only long standing tradition is of violence and acts of aggression. Alice gains little as a nurse then she does as a jail inmate and later as a runaway convict. Teddy lives and thrives by the death code. He has lived with violence throughout his life and now wins his bread through it. His exhibitional aggression offers him security more than marriage, love or religion. Aggression for him masks and inverts reality—reality which is not only bitter but is devoid of all reassurances. His final act of aggression seals death's triumph over love. In a melancholic situation then, thanatos survives and Eros stifles. Little time, in the discourse of the novel, is devoted to the matrimonial bliss of the couple. Their conjugal bliss is never away from lewd gestures, pervert sexuality and most of all violence. In the final act of violence all institutions of marriage, law and religion are disrupted and destabilized. The characters manifest little faith in these centers and consequently face a deprivation and loss of object. The postmodern reality of *Our Lady* supplements the characters'

melancholy. With its weakened centers, it augments and worsens the state of 'object loss'. The world of Alice Bhatti then is a perfect Freudian melancholic model. With every metanarrative impoverished and grand –narrative exhausted, the characters thrive through their own version of illusive reality. What these melancholic ridden characters fail to realize is that the loved lost object hardly exists, what thrives is a world of contingent ideas and notions. Alice's rise to the status of a savior marks the complete irreversibility of the religious process. In her is not only the subversion of the religious institute but the very demeaning of it too. In such a condition then the characters fail to associate with any new object of love. The death instinct as the final triumphant completely destroys the ego thus completing the melancholic process. Hate, murder and aggression drain love, procreation and god.

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Essays

How I Wrote My Books?

Dr. Tariq Rahman

I studied in Burn Hall school in Abbottabad which was administered by the Roman Catholic clergy and had a very good time there. In 1970 I entered PMA as a cadet and got commission in the armoured corps. In 1978, basically because I was a conscientious objector to the military action in Bangladesh, I left the army and went to England on a British Council scholarship. I had never, except for a few weeks, studied in any Pakistani university though I had a B.A and three M.A degrees as a private candidate from both Peshawar and Punjab universities. However, my first experience of university was the University of Sheffield. I got both M.A and Ph.D from this university in English literature and not in linguistict. It was in 1989 that I got an M.Litt in linguistics from Stathclyde and finally in 2014 the University of Sheffield conferred a higher doctorate (D.Litt) upon me after examining my published work. Earlier, in 2012, I was the first Pakistani to have been given the Humboldt research award for it and our own HEC had also given me the lifetime achievement award on it in 2009. Moreover, two presidential awards, the Pride of Performance (2004) and the Sitara-e-Imtiaz (2013) had been given in recognition of it by state. What was this work? This is what this memoir is about.

This work is in the form of articles in journals, chapters in books, encyclopedia articles but I will confine myself to book. The books I am talking about here are not my short stories (three collections) or poems in English (two slim collections) but only scholarly books with one major theme and not collections of articles or edited books. There are seven of them: *Pakistani English (1990*; *A History of Pakistani Literature in English* (1991); *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (1996); *Language, Ideology and Power: Language-learning*

among the Muslims of Pakistan and India (2002); *Denizens of Alien Worlds* (2004); *From Hindi to Urdu: a Political and Social History* (2011) and *Names: A Study of personal Names, Identity and Power in Pakistan* (2015). All except the first two were published by the Oxford University Press (Pakistan) and some were also published by Orient Blackswan in India.

When I eventually left the army in April 1978 I could have pursued various careers: the civil service as army officers could opt for it at that time; the United Nations and the corporate sector. I did not want to enter government service since I thought the best service, if wanted to serve the government as an officer, was the army. I got to know about the UNO later but then I had made up my mind to become an academic. And, as for the corporate sector, I never thought about it at all. I had a vague idea it gave no time to study and for me one's job should give one time to read books. The only profession which did give time to read books was the university I was told so that is what I wanted to join. I came back to Pakistan on 15 April 1985 with a Ph.D in English literature and on the 16th I started two things: looking for a university appointment and collecting material to write a book to be entitled *A History of Pakistani Literature in English.*

I heard that Professor Daud Kamal was a poet of English and he lived in Peshawar where he headed the department of English literature so I went to interview him for my book. At the end of the interview Daud Sahib offered me an associate professorship since, as he told me, Ph.Ds in English literature were a rare species. I had a lecturership in the Open University in Islamabad and lived in my father's house and drove his car so I was not very keen to come to Peshawar. I thought my wife, Rehana (Hana) would hate living in a city where women cannot move around easily and my mother would not like us living in danger (the Afghan war was still going on). However, to my surprise, both ladies jumped at the proposal and nobody listened to my objections. I even threatened my mother with the sale of my plot in Karachi Defence to buy a car and furniture thinking she would refuse such an absurd proposal. But lo and behold

she agreed and we had to go to Peshawar where I wrote the book spending my own money on it.

The pursuit of language began in earnest in 1987 when I was given a full professorship and the headship of the English department at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad. I was only 38 years of age and still had the naïve belief that dreams could come true if one tried. I requested the VC to make someone else its head because the administrative work took too much time which I could hardly spare from my research. I was rotated and an associate professor was given the chairmanship. I was now free to pursue my research. At last the book was completed and Najam Sethi, proprietor of Vanguard Press in Lahore, had already showed interest in it so I sent it to him in 1988. It was published in 1991.

Now I come to the story of how I wrote my major book *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (1996) and a small byproduct of my study of linguistics in Scotland called *Pakistani English* (1990). Both stories go together.

My idea of a perfect day is to lie in an armchair in the open sunshine reading a book. And this is exactly what I was doing that balmy April day in 1988 in Muzaffarabad. The book I was reading was Jyotirindra Das Gupta's *Language, Conflict And National Development* (1970)

"It seems nobody has written on language and politics in Pakistan," I told my wife. Actually I was only thinking aloud but one does not want to be taken as a lunatic every time one opens one's mouth.

"So, are you going to write another book," she said triumphantly like the *thanedar* (jailer) who has finally caught the thief who stole the spoons.

"Well, I just might. This chap Das Gupta did," I said tentatively.

"He had research grants in Berkeley whereas here nobody will give you a fig for writing a book" she

> argued and I agreed and laid down arms. But the desire did not die. It merely slept.

In September 1988 I was told that I had got an Overseas Development Association (ODA) scholarship. I had applied for it but did not believe I would actually get it. But, quite incredibly, it had come through. As I had a Ph D from England I thought I would go to Scotland this time.

> "I want to collect research material," I told Geoffrey Keye.

> "But you will have to do it in your spare time," he said. "This is a one-year course in linguistics. It is very tough".

Once again, in October 1988, I landed at Heathrow Airport. But this time I was no greenhorn as I had been when I first arrived at the same airport in 1980 and had to sleep on a bench all night since I had missed the British Council officer. Now I blithely went to the coach and from there to the Victoria terminal. The British Council office welcomed me and lodged me in a poky little hotel near Piccadilly. In that forlorn room I wondered whether I should have come alone at all.

When I knew I was wrong about being able to stay alone I called my wife and our two children, Tania, aged five and Fahad aged three, to Scotland.

When I was writing my thesis on these rules my right hand broke and both my children developed chicken pox. So there we were, imprisoned in our flat, outside which children ran and shouted all day in the lovely Scottish summer. Inside, we whiled away the long summer day writing my thesis. I say we because I dictated and my wife wrote it. Even the more technical aspects, such as linguistic formulas, were written by her, though I used my left hand to indicate the rough shape. It was this thesis which was later published as *Pakistani English* and which is used by many research students for their linguistic studies in Pakistan.

But Pakistani English was small fry compared to Language and Politics in Pakistan which was the main reason why I went for an M.Litt degree after a Ph.D. In September 1990, I was appointed in the Institute of Pakistan Studies as an associated Professor of Linguistics. I had to go to England for research and a summer course in the University of Cambridge was offered. But after that course I had to survive on my own and work in the India Office Library.

My own university and the University Grants Commission declined to oblige me because my research project was, in their bureaucratic jargon, completely 'private'. So, steeling my heart, I invaded the family bank balance. It was not much of a balance, I discovered, and my depredations made it very unbalanced indeed. In Cambridge I stayed at Downing College. It was summer and the sights and sounds of the summer terms which EM Forster loved so much, invaded my senses. By the time the course ended I found that I had filled my bag with so much photocopied material that I could hardly lift it. Thus loaded, I left Cambridge for Reading where my old Sheffield friend Dr Balasabramanyam Chandramohan lived. Mohan was as friendly and considerate as ever and lived in Reading. I travelled miles away to the India Office Library which used to be in the east End at that time. At last the summer ended and I returned loaded with more books from England.

In December 1991 I was given a job in the University of Sana' a, Yemen. This job, while good for making dollars, was useless for research. Thus when I was offered a job in Saudi Arabia in the University of Jeddah on an even better salary I told my wife that research was not possible either in Yemen or in Saudi Arabia and, since that is what I lived for, we should return to Pakistan. We came back in July 1992.

The Linguistic Map of Pakistan was far from clear to me by the end of 1992 but the only area I thought I knew somewhat better was Sindh and Multan. Here two language movements, both connected with politics, were going on. The first was the Sindhi language movement and the second was the Siraiki one. I had been offered a place of stay in the Bahauddin Zakariya

University in Multan so I went there first. But when I descended from the train in Multan I did not know where BZU was. I had, however, lived in the cantonment as a young officer in 1971.

> "Take me to the cantonment," I told the yellow cab driver.
>
> "Which place?"
>
> "Where there are tanks," I told him.

Later, warm in bed sheets, I thanked God for having passed that terrible nine mile run in PMA otherwise I would never have been commissioned and would be shuttling somewhere in the darkness of Multan.

The next day I thanked my host and set off on my odyssey. With my luggage in hand, I tried to look around for Shaukat Mughal Sahib, a lecturer at a college in Multan. I did not even know which college he was in and simply wandered from one to the other till he was discovered at Bosan road. He was most helpful and gave me the address of Dr Mehr Abdul Haq—the father of Siraiki!

> "And please have lunch with me," he said by way of good-bye.

I was overwhelmed with gratitude. In Islamabad we have become so Westernised and busy that we have to think twice before offering hospitality. But here the old world with its generous hospitality still existed. I took his address and went off in quest of Mehr Abdul Haq.

Multan had expanded in twenty years but the scooter rickshaws were still around. And on one of them I reached the house of Dr Mehr Abdul Haq. They took me to his room where he lay in bed—a frail old man but still mentally alert.

> "I was the first to write on the history of the Multan language," he told me.

Then began a long interview which gave me much information. I also took the addresses of the other people I would have to see in Multan. And full of ideas, still with my bag, I went for lunch to Shaukat Mughal's houses.

I had no time for anyone in BZU as I ran around interviewing people and being a persistent nag. I talked to the office bearers of Taj Mohammad Langah's party, the Pakistan Siraiki Party, into fixing an interview with him; so on interview, which can only be descried as a marathon session. It lasted well over four hours and my questions came in edgeways to be drowned under a chronological narrative in which there were many asides and alleys.

At last in the end of January I caught the fast train to Karachi. The aim was to visit Hyderabad. If only half of the tales of the dacoits were true, this was like going into the battlefield unarmed. This is where, admitting defeat, I turned to the army...but thereby hangs a tale.

In 1978 I was commanding a squadron of tanks in Thall, a remote outpost near Parachinar. I was on my way out so as soon as a good officer rejoined the regiment they posted him as the squadron commander to Thall. This new officer was Major Malik Mohammad Saleem Khan who was now a major-general in Karachi. In Thall we had shared a room where I had told him why I was leaving the army.

So now, on the strength of the bond of that companionship in far-away Thall, I dialed his number. I told General Saleem that I wanted security. If he had vehicles running to Hyderabad, perhaps I could hitch a ride. And, above all, I wanted a place to stay in Hyderabad which I would pay for.

> "Don't worry," he said in his quiet voice, "you will be my guest. This is no problem. But since when have you developed this insecurity? I remember you used to be an accomplished rider and went in for para jumps".

I did not tell him that courage is not only part of one's psychological makeup; it is also a product of one's support system and there is no stronger system than the army which had made me braver than I am.

On the set date I went to the general's office and his ADC put me in a car which took me to Hyderabad where I was lodged in the Desert Inn—a guest house of the army. The next day I went to the Institute of Sindhology at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro".

"I have come for research on the Sindhi language movement," I told the librarian.

"We have files and files on it. What exactly…?"

Like a greedy child who pounces upon a heap of sweets I pounced upon the files. The Sindhi sources where difficult to read but I managed to make the general sense of the passages. In the evening, while dining in the mess, I heard an explosion which shook the huge building.

"What was that?" asked an officer who was dining with me.

"An explosion in Latifabad, the Mohajir area," replied another. We returned to our meal but I was full of apprehension. All night the whine of alarms and the clanking of horns kept me awake. I tossed around restlessly in a fit of insomnia.

"I have to go to the Hyderabad Municipality," I told Panhwar, the young lecturer who was helping me.

"Do not, please. That is where the bomb went off," he said in panic.

"But I must see the records to find out whether, and if so, when Urdu was made the official language of record of the Municipal Corporation."

"It was. We know it," he said.

"One needs proof for research," I said.

In the next few days I got an in-depth knowledge of the Urdu-Sindhi riots of January 1970 and July 1972.

General Saleem also asked the Commissioner of Karachi to help me locate material in the Clifton archives. I thanked General Saleem for his help for which I was genuinely grateful but I also told him why research was such a rare commodity in this country. The gist of what I told him was this:

> "In countries where research is easy, scholars have prestige and access to documents is a right. In this country it needs a general and a commissioner, the army and the bureaucracy, to provide access to archival records. It is enough to make anyone give up in despair".

To my surprise he fully agreed and did not even call me a firebrand as he used to in 1978 in our shared room in Thall. As I write this today (August 2015) I remember General Saleem who died of cancer early this year. He was a gentleman in the real sense of the term as the British used it. He was gentle and humane and that is the greatest compliment I can pay him.

Next, I had to visit Lahore to find out about the Punjabi Language Movement. I began with the idea that this would be an easy language movement to investigate. After all I did not speak Sindhi and did not even understand the text without the help of translators. But Punjabi I could understand and speak, and this, I thought, would be a great advantage. Those who look after the archives see to it that no scholar can somehow sneak in. In Karachi they hid them in Clifton but in Lahore they went one up—they put them within the Secretariat. Now if you have not dealt with the bureaucracy, especially the bureaucracy of Lahore, you would imagine that public servants are paid by the public to serve the citizens. Well, you will learn the lesson of your life if you start telling that to the chaps who look after the Punjab archives. First, the *thanedars'* boys at the gate, the *police-walas,* will not let you in. And if they the bureaucracy knows how to deny you the pleasure of actually looking at them. Thus, there was not much that I could benefit from in the

Anarkali archives though I am told foreign scholars are given better treatment.

What happened to the Punjabi movement after the partition? For an answer I went to the Punjabi Adabi Board. The only thing I knew about it was that it was near the veterinary hospital i.e *kora aspatal* (horse hospital). So this is what I told the rickshaw driver. The man was a proper Lahori. He thought up all kinds of abusive terms about poor horses when he lost his way. When reminded that our target was the Punjabi Adabi Board he was none too polite. He let Punjabi have it too. But just when Punjabi's mother and sister had been proved to be no better than they should, we found the place. It was a small house in a quiet lane—a very unlikely place for a language planning board. But the man I met there was remarkable. His name was Asif Khan and he was one of those motivated intellectuals who keep writing despite all odds. I did not know how much he had written then but his humility and helpfulness impressed me. We talked in Punjabi though he must have guessed that it was not my mother tongue. But it is a language I enjoy speaking and so the interview went well.

In 1993 the book had advanced beyond the stage of ideas and drafts. The chapters on the Siraiki, Punjabi and Urdu-English controversies in Pakistan were ready in rough form. But the Bengali language Movement was a non-starter as I had only secondary sources and that too in English on it. I did not know what to do so in sheer desperation I rang up the military attaché in the embassy of Bangladesh. As we talked it turned out that although the brigadier did not know me he was in PMA at the same time though senior to me. He said he would arrange everything and tell his friend Brigadier Shareef to receive me at the Dhaka airport. And what a blessing it was that the friendly Brigadier was there since there was a strike and I would not have know how to leave the airport. Brigadier Shareef took me to his own flat and I rested in his son's room and we went to the university where somebody had promised me a room. Again there was a strike and, being a Pakistani, Brig.Shareef said I should not risk chasing a room. So I passed the night in his house and next day we started hunting for a room again. Now I

had been given only a ticket by the Hakeem Saeed Hamdard Foundation but no money to live in Dhaka. I had brought money out of our savings but that was not enough to find suitable accommodation in Dhaka. So, as we roamed around Dhaka I felt terribly exhausted and depressed. Research just did not look possible.

Back in Brig. Shareef's office I visited the toilet and found a large dressing room which was airconditioned. When I came back I announced to him:

'I will stay in your dressing room'

He was appalled and said that would hardly be hospitable but I was adamant and that is where I lived in an office which took on the appearance of a haunted house at night. And I hired students who translated documents for me and I sought people I could interview and read whatever I could on the Bhasha Ondolan of 1952. Then, just when there was a scare of plague in Calcutta jumping to Dhaka, I flew back to Islamabad with research material bursting the seams of my bags.

There were other trips too—London, Oxford, Chitral, Peshawar, Abbottabad etc—but one cannot describe them for lack of space. At last in 1995 January the book went to the Oxford University Press and was published in December 1996. It was an instant success. It was reprinted five times and then published by Orient Longmans in India and is still much sought after.

My next book, a tome of nearly 700 pages called *Language, Ideology and Power*, on the history of language-learning on the Muslims of South Asia was born dead. I worked so hard at it and, like before, travelled to England living with Chandramohan and in Oxford's colleges. I had to survive on an apple for lunch as the savings I used had to be stretched as much as possible. I even went to India and lived in the IIT at Delhi and in Jawaharlal University trying to collect material on Urdu in India. I found and put in so many original sources in it that the book is tough to read. Perhaps that is why very few

people actually read it. The Oxford edition came out in 2002 and the Indian edition in 2008 but both fell on deaf ears. Meanwhile, out of the work I had done for the previous two books, I salvaged some chapters and undertook a new survey which became a study of the education system of Pakistan. This was published as *Denizens of Alien Worlds*. It was better received than the previous book and enjoyed two reprints though it was not anywhere near *Language, Ideology and Power* in scholarly quality.

Between 2002 and 2004 I spent time in scholarly wilderness which means I was not writing a book though I was writing chapters and articles and, of course, a weekly column in a newspaper. In that year I was appointed to the Pakistan Chair at the University of California, Berkeley and there I started thinking of writing an alternative history of Pakistan which is still unwritten and a social and political history of Urdu which has seen the light of the day in 2011. When this book started our Higher Education Commission had been formed and Professor Atta ur Rahman was its head. He was a courteous gentleman of whom I was very fond and he asked me to apply for a research grant to write this book. But the middle-level bureaucracy of the HEC took two years in giving me a grant and that was so meager that I had to spend my own money on my research. But this time I got a fellowship in the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies and later at the South Asia Centre at the University of Heidelberg (DAAD fellowship). So I went to India with HEC money and to Britain and Germany on fellowhips. I also learned Persian and polished my Devanagari script and the book came along well. In 2011 it was published first in India and then in Pakistan. It is doing reasonably well and is being reprinted as a paperback.

In 2011 I retired as professor emeritus from NIPS (QAU) and was offered a deanship in the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore. And here in 2012 I thought, quite by chance, of writing an article on Pakistani names and their relationship with identity. This article grew into a book and that was launched in April 2015. The story of getting the names for the book is as hilarious as the other stories I have told the reader

but I do not have space for it. Briefly, I tried to get the names from NADRA and, despite the fact that Tariq Malik, the head of the institution, was known to me, I never got the names. The young man who was volunteering to help me for a small fees banged his head against the bureaucracy of the place and was sent back every time. Even the boards of education did not give me names when I asked for them. Friends got them somehow. Even my secretary got the names—and she told me she used my name and official position for it—but I did not. Private schools refused outright and so did the elite clubs and *madrassas*. My colleague, Ms Amina Gardezi, however, got the names of an elite club and a former army officer got the voting lists from Baluchistan. As I had the chance to stay in Heidelberg both in 2012 and in 2013 I had easy access to secondary sources and so the book was completed and published in 2015. That it was published along with my very first major research *book A History of Pakistani Literature in English* first published by Vanguard of Najam Sethi and now reprinted by the Oxford University Press was a source of great satisfaction for me.

So what does one learn from this personal saga of research. That it is very difficult to carry out research since it is not encouraged in Pakistan. I know there is much talk of encouraging PhD and M.Phil but that is not the only kind of research one carries out. There are people like me who work on their own because they are internally motivated; because for them research is a hobby. They should be given funds and time on the strength of their previous work but they are not. The hassle of applying for grants puts them off and they are forced to use their savings or apply for research positions in foreign universities. I have found this to be very uncertain. That is why every little bit I publish is like an odyssey. How long I can continue to publish I do not know. But one of the things I keep emphasizing is that scholars should be valued for what they are. They have a right to the society's wealth and leisure (time for research) so that they can keep producing their work—work which may not have any direct relevance to the production of wealth or development or national interest as narrowly defined. They should be encouraged because they produce a research culture which ultimately produces what everyone values: a

better life on planet earth! That is why I look upon research funds and leisure as my right whether I receive them or not.

My, Me, I; Ours, We, Us; Theirs, They, Them

Dr. Waqas Khwaja

It is a truth perhaps not unacknowledged that though we can, and may, leave home, we never return to it. Yes, yes, we come back sometimes, even often, in some cases. But where is that home? What has become of it? Why doesn't it feel the same anymore? Why don't we recognize it as we remember it? What happened to it? What happened to the dear ones we left behind? To our parents, our siblings, our relations, the inhabitants of our household, our pets? That room that was ours, though its furniture looks more or less the same, is not quite that intimate, private space it once was to us. The rooms and corridors, that clock above the mantelpiece, the shining dining table, the beds, the sofas and rugs, same, but not the same. The kitchen, the pots, and the crockery, somewhat faded and fatigued. The garden, still blooming with flowers as we left it, but why does it look a little stale, a little ordinary? The backyard and its fruit trees, still there, but helpless and bereft somehow.

And then it may hit us suddenly. It is we who have changed. Our orbit of experiences, our views, our perceptions. Where is that youth who skipped about without a care in the world, floated in and out of the house on whim, dashed through corridors and rooms, swerving past furniture and stands with dainty breakable displays, heady with laughter and delight? It is our childhood that is gone. And, with it, that childhood vision is no more. It is the innocence of youth too, that naïve, unsuspecting faith in the world, in the present as we had known it and the future that we imagined for ourselves with never a thought to the loved ones, as if they would never dwindle, never decline, that is lost. It is the young adult just coming into its own, seeing everything with that delicious wonder of a new and fabulous discovery, alight with expectation, who is gone. And everyone else has grown up or aged a bit, the time of separation opening a window to their physical attributes and personality traits that wasn't there before. In some strange way we have

become strangers to those we left behind. In some equally strange way, those we left behind have become strangers to us.

But what do we do with memories? There everything is preserved just the same as it ever was. Now, perhaps, we realize, for the first time, that the world doesn't ever stand still. People grow up. People grow old. People are fragile. They pass. Place and location do not remain the same. Distance has made everything dearer to us, but when we come back it is no longer as we remember it. Indeed, it is not just our perception of it. The world too has changed. But who are these, calling for attention from the dark borders of our memory?

What is it we have forgotten? Are there people missing from this picture of our past? People who have dutifully fallen back from what memory has preserved. People who would like you to remember them, but don't expect it. People who would want you to notice them, but are hesitant to project themselves to your attention when you are so engaged and excited in meeting all those long lost relatives and friends? Look! They are still there. No, not poor relations. They too, perhaps, get delayed, and somewhat casual, attention. Oh, it is our cooks and housemaids, our dusting boys and gardeners, our drivers and chowkidars, our sweepers and sweepresses, diligent, silent until addressed directly, and often invisible. Now, perhaps, we see them called to present themselves and say their salaams before being dismissed out of sight, except those that are expected to serve or provide food and other necessary services. Quite a cast of characters living in the shadows!

We notice, now, with some discomfort how brusquely, how imperiously, they are treated. If we were not already uneasy about this before we left home, this discernment too, probably, is the fruit of our "foreign" experience. They are expected to wait and languish silently in the background, alert, however, to any sign or word of need, while we enjoy your lavish repast, our deserts, our exotic refreshments, over an exchange of anecdotes and jokes, and the regulation after-dinner session of political wrangling. We are abashed to see how they are treated as if they did not exist, that is, not until they are

needed, and how their slightest hesitation or confusion is an occasion for ridicule and sneers, if not downright abuse. But our courage fails when we wish to protest against this treatment of the domestics. We have just arrived. Everyone is so happy to see us. We don't want to spoil the atmosphere for everyone. And we remember, with a pang, an unpleasantness or two that might have occurred on such "fancy" issues of rights and respect a few years earlier, when we had not yet made our way out into the wide-open world across the oceans.

How shallow and artificial is our world, we think. How hypocritical! How safely cocooned in the security of family status, wealth, and entitlement! Even when we break away, we know we are still part of the system that favors those with family resources at the expense of millions who live but a life in name, ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-sheltered, debarred not only themselves from advancing their lot in life, but in imagining a life of dignity, of education, a respectable opportunity to earn a living, of adequate healthcare, comfort, even for their kids. They are all around us, but our kind, it strikes us, do not see them, do not notice them at all as we go about our daily indulgences and the routine of complaints about all that we desire but cannot have. How much do we know about them? How they live, or even *where* they live? What they eat when they are in their own small room or hovel with their families? How their time is spent when they are not working in our homes? Do they have a second source of income? Do they double as peddlers selling ice-cream from pushcarts, or balloons on a stick, or potato chips from a bag slung on a shoulder? Do they work as cobblers in the evening, or ply a rickshaw for someone, or hire themselves out for petty services? Isn't that woman roasting gram and corn on that small roadside oven of dried clay the Mehtrani who sweeps our floors in the mornings? We don't know. And we don't care. It is not for us to worry what these people do, or how they survive, or what their needs are? We know that our cook isn't one of them, for he, or she, is on duty with us twenty-four hours a day and gets to lodge in our servant quarters in recompense. We know that the housemaid is well provided for with a room of her own in the servant

quarters, for she too is needed 24/7. But we are not responsible for the whole world.

Now if we emerge out of our bourgeois angst (or is it anomie?) for a few minutes, can we visualize how someone from the province of the people in the shadows feels about leaving home, and coming back to it? Do they have the same narcissistic thoughts and feelings that we have about loss of innocence and the loss of home, the passage of time and the ravages it leaves in its wake? They are the ones, for example, recall, whom we are so contemptuous of when we travel on that last stretch of our journey to Pakistan, passengers the plane picks up from transit stations like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and the like. They with those huge, out-of-date, portable three-in-one audio systems, rolled beddings corded with hemp twine or plain cotton rope, battered suitcases, and a miscellany of toys and knickknacks in hands or in plastic bags, teetering in the aisle as they go about trying to find a suitable storage bin for their assorted luggage. And we turn up our noses at the way they talk, the way they carry themselves, the outlandishly garish clothing they wear, at how those of them who have women in tow have them all covered up in burqas or chadors, but all extravagantly painted and made up underneath. They too have family and friends waiting for them at home. They have kids too, who are growing up in their absence, without the immediacy of their love and protection. And spouses left behind, expected just to take the jibes of in-laws, neighbors, friends and strangers alike as they patiently wait for their return. These hardy souls voyaging out to seek a living, to improve their economic condition, may come back to harrowing changes as well—the sickness or death of a child, parents in anguish over insufficient resources suffering extreme deterioration of health or mental breakdown, families turned out of a two-room flat simply because they could be thrown out, simply because they had no one to look out for them, a spouse gone astray, unable to cope, or lost to the unrelenting mists of black depression. Loaded with their cheap toys and battered suitcases stuffed with bargain clothing and other inexpensive gift items, how do they feel when they arrive home? Do they tell their family how they slaved 20 hours a day to bring this little bounty

of cheap stuff for them? Or how they were despised and mistreated by the people they work for, by the people of the country they work in? Do they describe to them their shabby living quarters, where they share a 12 x 14 room with fifteen people, all sleeping on the floor, all using the only closet bathroom available to them? Will it help if they said how they had been abused and betrayed year after year, generation after generation, age after age, for as long as they or their ancestors can remember? Who is interested in their plight? Are we? It is as if there were two separate nations within a "nation", the haves and the have-nots, the prosperous and the destitute. Between them there is no understanding. Not just their vocabularies, their languages are different.

So no one writes the histories of the dispossessed and the marginalized. It is inscribed only on the skin of their bodies and in the invisible intricacies of their brain cells, and such inscriptions are easily obliterated. We may set people on fire and burn them to death. We may shoot them with a gun. Blow them up with a homemade bomb. We may chop off their head. Or we may shut them up in a prison cell and just forget about them. There are many ways of getting rid of people we may consider undesirable. And there are many pretexts to find people as offensive and expendable. An expression may be too bold. A gesture may upset us. Someone's religion may not be quite acceptable. Even the wrong denomination may ignite our ire. But poverty and helplessness, this is particularly odious, and it generates in us an incredible sense of empowerment, for in such a condition we can disfigure and destroy with impunity, without fear of consequences. Our spirit rages with some primordial urge to crush and pulverize the poor and the powerless. It is there blood, sweat, and tears that ensure our prosperity. This is the social value we have inherited from our ancestors. This is the economic system we swear by. This is our political philosophy irrespective of our form of government, civilian or military.

And we who have turned our face from this commonplace crowd of people find in them the source of all evil. They are the unregenerate, the misguided, the most

retrograde. It little bothers us that they comprise over 90% of the country's population, and if they could organize and plan an uprising, they could sweep our paltry sense of security away in an instant. We are fortunate, though, in that, this huge mass of people is divided naturally by language and cultural differentials. We have our controls firmly in place. Power resides, first and foremost, with the English-speaking elite that believes it has inherited the mantle of the departing British colonial administration. The next level of defense is the imposition of Urdu as the national language of the country and all that this necessitates in terms of investment of resources in maintaining that status and promoting it as the medium of education for the populace generally. Only after space, resources, and precedence is ceded to these two privileged languages do the "provincial" or "regional" languages come into play. Although the perils of such an approach were clearly demonstrated in the breaking away of the country's eastern wing to form the independent State of Bangladesh, we have not learned much from it, for we continue to pursue it even as the hazards of this policy grow daily in depth, scope, and complexity.

We now discover that we are not just two nations but many within the country or State that we call one, that the lines of division are not just of class, the inequitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and resources, but of linguistic and cultural differentiations as well. Thus, whereas, the rich do not speak or understand the language of the poor, provincial boundaries further multiply the demographic and linguistic diversity. This should have prompted a policy of flexibility and inclusiveness. However, the reverse has come to pass. Like the British in India, the center (the Federal government) has imposed its linguistic writ on the country has a whole. The provinces have thus been deprived of their linguistic recognition and identity. The poor, needless to say, have been totally ignored.

Would it really harm our commitment to a single State if all the country's spoken languages were officially given parity, an equal chance to develop and grow? Many studies have

argued that it would advance the literacy rate and quality of life in all the provinces of the country. What is the harm in recognizing all these languages, Sindhi, Pashto, Baluchi, Punjabi, Urdu, and English, as "national languages?" Isn't our multilingual, multicultural heritage something to be proud of, something to hold on to and embrace? It was the imperial British regime that silenced and disempowered the populations of the subcontinent by imposing on them the regime of a foreign tongue and rendering their languages peripheral and irrelevant. It was a deliberate attempt to kill the spirit and pride of the people by killing their language. That is how the development of several of these languages was arrested. Now that the British have left, should not such policies of theirs that were detrimental to local cultures and languages be also dismissed? Or was the so-called independence only gained to replace the authority of the gora sahib with the brown and continue the colonial practice of hegemonic exploitation unabated?

Our English-language writers, having in the past few years made a bit of a name for themselves in Europe and the United States, have come to believe, and of course their Western reviewers and scholars have encouraged this view, that they alone "represent" the country, that theirs is *the* "authentic" and "objective" rendering of the state of its society. Yet only two to three per cent of Pakistan's total population, perhaps, is able to read the books by these much-touted celebrities. Their actual readership is indeed a modicum of that percentage. Isn't there something odd in that claim of representation then? For all the effort that some foreign publishers are putting into promoting/marketing the work of these writers in Pakistan through literary festivals, the fact remains that only a very small and select crowd, that belongs pretty much to a certain privileged elite, attends these events, and commends and compliments it in writing. The local languages, except to an extent Urdu, continue in the subsidiary position they were relegated to during the times of the British in India. Urdu, however, for whatever this information is worth, enjoyed a special status under the British colonial rule too, for the British made a special effort to popularize it as a link language for the commonality all across India.

And here is my cue to enter this piece of writing in person. I have nothing at all against any language. All languages, I feel, are effective, efficient, and beautiful for the people who speak them. I just don't think that any tongue in a richly multilingual country can lay claim to representing or speaking for all the linguistic groups in that country. Or, for the various groups and classes that exist within a society. And if it makes that claim, it is doing so by taking away the power from the people to speak for themselves in their own language or idiom, or a language of their choice, in their own way. This is such an obvious fact, that it does not need any iteration whatsoever. The question of who represents whom, and to what extent, if at all, is entirely related to the troublesome issue of identity, individual as much as collective identity (if there is, in a definitive sense, any such thing), and language, one's mother tongue, one's natural mode of communication, even the vernacular or patois, is intimately connected to what individuals and communities experience as their identity, a perpetually evolving and dynamic concept, by no means static and unchanging at all. But not until the sense of this spontaneously evolving identity is threatened or perplexed, does the need arise to recover and define it in some specific and conclusive way, which, ironically, is a self-defeating exercise, since it tries to give static shape and contours to something that is vital and dynamic. Yet, in marginalizing a language, or imposing one from the center, precisely that threat or befuddlement is created which provokes people to disaffection, protest, and calls for autonomy, with the insistent pressure and provocation to define their distinctiveness in some final or absolute way. Without the freedom to use one's own language as a matter of course, the right to education in it, and the opportunity to make a living based on that education there is no self-esteem, no pride of identity or ownership of place, no sense of home, for a person. If anything, this was the promise implicit in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. Each citizen of a free country should, in real terms, and as a matter of course, have the opportunity to experience the fulfillment of this promise, of self-fulfillment, if you will, on one's own terms, as long as it does not encroach upon or abbreviate similar rights of others

irrespective of gender, class, race, religion, color, or creed. There can be no home or homeland where this promise is ignored or betrayed. Unfortunately, the culture of privileged communities, of language, class, gender, religion, ethnic origin, tribal or clan loyalty, elitist affiliation (military or civilian), and the like, does exactly this. It is a culture based on exclusion, exclusion, exclusion. A home is not a home unless it is inclusive, a source of strength, security, and reassurance for all who live under its roof.

Poems

Cogito

Dancing around
in spiral circles,
the ground beneath my feet
is hard to feel and see.
So I just say, where I am,
there the centre shall be!

When I stop
the moments seem
to halt in their tracks,
and my shadows outnumber
the lights around me.
So I just say, where I am,
there the centre may well be!

Then and Now!

Half a world away
I live frozen in time.
Memories flood back:
a woman crying by the pond;
a clumsy snowman;
evenings of pleasant forgetfulness;
raindrops trembling on the windscreen;
a mind overwhelmed with hazy truths,
with loves that perhaps never were.

I now wear many rings,
socks with holes,
and my heart on the sleeve;
make a friend or two
in strange places;
write poetry in three languages –

struggling with the lines of a poem till
the pen dries up
or my fingers begin to fail,
and wondering when I'll run out of words,
or dignity.

Dr. Anjum P. Saleemi

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Blue is a Vicious Color

She waited beside the Yamuna
for the celestial;
anklet chiming as
her feet danced with the streaming water.
An unheard melody
impelled stones and leaves to breathe.
Far away, the sluggish orange
drowned slowly: amorphous in the restless turquoise.
It was time.
For the Blue to take over.
The night beamed
with fireworks.
Unbound, Radha ceased to exist.
Eternity was his frolic, fueled
with virgin golden locks.
But Blue is a vicious color,
Toxic and Hungry.
He demands blood be disguised in red.
Alas! Blood is the only abundance.
There came another renderer, epic
in her passion.
Meera would wear richer anklets and dance
Like a eunuch,
Ignored!
Praised!
Discarded!
Desired!
like a trinket in the hands of a greedy old woman.
But the discontent Blue pined for more

like a black hole, never to be filled, yet
with the gravest pull.
He relished the smell of burning flesh,
The sight of bruised pride delighted him.
She would extract salt from her eyes, mix it
with gore and
cleanse the stone.
She would wait for the unyielding rock
to turn human.
Still obstinate.
One afternoon, Meera was undone.
Stone eyes became those of Medusa's and
she became a stone herself.
The Blue devoured the red.
Because Blue is a vicious color,
Toxic and Hungry...

Komal Nazir

ξ ξ ξ

On Living

I feel not any pain
For I am dead inside
And for the dead
It's all equal
Be it pleasure
Or pain.
I can feel the words though
I can't escape their echo
And the words tell me
'What a pleasant day it is today!'

Sojourn

I long

For it

To be

Too short.

Mahrukh Nishat.

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Book Review

The Heart Goes Last

Margaret Atwood

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2015

Margaret Atwood has long been considered one of the pioneers of speculative fiction, thanks to her masterpiece *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is rightfully considered a seminal text in the genre. Throughout her significant and prolific career, Atwood has delivered a biting critique on society through her meticulous and skillfully produced dystopias, which are often chilling in how precisely they mirror the advancements in the modern world and their true cost. She is here to remind us that we have carelessly ransacked the resources at our disposal and the cheque is coming up. In keeping with her body of work, ***The Heart Goes Last***[i] carries on her tradition of uncompromising satire. Though it tackles her preferred themes of environmental depletion, the desperation of humankind to protect itself from its own actions, and the oft-dire consequences of thoughtless social and scientific experimentation, the tone veers more towards the comic in this book than any other found in her repertoire.

We are introduced to Stan and Charmaine- no second names- our despairing protagonists, living in filth out of their car after having lost all of their worldly possessions to an economic crash that precedes the events of the novel. The reader can easily substitute each of these two characters for the everyman or everywoman; therefore, they become perfunctory vehicles for Atwood's commentary, unlike the masterfully wrought flesh and bone characterization that can be found in works like *Blind Assassin* or *Alias Grace*. Nevertheless, they remain entirely human, perhaps *because* they are so ordinary: she misses her homely knick-knacks, he feels his masculinity has failed him. Their social conditions are bleak, to say the very

least. Surrounded by petty crimes that run the gamut from violent theft to prostitution, their desperate circumstances are made even more painfully evident through the means they have to employ simply in order to survive, such as selling blood and rummaging for scraps. The fact that this does not seem like some farfetched post-apocalypse, but instead is an increasingly common reality for millions of impoverished across the world, makes the scene all the more hard to swallow.

In their naiveté, they have created a myth out of their love and attributed it with the power to protect them from their truly miserable actuality. On the verge of making irrevocably damaging decisions due to their fraught existence, the central characters are saved by a seemingly harmless advertisement for a groundbreaking new social experiment- the Positron Project. In Consilience, the town where the said experiment is to be conducted housed, Stan and Charmaine will enter a proverbial brave new world. This world is clinical in its detachment from the chaos they presently navigate and struggle to survive in; it is through a world of pristine 50's style homes with picket fences and an excess of food. This plenitude of alien comforts allows them to initially ignore the suspect activities taking place in the town. Expecting a safe future within grasp, they even accept the bizarre terms of residence: they must alternate living between their house and the Positron prison every other month.

However, the telltale signs of the sickness concealed beneath the neat suburban façade are present from the very beginning: there is no way of receiving or sending news to and from the outside world and no internet access, for instance. They are told that there are no actual prisoners; however, Charmaine is given the duties of an executioner. Gradually, the protagonists are exposed to the nefarious nature of the place they've chosen to call home and come to realize it is not the dream house they imagined. Faced with this reality, their relationship undergoes a radical change as they both react to their newfound knowledge in different ways- when the pressing threats of the outside world are removed their unshakeable bond dissolves into infidelity and deception. This in turn is a mirror to the atmosphere at Consilience, where nothing is as it seems.

According to M John Harrison, in ***The Heart Goes Last*** "Atwood allows her sense of the absurd its full elbow room; her cheerfully caustic contempt – bestowed even-handedly on contemporary economics, retro culture, and the social and neurological determination of identity – goes unrestrained."[ii] This absurdism is aided by the often breathless pace of the novel, which at certain points seems ready to unravel, but is never allowed to do so by a writer who is exceptional precisely because of her ability to juggle multiple narratives within the scope of a single book. Though it may not be one of her finest, the novel effectively serves as a persuasive warning against blind servitude to economic determinism, one that is ever the timelier in the present age.

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[i] Initially a series on *Byliner* (online platform), 2012-2013; increased to novel length and published in 2015 by Bloomsbury Publishing

[ii] "The Heart Goes Last by Margaret Atwood review – rewardingly strange" in The Guardian.

Explorations is an annual literary and research journal of the Department of English Language and Literature at GC University Lahore. The journal accepts articles and reviews which have not been published previously and are research based and innovative. In the articles submitted for publication, the MLA documentation style is to be followed as described in the MLA style manual. The word limit for articles is 5000-7000 words, with an abstract of upto 300 words; containing the consent letter of the author, with permission to re-edit the submitted article as per policies of _Explorations_. Authors are responsible for reading and correcting proof.