Editors' Note

"Colloquium" is the first venture by the Department of Arts of the Bhawanipur Education Society College. It gives an opportunity to the members of the faculty and other young scholars to express their views on diverse fields of interest which is implied by the title of the journal.

This issue of Colloquium deals with the concept of space from a multi-disciplinary perspective. 'Space' is a concept which has been present from the time of ancient civilization in the fields of art , architecture, literature, music, dance and science. The notion of space or spatiality has now become central to an understanding of multiple disciplines in the post modern era. In the fields of history, sociology, political science and international relations, studying space can open up new possibilities for defining territories, identities and policies. From a literary and cultural perspective, space can be realized variously as a concept - discursive, psychological or imaginary. It can also be seen as a textual construct whose meaning is fluid and relational with respect to social factors. Finally, a discussion of space and spatiality invites concepts of plurality, multiculturalism and interdisciplinary analysis of 'spaces'.

Space and spatiality is a diverse eclectic subject matter the mention of which can be traced back to the works of Aristotle and Plato, Bergson and Einstein, Euclid and Carnap, and perhaps the likes of Newton, Descartes, Leibiz and Kant. Modern writers such as Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Manuel Castelles and Henri Lefevbre write about space and spatiality as social and cultural as well as quasimaterial productions. Massey, along with Harvey and Thrift, shows how with the changing times the notion of space and spatiality have moved well beyond the Cartesian and Newtonian concepts, and have spread throughout disciplines.

The production of historical knowledges of space have been viewed by the modern critics from various points of view. Colonial and post colonial geographers look at it from the viewpoint of imperialism and empire, colonialism and ante colonialism and the development of such. The notions of nation building and geopolitics incorporate territory and place, imaginative geographies and geopolitics, and identity and the nation. The concept of historical hierarchies include class hegemony and resistance, race and gender. The built environment plays an important role in the concept of space and it includes the role of nature and the environment, making sense of urban settlement and geographies of urban morphology. Place and its meaning are also important and this includes landscape and iconography, conceptualizing heritage and its performance, spectacle and power. The concept of modernity and modernization is always important in understanding space and spatiality and it encompasses capitalism and industrialization, culture of science and technology, modernity and democracy. Beyond these borders are concepts of globalization, governmentality and nature-culture. As can be seen, the notion of space and spatiality is wide and varied and the articles in this journal have tried to address the issues associated with it. This collection of invaluable articles diverse in character and construct are based on the concept of space.

Jashomati Ghose examines African diasporic fiction through Helen Oyyemi's debut novel *The Icarus Girl*, which is inspired by her own experiences as a Nigerian growing up in London. Jashomati delves deep into the psychological problems that beset young Jess growing up in London who is caught up in a web of cultural identities. She delineates Jess's journey through multiple cultural spaces in search of identity.

As Gargi Talapatra has written in her paper, literature maybe regarded as the unofficial histories of a period complementing

factual documentation. In it, Gargi has shown how Charles Dickens relocated the uprising of 1857 in India to the island of Belize which was an English colony in his novella *The Peril of Certain English Prisoners*. This novella is very different from the other works of Dickens and some of the events which are portrayed in the novella are drawn from factual accounts of the siege of Lucknow.

Anirban Guha Thakurta has examined Oodgero Noonuccal's poem "We Are Going" showing how the colonial superstructure or colonizer defaces native history, culture and identity. The poem is elegiac in tone, mourning the repression and deterritorialization of the Aborigines by the 'Whites' in Australia. The author explores the ramifications of superimposition of 'White' culture on the Aborigine culture.

Partha Sarathi Nandi writes about the case of Gregor Samsa and his loss of human identity in Kafka's famous novella *Metamorphoses*, in subjugating his desires for his family. The author shows how Samsa's metamorphosis leads to a subsequent change in his family. His plight, alienation and ultimate death leads to a rejuvenation of his family members.

Nilanjan Chakraborty's paper is based on Rituparno Ghosh's multilayered film *Chitrangada*. It is a foray into the space of gender violence that is caused by society's bias against transgenders and gay population causing cultural, social and psychological alienation.

Satyajit Ray has written many supernatural stories which appeal to all, both young and old. Nabanita Das's paper explores these supernatural spaces.

Sonal Kapur shows how Gita Hariharan's book *Where Dreams Travel* takes off from where *Arabian Nights* end, in her paper. It delves into the stories left untold, the disnarrated spaces, the other side of the *Arabian Nights* into the world of Dunyazad and Dilshad's stories.

Arunabha Ghosh has taken the poems of Wendell Berry in his *Farming : A Handbook* which deals with issues related to the environment as the subject of his paper. He writes about Berry's preoccupation with the land and his notion of culture which is derived from the way life that he leads. He shows how place and space are almost synonymous to culture and nature in these poems.

Nawazish Azim attempts a reading of various articles written by women of colour. She concentrates on the African-American, Asian-American and Native-American where she shows that the body of the coloured American woman becomes a site for power struggles which is either accepted or denigrated according to the social and spatial setting.

The poetry of Sylvia Plath has been the focus of much critical attention. In her paper Kuntala Sengupta focuses on a selection of poems by Plath in which she discourses on the prevalence of images of places and spaces in them.

Swati Mukerji focuses on the realist writers of the 19th century when she writes about the emergence of the Urban novel in America. She focuses on a few specific writers namely Charles Brockden Brown, Henry James, Stephen Crane and Frank Norris. With the rural world gradually giving way to urban industrialization we are given insights into a new world as seen by the writers.

The genre of the superhero film has always been popular. With time the audience has grown and the themes have become more serious. The superheroes have created a parallel world which mirrors problems to which the superheroes have solutions. Sourjya Roy explores this area focusing on five specific films.

Rupsa Banerjee focuses on the poems of William Carlos Williams namely 'Paterson' and the 'Maximus' poems of Charles Olson. Williams was a key member of the early modernist movement in

America. He personally mentored Olson who was a second generation modernist. In the paper, the author shows how the language used by the two poets creates a balance between imagination and reality and opens the boundaries between intellect and sensuousness, and helps in the understanding of the concept of space.

There has been in India from ancient times a long drawn and continuous struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, majority and the minority, powerful and weak, forwards and backwards, affluent and marginalized over the question of space. The former trying to encroach upon the space of the latter, and, the latter in turn trying to preserve and establish its identity and protect, safeguard and create its own social, political and economic space. In extreme cases this turns into a demand for the formation of a separate state within or even outside the Indian Union.

It is equally true in the case of the world scenario. Globalisation, for all practical purposes, refers to a process whereby the west is trying to dominate upon the economic, poltical and cultural space of the rest of the world, and the so called Third World trying to protect itself the against inevitable evils of the same. The two articles written by Dona Ganguly and Lopamudra Majumdar reflect upon the question of space from the micro and macro point of view, respectively.

Dona Ganguly discusses the demand for the creation of a separate political space in the form of the Autonomous Tribal State within the state of Manipur. She tries to establish how "despite of being the occupant of the major proportion of the total geographical space" the Hill Tribes of Manipur are subjected to decades of exploitation and oppression by the dominant Meitei communities which has resulted in acute identity crisis. But the author has her reservations about supporting the demand for statehood and emphasizes the need for

"consolidating a space called India which would be proficient in accommodating an assortment of diverse identities".

Lopamudra Majumdar focuses on the fact that globalization has resulted in shrinkage of geo-political spaces. It has created not only a 'global market' but also a 'global culture'. Globalisation has transgressed "the borders of honourable identity, dignity and autonomy of the people and the nation states, that are on the periphery of the global order". But the author insists upon the need to preserve and protect one's own cultural space against the dominance of the global society.

We are happy to include three articles contributed by our students. Paramita Dutta explores the blending of spaces in Tagore's *The Home and the World*. Barnana Sarkar examines the validity of Wordsworth's Philosophy of Nature in the present age. Srijita Basak re-explores Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a reader of a changed time and space. The fresh and youthful views of these papers add to the richness of the volume.

Our grateful thanks to all those who have encouraged us in our endeavour. Professor Sanjukta Dasgupta, Department of English, University of Calcutta, and Professor Dipankar Sinha, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, have been gracious in agreeing to be on our advisory board. The Governing Body of the college has provided us with unstinted financial support for which we are extremely obliged. We owe a special thanks to the Teacher-in-Charge, Professor Debjani Ganguly, the Rector, Dr. Sandip Dan and all members of the Arts section for being with us in this project.

Amala Dhandhania
Ananyya Banerjee

‘Home Strange Home’: Childhood and the Diasporic Experience of Space in Helen Oyeyemi’s *The Icarus Girl*

Jashomati Ghose

To be born is to come into the world weighed down with strange gifts of the soul, with enigmas and an inextinguishable sense of exile. So it was with me.

– Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*

Childhood has more often than not functioned as a relevant novelistic trope for drawing new maps of the self and/in the world. In the West, the fictional space of childhood is in constant dialogue with a larger, discursive domain that ever since the Enlightenment, has been engaged in the process of historicizing and spatializing what has come to be termed as the ‘Eurocentric self’. The sojourns of the so-called ‘self’, constituting its often uniquely individualized experiences of time, space and identity are time and again played out in the Western bildungsroman that traces the veritable *rite du passage* from childhood to adulthood. The worlding of the Classic Western bildungsroman, irrespective of all specific socio-cultural and historical contexts, privileges a certain ‘temporal-spatial expression’ or ‘chronotope’ (Bakhtin 258). In this type of novel, the individual appropriation of space in time is mapped through a linear, chronological pattern of progress. This individual cartography of progress stages childhood as a process of multiple and progressive ‘becomings’, creating thereby, an image of the self which compliments the Western grand narratives of individuation. This

concrete chronotope of the Western bildungsroman offers little room for silence, absence, slippage or lapses with relation to the unitary, unfragmented image of the self. We, readers and writers and our texts have, however, travelled a long way from the heyday of Western imperialism to the anarchic years of decolonization, standing finally, at the thresholds of global multiculturalism and neocolonialsm. In our eyes the neat chronotope of the western bildungsroman now reveals fissures and violent ruptures, the image of the self crumbles, confirming the cultural presence of a plethora of alternative identities: Black, Asian, Euro-Asian, Euro-African, subaltern, queer and the list goes on. The modern diaspora novel-of-belonging (and let us call it a novel- of- belonging rather than a bildungsroman) exhibits this attempt to create fresh spaces for such hitherto ignored or unexplored identities. In this context the child emerges as a significant cross-over figure in diaspora fiction, straddling multiple cultures, identities and homelands. In contemporary global diasporas, such as the African diasporas in Europe and America, childhood experiences constitute a site of perennial conflicts, struggles, resistances and negotiations between several cultural identities. The chronotope of this new diaspora fiction, engaging in the complex experiences of childhood in the interstices of multiple cultures, prioritises fluidity and ambivalence over fixity and determinism that had characterized that of the Western bildungsroman of the previous centuries.

Childhood, very much like gender, is a locus of diaspora experience that has engaged contemporary migrant African writers like Bernadine Everisto, Sefi Attah, Esi Edugyan, Helen Oyeyemi and Diana Evans. In exploring childhood as a site of marginalisation, repression and discrimination as well as a site of new emergent identities, African diaspora fiction seems to offer these writers and their communities a highly ambivalent avenue for self fashioning.

The paper opens with a discussion of Helen Oyeyemi's debut novel *The Icarus Girl* which seeks, rather sceptically, the magic of belonging in the global diasporic space where several perspectives come alive at once, where myths and cultures intersect, where "Anything is possible, one way or another" (Okri 559). The novel is, in the author's words, a product of purely childhood impressions, a part of which has been inspired by the author's own experiences of growing up in London where her Nigerian parents had moved when she was only a little girl of four. It is a text which has evolved literally from a mere children's story the author had intended to write, involving a eight- year old girl and the 'history' (Oyeyemi, Interview 2.2.2005) of her imaginary friend into a complex work addressing the predicament of childhood in the African diasporic context. In the story Jess seems to articulate what her author defines as "the muddled perspective of someone who is in a Nigerian cultural framework but not of it" (Oyeyemi, "Home Strange Home"). This 'muddled perspective' however, is necessary in characterizing a peculiar form of 'double consciousness' (Gilroy 1) that Jess is entitled to as a girl of mixed parentage growing up in cosmopolitan London. The novel traces Jess's peculiar appropriation of space through a negotiation of story-worlds whose many cultural chronotopes are mutually irreconcilable.

From the very beginning Jess is shown as precociously well-read with a critical bent of mind unusual for an eight year old. She feeds her imagination with images, characters and situations from fairy tales like Sleeping Beauty, *Alice in Wonderland, Little Women* and even serious poetry like Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'. She is also well versed in stories from the Yoruba myth that her Nigerian mother Sarah keeps telling her. Jess no doubt takes after her mother, who is a writer by profession, trading in stories through which she can fashion her own identity as a diaspora writer. It is through Jess however, that

Oyeyemi chooses to articulate her own ambivalent position as a Nigerian woman writer living in Britain. The predicament that haunts Jess is that suffered by her community at large – a constant anxiety that the several story-worlds, magical no doubt, in their potentials for imaginative freedom, are perhaps mutually irreconcilable. The second source of insecurity that she faces as a child is that she may be alone in her strange experience of negotiating identities, stories and perspectives, an experience she believes, none but her spirit double can understand. The story of Jess and her mysterious twin self becomes, in this light, a quest for a space of belonging. The novel's complex chronotope which involves a revisioning of many existing novelistic chronotopes, shows how a quest such as Jess's may be realised through new spatial and temporal thinking. In inserting such a mode of thinking in a novel dealing with childhood experiences, the young author creates new dimensions for diaspora fiction.

The crisis of belonging in the global diasporic space that Jess feels from a very tender age is reflected in the very beginning of the novel where something as apparently secure as a domestic space seems to throw challenges at her in every step. When we first meet Jessamy Harrison, she is "sitting inside the cupboard in the landing" (Oyeyemi, *Icarus 3*), reminding herself scrupulously about the exactitude of this physical location. A few lines onwards and Oyeyemi writes that Jess, lost and perennially insecure as she is, does not much like "life outside the cupboard" (Ibid 4). The cupboard, an enclosed space is Jess's chosen niche which gives her an illusion of belonging, much like the attic room of the twins Bessi and Georgia in Diana Evans'*26a*. Life outside the cupboard is a confusing welter of colours and shapes that reminds her how increasingly difficult it is to hold one`s place in this world. It is the enclosed space within the cupboard, a small home-within-a- home that reminds Jess of who she is and where she belongs. It helps her put things into perspective.

With Jess, locked up in her own world of fervid imagination, the threat posed by the outside world is inescapable. Strangely enough the first of these threats comes from her mother as the novel begins with Sarah calling out the name of her daughter who remains unresponsive until she is discovered hiding in the cupboard. Jess's fragile illusion of security is severely shaken as she hears her name being pronounced from outside, "strange, wobbly, misformed" (Ibid 4) as if she were a little elf trapped inside a bottle, with her mother tapping it from outside. The idea of being trapped inside a bottle, like a mischievous elf or a magical genie is of course something Jess must have come across in fairytales, judging by her wide range of reading. The playful world of fairies and elves however is strangely subverted when Jess, a mere eight-year old imaginatively reinterprets it with relation to her own dark and disturbing world. To Jess the cupboard provides a relief that is only temporary and the big bad world becomes almost a magnification of the popular gothic trope, the attic which harbours monsters who will *"get"* (Ibid 260) her if she is not careful. As the novel proceeds, one learns that these monsters are not simply the commonest of people around Jess, who demand things of her, bully her and who never cease to remind her that she is different or special in a negative sense. There are other monsters, the quiet ones, lurking in every story that the world invents and for Jess who seeks to belong, there is forever a danger of being trapped in the stories which claim to define her ethos.

In the novel, this ominous game of entrapment is set in motion by Jess herself, when during her brief stay in Nigeria with her maternal grandparents, the little girl accidentally meets and befriends a imaginary friend called Tilly Tilly. Jess's carefree games with Tilly Tilly, which seem magical in the beginning, soon become darker and darker as they begin to spell serious trouble for her and her family. Events take a disturbing turn when Jess comes to know that Tilly is an

embodiment of her dead twin Fern, who had died at birth and whose soul was not appeased due to her parents' non-observance of the Yoruba cult of *ére Ìbeji*. As Jess comes under the spell of her spirit double, her identity is subject to the strange case of splitting and doubling. Jess's counselling by Dr. Mackenzie, a British psychiatrist, however can do nothing more than aggravate her schizophrenic condition. Through Jess and her disturbed childhood, Oyeyemi may very well be providing a critique of the Eurocentric cult of the individual. In her counselling sessions the psychiatrist asks Jess to identify her own voice, her own 'safe place' (Oyeyemi, *Icarus 218*), where she is neatly cut off from her shadow self, Tilly Tilly. The difficulties faced by Jess, and her creator Oyeyemi herself, lies however, precisely in the adaption of this Eurocentric individualistic stance towards the appropriation of space. Tilly Tilly's hauntings which render Jess schizophrenic in the eyes of the West could mean something very different to the child herself. This imaginary companion plays the part of a missing twin in Jess's life, one who, despite her dark mischiefs, initiates her into the ancient Yoruba experience of a shared self. The dark secret of twins or spirit beings called the *abiku*, as Yoruba myth puts it, is that they live in 'three worlds': "she lives in this world, and she lives in the spirit world and she lives in the Bush" (Ibid 181). Twin children, who are denizens of these multiple worlds communicating across the illusory barriers of time and space present alternative notions of the self that are not individual, but collective and cosmic. As a child being brought up on a mixed cultural diet, it is after all not unusual for Jess to be caught between such contrary identities and spatialities. An ambivalent resolution to this crisis of identity and space is offered at the end of the novel where Jess, has a strange vision while remaining unconscious following a street accident. In this vision Jess sees herself uniting bodily with her spirit double Tilly Tilly. The union immediately precedes her waking "up and up and up" (Ibid 334) into

an uncertain future. Jess's ambivalent awakening into an unknown future is paralleled by her grandfather's ritualistic erection of the *ére Ìbeji* statue to appease the dead twin and to invite her to participate in the material life of her living twin. A dual note of trouble and reconciliation, vengeance and forgiveness comes alive at once in the end when contrary cultural spaces collide into a kind of rapprochement.

Through this strange tale of twin possession, Oyeyemi thoroughly revises and rewrites the chronotope of the novel of growth in the context of Nigerian diaspora. Her very title 'The Icarus Girl' creates an uncanny correspondence between Jess, who falters in her attempt to fly through and across fictional spaces and Icarus, the young novice in Greek myth who fails in his attempt to fly away from the enclosed space of the prison. In her magic games with the imaginary playmate Tilly Tilly, Jess further is haunted by a fear of falling incessantly through space, reminding us of Alice's words in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* : " Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end?" (Carroll 17). The inclusion of the first two subtexts indicates a certain space crisis that Jess repeatedly experiences as a mixed race child belonging to the diaspora community. On the other hand, the inclusion of Yoruba myth creates alternative worlds and their promise of more open spaces in the novel. Imaginary figures like Tilly Tilly and the mysterious goddess of twins who travel with Jess all the way from Nigeria to Britain present a dimension of spatial mobility and imaginative fluidity that Jess herself seeks so ardently. These figures which cannot simply be written off as figments of Jess's imagination are rooted in Yoruba myths of the cosmos, where life is an interface between the material world and the spirit world, where identity is not individual, but communal. Jess's journey through multiple cultural spaces in search of an identity thus comprises a story whose chronotope is not simple, but complex, because in it the chronotopes of multiple genres co-

exist in ceaseless dialogue. The chronotope of the Western bildungsroman, with its uni-linear *rite du passage* is thus problematised by Jess's non-linear journey in search of a home, a root and an identity that is multiple. The realistic chronotope of the Western novel of growth is hereby rewritten into a magic realistic chronotope of the diasporic novel of identity where dreams and reveries, myths and divinations are as real and palpable as the material world in which events take place. The symbolic subtext of the Greek Icarus myth again, with its tragic story of a failed rebellion against Fate implies a chronotope of regression contrapuntally set against the bildungsroman chronotope of progress in Oyeyemi's novel. There are moments when Jess also feels like Alice who seems to suffer an endless fall into a wonderland of absurd adventures. However, when Jess at the end of the novel "wakes up and up and up", one wonders whether she like Alice, has outlived her dream at all since at the moment of her waking the dream and the reality collide bodily into an uncertain union. The chronotope of the dream where events leave no trace in time, of myths and fairy tales where events are distilled from time and that of the real world where things happen in time overlap to create and define the complex experience of childhood in the diaspora.

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Re-locating 'space' in Representation: *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners* by Charles Dickens

Dr. Gargi Talapatra

Though apparently classified as two different disciplines, history and literature seem to share a common strand in adhering to a narrative structure. Just as literature conveys and creates meanings through the realms of a narrative, sense of history also depends upon the same in order to root an individual/ group/ nation to a particular space and time. The entire root of belongingness in terms of nationality, culture and ethnicity thus comes to derive its existence through a tapestry of narration. As a result, every conflict in the history of the human civilization has inspired literature in various forms since times immemorial, which may be regarded as unofficial histories of the period, complementing the factual documentation.

While history portrays a collective record of a supposedly historical event in which the subjective comprehension of truth remains latent, literature brings to the surface those fears and apprehensions related to human loss and suffering which enables a historical event to permeate through the pages of archival records into the lives of the common people and imparts a sense of shared experience beyond the rigid borderlines of time and space. The Uprising of 1857 has been no exception. It has been a continuous source of inspiration to the creative artists of both the countries for more than a century, and in tracing the pattern of these representations one may get to comprehend the multiplicity of the nature of the historical event,

where each of these works holds up a certain truth – each true in its own way and yet projecting the parochialism of finite human perception.

One of the first narratives of this kind was *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners* – a novella by Charles Dickens, published almost immediately in the *Household Words* in December 1857. As one of the earliest reactionary creative pieces towards the Uprising, 'The Perils of Certain English Prisoners' stands out in its technique of voicing and contextualizing the violence related with this historical event in the mind of the 19th century English society. Dickens defies the constraints of time and space in relocating his response towards the Uprising of 1857 in the island of Belize – an English colony in North America, where apparently the English men and women are trying to escape from the pirates. In one of his letters, Dickens states with reference to this novella: "I wish to avoid India itself; but I want to shadow out in what I do, the bravery of our ladies in India."[1] Probably the fact that his son Walter had left for military service in India in July 1857 might have been one of the reasons behind his discretion. Nevertheless, Dickens is seen to do what he declares in his letter successfully through *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*.

In this novella, Dickens portrays life of the English men and women at Belize – their society and interactions with the colonized Other, through the arrival of Gill Davis and his fellow soldiers on the island. Gill records "in those climates, you don't want to do much", thereby initiating the effect of alienation by verbally imposing the different climate and through this difference, the larger dissimilarities of mindsets and cultures (Dickens 02). He begins with the recollection of his dream of "the shepherd" who "used to give me so little of his victuals and so much of his staff, that I ran away from him—which was what he wanted all along, I expect", quite distinctly threading in the concept of Christianity and the white man's burden to discover

and civilize new terrains into the discourse, and at the same time he mentions how the shepherd "seemed to move away from the ship's side, far away over the blue water, and go right down into the sky" as his ship came into the vicinity of the island – which is perhaps an implication of the god-forsaken identity of the colony (ibid).

First introduced to Christian George King, "one of those Sambo fellows" who "was fonder of all hands than anybody else was", Gill Davis recollects how he wanted to have "kicked Christian George King—who was no more a Christian than he was a King or a George—over the side, without exactly knowing why, except that it was the right thing to do" (Dickens 04). In this statement the Othering of the native is achieved through the identification of the very basic slippage in his identity, which though it may resemble the colonizer, can never make him their equal. The elaboration of the instinctive repulsion towards the native which follows in the latter half of the statement portrays the ability of the protagonist as a colonizer almost blessed with a divine capacity to see through the intentions of the native, especially as his remark stands out to be justified in the course of the novella when Christian George King is discovered to be the traitor amongst the English. In this manner, Dickens establishes judgmentalism and absolutism of the colonizer as perceptions of intuitive wisdom, which establishes them justly in their civilizing and ruling mission of the conquered territories.

The power equation operative between the colonizer and the colonized is concealed in the novella when Gill gets to learn from Miss Marion Maryon, the sister of the captain of the sloop, about their interaction with the natives – "we are all very kind to them, and they are very grateful to us", and further about Christian George King – he "would die for us" (Dickens 06). Two ideological ends are achieved in this process – the benevolence on the part of the colonizer is established and the natives are represented as benefitting from this

civilizing mission, and at the same time, the innocence and kindness of the Victorian women is brought out in the affectionate approach of Miss Maryon, who as her name suggests, symbolizes all that is inclusive, accommodative and positive.

It would be significant to note Dickens's pattern of characterization here. Christian George King is seen to be speaking in rough pidgin English, which makes him sound all the more alienated and automatically distances him from the sympathy or understanding of the readers, much in the technique of Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Similarly, the protagonist Gill Davis repeatedly reminds the readers that he is illiterate, the reason why his recollections are being written down by the lady beside him, and the political implication of an uneducated, unrefined, illiterate protagonist can be understood later as he declares regarding his attitude towards the natives – "I have stated myself to be a man of no learning, and, if I entertain prejudices, I hope allowance may be made. I will now confess to one. It may be a right one or it may be a wrong one; but, I never did like Natives, except in the form of oysters" (Dickens 07). Through this statement, matters of humanitarian tolerance of cultural difference are completely obliterated, for the readers soon get to realize that Gill Davis despite his educational drawbacks is the proper English man of commands and that his "prejudice" towards the "barabarous" natives, is essentially "a right one" – thereby promoting a judgmental approach towards the colonized.

The Pirates attack the Island left alone by the English men who were misguided by Christian George King and sent down the river so that those left on the Island, including the ladies and the children, could easily be taken captives. The first description of the panic the word "Pirates" has on the women and children left ashore is justified thus by the first person eye narrator: "for, those villains had done such deeds in those seas as never can be told in writing, and can scarcely be

so much as thought of" (Dickens 16). It is from this point in the text that one may clearly see the parallel being drawn between the pirates and the 'mutineers'. The description of the battle at the fort resembles the siege of Lucknow, and the role of the women, especially Miss Maryon and Mrs Fisher is highlighted in a memorable manner to reflect the contribution of the second sex, otherwise perceived as delicate and fragile, in hours of immense crisis.

The alternative discourse on heroism begins with the description of Miss Maryon of whom the author recollects: "…Miss Maryon had been from the first with all the children, soothing them, and dressing them…and making them believe that it was a game of play, so that some of them were now even laughing" (Dickens 17). The resemblance between this fictional account and the factual account provided in *A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow* which was published a year later in 1858, is astonishing, as it describes the women taking care of the children in the *tyekhana* and nursing the wounded soldiers during the Siege. This recognition obliterates the Victorian demarcations of the public and the private sphere, for the woman is portrayed doing as much service in preserving lives of the young ones as the men did in the battlefield fighting the enemy directly. Nevertheless, the Victorian concept of the sanctity of a woman is retained as Miss Maryon tells Gill Davis: "…if we are defeated, and you are absolutely sure of my being taken, you will kill me" (ibid). This idea of preservation of honour at the cost of one's life is reiterated later in Christina Rossetti's poem "In the Round Tower at Jhansi, 1857".

At this hour of crisis, Gill Davis observes further "to my astonishment, little Mrs Fisher that I had taken for a doll and a baby, was not only very active in that service, but volunteered to load the spare arms" and quotes the words of Miss Maryon who also volunteers for the same service "I am a soldier's daughter and a

sailor's sister, and I understand it too" (Dickens 18). These statements uphold the legacy of English courage and valour as natural attributes, as they permeate the conventional concept of division of labour. It is in fact these two women who detect that the gun powder had been spoiled, and this introduces a new discourse into the social stream of projecting and perceiving a woman, as she transcends the constructed barriers of gender in her efforts to preserve life, through knowledge based on keen observation – thereby obliterating the domains of active and passive in being "steady and ready with the arms" (Dickens 20).

Another description worth mention is that of Mrs Venning, an aged English lady on the Island, as she is killed in her attempt to save her grandchild: "I…saw Mrs Venning – standing upright on the top of the steps of the trench, with her gray hair and her dark eyes – hide her daughter's child behind her, among the folds of her dress, strike a pirate with her other hand, and fall, shot by his pistol" (Dickens 21). The child, it is later seen in the novella, is saved by this sacrifice of her grandmother and is returned to her mother by the Captain of the English ship and the story given is thus : "the child had kept quite still, where her brave grandmamma had put her…and had remained quiet until the fort was deserted; she had then crept out of the trench, and gone into her mother's house; and there, alone on the solitary Island, in her mother's room, and asleep on her mother's bed, the Captain had found her" (Dickens 28). This episode celebrates the effectiveness of this form of alternative heroism based on resistance and self-defence in portraying the life of an innocent child saved from the brutal Pirates by an ageing woman whose only weapon was her outfit and her presence of mind.

In this manner, Dickens as a creative artist provides vivid pictures of silent defensive heroism on the part of the English women in *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners* recreating the terror and the pathos associated with it. Though the heroism of General Havelock

and the other English officers during the Uprising was celebrated in many poems, Stephen Henry Sharman's poem 'The Relief of Lucknow' (1858) being one of them, this other side of heroism which lay in resistance, was yet to be explored in the immediate context, and this is what makes Dickens's novella stand out as a literary piece of exceptional dimensions.

Though it comprises three chapters – the first one describing the siege, the second one describing how the prisoners taken are fist made ransom for the treasure left on the Island and how they eventually escape from the pirates, and the third one relating the relief of the prisoners in reuniting with the English officers who had returned to the Island much after the siege and had set out looking for the survivors – only the first and the third chapters of this novella are attributed to Dickens, while the second chapter is believed to have been written by Wilkie Collins as a later addition to the existing text.

In the third chapter, Dickens provides a description of the prisoners of the siege escaping down the river in a raft and the moment of ecstasy when they are relieved by the English soldiers. Probably since Dickens wanted to focus upon and highlight the bravery of the English women, he does not provide a detailed account of the men at the battlefield with the pirates in the novella. The determination of the English soldiers and their valour is described thus as they stand on the English ship: "every man lying-to at his work, with a will that had all his heart and soul in it. Every man looking out for any trace of friend or enemy, and burning to be the first to do good or avenge evil" (Dickens 27). The allegorical cross reference to the basic tenets of Christianity in the repeated use of "every man" tends to generalize the heroic spirit and courage as a national and racial attribute and may be related to the illustration in the Punch magazine entitled 'The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger' published in August 1857.

The moment of re-union of the English officers with the prisoners finds a very graphic depiction in the novella: "there was a tumult of laughing and crying, and kissing and shaking hands, and catching up of children and setting up of them down again, and a wild hurry of thankfulness and joy that melted every one and softened all hearts" (ibid). The joy of rescuing the survivors, in its intensity of emotions and gladness, transcends the confines of space and time and merges with the basic humanitarian perception of being reunited with one's own, as valid today as it was in 1744, or 1857. A very similar picture can be found in *A Lady's Diary of the Siege of Lucknow* where the author writes upon the arrival of the English troops in Lucknow: "…our compound and verandah filled with our *deliverers*, and all of us shaking hands frantically, and exchanging fervent "God bless you's" with the gallant men and officers of the 78th Highlanders" (Anon 68). It is here, in this merging and blending of fact and fiction across the boundaries of fact and fiction, that literature becomes a documentation of things past, present and future, and therefore, records those sheer moments of existence which do not find place in the archives of conventional historiography.

The Perils of Certain English Prisoners when read in this light, provides a rare glimpse of a very unknown Dickens, as he moves away from the realms of familiar subject matter to reflect and comment upon matters related to colonialism and the colonized Other – the historical fact which marked the emergence of England as a dominant nation. It also exemplifies the freedom of a creative artist as he represents the moments of utter crisis in an alien land as perceived from his own subject-position, and brings into light a very different authorial self compared to that portrayed by the other works such as *Oliver Twist, David Copperfield* or *Tale of Two Cities*.

Re-reading this novella enables a better understanding of that aspect of a creative individual which springs from a sense of belongingness

towards the nation based on narrated facts, and in turn, helps in consolidating the same view further, through yet another string of narration – the blending of fact, imagination and fiction. While history as a discipline, operates within strict limits of factual records within a rigid frame of time and space, Dickens by entirely relocating the axis of space in this context, explores the infinitely transcendental potential of a literary artist who can re-create his own space to convey the spirit of a certain time, while retaining his own identity. In a way, his novella also portrays the colonizer's power to ascribe an identity upon the colonized Other, through imaginative obliteration of cartographic territories.

Notes:

1. The Imperial Context of "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners" (1857) by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins - http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva354.html

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Someone's 'Terra Nullius': Studying Lost Topographies in Oodgeroo Noonuccal's 'We Are Going'

Anirban Guha Thakurta

Homes are not topographical and mere works of machinery and craftsmanship based on habitats built by means of bricks and walls. Homes are ideological constructions, based on the idea of familiarity of experience achieved by means of the unification of the physical empirical substance of the construction of habitable space and the psychological, spiritual, and greater cultural sense of habitation of the individual who inhabits the same physical space. The de-familiarisation and distortion of the already established uniformed unification of the physical habitat and the mental habitat creates the scenario of un-housed-ness and a sense of non-being. Colonial superstructure deconstructs native history, culture, identity, and goes to the extent of erasing the same by virtue of dehumanizing the native individual, and tries to locate the past of the native land as a non-entity, a tabula rasa, and legitimizes its 'discovery' by itself. Western imperialism 'dis-covered' Australia like the places of African continent and went on to perpetuate its own laws and disciplines of civilization by a complete negation of the pre-colonial world of cultural heritage and history. Dehumanization of the native is a precondition to imperialism and its justification of the colonial violence inflicted on the native. The subjugation and silencing of the Australian pre-colonial Aboriginal oral history and its cultural fecundity follow the characteristic narrative of imperialism.

Sincerely Aboriginal Australia's case is no exception when seen and reflected in terms of a comparative study of other narratives of Western imperialisms in other parts of the world. The dehumanization of the native and the silencing of the pre-colonial native traditions differ from other spaces of colonial encounters across the globe only in kind and methods and not much in degree. Australia was a settler's colony, and therefore there is a case of the settlement of the European diasporas who would naturally find themselves de-territorialized and un-housed. And there will be on their part a natural inclination of making out of the foreign and alien habitat a habitable unification of the physical, mental, and cultural Home. Thus another natural inclination of the new settlers would understandably appear to be of metamorphosing the alien land into habitable home. However, this needed a methodological apparatus which we define as the universal case of de-constructing the native home in order to build a home of the settlers. And there lies the unnaturality in the methodology of construction of the settler's home, and there lies in Australia's case a unique case of imperial narrative where the settler's physical de-territorialization from his native world forces him to re-construct in the alien world a habitable home by virtue of re-territorialization and an aggressive de-construction of the native Aboriginal cultural home, while on the other hand the native Aboriginals suffer no physical de-territorialization and roam homeless and un-housed without any further possibility of re-territorialization. Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) is an Aboriginal voice and activist who presents an elegy of lost homes and known topographies, and tries to paint silenced narratives of the home-less-ness of the native tribes in 'We Are Going' and thereby functions as the native trying to 'write back', and the same tries to establish the story of dehumanization and marginalization of the rightful owners of the so called 'Terra Nullius'.

To begin with, Oodgeroo's 'We Are Going' is an elegy, elegiac in the mourning for the loss of homelands, for being a stranger in the native land, for suffering estrangement and alienation of a tribe which is forced to dwell in ignominy and silence in the context of colonial encounter. The poem's evaluation can run in many ways, and all such variations of interpretations run together in congeniality to form a unified whole of mourning the loss of the habitable space and establishing at the same time the silenced histories of the past which definitely procures the phenomenon of 'writing back'. The poem mourns the absence, and at the same time pours in the memory of the pre-colonial past to form a view of the Australian topography that does not get referred to in the colonial narrative of the continent's history, or gets rejected and silenced following the basic features of white man's dominion. It presents through vanished realities the truth of the cultural memory of the Aboriginal past, and tries to locate through the absence of such ways and traditions of the native folk the prevalent presence of the same. Thereby it is a reflection on the subjugation of the land and its people on one hand, and on the other it tries to locate the spectacle of native Australia de-familiarizing itself, since a land or an inhabited topography gains a character by the people that populates and inhabits the same. This is not a mere poem of the retelling of the trauma of dislocation of Aborigines. This is at the same time a poem about the continual unnatural dislocation of Australia itself which is made to come as subjugated by being polished and re-constructed according to the norms of foreign laws and disciplines of 'civilization' and 'modernity'. On the other hand, beside this interplay of man's and nature's dislocation and re-ramification, there exists in the poem an underlying anti-colonial Aboriginal historiography which tries to re-establish the past unified oneness ---- native traditions and customs, its mythology, its unification of the larger physical nature existing outside and the inner

tribal nature which developed an inscrutable oneness with the inhabited space and landscape ---- existing between Australia's land and its age-old tribes. Read from other perspectives, the poem also presents the wholeness and fecundity of the unified ecological and humanitarian universe of Australia getting continually disjointed and deconstructed.

Australia's 'discovery' by the Whites 'covered' the Aboriginal past under thick blankets of colonial repression. This de-characterized and re-characterized not merely the land according to the ways of the Whiteman, but also its people, as right in the first line of Oodgeroo's 'We Are Going' we come across the tales of the old Aboriginal structures which previously characterised not only their land but also, with oneness of the same, their 'selves' are deconstructed and how the natural owners of the land have suffered an unnatural alienation and homelessness and turned in their own native land a distant 'They'. Oodgeroo further writes:

> They came in to the little town
> A semi-naked band subdued and silent
> All that remained of their tribe.
> They came here to the place of their old bora ground
> Where now the many white men hurry about like ants.
> Notice of the estate agent reads: 'Rubbish May Be Tipped Here'.
> Now it half covers the traces of the old bora ring.
> 'We are as strangers here now, but the white tribe are the strangers...[1]

Oodgeroo's lines reflect two important aspects of the colonial encounter together. Firstly, the Aboriginals, turned into a distant 'they' are placed as direct foil to the condition of the 'white men' who find ease and homely spontaneity in the supposed foreign space 'hurry[ing] about like ants', while the natives are subjugated and

made 'strange' as the old pre-colonial world of communion existing between the native folk and their land --- with its known topography, its cultural characterisation of the larger nature, its totemic and mythical ramifications of the known space --- is somehow disturbed and distorted, and the same de-familiarization of the greater outer world leads to the overwhelming question of a crisis of identity, of being 'strange' without physical dislocation. This in turn has many dimensions. On one level this can be looked at as a case of the larger topographical space getting altered and thereby the inhabitants are culturally dislocated and turned 'homeless', while at another level it is the native tribe's subjugation which has resulted in the greater distortion of the landscapes without. The result is not merely geological and spaciological subversion, but to bring our second contention, this is a subversion of the colonial kind, a spectacle of the possessor of the land being made crippled and forced to follow foreign norms even when the foreign ones are 'strangers'. This brings before our eyes the spectacle of colonial Manichaeism that Fanon talked about as he went on to characterize truthfully the nature and scope of the coloniser/colonized relationship:

> The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things....
>
> The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire.[2]

Fanon's truthful portrayal coupled with Oodgeroo's mournful depiction of the 'semi-naked' Aboriginal folk testifies to the Manichaean nature of colonial encounters and places the Australian case as part of the universal saga of colonial repression.

As the poem moves forward there is a continuation of the recurring pattern of mournful representation of a known topography turned

emotionally and culturally 'strange' to the Aboriginals. The line 'Notice of the estate agent reads: "Rubbish May Be Tipped Here"', beside the last remnants of the 'Bora' ring (a place associated with the native initiation ceremony) is a clear metaphorical and metonymic representation of the nature and scope of the subversion of the native cultural and religious rituals and the associated ideas involved with the land. Oodgeroo shows the Eurocentric il-legalization and disfiguring of the Aboriginal homeland and legitimisation of the same as a means of disciplining the topography and modernizing by creating civil amenities. This essentially takes away the natural flavour of the land and the inhabitants, and Western civilization did not merely disfigure the land, but deemed its inhabitants as non-existent, and the same gave them the rationale to impose its own laws on a the land and its people, as Colin Bourke and Helen Cox confirm:

> The British sought to extend their laws to the land now called Australia and its Aboriginal inhabitants....
>
> Despite Aboriginal resistance England declared itself the sovereign or ruler of Australia. The established legal doctrine that enabled it to do this is known as terra nullius....
>
> Australia was declared to be a land that was not occupied by a people with settled laws. In legal effect, it was terra nullius.[3]

The next few lines of Oodgeroo's 'We Are Going' can be seen as the postcolonial act of re-membering the lost identity and identification with the land on the part of the native. She writes:

> We belong here, we are of the old ways.
> We are the corroboree and the bora ground,
> We are the old ceremonies, the laws of the elders. [4]

It is from here that the concept of space and memory, of mourning the lost topographies finds a new aspect of historical space. Oodgeroo now tries to employ the knowledge of the Aboriginal past and their

pre-colonial rituals as a medium of alternative historiography. The poem becomes a representation of the Aboriginal concept of time and space, the Aboriginal beliefs regarding the land. This works as a pattern which is counter-discursive to the Eurocentric claims of the 'terra nullius'. There is flurry of nature imagery and images of the age-old customs and Aboriginal forms of customs which were practiced as laws, the ones which got rejected by the colonial aggressors. Unlike basic European concept of linear time and compartmentalization of the landscapes by means of categorizations of 'sacred', 'civil', and so on, the Aboriginal concept of their inhabited topography and land is one of a unified uniformity beyond the basic laws and disciplines of the Western world. The images approve of the religious history of the tribes and their beliefs, and function to portray how this oneness with nature and the unified whole of Man being Nature and the Landscape is lost under the colonial rule. There are references to the 'Dream Time' or 'The Dreaming', the eagles, the kangaroos, the 'hunting and the laughter', 'corroboree'[5] which all recur as items of historical documentation of the neglected past of the Aborigines. Bill Edwards notes the significance of the land in Aboriginal thought:

> The whole landscape is conceived as having been formed through the activities of the Spirit Beings. The whole environment is viewed as the arena in which the dramatic events of The Dreaming were and are enacted. The continent is dotted with significant sites associated with stories, for example, places where Spirit Beings first emerged, where they performed a ceremony or where they died and re-entered the earth. It is criss-crossed with the tracks of the Spirit Beings as they travelled from site to site.... In one sense, all land is a sacred site....
>
> Western ideas about reality and religion are based largely on the

general acceptance of dichotomies between natural and cultural, material and spiritual, past and present, secular and sacred, subject and object.... [6]

However, the Aboriginal beliefs never made any distinction of the Western kind. To them all nature, its attributes, rocks, are extensions of the human being, and therefore the distortion of the land and alteration based on subject and object (which is basic to Eurocentric appropriation and characteristically representative of the colonial encounter) not merely distorts the land, but the native identity. Thus to be homeless for the native Aborigines is a potential homelessness of the larger habitat, and landscape of Australia. Thus when the poetic voice proclaims:

We are nature and the past, all the old ways
Gone now and scattered... [7]

---- it is a case of mutual subjugation and dismemberment, a turning of tribe into no land's man, and a painful metamorphosis of a land into a land belonging to none. This is a loss of mutual addressing and homes.

Oodgeroo's 'We Are Going' is elegiac since it mourns mutual subjugation and subversion resulting in mutual de-territorialization of the empirically living Aboriginal tribes and the spiritually living landscape. However, one thing must be pointed out before we conclude. The poem is no harmless elegy. This is a plane of historical documentation, a means of translating oral narratives of the Aboriginal conception of time and space associated with their homelands, a way of scripting the same to develop an alternative realm of historical consciousness and historical space. This historically manifests too a unified ecology of mysticism uniting nature and man as a single whole. The same historiography allows Oodgeroo to locate the distinct world of cultural and philosophical

heritage of the native indigenous Australia against the racist and Eurocentric modelling of the same as available in literary spaces such as A.D. Hope's 'Australia'[8]. This duly manifests Sally Morgan[9]'s desire to write a history of the tribes of Australia. Oodgeroo's 'We Are Going' is thus definitely a political and emotional commentary on the 'discovery' of Australia, and it duly reciprocates to the cause of re-'discovering' the same land and the topography to be someone's 'terra nullius'.

Notes:

[1]Oodgeroo Noonuccal, "We Are Going", 26th January, 2014 <http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/oodgeroo_noonuccal/ poems/4601>

[2]Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence", The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin Classics, 1967, 2001) 30.

[3]Colin Bourke and Helen Cox, "Two Laws: One Land", Colin Buurke, Eleanor Bourke, and Bill Edwards ed. Aboriginal Australia (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2002) 56.

[4]Oodgeroo Noonuccal, "We Are Going", 26th January, 2014 <http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/oodgeroo_noonuccal/ poems/4601>

[5]Corroboree is part of the Australian Aboriginal ritualistic design where the Aborigines interact through dance, costume, and music with Dreamtime or The Dreaming.

[6]Bill Edwards, "Living and Dreaming", Colin Buurke, Eleanor Bourke, and Bill Edwards ed. Aboriginal Australia (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2002) 81.

[7]Oodgeroo Noonuccal, "We Are Going", 26th January, 2014 <http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/oodgeroo_noonuccal/ poems/4601>

[8]A.D. Hope's famous poem depicts Australia as a barren spectacle and a land having no sign of what European civilization called 'civilization'. Hope's representation of Australia is stereotypically representative of the ways of Western discourses on the Australian land and indigenous tribes. He wrote:

A nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey
In the field uniform of modern wars
Darkens her hills, those endless, outstretched paws
Of Sphinx demolished or stone lion worn away.

They call her a young country, but they lie:
She is the last of lands, the emptiest,
A woman beyond her change of life, a breast
Still tender but within the womb is dry.

Without songs, architecture, history...

A.D. Hope, "Australia", 26th January, 2014,

< http://johnwatsonsite.com/MyClassNotes/Topics/Poetry/Australia%20AD

%20Hope.html>

[9]Sally Morgan thought it necessary to write a history of the natives from the point of view of the oppressed, thus intending to voice the untold past that would sloganize rebellion of the anti-colonial kind and tell the true story of invasion and violence of Western imperialism by writing back to the centre which termed the deconstruction of native history and culture as 'discovery'. Morgan famously wrote:

> I want to write the history of my own family... there's almost nothing written from a personal point of view about Aboriginal people. All our history is about the white man. No one knows what it was like for us. A lot of our history has been lost, people have been too frightened to say anything. There's a lot of history we can't even get at... I just want to tell a little bit of the other side of the story.

Sally Morgan, My Place (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987)163-64.

Oodgeroo poetically records remnants of the silenced remnants of Aboriginal history.

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* : A tale of tangled relationships and multiple transformations

Partha Sarathi Nandi

"To die would mean nothing else than to surrender a nothing to the nothing, but that would be impossible to conceive, for how could a person, even only as a nothing consciously surrender himself to the nothing, and not merely to an empty nothing but rather to a roaring nothing whose nothingness consists only in its incomprehensibility."

- Franz Kafka

I

"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (Ger. "ungeheures Ungeziefer", i.e. "Monstrous Vermin" or "a giant bug" or "an insect" as often interpreted in English.). But whatsoever it means, the moment Gregor Samsa metamorphosed from "He" to "It", "Valid" to "Invalid", "Dependable to Dependent" - from that day everything in he loved in his life changed forever.

Franz Kafka's novella, *The Metamorphosis* (Ger. *Die Verwandlung*) or *The Transformation* (as sometimes translated) first published in 1915 is similar and yet different from his other seminal works like *The Trial* (written in 1914 & 1915, published in 1925) or *The Castle* (written in 1922, & published in 1926). Though it portrays the tragic fate of the protagonist Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman and his helplessness in his plight, just like the chief financial officer Josef K. in *The Trial* and K. ,the land surveyor in *The Castle*, but unlike the other two characters, Gregor does not have to fight fruitlessly against

the inaccessible authorities or the bureaucratic system, (as we see in the latter two novels) or get stabbed in the heart and die "like a dog!". His problem is much more complex. His fight is more with himself and his family rather than the external world. From the beginning Gregor starts losing his self; his body, his voice, his language, his job and in a way, his identity. He gets alienated gradually from the society and more precisely from his own family and this drifting of his self and his self-effacement is completed with his untimely death.

Gregor's cause of transformation is never revealed or explained by the author. Instead he deals with the after effects of this situation. He focuses on Gregor's attempts to cope up with his "new self", his gradual destabilized relationship with his father, mother and sister and his dear sister's denial of the insect to be him: "But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he'd have gone away on his own accord. Then we wouldn't have any brother, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our lodgers, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself and would have us all sleep in the gutter." *The Metamorphosis* is not just a physical transformation of a man but it is the transformation of characters around him too.

That Sister Grete (Fraulein Samsa) who once "would burst into tears" on hearing his "intention of sending her to the Conservatorium" ("despite the great expense that would entail") would herself, later suggest her father that; "We must try to get rid of it... At least I can't stand it any longer". Mother who in her "gentle voice!" would previously inquire her "hadn't you a train to catch?"would later scream "in a loud, hoarse voice"and faint just at a mere glimpse of him. Though "he then ran after his sister into the next room as if he could advise her, as he used to do; but then had to stand helplessly behind her." "Gregor was now cut off from his mother" and his sister

as well, who for "the first time" (and the perhaps last) "directly addressed him since his metamorphosis", indirectly blaming him for the accident. Not only did Gregor transform, so did his father; "The man who used to lie wearily sunk in bed whenever Gregor set out on a business journey; who welcomed him back of an evening lying in a long chair in a dressing gown; who could not really rise to his feet but only lifted his arms in greeting... Now he was standing there in fine shape; dressed in a smart blue uniform with gold buttons, such as bank messengers wear; his strong double chin bugled over the stiff high collar of his jacket; from under his bushy eyebrows his black eyes darted fresh and penetrating glances; his onetime tangled white hair had been combed flat on either side of a shining and carefully exact parting."Being absorbed in his "new recreation"of crawling over the ceiling he failed to notice the changes he should have been prepared for.

Throughout the novella there are various instances which could trace back to Kafka's own strained relationship with father Herrman. For example, just as Gregor, Kafka too was subjected to his father's abuse and yelling (because he thought him to be a failure). "Gregor felt as if he had let down the family because he had provided for them up until this point where he could no longer work. He thought it would be very difficult for his family to be financially secure without him working."[1]

His own horror of family life, which he often expressed to Felice in his letters,"I have always looked on my parents as persecutors"[2] is expressed through the portrayal of Gregor's father who "believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him." When the metamorphosed Gregor is chased away by his father, "No plea of Gregor's availed, indeed none was understood; however meekly he twisted his head his father only stamped the harder." Kafka felt his

life to be so terrible that he even wrote: "I doubt whether I am a human being" and that "It is through writing that I keep a hold on life." Thus his "exceptionally repulsive" story (as he himself admitted in one of his letters to Felice), perhaps served him as an outlet to express his pains through Gregor and keep himself from being transformed into Gregor. "This is the domestic matrix out of which came the terrifying claustrophobia and self disgust of Gregor Samsa."[3]

However "Like *The Judgment*, this story too grew directly from personal experience – though, also like that earlier story, it would be limiting and untrue to its originality and imaginative range to think of it as 'autobiographical'."[4] Perhaps this phenomenon of blurring between reality and fantasy in *The Metamorphosis*, can be best seen in Steven Soderbergh's 1991 film *Kafka*, which too blurs the lines between fact and fiction of Kafka. Soderbergh's *Kafka* is an insurance worker cum writer who gradually transforms into K like character and involves himself in solving the mystery of The Castle. However in the beginning of the film he narrates about himself and his father in an autobiographical manner : "Do you remember many years ago Father took me aside and told me I was preoccupied with the insignificant, morbidly preoccupied in his opinion. Well for years now, I have led a life that even he must call normal except for the fact that in my odd, spare moments...I write. I may be a disappointment to him, but I ask- Is it a crime?" and after his getting involved with an underground group and eventually confronting the secret organization in the castle, the film returns again to the autobiographical yet fictitious mode and ends with a TB affected Kafka writing a letter to his father: "I can no longer deny that I am part of the world around me nor can I deny, despite of our differences that I remain your son."

II

Keeping aside the autobiographical elements let's now just concentrate on the tragic life of Gregor alone. "*Metamorphosis* is about invalidation, our self-invalidations and our invalidations of others; and it does nothing-offers us nothing morally-but this vision of how we do it. The narration focuses on how Gregor invalidates his family, how his family invalidates and destroys Gregor, how his sister Grete, learns to invalidate her brother."[5] Gregor has 'picked on' the exhausting job of a traveling salesman which he hates but still, is compelled to do for his family's sake: "If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents I'd have given notice long ago, I'd have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him...once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him-that should take another five or six years- I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then". However, he received no thanks for saving his family after the business collapsed. His duty towards his family, and sacrificing his dreams and desires for their sake were, as if, taken for granted.

But as soon as he metamorphosed, things instantly changed inside the family circle. People are generally afraid of what they don't understand and unable to accept what does not fit their criteria of normalcy. Thus, the transformed Gregor is no longer treated as their family member but is considered as an abominable creature, who is made to remain confined in his room. He is no longer at the center of the family. The axis of power shifts, and the other members; his father, sister and mother who gradually take up jobs to support the family, invalidate his existence. He, from being the sole provider of the family turned into a recipient of their charity. "There is now a sense that he is a burden, and he begins to submerge himself in guilt."[6]

After the metamorphosis, Gregor starts losing contact with the outside world. At first he loses his body, then his language. "The

words he uttered were no longer understandable, apparently, although they seemed clear enough to him, even clearer than before." But at first, he was overwhelmed by the fact that "people now believed that something was wrong with him, and were ready to help him. The positive certainty with which these first measures had been taken comforted him. He felt himself drawn once more into the human circle and hoped for great and remarkable results." His resolve to open the locked door of his room – "to cross the symbolic space between his private world and the shared world of commonality- should have been welcomed."[7] They should all have shouted encouragement to him but nobody did so. Instead they greeted him with a gesture of disgust, horror and fear. "His father knotted his fist with a fierce expression on his face as if he meant to knock Gregor back into his room, then looked uncertainly round the living room, covered his eyes with his hands..."

With the end of his physical metamorphosis, began his family's mental metamorphosis, especially Grete's. Gregor strived for acceptance by his family members and tried to cope up with his new form. But the more he tried to act normally like earlier times - the more he tried to play the role of a good son, a loving brother, the more is his identity denied and the more is he misunderstood, feared and distanced by his family. Whenever he emerged from his room, he was greeted with 'panic' by his mother and 'attack' by his angry and disappointed father. And in due course of time he is alienated and his existence is obliterated. Ultimately, Gregor,"who thought of his family with tenderness and love", passes away due to his suppurating wound, from the apple lodged in his side (once thrown by his father): "The first broadening of light in the world outside the window entered his consciousness once more. Then his head sank to the floor of it's own accord and from his nostrils came the last flicker of his breath."

Gregor's plight symbolizes the fate of Everyman. Perhaps, through him, Kafka wanted to portray the difficulties of existing in a modern society and the struggle for acceptance of others by an 'invalid', who gets slightly deviated from the societal criteria of normalcy. His or her life becomes as trivial and valueless as an 'insect'. As soon as his or her power to produce or provide seizes, he or she becomes insignificant (like an insect) for the others. His existence becomes a burden, even for his own family and the stable relationship between him and the others is disrupted. He gets alienated gradually, from the society, friends and family and finally dies alone in oblivion. This state reminds me of the *sloka* delivered by the ancient Hindu philosopher of the eighth century, Adi Sankaracharya, especially for the renunciates: "Ka taba kanta kaste putra sansaroyayam atiba bichitra./ Kasya tvang ba kuta ayatastvatang chintaya tadidang bhrata." [Who is your wife? Who is your son? This world is a very mysterious one. (One must practice detachment in regard to wife, sons, relatives and properties, because separation from them are certain.) Brother (a fellow seeker)! Always think of who you are and where you come from. (Only True self-understanding or 'nojabodh' is the way to attain absolute knowledge or 'Atmajnana' resulting in eternal tranquility or 'Brahmisthiti').][8]

III

However, as I have mentioned earlier, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is not just about Gregor's transformation and his predicaments. This is a story of the transformation of all the other characters, (especially Grete's) as an aftermath. As Gregor gradually progresses from being active to being passive, Grete blooms from her caterpillar like state towards being a butterfly, and her transformation too is complete with Gregor's death. Thus the story begins with one metamorphosis and ironically ends with another. It starts with the description of

Grete in a larva like state : “probably newly out of bed and hadn’t even begun to put on her clothes yet” and ends with Mr. and Mrs. Samsa’s discovery of “ their daughter’s increasing vivacity, that in spite of all the sorrow of recent times, which had made her cheeks pale, she had bloomed into a pretty girl with a good figure” and their concurrence on the subject of finding ‘a good husband for her’ soon. In response to their ‘new dreams’ she “sprang to her feet first and stretched her young body” like a butterfly shedding of its cocoon and spreading her wings after her metamorphosis.

Gregor’s reverting to infant stage paved the way for Grete’s progress to a matured stage. “With his sister alone had he remained intimate” while in his human form and thus soon after his transformation, it was she who, took care of her, bringing her “a whole selection of food, all set out on an old newspaper.” Then she started helping her mother with cooking and taking care of her parents. In the changed circumstances, Gregor’s once ‘invalid’ father who “had grown rather fat and become sluggish” took a job in some bank, his asthmatic mother started “sewing for and underwear firm”, and his sister “who was still a child of seventeen and whose life hitherto had been so pleasant, consisting as it did in dressing herself nicely, sleeping long, helping in housekeeping, going out to a few modest entertainments and above all playing the violin” took a job as a salesgirl, and “was learning shorthand and French in the evenings on the chance of bettering herself.” In due course of time she supplanted him. They got so self-involved and exhausted by their work that they could find no time “to bother about Gregor more than absolutely needful”. In Gregor’s absence Grete and her mother are drawn closer to each other. They “sat cheek by cheek; when his mother, pointing towards his room, said: ‘Shut that door now, Grete’, and he was left again in darkness, while next door the women mingled their tears or perhaps sat dry-eyed staring at the table.”

Gradually she could not manage her time to look after his brother any more "yet, with a touchiness that was new to her, which seemed anyhow to have infected the whole family, she jealously guarded her claim to be the sole caretaker of Gregor's room until the appearance of the charwoman. He by now had grown completely useless, just like the things ('for which there was no room elsewhere') which were pushed into his room by his family to vacate a room for three lodgers. Though he had even no room enough to crawl, yet he crawled out to hear his sister's violin ("Was he an animal, that music had such an effect upon him? He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved.") remembering the times when "no one here appreciated her playing as he would appreciate it."

But this time her reaction on his appearance was just the opposite. She with her authoritative voice announced "My dear parents, things can't go on like this. Perhaps you don't realize that, but I do. I won't utter my brother's name in the presence of this creature, and so all I say is: we must get rid of it. We've tried to look after it and to put up with it as far as is humanly possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest." Her denial of his identity is instantly supported and encouraged by her father but until a solution about what could be done to get rid of him could be found, she chased him to his room and "hastily pushed shut, bolted and locked" the door banishing him forever from the human society. In a way, this may be seen as Grete's confirmation of her position from the margin to the centre of the family, de centring Gregor from the position, he once held. The problem of getting rid of him, too, is automatically solved soon, with Gregor's death (due to their negligence and repulsive attitude towards him).

When the charwoman informed them that ,"it's dead; it's lying here dead and done for!", Mrs. Samsa who once cried out sympathetically: "Do let me in to Gregor, he is my unfortunate son!

Can't you understand that I must go to him?", checked 'it' and said to Mr. Samsa, "now thanks be to God." Grete whose eyes never left the corpse, said: 'Just see how thin he was. It's such a long time since he's eaten anything. The food came out again just as it went in' as if returning him, the status and identity of 'human' (she once denied), after his death. His death brought 'a tremulous smile' on her mother's face and united the family more strongly. His father regains his authoritative self and dispels the lodgers and after their exit "Mr. Samsa and the two women soon left the landing and as if a burden had been lifted from them went back into the apartment."

The family, having finally got rid of the burdens (namely Gregor and the Lodgers), "finds itself renewed and rejuvenated."[6] To celebrate their liberty, "they all three left the apartment together" to make a trip into "the open country outside the town," with a hope to "let bygones be bygones" and with a resolve to make a new life and also to change the apartment "which Gregor had selected." Thus ultimately, they successfully have managed to escape him and "subtly made him the scapegoat for their ills."[9]

IV

Kafka never explains how or what was the cause of Gregor's metamorphosis, because his intension probably was to spare the pleonasms and portray dramatically, the senses of horror, hatred, self-disgust, anguish and claustrophobia of the characters and the tensions caused in a stably structured family after a tragic incident. From the beginning, the story is concerned with Gregor's predicament, but gradually at the end, the event of his death becomes an insignificant one. For he had long been dead to his family, though alive to himself. Gregor's position resembles that of the Hunter, from another of Kafka's short stories *The Hunter Gracchus*. When the Burgomaster asks the hunter "Are you dead?" he replies in

affirmative and when the burgomaster says “But you're also alive”,he again replies:“To a certain extent I am also alive. My death ship lost it’s way...” and when asked if he had any share in “the world beyond” the hunter answered, “I am always on the immense staircase leading up to it. I roam around on this infinitely wide flight of steps, sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, always in motion. From being a hunter I’ve become a butterfly.” Gregor too, after losing his human body, was alive to a certain extent, finding a recreation in the form of “crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was much better than lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely.” From being a human he had become a ‘giant insect’ but still clinging to the memories of his previous life. His death lost its meaning because his existence itself, by the end of the novel, has become obsolete and thus the story shifts from his metamorphosis to the family’s metamorphosis. And from the ashes of a metamorphosis rises another.

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The 'us' and 'them' binarisation in *Chitrangada, The Crowning Wish*

Nilanjan Chakraborty

"I will carry on making films my own way and feel I am yet to deliver my best", says our very own Ritu Da, Rituparno Ghosh, one of the greatest independent filmmakers that Bengal or India has ever produced. This excerpt is from an interview given to NDTV movies and most unfortunately this was to be his last, as he breathed his last on 30th May, 2013 only at the age of 49. Born in a middle class family in Kolkata, Ghosh had a tremendous courage to charter out new territories in Bengali cinema- both in form and content- and established himself as one of the most respected filmmakers in the country, even though he showed no appetite for overt experimental sensationalism in his narratives. Brought up seeing the films of maestros like Satyajit Ray, RitwikGhatak and Mrinal Sen, Ghosh had a very good lineage to look up to, but he made tradition his own and infused commerce in the so called 'art movies' with fluid dexterity. Ghosh's *Chitrangada* is the last released film in his own lifetime, as he had completed the shooting of *Satyanwesi* but did not live to see its release. *Chitrangada* is a film that is a reworking of a dance drama of Rabindranath Tagore by the same name, and one must remember that the story of Chitrangada, the princess has its origin in the classical epic of Mahabharata. In that way, Ghosh's film becomes a text of "second order signified", but Rituparno Ghosh is far more inclined to use Tagore's dance drama as the sub-text than going to the myth of Mahabharata, involving Arjuna and the princess of Manipur, Chitrangada. According to Rudra, the main protagonist in the film

(played by Rituparno Ghosh himself), *Chitrangada* is a story of "wish fulfilment" since Godhead Shiva had given the 'blessing' that no female would be born in the royal family, but despite that Chitrangada is born. She however is brought up like a 'man', expert in the field of warfare but grows weak the moment she meets the charming Arjuna, then roaming in the forests as Pandavas were exiled by Duryodhana, the head prince of the Kauravas. The gendered dialectics of the inside/outside, male/female, domestic/political can be deciphered from the entire account as Chitrangada is forced to hide her identity, her gender and 'become' someone else in order to fulfil the masculine lust for a male heir. This becomes a parallel motif in the story of Rudra, the dancer who wants to resist the masculine construct of 'maleness' because he is a gay and falls in love with Partha. Rudra's romance with Partha is not only a narrative of sexual resistance, but is replete with social protest as well since Partha is a drug addict but Rudra feels a deep attraction for Partha, perhaps identifying himself with Partha's pain of marginalisation and society's de-identification of the gay community.

Rituparno Ghosh's film is experimentation in the realm of time and space and the director, in his signature style frequently moves back and forth in narrative chronology in order to construct a postmodern dissemination of time. The film represents basically three spaces- the mythical space of Chitrangada (which for Ghosh is more the text of Tagore than *Mahabharat*), the present time frame of Rudra who is going through a gender reorientation programme in a hospital, and the 'past' of Rudra and his affair with Partha. What is therefore worth mentioning is that time itself becomes a frame by which the third gender has been represented by the director. In talking about the "mythical time", Isidore Okpewho writes:

"It is therefore important to establish that when the narrator

counterbalances the 'pastness' of his tale by giving it a contemporary stamp, he is not merely dragging it from one extreme to the other but seeking a balance which frees the tale from any kind of commitment to determinable time… But the ideal of the mythmaking effort remains one in which the narrator manages not to overstrain our sense either of the pastness or of the presentness of the tale" (Okpewho, 1983:105).

Myth, by its very inception, problematises time since time becomes a functionality by which the context of the tale is established. Ghosh uses the text of Tagore as the first order signified in order to signify a time-space continuum, where the third gender can be looked at from a different perspective- not one of repression, but of acceptance. The 'hegemony' of the 'normal' is a restrictive socio-political order that marginalises the members of the LGBT community, and Ghosh's protest is against such 'de-humanisation' of the gay community and that of the transgenders. So the myth of Chitrangada creates a circular format in the construction of the text of the cinema, the narrative repeatedly goes back to the myth as a reference to a 'point of origin', an origin of the history of repression. The body of Rudra becomes a political site of negation of 'identity' that is imposed by the heteronormative structure of the society. Heteronormativity will have its own repressive policies, but what Ghosh essentially wants to represent is the trauma that such marginalised people go through while negotiating their space within a homophobic society. In fact the opening title says that "Tagore's Chitrangada is an Amazon warrior on a quest to discover her gender identity" and then it adds "From this work of Tagore comes a very personal interpretation". Ghosh mentions also that in the "original" text of Mahabharata, Chitrangada is mentioned just as a princess who was "besotted to Arjun" (*Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, Shree Venkatesh Films Pvt. Ltd.). once again, the concept of time becomes crucial is constructing

the politics of negation, as the text of Mahabharata negates the fact that a 'woman' was brought up as a 'man', and Tagore gave it some gender reading to transform a 'woman' to a 'warrior', which is traditionally a space for the Kshatriya 'male'. The film opens with a doble gaze- the gaze of Rudra on his 'past' when he was considered as the 'male' and the gaze of the audience interpreting the tale of Rudra in reference to Tagore's dance drama. The background music is typically that of a war clarion, something that Ghosh uses as a text from the popular culture to denote the space of the 'male', as the "queer" Rudra/Chitrangada intrudes that space of gender stereopyfication to create the subversion. It is also interesting that Arjun meets Chitrangada in Manipur when he is in the midst of practicing twelve years of celibacy, but he is tempted to Chitrangada when she takes the form of a "feminine woman", which is itself an act of gender and sexual subversion.

Body is one of the problematic sites of cultural signifiers, since stereopyfication starts with such "bodily discourses" that hinder the naturalisation of the 'normal'. The question really is what is normal? Deconstructing the body as a problematic text, can be, as Bryan Turner argues, "a fleshy discourse within which the power relations in society can be both in-terpreted and sustained" (1996: 27).

Therefore the very hegemony of the 'normal' is a power discourse that practices the marginalisation of the third gender as diabolical. While debating the issue, Rudra's mother observes that she and her husband had all throughout known about the *"sotti"*, the "truth", which they have constantly negated in order to engage with the heteronormative narrative of the society. In fact she considers their insistence on a boy should "become" like a "boy" as abnormal since "normality" is defined by "nature". The nature/nurture dialectics is as old as human civilisation perhaps, and the struggle against such societal repression is also a narrative of counter struggle that is

eternal. Words like "boy", "girl", "man", "woman" are all embodiments of power relation constructed by patriarchy, but classical feminism has approached such binaries as a pre-determined truth, which negates the possibility of existence of the LGBT community. The struggle of the "female" against the "male" presupposes a heterosexual culture where the bodily existence of the people like Rudra becomes an absent motif, an epistemological blank that make the marginalisation almost "apolitical" since it does not even "exist". Rudra's struggle is as much with society, as with his own self, since the film is also about the architectonics of identity formation. Identity formation in *Chitrangada* is not a simple thesis of coming to terms with the self, but is rooted also in the politics of how body is treated as a site of political discourse by heteronormative patriarchy. As Susan Bordo argues in her essay *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*:

"The body is not only a text of culture. It is also, as anthropologist PierreBourdieu and philosopher Michel Foucault (among others) have argued, a practical, direct locus of social control" (Bordo, web)

Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* critiques the panoptic structure of prisons as the microcosmic representation of the State's gaze which constantly keeps a vigilance over the movement of the citizens in order to castrate the citizens to near submission to the power of the State.[1] Rudra is not only an object of scrutiny by the society, but also of his own self since gender reversion not only engages the body with biological changes, but also with cultural and psychic transformations in the form of shifting identities. An interesting narrative interjection is introduced through the character of Subho, the psychotherapist who helps Rudra to come to terms with the shifting identities and floating personas as he goes through the whole

process of gender reorientation. However it later turns out that Subho is an 'absent motif', who does not exist in the empirical consciousness, but he is more of a hallucinatory principle. As Stinson puts it, hallucinations are"internal mental events, such as cognitions, which are perceived by the individual to be of a nonselforigin" (Stinson et. al, 2009).Subho is the "nonself origin" to whom Rudra confesses his self, investing all the anxieties that he carries within himself. Rudra's body becomes the site of societal, gender as well as emotional struggle, as he tries to become a "woman" technically in order to adopt a child with Partha. In this film, the idea of "family" itself has been critiqued as a gender stereopyfication, since the parents must belong to the binaries of "male" and "female" in order to become the "father" and the "mother"respectively. The very cult of parenthood is based on the premise of gender heteronormativity, and this is what Rudra points out, when he says that *"amra Elton John er deshe thakina" (*we don't live in the land of Elton John) hinting at the relative gender sensitisation in the West. However, it also seems that Rudra is quite a traditional person when it comes to the existence of man as a subject within the discourse of a family. When a friend comes to meet Rudra, she clearly hints at the maverick nature of Partha and whether he at all will be able to provide Rudra with a "family". Family, as is constructed by social praxis, is a unit of moral codifications, the primary of which is sexual. It presupposes the idea that the partners would live with each other forever, the implication being that the concerned partners (essentially of heterosexual leaning) would exercise sexual celibacy outside. What problematises Rudra's narrative is his challenge at the heterosexual normativity of "family", and at the other hand, his acceptance of sexual morality that is "required" to construct a family. The friend of Rudra casts aspersions as to whether Partha would at all live with him "forever", since *"songsar"* (family) is not that easy to build up, especially when

it involves homosexual partners. The IPC 377 of the Indian State criminalises any sexual activity that goes "against the order of nature" (IPC, web) and this was a colonial rule that came into existence in 1860. Without going into the narrative of colonial politics and the postcolonial resistance against it, it can be observed that this law has been used to maintain, what many would say, the "cultural fabric" of India, without understanding the history of sexual politics in India and how homophobia is indeed a by-product of Victorian middle class morality, which was transported to India through colonial narratives. "Nature" is perhaps the most abused word in the history of ideas, every narrator discerning his own idea of "nature" and imposing that as "natural". Rudra's mother quotes the Bengali word *"swabhab"*, to delineate the condition of society and its repressive policies. This word can be roughly translated as "nature" and she makes a valid point that *"jar jaswabhab, setai toh swabhabik"*, that is, the nature of every person should be considered as natural. In a way, this narrative also seems normative in the sense that every person is then essentialised as an object of "nature", which opens up newer possibilities of gender stereopyfication, but is better than the present model of relegating everything into the binary of "natural" and "unnatural".

Through technical mastery, Ghosh uses the various forms of visual and auditory representations to form texts at different planes to discern the sexual marginalisation of Rudra. Perhaps Rudra does not like the cultural/social essentialisation that goes with the tag "LGBT" community. Gender is what we are and since gender in the postmodern times is no longer a noun but a verb, representation of gender is equally a dynamic text that constructs the various facets of gender in non-binary or non essentialised formats. Judith Butler observes:

"The domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in

advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representation can be extended" (Butler, 1990: 2).

Representational politics therefore is in the field of the construction of a subject, this subject is the non-binary loci of social functionalism. The fundamental approach to a text maybe constructed from the perspective of a loci of commitment, that is, textuality that comes back to the question of subject itself as a commitment to the function of the text. The function of the "text" of *Chitrangada* is to repeatedly come back to the position of the subject, Rudra, who is the central loci in the functionality of the text. By 'central loci', we mean that Rudra is the subject that causes the text to happen, and in a way, he is the identity that problematises the binarisation of 'men' and 'women', not as a third gender, but as a legal subject of the State who has to go through the pains of a gender reorientation programme, because his country does not accept the presence of any citizen who can adopt children by being in a homosexual relationship. To come back to the representational politics of Ghosh, what he does masterfully is to use even music as a text of social resistance. When Rudra proposes to Partha that he should "change" his "sex" in order to facilitate the adoption, the audience can hear the background music of *shanai* or *shehnai*, which is a traditional music that is associated with Indian marriages. Since the institution of marriage itself is strictly heteronormative, every other symbols or visual/auditory representations presuppose the monolith that it is "natural" that a "man" "marries" a "woman". In Rudra's space, gender is subverted and the *shehnai* in the background is a political statement against the homophobia of society, but it also aesthetically creates the mood of pathos since the audience can relate

to the emotional trauma that Rudra goes through as a result of social marginalisation.As we have seen already, the sub-text of Tagore constantly interpellates the main text of the film, and the trauma of Rudra is co-related with the marginalisation that Chitrangada, the princess might have gone through. Rudra throws a question to his dance troupe, and in a meta-theatrical way perhaps to the audience- what would have been the reaction of the court (symbol of patriarchal aristocracy) and the king (who had ordered that his daughter should be brought up as a 'male') when the princess, who was conceived as a 'prince', walked in as a 'woman' after her transformation. It is to be remembered that in Tagore's text, Chitrangada is transformed from *Kuroopa* (a bad looking woman, hence almost 'ungendered' from the male gaze perspective) to *Suroopa* (good looking woman, hence the implicative binary of *Kuroopa*) by the blessings of Kamdev, the God of sensuality and bodily pleasures. Same question perhaps haunts Rudra's mind- what will be the reaction of society when he changes his sex. His father hesitates to call Rudra *chele* or male, and the nurse in his cabin calls him "Sir" which makes it more difficult for Rudra to come to terms with the reorientation of his gender. He asks the latter to call him just Rudra. This is where Ghosh triumphs as an artist- an artist no matter how political he is, is always tempered by the Other, the alternative questions that are often forgotten in political activism. Subho, the hypnotic Other self of Rudra asks why is he negating the identity of a woman by asking everyone to call him Rudra, since he is becoming a "woman" technically, even if he refuses to wear salwarkameez or sarees, the dress representation of a "woman". Is he not so sure about his mental preparation about his gender change? Is he really comfortable with his 'self'- or does he negate the presence of either a "man" or a "woman" in his self? Or is he simply scared of facing a society that is so homophobic and completely averse to ideas of sex change? Ghosh's triumph as a filmmaker is exactly here- he

goes much beyond the jargons of political activism and makes his films as a projection of human drama where the characters are protesting against certain social normativity, but they have their own psychic insecurities and fears that are a part of any human subject. Hence when Ghosh establishes the validity of the human subject through its vulnerability, the textual representation also increases their ambit to discern the human subject in all its psychic debilitations.

The denouement is reached with a further problematisation of the identity crisis that Rudra has been suffering from all throughout. Partha leaves Rudra for Kasturi, a "female" in the dance troupe f Rudra, evidently therefore pointing out that Partha is bisexually inclined. Partha becomes insensitive to the trauma of Rudra, denouncing him as a "plastic woman" and announcing his preference for a "real woman". Partha's betrayal causes more loneliness and psychological complications for Rudra since he does not know how exactly his self should be defined after he is left alone to suffer the gender isolation. Partha's sudden exit from his life causes Rudra to go into a state of schizophrenic delusions; he often gets 'sms' esin his cell phone which he considers as coming from an "unknown number" but is later discovered, they were all from Partha. Rudra perhaps enter into a problematic relation between the signifier, his self, and the signified, his gender identity, which does not seem to be working on the same plane. The same man who was so energetic in the process of cultural production of Tagore now seems deluded and in a state of psychic trauma. Rudra had invested his self onto Partha, and once he is no longer a part of his existence, that self suffers from tremendous isolation and loneliness. Rudra is the archetypal victim of the consuming social praxes that consumes the 'market' of homophobia in order to justify the representation of straight men as the acceptable lot. The body of Rudra goes through a series of

biological changes that involve hormonal, skin and sexual changes but the question that comes out though the movie is what is the reaction of all these changes in the identity of the person who is challenging social codifications and yet is falling prey to the heteronormative binaries. Becoming a "woman" from a "man" is moving from one binarised discourse to the other, and Rudra discovers through his gender reorientation that what he need is not this but to become an identity by "itself" "which" does not take part in the narrative of the "he" or the "she". In a capitalist economy of consumption, even LGBT gender identity is consumed as the Other which does not pay much heed to the politics of marginalisation that is ingrained in such social activism. The mother of Rudra claims copyright over her "son's" body, since she is the creator of that body and hence she claims to have the right to know everything before that body is changed to something else. What she fails to understand however is that it is not the "body" which is undergoing the change, but the "subject" which is being modified. Social violence need not always be 'violent', strict binaries are enough to create a ban on the integration of a "subject" to the social mainstream. So the film ends as a statement against such social violence that is always keen to construct binaries in the name of identity formation. Rudra decides to stop the gender reorientation programme and requests the doctor to take back his body to where it was. The "subject" demands that it should not be changed, it will stay as it is as a statement of social/ideological resistance. The struggle is not to change the "subject" but to make people accept it as it is. The film ends in a note of the second order signified by going back to Tagore's dance drama where Suroopa goes back to become Kuroopa once again after Arjuna leave Manipur, since the "subject" order needs to stay where it was. The music of Tagore is used as a text of replenishment, as the background score sounds *"Nutan praan dao pranosokha"* (Grant me

a new life, oh Lord). The scene that takes place on the beach is a supreme aesthetic and visionary take on Rudra's final assertion of his "subject", in a moment of surrealism, Rudra's hospital cabin is transported beside the sea at dawn. Subho (here his other self that merges with the text of the 'subject') helps him to come to terms with his self that is much beyond the dichotomies of gender, social repression and jibes at his "feminine" body language. As the dawn breaks, the audience also participates in the liberation of Rudra's self into the space of individuality, reconciliation and transcendence. The doctor calls Partha (Rudra remembers the number but fails to connect it objectively with Partha) and the latter says that Rudra should do what he wants to, since it his "wish". Rudra had asked his troupe members to interpret Tagore's dance drama as "a story of wish fulfilment", a wish of a patriarch to 'male' hi daughter and the wish of that 'male' to become a 'woman' after falling in love with the warrior prince in exile. Rudra's own life now becomes a narrative of wish fulfilment, his "crowning wish" to not to tamper with his "subject" that is not repressed by the heteronormative binaries. As the stage curtain opens to discern the rollback of Rudra, the audience appreciates the aesthetic statement that Rituparno Ghosh makes regarding the body of Rudra that refuses to alter its signifying capacity to sustain and satisfy the hegemony of heteronormativity.

Notes

1 For Further reference of Foucault's Discipline and Punish, see http://www.foucault.info/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault.disciplineandpunish.panopticism.html. 07-10-13. 12:50. Web

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Treatment of Supernatural spaces by Satyajit Ray

Nabanita Das

Representing supernatural beings in fiction has been a method well adopted, utilised and exploited by authors in all languages. In Bengali fiction supernatural beings and spaces have been depicted in different forms and figures by all major authors. This representation can be traced back to *Thakumar Jhuli* where the ghosts delineated where over proportionate creatures with large limbs or even deformed body parts such as elongated tails, nails, or limbs good enough to arouse terror amongst children only. With time, the presentation of the supernatural underwent a distinctive alteration. Here the authors represented 'the unknown', 'the other' the 'outer space' and the inner conflicting image of man's own psyche to be the supernatural. Satyajit Ray, the master story teller of modern Bengali fiction, was extremely fascinated by this genre and has gifted Bengali literature his share of supernatural stories. Satyajit Ray's ghost stories fail to be a part of the juvenilia only and for its psychosomatic content, it is well accepted among the aged also.

Ray's supernatural stories are about 25 in number; mainly clustered in three sections. The first set of stories are from the collection of *Professor Shanku* and his experiences; the second section includes stories narrated by the adventure freak, Tarini Khuro from *Tarinikhuror Kirtikalap* and the third section includes short stories written in different collections, penned by him such as *Ek Dajan Galpa, Aro Ek Dajan* and *Aro Baro*.

Ray's ghosts are in varied forms. In some stories, the supernatural presences are demonic figures, in some they are thousand year old

unsatisfied souls and in some they are unreal, uncanny presences, appearing through planchette. In Prof. Shanku's stories, the method of planchette has been delineated. In Tarini Khuro's stories, ghosts have appeared in different environments. The ghosts have sometimes appeared on the backdrop of a historical plot, sometimes on the background of a capitalist narrative in a burned down dilapidated house or at times in a narrative on family duel. In Tarini Khuro's stories, an unexpected skeleton figure appears in an artist's studio arousing considerable amount of thrill and horror among the readers. In *Tarinikhuror Kirtikalap*, the supernatural creatures are weird and fascinating. The supernatural beings present in his other collections are also worth mentioning. They include horror tales of ghost figures who are comical and friendly. There are animal ghosts, statue ghosts, vampires, and souls of dead people in Ray's paranormal stories. In *Telephone*, the eerie sound acts as the supernatural presence. According to the convention, the supernatural beings are objects of fear to the living world. The beings inhabiting the living world are supposed to be afraid of the creatures who inhabit the supernatural space. Satyajit Ray breaks this convention by introducing the timid ghost in *Ramdhaner Bashi* who is afraid of a human being.

In *Professor Shanku's* collection of stories, we encounter four supernatural presences. Professor Shanku is a scientist who has dedicated his life for the cause of scientific research and invention. However, his scientific bent of mind is coupled with the urge to solve the unknown mysteries of the world. He believes in ghosts, demons, witches and even clairvoyance. In *Professor Shanku O Bhoot*, the protagonist uses his laboratory as a trap to attract ghosts. In order to do so, Shanku creates an environment conducive for it. However the instruments used to set the artificial environment, run out of control and the soul of the Shanku's forefather descends uninvited in the laboratory, wishing to shake hands with Shanku. Here the presence of

the supernatural does not arouse fear in the mind of the readers but brings a smile on their faces. In *Hipnogen*, the protagonist is a devil possessed scientist who even after his death, does not give up his diabolical behaviour. Similarities may be found with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with this story. In *Shanku's Paralokcharcha*, Ray has depicted planchette. In the process of planchette, major figures of history have appeared revealing hidden unknown truths of the past. The souls of Shakespeare, Hitler, Sirajuddullah have been called upon. At the end of this fascinating narrative, the calling of the extinct species Pterodactyl horrifies the reader considerably. However, *Shankur Subarnasujog* is a psychological narrative referring to alchemist and on man's eternal love for gold.

Tarini Khuro in *Tarinikhuror Kirtikalap* is an expert story-teller; smart, adventurous, intelligent and a workaholic. In all his narrated stories, he plays a major role. Among the five stories of Tarini Khuro, Lucknow's Duel is most read and celebrated. The story is set in Lucknow where Tarini Khuro happens to buy a pair of antique dueling rifles in an auction. Surprisingly, the next day, an unknown Anglo visitor, narrates a story of a duel, fought 150 years ago with the same kind of a pair of rifles. The duel was fought between Captain Charles Bruss and John Elliworth an English artist, for a beautiful lady Annabella. The visitor informs Tarini that every 16th October the duel is performed and if he wants to watch it, he can accompany him. When Tarini visits the Dilkhusha area along with the Anglo visitor, he witnesses the two brave hearts, fighting the duel. Tarini is surprised to see the same rifle in the hands of the English men that he had bought from auction. Captain Charles and artist John are accompanied by their seconds Hue Drummond and Philip Maxon. With the instruction to fire, Captain Charles slays John immediately, while Annabella murders Charles, to be united with Hue Drummond, her lover. In a moment, the Anglo visitor, who had accompanied

Tarini, transforms into an English gentleman, introducing himself as Hue Drummond and vanishes into thin air. When Tarini returns home, trying to reject the whole incident as a figment of imagination, he opens the box containing the dueling rifles, only to smell fresh gunpowder. The narrative is a superb example of English chivalry, reminiscent of the stories heard about the supernatural presences in the castles and palaces on England.

Supernatural presences are not always malevolent. This idea has been established by Ray in 'Maharaj Tarinikhuro' also. This is a narrative on personality transference. In this story, Tarini replaces an insane ruler and enacts his role during the time of his treatment. During this tenure, an English gentleman, visits the kingdom and wishes to buy precious objects from the ruler. One night, Tarini is visited by the soul of the ruler's father who tells Tarini about an inauspicious gem that needs to be sold out of the land. Tarini sells that stone to the English gentleman who eventually dies in a plane crash. Here the supernatural presence is benevolent that tries to save the ruler and the kingdom from an inauspicious curse.

In 'Dhumalagarer Hunting Lodge' the story revolves around family disputes and thirst for power which instigates the younger brother to kill his elder sibling. When Tarini enters the scenario to investigate, the younger brother tries to manipulate him by impersonating as a ghost. However, the ghost of the dead brother enters the scene, kills his brother and fulfills his revenge.

In his other collection of short stories, the presence of horror can be felt. *Badur O Bibhishika* is a story on vampires. The narrator is an archaeologist who is researching on the works of terracotta on Bengal's temples. He is scared of bats, but as destiny would have it, a bat makes a nest near his ceiling. Meanwhile, the narrator has befriended a weird man who narrates to him, stories about bloodthirsty vampires. The man is generally found in cemeteries at

night and can see very well in the dark, matching the qualities of bats. The narrator, in his dream sees the man to have transformed into a vampire, sucking blood from the dead human bodies. This horror tale excites the faculties of imagination of the readers and the information, about the man's insanity does not convince the reader completely.

Fritz is a horror tale based on a German doll. Six year-old Jayant is overjoyed to receive a human look alike German doll. He spends hours conversing with the doll and feels that even the doll understands his words. Jayant thinks that if he had known deutsch, he would have been able to talk to him. Unfortunately, when the pet dog destroys the doll completely, Jayant gives a ceremonial burial to it and the emotional attachment between them gets severed. After many years, when Jayant visits his old house, Fritz's ghost appears in front of him. When the burial of the German doll is excavated a human skeleton in the form of a doll is rescued from the burial ground. This narrative poses many questions thereafter. Was Fritz a human being converted to doll through black magic? Did he return to show his love for Jayant? This narrative definitely brings the two spaces very close to each other with the concept of love.

In *Brown Saheber Bari* the ghosts of an English man and his pet cat, Simon project the idea that the bond shared by them was eternal, even after their death and even beyond it.

Ray in *Ratanbabu Ar Sei Lokta* represent man's own psyche to be the supernatural. Mr. Ratan is a lonely man working for Geological Survey. Since he does not mix with people much and loves to lead a solitary life, he travels in short successions. In the story, during the Pujas, Ratan visits Tatanagar and checks in a hotel at Sini Street. Surprisingly he encounters a person, Manimay, who is exactly like him in appearance and behaviour. Manimay's gait, his way of talking, his gestures, his birthday, his life history is similar to him. Ratan, with

the presence of a duplicate, feels insecure and uneasy. According to him, his sole identity is at stake. Therefore he decides to kill Manimay. One evening, both of them walk towards the rail bridge, and when the train is about to arrive, Ratan pushes Manimay from behind and he dies. The society adjudges Manimay's death to be a suicide and Ratan feels relieved. After few days, Ratan visits the same bridge alone and finds a box, stuck at the railing. When the train is about to arrive, someone pushes Ratan, exactly in the same manner he had pushed Manimay, and he too dies. Who had pushed Ratan? Was it the ghost of Manimay? Does a person, named Manimay truly exist, or is it Ratan's alter ego? Ratan was an alienated man, and therefore was he destined to die in the hands of the supernatural? Ray does not mention the presence of ghost anywhere in the story. The narrative revolves around the psychology of Ratan.

In *Telephone*, the use of eerie sounds, silences, creepy music arouse the haunting effect. The ringing telephone, the calling bell tone and the footsteps at stairs are elements used to increase fear. The reference to any supernatural being is not present in the narrative. In *Ramdhaner Bashi* the ghost of Ramdhan is afraid of human beings as he was, when alive. The comic element of the story reaches its peak, when the ghost, when encountered by living human beings, is unable to fathom the reason of his fear.

Satyajit Ray, in his collection of short stories on ghosts, has explored the genre extensively. He has explored different facets of the supernatural and how it has continuously tried to build a relation between the two spaces.

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In Search of Absent Presence(s): The Narrative as Disnarrated Space in Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel*

Sonal Kapur

> Wandering through the gradual galleries
> I often feel with vague and holy dread
> I am that other dead one, who attempted
> The same uncertain steps on similar days.
> Which of the two is setting down this poem—
> A single sightless self, a plural I?
>
> (Borges, Poem of the Gifts)

"A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say," wrote Italo Calvino in his 1991 essay "Why Read a Classic?" *(The Uses of Literature* 125). *The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights*[1], a concoction of scintillating tales, is one such book. Of uncertain authorship, date, and geographical location, the book serves as one of the earliest and classic examples of the art of traditional storytelling. Following the technique of a frame narrative, the tales have proven to be shape shifting and transcultural. The history of their creation and evolution is a complex albeit pyrotechnic labyrinth of compilations, modifications, translations, variants and scholarly revisions, which forms an indispensable chapter in folkloristics[2]. The main, umbrella frame story that inaugurates the book's fascinating storytelling enterprise narrates the, now well-known, story of Scheherazade who resorts to storytelling in an attempt to ward off her impending decapitation at the hands of King

Shahryar. Betrayed by one woman, the king devises a blood-curdling revenge strategy: find a fresh virgin each day, marry her for the night, and behead her the next morning. This set into motion an almost endless mechanism, whereby, the virgins, one after another, lost their virginity and their heads until Scheherazade, the wazir's elder daughter, the glib and mesmerising storyteller, marries the king and succeeds in taming the executioner's axe. Captivating the king within the intricately woven web of her myriad stories, she narrates a fascinating tale every night for a thousand and one nights. These one thousand and one nights of storytelling culminates into a moment of redemption for the king and one of emancipation for Scheherazade and the other remaining virgins. King Shahryar abandons his macabre plan and is reconciled to womankind; Scheherazade successfully saves the lives of other women along with her own and earns for herself a well-deserved place as a saviour and a raconteuse in the annals of folk memory[3].A perfunctory reading posits the narrative as a relatively uncomplicated and quite charming tale of betrayal, salvation and the happily ever after, enriched with several sub stories which add to the central frame story's entertainment value. A closer reading, per contra, tears through the story's contrived simplicity and specious closure. Over the years, the vast trajectory of compilations, translations, and scholarly research that *The Arabian Nights* has traversed, establishes the polysemic nature of the book, which has an inexhaustible capacity to illuminate the, hitherto, hidden, forsaken, or undiscovered, dark corners of the labyrinth that it is. These hidden, invisible absent presence(s) are what Githa Hariharan explores in her book, *When Dreams Travel*, a brilliantly evocative and powerfully written variant of *The Arabians Nights*. Its narrative proper begins at the point where its predecessor's suppositiously ends: on the other side of the thousand and one nights of ceaseless storytelling and delves into the beyond of the preceding

narrative's presumed 'happily ever after'.

> Mirrors are filled with people.
> The invisible see.
> The forgotten recall us.
> When we see ourselves, we see them.
> When we turn away, do they? (Galeano 1)

A narrative work is woven around a pivotal storyline and it is particularly so in the case of a frame narrative. In a frame narrative, the central story enables to string together multifarious sub narratives. The central frame story of *The Arabian Nights* is a case in point. Like its master storyteller Scheherazade, however, it is an elusive creature, a mirror that reflects and refracts in turn. Hariharan uses this play of reflection and refraction to, imaginatively, knit her narrative with those voices, implicitly present but furtively hiding or hidden behind the singular voice of Scheherazade. Dunyazad, Scheherazade's younger sister, and Dilshad, a young slave girl, (a new introduction to the age-old narrative), are the peripheral voices, eithersilent or entirely unknown, that Hariharan reclaims or creates and gives a voice to. Instead of Scheherazade, the whole story revolves around Dunyazad's journey to find out about her elder sister's mysterious disappearance or even apparent death, which she suspects to be a murder. She meets Dilshad who becomes her companion on this expedition and the past, the present, and the future turn fluxional, coalescing with and diverging from one another, as they exchange dreams and memories through mutual storytelling:"For seven nights and days there are dreams in mirrors, mirrors in their dreams. There is a festering memory in Dunyazad's story of the night. Dilshad or Satyasama take this pulpy, oozing memory and transform it in the hard and relentless light of day" (118).Their stories not only give rise to a polyphonic text but one that serves as an interesting and sui generis example of a self-reflexive,

imaginative narrative space based on 'what might have been'.When speaking of space in narratology, a distinction needs to be made between literal and metaphorical uses of the concept[4]. Forms of textual/narrative spatiality include spatial frames, setting, story space, narrative world and narrative universe[5].In Hariharan's narrative these spatial forms function through the 'disnarrated', a significant concept in narrative theory introduced by Gerald Prince in 1988.*Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory states*:

> As delineated by Prince, the disnarrated comprises those elements in a narrative which explicitly consider and refer to what does not take place(but could have). It can pertain to a character's unrealized imaginings (incorrect beliefs, crushed hopes, false calculations, erroneous suppositions), to a path not followed by the events recounted, or to a narrative strategy not exploited. (118)

If narrative is appertained to the telling, the disnarrated is concerned with the tellability. In other words, the disnarrated underscores whether a narrative is worth narrating or telling. "This narrative is worth telling because it *could have been* otherwise, because it normally is otherwise, because it was not otherwise"("Disnarrated"). By focusing on what does not happen but could or should have happened; or perhaps, should not have happened, the disnarrated creates an alternative narrative space which provides new perspectives to look at a text and renders it open to greater imaginative visibility. In *When Dreams Travel*, the disnarrated functions at multiple levels. To begin with, Dunyazad and Dilshad's stories, as the projections of unactualised possibilities and unexplored dreams and desires, stem from disnarrated space(s). "[They] travel, reinventing their lives and bodies and, in the process, mirroring and distorting the reality created by Shahrzad, so that the

past and future are reconstructed by the sheer determination of wishes, dreams and the memories of those dreams" (Biscaia 127).

In' Nine Jewels for a Rani' (134-149), Dilshad's first story, she narrates the story of Satyasama of Eternal City, considered a freak by the city's inhabitants. Possessing a furry face and a simian appearance, she is an outcast. Cruelly re-named Monkey-Face, she resides on a peepal tree. One night, a lightning strikes the tree. As a consequence, she turns blind in the right eye but she acquires a power of reasoning and a set of values quite unlike those of her city. She is now completely alienated from the others, both physically and intellectually. She continues to reside on the lightning struck tree and takes to singing, becoming a perfect candidate for a public freak-show. Eventually, the sultan buys her and she becomes a part of his harem. She falls in love with a eunuch who becomes her poetic muse. She is able to survive only by performing in some spectacle but once the sultan's interest in her begins to wane, she withers away, gradually growing silent with the execution of the eunuch she loved. The peepal tree she resided on is hacked followed by the chopping off Satyasama's limbs one by one. All that remained of her was a mutilated mess. Even then,"She will refuse death though she is bereft of her friend the rani. She will resist succumbing to the relief of silence, its escape from pain and hatred, as long as that moan continues" (149). Satyasama's tale becomes a symbol of survival, an unfulfilled desire of resistance, of emancipation, for Dilshad, the slave-girl. Hariharan subtly posits Dilshad as the representative voice of King Shahryar's harem, a site of his power politics. Through Dilshad, she projects the disnarrated possibility of a subaltern resistance to tyranny and exploitation. In a masterstroke, Hariharan brings this possibility to a full circle by designing a hypothetical situation within the text where Shahryar is deposed and imprisoned by his son, Umar, and suggests the elusive slave-girl, Dilshad's role

'in wresting power from one sultan,[and] vesting it in another'(114), finally winning for herself freedom to start life afresh. Satyasama's tale also becomes a potential disnarrated device through which Dilshad endeavours to help Dunyazad (and, by implication, Hariharan attempts to help the readers) resolve the various possibilities involved in Shahrzad's mysterious disappearance, absence, or death. Like Satyasama, Shahrzad too, thrived on having an audience for her storytelling. With the thousand and one nights of storytelling over, what fate could have awaited her? Surely, the prodigal storyteller who had so successfully 'cheated the regal sword' (23) in the past, would have desisted from succumbing to it in the present. Did she then, like Satyasama, refused to go silent? What could have happened to her? Perhaps, 'she too has learnt the lessons of the tales she told' (25) and has become a 'permanent fugitive' (25); '…now a myth that must be sought in many places, fleshed in different bodies, before her dreams let go of Dunyazad or her descendants'(25).

A pivotal narrator of Hariharan's narrative, Dunyazad, too, weaves a narrative out of the disnarrated space. She "stalks the old Shahrzad story with wary devotion, drawing obsessive rings round it like a predatory lover. She sees all memories and visions through this one prism" (116).Keeping Shahrzad's story as her point of reference, she examines 'minutely, zealously, from every point of view that occurs to her' (116), seeking stories in the absent presence(s): a pregnant Shahrzad in her story "Rowing a Floating Island" (121-133); a dying Shahryar in "A Lover, a Tomb"(150-161); her father, the wazir in anguish in "Three Scenes and a Father" (168-176), her psychotic and possessed husband Shahzaman, Shahryar's younger brother in "The Adventures of a Sultan" (189-200), a young Prince Umar in "The Palace Thief"(215-225); and even a story about Dilshad in "The Slavegirl's Palace" (233-245). Since her stories do not discount the

original story, we can safely claim that they do not fall in the category of denarration[6]. The stories neither occupy the non-narrated / unnarrated[7] space nor qualify as the unnarratable[8]. Woven around that which does not occur but could or should have occurred, the stories are instances of the disnarrated. They recount roads not taken, choices not made, and goals not reached ("Disnarrated"). Among the stories, "Three Scenes and a Father" serves as an excellent example of the rhetorical function of the disnarrated space. The story is a hypothetical imagining on Dunyazad's part about the moral anguish the wazir, a father of two daughters, one of whom he were to sacrifice at the blood-thirsty altar of the sultan, must have undergone. Composed of three phantasmagorical sub-episodes of allegorical import, the story highlights the choices made and those abandoned. In the first episode, the wazir finds himself in a vast desert, "alone in the face of an impending storm" (169). He walks on and eventually stumbles upon an "opal-hued pool" (169), dips his face in the water and, as he pulls out his face, he gasps to discover a "whole population of dismembered bodily parts, pickled in a vicious fluid," (171). "All of female Shahabad seems to be represented in this hellish oasis" (171) and among those body parts, he comes across "the capable hand of his first-born" (172). He kisses it tenderly, slips it back into the pool and, without turning back, walks away from it. For now, the wazir has won over the father. A choice made, a decision taken. In the second episode, the wazir quickly buries his eldest daughter in a pit he digs in his courtyard. The sultan's messenger arrives and asks the talking house if it houses a female virgin. The house responds in the negative and the wazir heaves a sigh of relief. It seems, at this stage, the father wins the battle back from the wazir. This paternal triumph, nonetheless, is short-lived. As soon as the messenger departs, the wazir removes the mud covering the pit, only to discover "a plump white goat that looks at him with limpid eyes" (174), instead of his

daughter. The third episode unfolds with the wazir running across the desert for it is "time for him to make his offering to his hungry god" (174). His god ordains, "Remember, only something you love will fill my stomach with your devotion" (175). The wazir lights a fire and begins to cook the goat he had discovered in the courtyard of his house. "The goat, the wazir's daughter, is now cooked meet" (175). The disnarrated reveals the worth of telling a narrative not only because it could have been otherwise but sometimes also because it was not otherwise. By imaginatively constructing her father's moral dilemma and internal conflict, Dunyazad underscores the choice he could have made and the one he made because it could not have been otherwise in a rigid patriarchal, authoritarian world where women were condemned to the fate of sacrificial scapegoats, a world, whose inegalitarian values, find a strong echo even today. The story also functions as an instance of Hariharan's use of the disnarrated as a narrative strategy to effectively expose the power equations within a patriarchal world and the consequences it entails.

> The thousand and one nights are done, or so they tell her. Dunyazad carries those story-laden memories like festering wounds, not in some safe, reticent organ, but in a permanently deformed tongue weighed down by memory, memory laced with fantasy (22).

At the finishing end of Dunyazad's inventive spectrum of stories is her story "The Dreams of Good Women" (253-267). The story marks the apotheosis of the narrative borne out of the disnarrated space. The story points out to the "unexploited lines of development" ("Disnarrated") which Shahrzad's "porous umbrella of a story, a wandering story" (8), could have taken. It is an imprint of Dunyazad's unrealized desire to swap places with her more famous sister, to be the one chosen for the role of the martyr, the saviour, the awe-inspiring raconteuse. The story opens with Dunyazad alone in a

room, unable to resist looking in the ivory-framed mirror. Suddenly the face of a girl appears on the surface of the mirror: "There she is in the mirror, the other half of herself she lost in the wazir's room many years ago." (254). The younger Dunyazad complains to the wazir, her father that she is the "eternal younger sister" (256): "[Shahrzad] goes every place first. She does everything before me, then tells me all about it. And when it's finally my turn, what will be left? All I can do is live out what she has already described and possessed completely" (256). She confesses she loves her sister but does not want to be her shadow. Slowly, the image in the mirror fades away and a new image is illuminated where there is no wazir or Shahrzad. The only inhabitants of this image are a younger Dunyazad and Shahryar, transported back in time "in which a thousand and one nights tailed a single day" (258). In the, now stale, past,Shahryar was Dunyazad's "first sight of a man in the thrall of desire" (56) as she sat crouching on the floor, a witness to the thousand and one nights of storytelling and story seeking . Now, in the present, they silently appraise each other and Dunyazad goes to his chamber. There they see a sleepless Dilshad waiting for them. Suddenly, the pawns on the chessboard of fantasy and untapped possibilities shift positions: "Dilshad is playing Dunyazad to Dunyazad's Shahrzad" (259). Through the story, Dunyazad relives a past and an unactualised desire and suggests how the 'could have been' would have altered the future.

> It is always this mysterious, unknown corner of a story that sets the writer going. It was Dunyazad's position as the unheard younger sister, the yearning, questioning follower, which allowed me to step into the story as a writer
>
> (Hariharan, "The Unknown Corner- A writer's bank of myths" 8).

Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel* is nothing short of a perfectly ensorcelling act performed by an accomplished conjurer of stories.

Its narrative as well as its narrative strategy is, inherently, a case of the disnarrated. With a knack to draw out the absent presence(s) from the mysterious, hidden corners and bestow upon them the power of dreams and possibilities, Hariharan brews up a potent narrative based on the 'what if'. Besides the individual tales narrated by the book's two chief narrators—Dunyazad and Dilshad—Hariharan's overarching narrative that frames these tales is in itself a search as well as a manifestation of the absent presence(s), the 'what could have been'. Her narrative is entirely an exercise to seek and reclaim the disnarrated space. Through self-reflexivity, the narrative first, locates the disnarrated space and then builds itself upon it. What is, perhaps, most interesting is the spin Hariharan gives to the notion of the disnarrated. To think of 'what could have been' is a retrospective act, laced with nostalgia. In *When Dreams Travel*, Hariharan does not confine the disnarrated space to a mere delving into the past. Instead, she uses it as an instrument of clairvoyance. The disnarrated space in Hariharan's hands traces a trajectory from what could have happened in the past to what could happen in the future. One can best understand this through Dilshad's introduction in the text. While Dunyazad and her stories express what did not occur but could have in the blurry, distant past, Dilshad and her stories indicate what could happen in the future. Her stories create a thought-provoking tapestry of tales where the medieval and the contemporary perspectives are sewn together. Through Dilshad's stories, Hariharan pours the absent presence(s) of the past into the powerful dreams of the present and almost magically transforming the disnarrated space into an anticipatory device that can be used to break the shackles of a singular time, space, history and context and reach a future where "The powerless [would continue] to have a dream or two, dreams that break walls, dreams that go through walls as if *they* are powerless" (25). Hariharan implicates her own desire to create stories out of

fugitive voices and histories through Dunyazad and her stories. Dilshad, as an emblem of the future descendants of Shahrzad and her storytelling legacy, illumines the road ahead for others to explore and unravel not only what could happen with Shahrzad's story but also, with the art of storytelling itself. *When Dreams Travel* is a one of its kind instance of a narrative that emerges from and revolves around the disnarrated space which is porous and fluxional, effortlessly blending the past, present and the future, 'curving one into the other, a circle with no beginning or end' (276).

End Notes

1. C.f. Lyons, Malcolm C., and Ursula Lyons Trans. The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights. Vols. 1-3. UK: Penguin. Print.
2. Folkoristics is the formal academic study of folklore. The term derives from the nineteenth-century German term for folklore, *folkloristik*.
3. Folk memory refers to a body of recollections or legends that persists among people.
4. C.F.Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory. First ed. 2005 and The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Second ed. 1999.
5. C.F. The Cambridge Companion to Narrative. 2007.
6. Denarration is the narrator's denial or negation of an event or state of affairs that had earlier been affirmed. C.f. "Disnarrated."
7. Non-narrated or the unnarrated refers to the ellipsis underlined by a narrator within a narrative or inferable from significant lacunae in the chronology. C.f. "Disnarrated."
8. The unnarratable refers to those aspects of a narrative that are deemed unfit for narration because they violate formal, generic, social or authorial conventions and laws or simply because they are not sufficiently interesting, thereby falling short of narratability or tellability. C.f. "Disnarrated."

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‘Bearing the Taste of the Place’: Spatiality in Wendell Berry’s *Farming: A Hand Book*

Arunabha Ghosh

> Recollecting that we once lived in places is part of our contemporary self-rediscovery. It grounds what it means to be “human” (etymologically something like “earthling”). . . . The “place” (from the toot plat, broad, spreading, flat) gave us far-seeing eyes, the streams and breezes gave us versatile tongues and whorly ears. The land gave us a stride, and the lake a dive. The amazement gave us our kind of mind. We should be thankful for that, and take nature’s stricter lessons with some grace.[1] (28-29)
>
> — Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*

> My life is only the earth risen up
> a little way into the light, among the leaves.[2] (20)
>
> — Wendell Berry, Farming: A Hand Book

In “A Wet Time,” a poem in Wendell Berry’s *Farming: A Hand Book* (1970), Berry writes, “The land is an ark, full of things waiting” (22). On one hand, his comparison of the land to an ark points towards the flow or current of the place; on the other hand, however, this metaphor raises questions regarding the identity of the land that is movable. The apparent impossibility of the first suggestion is explained in the poem and we find that Berry is pointing towards a huge rise of water that engulfs the earth—as proportionately with the rise of water level the earth is falling to ‘meet’ it. As a passive onlooker of the phenomenon, the ‘I’ in the poem stands still—albeit

he is unwilling to accept it. The perceiver describes the process minutely—the fields are sodden; as soon as the feet are raised, water fills the track—croplands and gardens are inundated, airy places become dark and silent. In the midst of all these his mind "passes over changed surfaces/ like a boat, drawn to the thought of roofs" (22). It is the mind that moves, though the body stands still "like a stake/ planted to measure the rise" (22). Indicating himself as a stake, which is a pole set up to mark something the movement of the earth (and earth) is juxtaposed with the immovable position of the perceiver. The image of the ark in time of flood obviously alludes to the biblical flood brought by God upon the earth because of the wickedness of human beings. The anecdote in the Genesis, however, is symbolical here as Berry refers to a probable reality of flood in future due to global warming at an alarming rate. The passage from myth to reality occurs spontaneously as Berry says,

> I turn like an ancient worshipper
> to the thought of solid ground. I was not ready for this
> parting, my native land putting out to sea. (22)

If we move to the second proposition suggested in the beginning, i.e. regarding the identity of the land, it reveals as the poet's 'native land' which is the United States of America. But in the myth of the biblical flood the entire earth was flooded, not only a particular part of the world; and hence, can in Berry's vision only his native land be affected? Or, put in a different phrase, can Berry as a visionary afford to be that selfish to lay his interest within the periphery of his native land? The poems in the collection, *Farming* tells a different story anyway, and we find a typical place-space consciousness in the poems which assure us that the poet, conforming to his role as a true visionary, has extended his vision from the narrow boundary of a place to the openness of the outer space. Close analysis of the poems would reveal this aspect of his writing; however, the theoretical

paradigm of the place-space synergy is to be highlighted before that.[3]

In general, literary imagination's traditional specialities are to evoke and create a sense of place with expressions chosen carefully. During the last two decades of the twentieth century the concept of place as well as space has been re-interpreted in many ways that included active involvement of various disciplines under the humanities and physical sciences as well; that is to say, whereas architectural patterns evoke a sense of place and the identity of the place somehow depends on that pattern, it is the openness of the space in an environment which invokes a different and quiet opposite sense of place. For our discussion of Wendell Berry's poetics we have to depend on the conceptual paradigm of space and place as given by the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. In his landmark study, Space and Place: *The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan remarks,

> "Space" and "place" are familiar words denoting common experiences. We live in space. . . . Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other. There is no place like home. What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighborhood, hometown, or motherland. . . . Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. (3)

To define each term brings the interdependence of them as the concept of one depends on the other to define itself. Tuan continues,

> The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

When the Tuanian theorisation of place and space is applied to the

poetry of Berry and other contemporary ecopoets we find two common tendencies in their poetics—first, to create a sense of place in the text of the poem; and, secondly, to show a humility, to value the environment of the open space and recognising the fact that it is impossible to know the place *totally*.[4] The recognition of the unknowability of the space and the extent to which it is knowable forms the base of the humility towards space, which is, on the whole, humility towards nature. We need to mention that in case of ecopoetry, nature is not an inactive entity providing merely a backdrop; rather, nature is perceived as "a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems" (Scigaj, 37). Hence, here comes a question of interrelation of humans with the nonhuman world that include the flora and fauna of a place.

Based in a farm on the Kentucky River, most of Wendell Berry's writings explore the issues related to environment in novels, essays, and of course in poetry. In *Farming: A Hand Book*, these issues are dealt with a sense of place which can be called his quintessential style, or, as a matter of fact, practice. Berry's preoccupation with land is important as it is behind his sense of culture; the idea of culture, however, is derived also from the way of life that he leads and which, many people now consider as an alternative way of life, as a possible replacement for the overtechnologised world. In the poem, "In This World," the poetic language that Berry creates is actually made upon a conflict between two opposite facts—on one hand, we have the portrayal of a place serene to the core, and, on the other hand, there are human beings "making plans. Wearing themselves out,/ spending their lives, in order to kill each other" (24). The concrete as well as mystical poetic language is created as we see that in one poem after another Berry juxtaposes a complex relationship between self and the community, and between space and temporality. The first relation is something more than the interrelation between the human and the nonhuman world, as the spatio-temporal concept comes into it—at

any given point of time a space is defined in terms of the first interrelation which alters with time, and, as a result, the concept of spatiality alters with it too. In "The Lilies," these complexities find excellent expression. The poet first describes the "gay woodland lilies" or the gray trunks of ancient trees, held or moved by the standing or moving air. The poet muses on the vitality of the earth underneath the lilies that made them full of life. The "music of the light" is created by this vitality and from time immemorial, the earth has woken them up and the lilies remained "no less symmetrical and fair/ for all the time" (33). The end of the poem is interesting as after the reflection on the lilies the poet asks a question regarding the land—"Does my land have the health/ of this, where nothing falls but into life?" (33). The land is inhabited by humans and the nonhuman creatures, and it is interesting to see how the poet moves from a very normal, somewhat mundane, picture of the lilies to a philosophical inquiry of vitality bestowed by the land. The past of the land is connected to its present through the interaction of the human and nonhuman world. The Tuanian theoretical standard of place-space synergy is a ready tool to understand Berry's response to the issue of interrelation or interdependence between the human and nonhuman worlds. As the poems bear evidence, Berry stresses the necessary but lacking correlation with the landscape around men—an organic, physical and sensuous, active relationship that is long lost. His poems that focus on the domestic/wild dichotomy are important because in them the idea of 'opposition' is dichotomy is distilled away and a synergy is aimed at—so that the human world can discover, and to some extent re-create, the bond. Nature is taken as a 'series of cyclic feedback systems,' and the aim of the poet is to know to what extent the dependence between man and nature is possible; also, there is an emphasis on the fact that nature is ultimately unknowable, and human comprehension of its mystery goes only to a certain extent. "The Springs" describes this notion of relationship. Springs in the poem becomes a site of pilgrimage as the country is "without saints or

shrines," and Berry talks of 'one' who went on a pilgrimage to the springs. The identity of this man becomes clear at the end as Berry establishes the relationship between the man and the landscape in which the springs are integral part. The idea of permanence is related to the land as the springs are called "everlasting," and Berry weaves the intricate filigree of vitality that passes through water to the ground where men find "bondage"—

> The water broke into sounds and shinings
> at the vein mouth, bearing the taste
> of the place, the deep rock, sweetness
> out of the dark. He bent and drank
> in bondage to the ground. (10)

The use of the word 'bondage' is intriguing as it does not refer to slavery here; rather, it is the state if being under the control of a force, influence or abstract power—and this abstract power is the knowable-to-an-extent nature. The 'one' then becomes the modern embodiment of an Everyman who needs to reconstruct the 'bondage.' This type of 'nature writing' or place-based literature is important as it traces the history and specificity of a place or landscape that cannot be found in the annals or court documents and reports of the place. The personal mind of a person, representing a collective psyche of the people of the place, is in harmony with nature; and, the poet rebuilds a lost bond through his text.

In *Farming*, we have a number of poems where a character called the Mad Farmer appears, such as—"The Mad Farmer Revolution," "The Contrariness of a Mad Farmer," "The Mad Farmer in the City," "Prayers and sayings of the Mad Farmer," "The Satisfactions of the Mad Farmer" etc..[5] It would be worthwhile to interpret each of them, but due to the limited scope of this paper we would take "Prayers and sayings of the Mad Farmer." The poem is relatively long with thirteen sections, and apart from everything else, the poem is remarkable for

its lyric grace. The first section starts with a humorous account of the Mad Farmer justifying his "only for himself" prayers. The first prayer—"At night make me one with the darkness./ In the morning make me one with the light" (56), is a reminder of the motif that recurs in many a Berry poem—the evocation of the bond between nature and human beings. The other important thing is the humility that Berry emphasises. In this context we should mention the chief characteristics of ecopoetry as defined by J. Scott Bryson in the Introduction of his edited volume, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Bryson points out three major attributes of ecopoetry—first, the recognition of the interdependent nature of the world and "a devotion to specific places and to the land itself" (6). Secondly, the essential duty, "an imperative toward humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature" (6). Lastly, a doubt, a scepticism towards the notion of progress which is based only on technology and heavy industry. The Mad Farmer hence urges to be humble and his prayers are full of this humility as to be humble is equal to a step towards an understanding of the inscrutable nature around us. The eighth prayer goes like this:

> When I rise up
> let me rise up joyful
> like a bird.
>
> When I fall
> let me fall without regret
> like a leaf. (57)

The humility leads to a realisation of the external world inside oneself as in the last section the Mad Farmer takes somewhat an objective position and says—for himself again—"Let him receive the season's increment into his mind. Let/ him work it into the soil" (59). While commenting on Berry's place-consciousness, Scott Bryson remarks,

> Through this Tuanian lens we see that Berry's response to the human-nature split is a call to connect with literal, local, physical places. He also demonstrates a highly developed sense of space in his point that a true and vital connection to the land reveals the extent to which we are incapable of fully knowing those places.

The profound bond with the land rendered by Berry can be found in a remarkable poem, "The Current"—here we find a relationship sustainable and this also enables the poet to connect himself to the land. The 'man' who "has made a marriage with his place" (41), finds himself as a "descendent" of "the old tribespeople" who preceded him in the land. The flow of the tradition of something which Yi-Fu Tuan would call 'topophilia,' becomes the unifying idea in the poem.[6] The title of the poem has two fold meaning—it refers to a stream, metaphorical; nonetheless, that flows from past to future; on the contrary, the man's position in the poem is the current's position, the momentary existence that can be called the 'present.' So what takes place *now*, that what is *current*, is linked with the past and future. Also, it is not something which has appeared in past or would appear in future, but it is a continuation. The spatio-temporal issue is well-handled as Berry writes,

> The current flowing to him through the earth
> flows past him, and he sees one descended from him,
> a young man who has reached into the ground,
> his hand held in the dark as by a hand. (41)

Berry's attempt to make place is to remind the readers that literally and biologically the human and nonhuman nature are connected as all things die and the bodies nourish the rest of nature. This is exemplified in "Awake at Night," where he writes,

> . . . the end, too, is part
> of the pattern, the last

labor of the heart:
to learn to lie still,
one with the earth
again, and let the world go. (55)

The same idea is echoed in an episode of "The Bringer of Water," a verse-drama in the third section of *Farming*. Nathan Coulter, who meets his fiancé, Hannah Feltner, explains why he has purchased an overused farm, and in doing this he echoes the idea of the 'current,' the flow in which man is a part:

. . . —the idea of making
my lifetime one of the several
it will take to bring back
the possibilities to this place
that used to be here. (92-93)

Place and space become almost synonymous to culture and nature, and the textuality of this practice is important as it is in perfect accordance with the postmodern idea of space and textuality. In *Geocriticism*, Bernard Westphal argues that the text precedes a place as the place is made, or rather created, by the writer (or artist) is his text—a poem, a novel, or in a painting. What is important is the tradition of texts that creates a place "with the beautiful regularity of geological and archaeological strata" (155). And thus, the place corresponds to a texture, as it is reticular in nature to its smallest folds. Here place becomes almost synonymous to space though space is more than a texture; it is an intangible conglomerate that regulates the flow of society as Berry has described in the poems of Farming. We can conclude by quoting a four-line poem, "To Know the Dark":

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings. (14)

This is probably the highest realisation of a man who loves his land and hence wants others to delve deep into the depth of the darkness of the open space which "blooms and sings."

Notes

1. In this connexion, Snyder says more of the relation of man and place,

   > Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience. For example: "real people" have an easy familiarity with the local plants. This is so unexceptional a kind of knowledge that everyone in Europe, Asia, and Africa used to take it for granted. Many contemporary Americans don't even know that they don't "know the plants," which is indeed a measure of alienation. (39)

   Clearly, Snyder views place as something sacred from where modern man is alienated and this aspect is the subject matter of his own as well as his contemporary Wendell Berry's writings.
2. In case of the quotations taken from *Farming: A Hand Book* the page number is mentioned. The details of the edition of the book are mentioned in the Works Cited list.
3. It is to be noted that because of the limited scope of this paper in our discussion we have only mentioned the theory but did not explain that in detail. However, the use of that in interpreting the poems would clarify it.
4. By the term 'poetics' we refer to the idea or definition provided by Jonathan Bate in his famous book *The Song of the Earth*. In the book, Bate argues for the power of poetry in a world which is ruled by technology and how poetry could bridge the gap between the human and the nonhuman nature. Bate defined 'ecopoesis,' from where came the word 'ecopoetics,' and writes that it is a "poetic language as a special kind of expression which may effect an imaginative reunification of mind and nature" (245). Seeing through this lens, Wendell Berry's poetic endeavour is nothing but ecopoetic endeavour.
5. In many of his poems Berry adopts this jeremiadic persona of the Mad Farmer; such as, "Manifesto: Mad Farmer Liberation Front" that appears in *The Country of Marriage* (1973). In the poem, Berry stresses the pristine state of things which are unadulterated. Equating human approach with corruption of the primitive, Berry insists on a form of unlknowability as what man does not know he does not destroy. Berry writes—

   Give your approval to all you cannot
   understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
   has not encountered he has not destroyed. (Collected Poems, 151)
6. For details, see Tuan's book Topophilia.

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Negotiating Space: The Female Body as a Site of Power in the Literature of Contemporary American Women of Colour

Nawazish Azim

The theme of exploring the dialectic between space which exerts power and the body of the coloured woman which receives or resists power is a recurrent one in the literature of women of colour. My paper is an attempt to map the female coloured subject and locate her within the coordinates of body, self, identity and subjectivity by exploring:

1. the body which is the site of power, in other words - oppressive practices and ideology,
2. the collective body of community as a means of resisting this aforesaid oppression, and
3. the journeys the body undertakes as means of negotiating this complex nexus of power.

To begin with, space is not just a geographical quality. As Henry Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974, trans 1991) says, it could mean real, external world as well as indicate the realm of mentality. While a place is a specific location, space is a 'practiced place' - a site which is motivated by movements, actions, narrative and signs, and a landscape is that site encountered as image. Space therefore is a repository of experiences and ideology, and exerts power over the body which occupies space. This is why Ed Soja in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (1989)* suggests that 'relations of power and discipline are inscribed

into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life', and discusses how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.' Also, as resistance is the force which counters power domination, bell hooks calls for a community of resistance and a re-visioned spatiality which treats marginality as a strategic positioning of identity. In this way, Adrienne Rich's idea of 'politics of location' becomes a way of defending the individual's subjectivity.

In my paper, I suggest that the body of the woman of colour becomes the site for power struggles and is either favoured or debased according to the social and spatial setting. In order to support my argument, I will attempt a reading of various texts, authored by women of colour, whether African-American, Asian American or Native American. The narratives I take up are '**A Girl's Story'** by Toni Cade Bambara, 'Black is a Woman's Colour' by bell hooks, 'Reunion' by Thadious M Davis, 'africans sleeping in the park at night,' 'Adolescence' by Rita Dove, *Shango Diaspora: An African-American Myth of Womanhood and Love* by Angela Jackson (all texts by African-Americans), 'Muliebrity' by Sujata Bhatt, 'Motown' by Smokey Robinson, Nellie Wong's poem 'When I Was Growing Up' (all texts by Asian Americans), 'Spider Dream' by Elaine Hall, Joy Harjo's 'I Give You Back', and Linda Hogan's 'The Lost Girls' (all texts by Native Americans). My purpose in taking up this diverse collection of texts is to not only explore issues of body, power and spatial politics in all three racial-cultural communities of American society but also to traverse the network of linkages between them. Let us now explore these issues in detail and determine the relation between space and the female body in American multi-cultural society.

I.

To begin with, 'A Girl's Story' is a short story within Toni Cade Bambara's short story collection, *The Seabirds are Still Alive* (1977).

Bambara writes about strong female girls in this particular collection because "in her vision, in her politics, little girls matter". In 'A Girl's Story', a young girl named Rae Ann experiences menstruation for the first time. Her fear, anxiety, sense of guilt and helplessness are mapped onto the site of her body, which grapples to deal with physical and psychological onslaught of womanhood. The very first sentence 'She was afraid to look at herself just yet' positions the terrifying experience of womanhood onto the body of the African-American woman, and parallels the fear and powerlessness, which the African-American woman subject experiences in socio-political life. Rae Ann's attempts to stop herself from bleeding and her inability to understand it as anything other than as punishment are significant in this compelling narrative, hinting that the body is the location of violence and blood-shed in the history of oppression of the Black female. Also, the inability of Rae Ann's brother Horace to understand her and the lack of compassion in his voice is significant of the fact that black women have to deal with the twin evils of patriarchy as well as racism. They rob the girl of her agency, since even at the end of the story, Dada Bibi, the saviour who is a symbol of undiluted African-ness, does not come; the dream of resisting and gaining subjectivity, based on the idea of belonging to a unified community remains unfulfilled.

The sense of community refused here is however achieved in other African-American poems such as 'Reunion' by Thadious M Davis, where the body becomes the site of celebrating collective womanhood. The girls in this poem 'eye their womanhood', 'fix their hair', 'giggle', 'stand arm-in-arm', 'whisper', and 'kiss behind hibiscus', all of which are bodily actions. Even after they grow up and move out, they 'hear their voices clairvoyant/… see into ourselves the love/ know into nights the bond', thus stating that the sense of collective belonging to a community is the key to their resistance to

power structures, and to reconstructing their subjectivities.

In other African American narratives such as the poem 'africans sleeping in the park at night' we see that there is ambiguous treatment of the body of the coloured woman. The body is the site of belonging to the community in the initial stanzas of the poem. The narrator is asked if she wants to 'lie on the grass/… feel the warm fire in (her) belly/ the heartbeat in (her) head/ and dragon's breath…in her nostrils..' In this way, the narrator will be rendered capable of identifying herself as an 'african sleeping in the park…'. This sense of belonging to the community is however undercut at the end of the poem when the narrator says that her 'breath is inseparable from the wind' and revels in the space of the marginalized within the marginalized; the space signifying freedom and individuality. In this way, the narrator achieves a unified subjectivity away from the community, in the bell hooksian paradigm of identity.

In other poems by African American women such as the 'Adolescence' series by Rita Dove, the girl's body is the site of desire, resistance and oppression. When she imagines that her scabs would fall away at the touch of her lover-saviour, her body becomes a site of desire coupled with resistance. Conversely, these poems also talk about the male body, firstly about the lips of a boy, and secondly about three men who visit the girl in the bathroom. The 'softness' of the boy's lips is contrasted with the fear the three men arouse in the girl, hinting at the presence of desire coupled with violence which is about to assault the body of the young girl. Body as site of desire provides link to other narratives such as *Shango Diaspora: An African-American Myth of Womanhood and Love*, a play by Angela Jackson, where the body of the Girl is the site of desire and oppression, into which Shango drains his terrible fire. His control over her erupts in the form of fever which the Girl suffers from in the beginning of the play. Also, when the Girl and Shango finally

reconcile, they do so in the form of a circular dance, thereby foregrounding the body again. (Thus, dance enacting desire is an integral bodily action, and recurs as a significant part of growing up in other poems on African American culture.)

This provides a link to poems/narratives by Asian Americans too, such as Sujata Bhatt's poem 'Muliebrity', where the female form is emphasised as the site of desire, power and resistance. It is about a girl who gathers dung. She has lived and worked in the most restricted of spaces and yet radiates a 'power glistening through her cheekbones' thereby emerging as a woman of strength, beauty and resistance. In this way, she is the primordial Woman who has come to occupy the marginalized space which offers resistance to patriarchal and racist conceptions of Asian American womanhood. In another Asian American poem, 'Motown' by Smokey Robinson, the body of the coloured woman is again a site of desire. Here however the underlying theme of sexual exploitation is stronger since there is a hint that the girl may have been sold by her father on arriving in America. She later gets pregnant at a party, thus making her body the site of acting out of patriarchal control, and considers how 'manila/the mission/Chinatown/east la/ harlem' are all the same when it comes to gender oppression, and yet the ending is not totally devoid of hope since the poem ends with the line 'Smokey Robinson still looks good!', with Robinson here being the signifier of the woman's hopes and dreams.

II.

A related theme to spatial negotiation of power is the construction of body of the coloured woman as a site of physical ugliness and how it is challenged. In this regard, Nellie Wong's poem 'When I Was Growing Up' in fact is the most chilling depiction of racist and sexual oppression in the entire Asian American group of writers. The

narrator's shame in her dark skin, leads to her wearing an 'imaginary pale skin' which she thinks will help her become one of the white girls, and belong to the American way of life. She wants white skin and sensuous lips, as proof of womanhood, and clothes and accessories which white girls wore to school. She also feels ashamed at the sickly bodies of Chinese men and feels that her self can never be clean as it is not white. In this way, Wong shows that beauty and womanhood are judged by white standards, and they appear as the normative to the narrator. The body of the woman of colour becomes a playground to act out the struggle between this oppressive ideal of beauty and the narrator's natural state of female-ness. In this way, her subjection of her coloured body into white skin so to speak is a mapping out of the politics of colour and race. The coloured woman's body becomes the site of white supremacy, and yet at the end of the poem, we get a sense that the poet now realizes her mistake and is resistant in retrospect. Her agency and subjectivity are recovered in the end of the poem by her realization of her earlier passive submission to racist control which she challenges now. This is why she says 'I know now once I longed to be white/ How many ways you ask/ Haven't I told you enough?'

In tone and treatment, this story is similar to 'Black is a Woman's Colour', where bell hooks talks about hair, and the process by which black women used to straighten their naturally curly hair in order to be 'womanly' and beautiful like white women. The white conception of beauty is here being accepted as the normative which hooks defies later by wearing an afro in college, which highlights her identity differentially. In this way, the body of the black female subject becomes the site for situating oppressive ideas of ideal beauty, which is resisted later on in the story. Also, the woman's body becomes the site of patriarchal oppression, as the mother is beaten up by the husband and the daughter is beaten up by the mother as a means of

showing solidarity to the husband.

This does not mean that body of woman of colour is nothing but a site of exploitation. In fact, in Native American poems/narratives, the woman of colour is mostly seen and celebrated as the survivor of oppression; her body a site of hope and freedom. 'Spider Dream' by Elaine Hall is an exercise in post-memory whereby the poet imagines an open sore running the length of an old scar on her leg, which is a signifier of trauma suffered in the past. Post memory is a psychological and literary practice by which the memories of trauma of the past suffered by the older generation are experienced by the present generation. The poet hints that the presence of the spider and her new eggs which run 'to find water, or forgiveness or just a way of living', is a pointer to the fact that the present generation can deal with the traumas of the past on their own, and are not totally devoid of hope. In the same strain, we find Joy Harjo's 'I Give You Back' to be a powerful poem on the renunciation of fear and the celebration of hope. The lines 'Oh you have choked me but I gave you the leash/ You have gutted me but I gave you the knife/ you have devoured me but I laid myself across the fire/ You held my mother down and raped her but I gave you the heated thing' indicate again the location of sexist and racist discrimination on the body of the woman of colour. The whole tone of the poem however is celebratory and it deals with how the poet gives up fear, which is her loved and hated twin, her shadow, and her blood, in order to survive, and to regain her subjectivity.

In the other poem by Linda Hogan, 'The Lost Girls', the poet talks about the division of the unified self of the coloured woman. She says that she lost versions of her self, girls who 'refused to work too hard' and who 'danced away the leather of red high heels' at some points in time, and wants to regain them. This is indicative of the way the poet is regaining her agency, and 'loving all the girls and women she has always been'.

In this way, the body of the coloured American women negotiate spatial politics twofold; by suffering from as well as resisting oppressive domination and power exerted firstly by racial discrimination, as well as by the derogatory standards of normative beauty. Hence, the female coloured body becomes a 'site' for negotiating oppression, whether racial or cultural or patriarchal. In this way, negotiating space by means of the body, is a means of negotiating power and oppression. The resistance demonstrated to this spatial power by some of the women-poets is also reflected in the imagining of the community as a 'collective body' of resistance. Hence, spatial politics acquires multi-fold dimensions in relation to the female body of colour in American multi-cultural life, and it is this precise confluence of geocriticism and body politics that I have explored by means of the various and diverse collection of texts in my paper. The essay 'Landscape, History and the Peublo Imagination' by Native American Leslie Marmon Silkoe is a good way to conclude my arguments. It deals with the links between geographical and psychic space where territorial possession and collective consciousness is mapped. Silkoe says that the space of the land is mapped onto the mind, often becoming a character in fiction, and the land itself becomes a repository of memory, history and imagination. In this way, the body of the land is symptomatic of the body of the woman of colour where the effects of power struggle are traced. It is here that memories and fictions merge together and create a sacred space for the emergence of the imagination of resistance and counter-force. Thus the body of woman of colour is itself a signifier for the geographic territory which is the location of struggle. In this way, the female body bears the possibility of emerging as a site for exercising oppression as well as fuelling resistance. It is physical and psychical, personal and social, biological and cultural. It may be the site of oppression, or the site of desire, or the site of resistance, or all of these

at once. This is why the idea of the body moving through space i.e journeying or travelling as a means of negotiating this power is a recurrent trope in these extracts. Here, we see how women travel across in order to physically survive in the world and rebuild their subjectivities. In this sense, walking, running, or commuting are important metaphors for the journey of the self which the woman of colour undertakes. The body moves through space and gains in agency and subjectivity. It is also an exercise in the idea of post-memory which reminds these women of the Journey which their ancestors undertook first into mainland America and later out of the oppressive geo-political American reality into a relatively safer world harbouring a greater degree of freedom and subjectivity, which allows them today to voice their positionality.

Characters such as the Girl in Shango Diaspora can only become Ms Waters after she has travelled physically and psychically to meet Yemoja, the goddess and we know this is so when Yemoja says 'You have come to the right place. Glad you passed the test…Why you think you have to walk this far to find me? Anybody whining and worthless can't come to me. Very few know my address, where I can be reached. Very few have crossed the bridge my mouth makes or swings shut.'

In this way we see how mapping the female coloured subject and locating her within the coordinates of space, body, self, identity and subjectivity by exploring the body as the site of power and the means of resisting this power is a recurrent theme in the literature of women of colour. Hence, spatial politics acquires multi-fold dimensions in relation to the female body of colour in American multi-cultural life, and it is this precise confluence of geocriticism and body politics that I have attempted to explore in my paper.

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Place / Space in Sylvia Plath's *Collected Poems*

Kuntala Sengupta

Sylvia Plath's poetry has been an area under considerable critical attention for a wide range of themes and critical approaches. A biographical analysis has led to her being variously labeled as feminist, political, mythical and suicidal. However, sufficient attention has not been given to the significant prevalence of images of places and spaces in Plath's poetry. With particular focus on a selection of poems from *Collected Poems*, this paper argues that the personae in the poems confront various kinds of places and that the poems resonate with a tension between place – referring to a space that is limited by specific measurements, and space – meaning a sense of an area without the restrictions of a place, a room of one's own without the boundaries of a definite wall.

Sylvia Plath's poetry abounds with images of places and spaces. Through the shattered house in 'Conversation Among the Ruins', the shop windows and rooms on the icy cold streets of Munich in 'The Munich Mannequins' and the hellish, smoggy kitchen in 'Lesbos' – the reader is guided to a multitude of places as diverse as the personae of the poems and as much essential for our appreciation of Plath's dynamic oeuvre. While we can feel the narrow place of the bedroom in 'Morning Song' where "the window square / Whitens and swallows its dull stars" (157), in 'Contusion' the tiny bruise "crawls down the wall" (271) of an immobile body comprising the interiority of the body with spatial exteriority. In 'Parliament Hill Fields', the speaker muses on the panoramic view of London only to end by entering "the lit house" (153), whereas in 'The Detective' the topicality of the house

seems to leak out into the undefined space of a desolate landscape where "there is only the moon, embalmed in phosphorus / There is only a crow in a tree" (209).

Certain aspects of space in Plath's poetry have been critically appraised before, yet these readings have so far primarily focused on oppressive domestic relationships, the creation of "psychic" landscapes out of natural settings, or the fusion of natural settings and self. However, the full significance of spatial configurations in terms of space and place has not been thoroughly investigated. Jacqueline Rose writes about Plath thus:

> "What she wants is not a room of one's own, the now classic feminist demand of the woman writer, but the road, field and tavern, the expansion of a world crucially located outside" (118).

Keeping in mind that Rose draws on a journal entry by Plath and that the comment is in this sense a comment on what Rose deduces from Plath's personal writing and not the poetry, we can nevertheless sense the poet's aspirations to negotiate the predefined places and explore the expansion of a space outside.

"Conversation Among the Ruins" portrays the breakdown of a relationship or a clash of conflicting poetic visions, and "Parliament Hill Fields" can be read solely as a meditation on loss. Jon Rosenblatt even argues that "the speaker [in "Parliament Hill Fields"] is a mother who apparently has lost a child through miscarriage" and that the speaker thus "finds solace in the pale, fog-bound landscape because it so closely mirrors her feelings of loss and isolation" (95). "Lesbos" certainly provides enough references to the two women's frustration to support a reading focused on two housewives' failure to communicate. Furthermore "The Detective" evokes notions of patriarchal oppression and even marriage as an act of murder, which would fit neatly into a feminist reading. The ominous presence of the

mannequins in “The Munich Mannequins” could be understood as men's transformation of woman into a puppet, a mannequin, a thing to play around with. “Contusion” can be read as a poem about death and “Morning Song” as a poem about ambivalent motherhood without particular attention to the significance of walls. This is just to give a few examples of the different directions that readings of these poems might take. The point, however, is the tension between place and space which run parallel to these themes and thus enable us to trace a spatial dynamic which is significant for our appreciation of Plath's poetry since this dynamic eludes the categorization which readings focused solely on the individual poems' subject matter would promote.

A brief overview of how Sylvia Plath can be positioned in relation to biographical criticism and 'confessional' poetry before turning to the concepts of space and place is necessary to posit her in the culture of her time, as in ours. The poems are grouped here in accordance with the dominant representation of elements such as the most significant images of walls. However, several elements can be actualized within the same poem which in some cases contributes to the overall configuration of spaces and places.

Sylvia Plath's work has been subject to enormous biographical scrutiny related to the well-documented periods of mental illness and her suicide at the age of thirty. While early readings of Plath's poetry tend to pivot on biographical interpretations, the wide range of critical responses available today offers varied and nuanced understandings of Plath's work. As a poet, Sylvia Plath has often been majorly labeled as “confessional” and her poetry thus perceived as founded on and primarily dealing with autobiographical material, to such an extent that the private life of the poet, and the images and narratives in her poems has become almost inseparable. Confessionalism, according to Jon Rosenblatt, “suggests that the

writer has written so directly out of his personal experience and memory that he does not separate his autobiographical self strives in vain to 'patch' the 'havoc' that has been visited upon the subject" (196).

"Conversation Among the Ruins" (1956) is the earliest poem included here, and the opening poem of the *Collected Poems*. As we have seen, the house here is associated with classical poetics and potentially conflicting poetic visions. In this way the house image is metaphorical in a way that departs from the concretized settings in certain later poems. However, the house also functions as a spatial frame, since within the poem it is in a sense the speaker's environment. If we compare this house to the insect's dwelling in "Dark House" (1959), we can see how the house in the latter takes on a different significance as an image of the psyche as an interior place. This enables the speaker in "Dark House" to negotiate the character of its being by taking a position both inside and outside itself as the exteriority and interiority of place meet in the figure of the house. In "Conversation Among the Ruins" the speaker becomes subject to the intruder's poetic vision as she sits "composed" (21) in "Grecian tunic and psyche-knot" (21) after the house has fallen, while in "Dark House" we find a subject persistently constructing its "This is a dark house, very big. / I made it myself," (132), without the intrusion of another presence. With the exception of "Conversation Among the Ruins" and "Dark House", the selection of poems discussed here were written between 1961 and 1963. Beginning with "Parliament Hill Fields" (1961) and ending with "Contusion" (1963) the treatment of space and place appears to have developed into a complex relationship between speaker and place, where the speaker is ultimately conflated with the "placeness" of a confined, delimited space. Despite the leakiness of place in "Parliament Hill Fields" and the speaker's return to a house that seems defined by "old dregs and

difficulties" (153), the configuration of space and place is still one where the speaker is positioned as a subject who is able to relate her impressions. Moreover, the speaker glimpses a momentary freedom in the "spindling rivulets" (153). In "Contusion," the speaking subject is reduced to an immobile body and the conflation of the body with a metaphorical room appears as a curious manifestation of being in one's place, in the sense that the body is ultimately a place of confinement from which one cannot escape by any means other than death. Similarly in "Barren Woman" (1961), the sterile body is conceived as a museum, although in this case there is still a speaker, an "I" to present the place. In "Morning Song" (1961), on the other hand, the 'drafty museum' (157) is figuratively the room in which the mother and bystanders witness the birth of the child, and the poem then primarily takes place in a concretized setting of the bedroom, but the speaker reflects on the open space of the 'far sea' (157), that moves in her ear. In "Apprehensions" (1962) the four walls can be seen as constituting a metaphorical room in which images of the body and mind meet and foregrounds a sense of confinement. More importantly, the notion of existing within the confines of the room, or behind the walls, points to the way in which the body and mind are conceived as places – outside, yet inside the speaker. However, "The Detective" (1962), composed after "Apprehensions" shows how the "placeness" of the house is dissolved, or vaporized, into an undefined space. Here, we can sense the leakiness of place from "Parliament Hill Fields," but this time the landscape is stripped, strict and formal with its "seven hills," "red furrow" and "blue mountain" (208) and the house is not only associated with the difficulties of the speaker, but has become a sinister crime scene. The detailed depiction of domestic frustration in "Lesbos" (1962) presents the kitchen as a particularly infelicitous place, similar to that of "The Detective" (composed a few weeks earlier) but now focused on the two women's

inability to escape the place assigned to them by their social context. In "Getting There" (1962) the speaker's confinement does not pertain to the domestic sphere, but the spatial dynamic evokes the tension between dwelling in a place while journeying forth towards a potentially unattainable space of becoming something, or someone, else. "The Munich Mannequins" (1963) deploys the spatial frame of the city but draws in the domestic, and points to the notion of being confined yet paradoxically part of a spatial expansion in the sense of a journey, or an expansion of geographical space (which in its turn would be made up of places).

In the later poems we do not necessarily see an increased use of metaphorical places and spaces as opposed to concretized spatial frames, but rather, as the reading of "Contusion" suggests we have an intensified awareness of being in one's place. The pull of an undefined space in relation to this is significant as an attempt to negotiate the speaker's experience of being fixed, confined in a place. The trajectory here is not to be viewed as a successive development towards a final stage of completion, where the speaker succumbs to the frustration of infelicitous places, or transcends topicality to a pure one, but rather as a way of acknowledging that there is a chafing tension, one that is not harmonized. Moreover, we cannot overlook the possibility that these poems can be viewed as a unity, with a focus on "infelicitous places" and the tension that arises between notions of space and place. As Rose points out: "Plath is not consistent. It has been the persistent attempt to impose a consistency on her which has been so damaging – whether as diagnosis or celebration of her work" (10).

Richard Allen Blessing reflects on the motivating forces behind Plath's writing thus:

> Perhaps the act of writing poetry might be seen as an act of freeing the self, of affirming that one is not gagged or bound.

> Looked at in that way, Sylvia Plath's poems become the poetry of an escape artist, the only strategy she had for releasing the energy of her psyche from the mortal wrapping against which she had struggled until the end' (72).

While this is certainly an interesting reflection on the poet's reasons for writing, one may wonder how the act of freeing oneself through writing relates to the way in which the personae in Plath's poetry confronts restrictions of place and the potentially liberating expansiveness of space. Considering the elusiveness of space, and the way in which "space", as soon as it is defined, run the risk of being restricted or delimited, and in this sense a place, writing poetry might be a way of exploring the limits that define and aspire towards a space of becoming, regardless of whether this is attainable.

In conclusion, the personae in Plath's poetry confront the walls, houses, and rooms of a poetic world in which the speaker never ceases to sense the pull of an undefined space. Blessing writes that "Plath is fascinating because the 'shape' of her psyche is peculiarly bottomless, a world of infinite plunge" (59). Here, Blessing does not necessarily refer to the poet's psyche in terms of the psyche of the person Sylvia Plath, but rather the poetic vision as it is articulated through poetry. This could suitably conclude that Plath's world, as it comes to us through her poetry, rather than being an infinite plunge, presents the reader with a constant positioning and re-positioning in relation to an inevitable topicality of the world.

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The American Urban Sublime: Literary Manifestations

Dr. Swati Mukerjee

The path of metropolitan development in the United States in the twentieth century, traced the rise of the modern capitalist city and its evolution into the complex urban landscape of post-modern times. At that time the city was re-inventing itself as a universal site where writers were trying to discover as to what aspects constituted the urban sublime. Over the ages, a diverse range of urban theories have helped planners, sociologists, writers and policy- makers to understand the urban complex.

Urbanism found its "most pronounced expression in … metropolitan cities" according to sociologist Louis Wirth, who postulated in "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1938) that the "historically conditioned cultural influences which, though they may significantly affect the specific character of the community, are not the essential determinants of its character as a city…" According to Wirth, the members of a cosmopolitan unit have "diverse origins and backgrounds" and such variations gave rise to the "spatial segregation of individuals according to colour, ethnic heritage, economic and social status, tastes and preferences". That kind of diversity often caused "segmentalization of human relationships" leading to the "schizoid" aspect of the urban personality (Wirth *Urban Sociology Reader* 34-35).

Focusing on the essential characteristics of the city-living experience, Simon Parker in *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City* (2004) postulated that "conflict" should form a part of urban theory because it related not just to

visible, physical violence "such as riots or civil disorder", but also to "less visible struggles over resources between social classes" (Parker 4-5). At the beginning of the twentieth century, sociologist Georg Simmel in his essay "The Metropolis and the Mental Life" (1903), showed how the city was a determinant of social and cultural life, promoting personal subjectivity. Enumerating the individual reactions to the changing conditions of a modern metropolis, Simmels paralleled living in an urban environment to primitive man's fight against nature. In the jungle- like situation of the twentieth century cosmopolitan existence, man protected himself with a state of indifference, as most urban dwellers were immersed in impersonality; in order to counter the sharp discontinuities in the metropolis. Simmel felt that the man in the modern city "reacts with his head instead of his heart" (636).He felt that the "blasé" attitude which characterized the reserved metropolitan man, caused an ever-increasing social distance among people, which was the outcome of urban density and specialization.

The exploitative relationship between labour and capital among the different social classes in a globalized city formed the subject of study, not only of the urban sociologists like Wirth and Parker, but also the realist writers of the nineteenth century like Stephen Crane, who highlighted the sharp contrasts among the different status groups in his fiction. Apart from Crane, Frank Norris and Henry James among others, resorted to the 'urban novel' or 'city writing', which became the dominant literary mode of expression in the twentieth century, highlighting the issue of social fragmentation characterizing the American metropolis. America was leaping into a new modern age, and these realistic writers set their stories in specific regions, drawing upon the grim realities of everyday life, while trying to communicate the complexities of the urban experience.

Realism was a literary technique, denoting a kind of subject-matter

relating especially to middle-class life, while attempting a faithful representation of reality or verisimilitude. It has been chiefly concerned with the commonplaces of everyday life, where character was considered a product of social factors and environment was the integral element in the drama of human life, as lived out in the city. A high point in the history of realism occurred in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of novels like Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1885), Howells's *The Rise* of *Silas Lapham* (1885) and Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1889).

Naturalism was an extension of realism in a way and writers, who began their careers in the 1890s, were referred to as the naturalists as they saw human experience as subject to biological or environmental determinism. Naturalist/realist writers like Crane, Norris and Henry James tried to provide a viable way of reading the urban experience in America and for this they used the language and vocabulary spawned by the contemporary urban environment. Recording their city-experiences required a vocabulary which was very different from the romantic and sentimental language of the 17th or 18th centuries. These novelists dealt with "…a mechanized world of man-made structures" and it was the "city itself" which provided a vocabulary for the urban novel" (Gelfant *American City Novel* 18).

The urban novel at the turn of the century tried to reassess the overall meaning of the urban experience in cultural, intellectual, social and political terms, envisioning a new consciousness of the city. The writers attempted to trace the emergence of a new social form resulting from the tensions between the rural vision and the urban industrial ideal. The following sections of this article discuss the contributions of naturalist/ realist writers like Charles Brockden Brown, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris among others, as they tried to give literary form to the urban glipses they saw around

them, while maintaining a love-hate relationship with the American metropolis at the turn of the century.

The distinctive character of American city- fiction started with the work of Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810), who like Crane and Dreiser much later, also started his career as a journalist. At the end of the eighteenth century he produced a remarkable group of novels like *Wieland* (1798), *Ormond* (1799), *Edgar Huntly* (1799) and *Arthur Mervyn* (1800), where he portrayed a landscape of collapsing faith and the ruins of an unnatural outward world.

In his works, Brown problematized the concept of the city, because for the first time, the so-called promising 'garden' of the New World was seen as a potentially malign wilderness, which was an evidence of nature's degradation. In his fiction, the city was portrayed not simply as a place of civilization but also of pestilence and deceptions, almost as abhorrent as the wilderness faced by the pioneers. While mentioning the yellow-fever epidemics that ravaged Philadelphia and other cities in the 18th century, in his works *Ormond* and *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown's description of a person afflicted with the fever, was among the early examples of realism in American city fiction: “It was obvious to conclude that his disease was pestilential….His throbbing temples and burning skin indicated a fever, and his form already emaciated, seemed to prove that it had not been of short duration” (Brown *Arthur Mervyn* 5).

Even though Brown applied the vision of the loss of the perfect 'Eden' to the American cityscape, his fiction was an evidence of how an innocent Adamic paradise was no longer viable because such a landscape dissolved into darkness, mystery and the troubled psyches of city people. Consequently the benign world of Nature gave way to the deceptions of the urban American environment where the power of darkness and sense of mystery was introduced into literature,

resulting in moral ambiguity which was new to the American cityscape. For him the epidemics were symbolic of the diseases of the mind, which were gradually becoming an inseparable part of the urban experience.

Yet Brown's portrayal of the darkness of the landscape fusing with the disturbed psyches of the city people was contradictory to the attitude of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804- 1864) towards nature, as he tried to balance the pastoral and the urban. Hawthorne was attracted to the ideal of the balance between the urban and the pastoral and in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), he explored the different facets of urban pastoralism by testing it against the pulse of reality.

Similar to Hawthorne's wish of a pastoral-urban bonding, Professor Leo Marx in *Machine in the Garden* (1969) made an assessment in retrospect, of the regenerative powers of the pastoral myth and how Nature was actually a source of "virtue" and "good fortune of Americans":

> In its simplest, archetypal form, the myth affirms that Europeans experience a regeneration in the New World. They become new, better, happier men—they are reborn. In most versions, the regenerative power is located in the natural terrain: access to undefiled, bountiful, sublime nature is what accounts for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans. It enables them to design a community in the image of a garden, an ideal fusion of nature with art. The landscape thus becomes the symbolic repository of value of all kinds—economic, political, aesthetic and religious (Marx 228).

The "city" that Hawthorne focused in his novel was Boston, yet he did not explore the cosmopolitan character of Boston, the way Henry James did in *The Bostonians* (1886), detailing an age of alteration, increased political activity and the evolving modern cityscape.

Henry James (1843-1916) was principally a realist of the late nineteenth century, seeking in his fiction to give a faithful representation of contemporary American life. In *The Bostonians* (1886), he dealt with explicit political themes like feminism, the general role of women in society, friendship between two women, journalism that invaded privacy and the women's movement that prevailed in America at that time.

The question arises, that while trying to explore these themes in the context of the city, why would he choose Boston as his setting? One possible answer could be that after the Civil War, as the whole nation was heading towards commercialization, the culture of consumption was replacing the high culture embodied by Boston. Originally Boston (being the site of the Massachusetts Bay Colony), was the place where the New England mind with its Puritan heritage and Transcendentalist philosophy was supposed to be still intact. As a result, at one point of time, Boston came to represent the national citadel of culture and moral purpose, far removed from the frenzied uproar over money, which was plaguing other cosmopolitan centres.

Yet, when James chose Boston as the setting for his novel, he tried to trace its transition from a city of New England heritage to a city of capitalism. At that time, Boston embodied the conflicting values of the New England mind and the culture of consumption, gradually leading to its decline as the intellectual centre of the nation. What the decline of Boston as a 'city of culture' meant, was crucial to the discussion of what American society achieved and sacrificed in its transition into a commercialized urban milieu.

The title *The Bostonians* is significant in the sense that it referred to the major characters namely, Miss Olive Chancellor, a staunch feminist belonging to the Boston elite, Verena Tarrant, a young talented speaker who is a protégée of Olive, and Basil Ransom, a

political conservative, originally from Mississippi. These three central characters are surrounded by a vivid supporting cast of would-be reformers, cynical journalists, as James showed remarkable ability to create a broad cross-section of American society. It should however be kept in mind that the quiet but significant struggle between Olive Chancellor and Basil Ransom for Verena's affection and allegiance, seems more pertinent and engrossing today than it might have appeared to nineteenth century readers. Basil eventually proposed to Verena and persuaded her to elope with him, much to the discomfiture of Olive and her fellow feminists.

At that time, Boston was fast moving away from its Puritan heritage, towards the new industrial order of the twentieth century. The spires of the declining churches were being fast outnumbered by the chimneys of the multiplying factories and industries. Beacon Hill, a prestigious enclave and cultural hotspot, was sharply contrasted with the landscape of Charlestown and Cambridge areas of the city, where factories and churches muddled together in the same wintry view. The depressing sight of factories encroaching within the city limits was presented to the reader through Verena's vision as she noticed:

> …the desolate suburban horizons…the general hard, cold void of the prospect of a few chimneys and steeples, straight, sordid, tubes of factories and engine-shops….There was something inexorable in the poverty of the scene, shameful in the meanness of its details…with sheds and rotting piles, mounds of refuse, yards bestrewn with iron pipes…and bare wooden backs of places (James *Bostonians* 185).

The sordid poverty and ugliness of the scene as viewed through Verena's eyes was juxtaposed with the impression of the city in the eyes of Basil Ransom and Olive's sister, Mrs. Luna. While talking to

her, Basil was surprised to hear that "nobody tells fibs in Boston. I don't know what to make of them all", while summing it up as "this unprevaricating city" (Ibid 35).

Basil on his part, referred to it as "the city of reform" (Ibid 38), because in the late 1870s, when the events of the novel were set, reform movements such as abolition before the Civil War and the women's suffrage movement after it, were still active in Boston. For Basil Ransom, to hear the celebrated speaker Mrs. Farrinder speak for the emancipation of women was "something very Bostonian" (49), betraying his belief that reform movements existed only in Boston, which was perhaps why it was constantly referred to as "a city of culture" (46). Yet the status–quo could not be maintained indefinitely, because the transition of the city to a capitalistic economy was becoming evident in the "…spires of the declining church, the masts of isolated self whose triumphant self-reliance has been transformed to isolation and loneliness; and the chimneys of the new industrial order" (45).

Yet James did not only highlight the grime and the poverty engendered by the onset of industrialization. He also accentuated some modern aspects of Boston, including the offices of newspapers which were the "national nerve-centres" (123) and the "high glass plates" (123) of the vestibules of hotels, introduced for efficiency at the sacrifice of privacy. The modern hotels were transparent, exposing the people in the lobbies, which had become the sites for publicity, just like the emerging department stores. The city also had "places providing pleasure", as Basil realized that Boston was "big and full of nocturnal life", with little or no remaining traces of Puritan heritage (413). The pleasure-seekers of the city were transported by the highly popular streetcars, whose speed and convenience demanded the sacrifice of the passengers' distinctiveness that New England virtue had greatly valued. Riding in a streetcar meant

sharing the same space with strangers, threatening everyone's individualism, as they moved through the expanding city, pursuing their materialistic goals. Through all these images, James depicted the shortcomings as well as the advantages of urban life, enabling the activities of commerce and consumption in a city which had been known previously only for its Puritan leanings.

Women like Olive Chancellor possibly did not get married because they felt they had a better connection to women than to men. She preferred to live with Verena, finding the arrangement of living in a same-sex household both practical and preferable to a heterosexual marriage. Their relationship gave James the opportunity to focus on one of the unique features of the city, namely the 'Boston-Marriage', which connoted an ambiguous co-habiting long-term relationship between two women. The term was said to have been in use in New England in the decades spanning late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, describing two women living together, independent of financial support from a man. There was an assumption that in the era when the term was in use, it denoted a lesbian relationship, even though there was no documentary proof that any particular Boston –Marriage, included sexual relations.

The living arrangements of a Boston Marriage helped the partners to pursue careers, because American culture of the nineteenth century made it difficult for women to have careers while being married to men. With society according inferior status to women, some of them sought independent lives, deciding to set up households together. In comparison to heterosexual marriages, the 'Boston-Marriage' arrangement had many advantages, with greater equality in responsibilities and decision-making. Apart from being emotionally attached to each other, the partners actively used their careers as a reason to avoid marriage. The Olive-Verena relationship exemplified this arrangement in *The Bostonians*, showing how being feminists,

they were involved in social betterment and cultural causes with shared values, trying to form a strong foundation for their lives together.

Even though this novel dealt with explicit political themes, along with feminism and the general role of women in society, yet James was at best ambivalent about the feminist movement. However, he was completely focused on the city of Boston, which was the locale for the unfolding events in the lives of his characters. Similar to James, we find Stephen Crane depicting the life of his protagonist in another city of the New World, namely New York, which like Boston was also an expression of the urban culture of America at the turn of the century.

The novels which were the result of Stephen Crane's (1871-1900) life in the bohemian poverty and urban jungle of New York were *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets: A Story of New York* (1893) and its companion piece *George's Mother* (1896), both of which were set in the tenements of Rum Alley in the city.

New York City was chosen by Crane as the fundamental naturalist setting of the novel *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*, where the events of her life gradually unfolded. The city exemplified the struggles, problems and conflicts of a decadent bohemia of evanescence and artifice. The main action of the novel has been confined within the tenements of Rum Alley, from where Maggie glimpsed larger horizons than those among whom she lived.

Rum Alley was a representative slum of New York City consisting of grimy tenement lodgings. During the last decade of the nineteenth century when the novel was set, large-scale immigration had disastrous effects on the urban American scene. Concentration of population, both native and immigrant, took place in metropolitan centres like New York, Boston, Philadelphia among others, mainly

due to the Industrial Revolution in America. The recipient cities and towns were ill-equipped to bear the burden of additional inhabitants and the result was that slums, shanty towns and tenement lodgings sprang up in an uncontrolled manner, changing the face of the urban scenario permanently.

The jungle reality of the slums brought about by rapid industrialization ensured that multiple families were squeezed into limited spaces within a city. The cramped living conditions were a critique of the prevailing social environment of cities like New York. The numbers of the labouring classes had drastically increased with high rates of immigration, not only from other countries but from rural areas of the country as well. Crane, along with contemporaries like Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser attempted to explore the problems of economic inequality which were causing fissures in the social fabric of the American nation at the turn of the century.

With rapid and unchecked industrialization, some parts of the city became the prototypes of Hell instead of Heaven, making outcasts like Maggie, symbols of absolute alienation. The poverty of Maggie's family, which Crane depicted so realistically, was a fallout of the unequal distribution of wealth in a capitalist economy, during the last decade of the nineteenth century. This led to excessive overcrowding in cities like New York, giving rise to unhygienic living conditions for the impoverished classes.

In the first three pages of the novel, Crane superimposed the sounds of the primitive animals on the ferocious jungle of the New York slums. The Darwinian struggle for existence was reinforced in some of the significant words and phrases of the characters, including terms like “howling”, 'writhing”, “livid with the fury of battle”, “furious assault”, “convulsed”, “insane demon”, “barbaric”, “triumphant savagery”, along with verbs like “kicked, scratched and

tore" (Crane *Maggie* 1-3). Maggie's parents were often depicted in insanely drunken battles during which they broke up whole roomfuls of furniture and crockery. Maggie's brother felt that the house resembled a battlefield after one such skirmish between the parents:

> A glow from the fire threw red hues over the bare floor, the cracked and soiled plastering and the overturned and broken furniture. In the middle of the floor lay his mother….In one corner of the room his father's limp body hung across the seat of a chair (Ibid 24).

Being on the lowest rungs of the social ladder, for individuals like Maggie, the city brought about alienation, rather than any kind of fulfillment, with misery rather than happiness being shared among the tenement lodgers. Maggie's plight was a critique of the social environment, where the novelist fused elements of poverty, ignorance and intolerance in a context of violence and cruelty to create a nightmarish world. The urban environment was extremely dehumanizing for the lower classes, often leading to unnatural deaths like Maggie's suicide.

Apart from this novel, Crane located *George's Mother* (1896) also in New York City, where there were constant traffic snarls and children fought animalistically for victory in tenement yards. Yet it was also the place of dream, wealth, indulgence and the social theatre, where ever fresh roles were being offered. George longed to "comprehend it completely, that he might walk understandingly in its great marvels, its mightiest march of life, its sin" (Crane *George's Mother* 35). When his mother died in front of him, an "endless roar, the eternal tramp of the marching city, came mingled with strange cries" (Ibid 53). George was in a better position to survive in the urban jungle of New York, unlike Maggie, who succumbed to pressure by committing suicide, as she was inconsistent with her environment and the urban ways of life.

The new naturalist generation that did not idealize or humanize, but defined an American life of human ironies, underclasses, social conflict and Darwinian struggle. Apart from Crane and Henry James, another contemporary writer focusing on the myriad aspects of the city in his fiction was Frank Norris, who was also a part of the naturalist tradition prevalent at the turn of the century.

If New York was the naturalist setting for some of Crane's novels, the city of San Francisco was the locale of Frank Norris's (1870-1902) *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899), as the title explicitly stated. The author contemplated this as a naturalistic novel, where the preponderance of sordid milieu over the individual was thoroughly emphasized and the assemblage of characters created a sense of sociological extremes. The novel presented the people or creatures in a new dimension of Darwinian thought in an urban jungle, outside the established frames of social conformity and orientation.

Norris chose San Francisco for this tale of moral ruin because of the violent and depraved reputation of the city after the California Gold Rush (1848-1855), due to which the physical and social landscape underwent permanent changes. The effects of the Gold Rush were substantial because the city grew from a small settlement of about 200 residents in 1846 to a boomtown of about 36000 by 1852, with merchants and immigrants arriving by hundreds everyday. The sudden massive influx into this remote area of California overwhelmed the infrastructure, which in many places did not even exist. With the news of gold discovery, local residents were among the first to head for the goldfields, and whenever the yellow metal was discovered, hundreds of miners would collaborate to put up a camp and stake their claims. The social climate of the city became so vitiated that vice thrived in its most sordid forms and a stranglehold of graft and political corruption gripped the city from the mid-1880s, with unmistakable origins in the criminal underworld.

In *McTeague,* Norris presented the theme of degeneration lurking beneath the civilized facade of an urban milieu, with money and gold forming the basis of the economy. It was the story of Sweeney Agonistes (later called Mcteague), an atavistic dentist from the California mining camps, who went to San Francisco to set up his practice there. The aggression lurking in his nature was apparent from his movements and appearance and Norris took pains to create his personality by the use of suggestive words and phrases at the very beginning of the novel:

> For McTeague was a young giant, carrying his huge shock of blond hair six feet three inches from the ground; moving his immense limbs…slowly, ponderously. His hands were as hard as wooden mallets, strong as vices…. Often he dispensed with forceps and extracted a refractory tooth with his thumb and forefinger (Norris *McTeague*).

Even while locating his novel in San Francisco, Norris implied that his protagonist was not the typical urban dweller of a metropolis. He was attracted to a patient Trina Sieppe, of Swiss peasant background whom he finally married, with disastrous results. She won five thousand dollars in a lottery, which brought misfortune to their lives, turning her peasant frugality to base avarice and McTeague's native brutality into drunkenness and violence. The psychological distress and the moral turpitude of the couple were mainly due to the competitive and ruthless environment prevailing in contemporary society. As cities like San Francisco boasted of complex lifestyles dominated by greedy consumers, Norris's plot was evidence of the fact that the old meaning of American Dream was threatened and no longer viable.

In the prevailing cosmopolitan environment of a capitalistic economy of late nineteenth–early twentieth century America,

material success without morality became the superficial meaning of the American Dream and the term came to denote a meaningless utopia. The obsession with money and gold by Norris's characters assumed grotesque forms after McTeague was forced to abandon his profession. When his wife Trina became insufferably stingy, he used to bite her fingers till the blood came, in order to force her to give him money. Surprisingly, even while their lives deteriorated beyond repair, Trina was obsessed with her hoard of gold, before being killed by her husband, who had returned to claim more money. He fled back to the Big Dipper Mine, where he had worked as a boy, a prototype of a person ruined by the violence and evil lurking in the urban wilderness of the twentieth century.

As a result of this, protagonists like McTeague, Trina, and Maggie were inevitably "ruined in the milieu which modern man had made" (Walcutt 123). While exploring the inter-relationships between the city dweller and his environment, the naturalist writers portrayed in their fiction, how "…increasing numbers of Americans made the city their home", as a result of which "…the city's new organization of space was bringing private and public spaces together, changing the social landscape along with the physical" (Klimasmith 7). Simultaneously, these writers attempted a basic kind of evolutionary analysis, while delineating the war of the higher and lower parts of human nature, hinting at the presence of underlying feral instincts, which prompted them to kill at the slightest provocation.

The end of the novel is about McTeague's flight from the pursuers, or "bounty-hunters", which he instinctively detected on his trail. Even as he tried to lose them while striking across Death Valley on a mule, he met Marcus Schouler, his friend-turned-enemy, who emptied his gun into Mcteague's animal. Crazed by heat and thirst, both men started fighting, with Marcus finally falling dead and Mcteague standing handcuffed to his body:

> Looking down, he saw that Marcus in that last struggle had found strength to handcuff their wrists together. Marcus was dead now. Mcteague was locked to the body. All about him, vast, interminable, stretched the measureless leagues of Death Valley (Norris *McTeague*).

American naturalism interpreted material change in a factual and pragmatic manner, while fictionally recording the processes that were altering the nation. The writers at the turn of the century were part of a transitional group, which broke free of the American Genteel Tradition of the previous era, showing how the web of circumstances sometimes brought about the destruction of the protagonists. They also focused on the cycle of degeneration initiated by a hostile environment, rendering the characters incapable of coping with the pressures created by the urban space they inhabited. Naturalists like Henry James, Stephen Crane and Frank Norris were among the first to articulate an age shaped by the harsh impact of modern industrial life on the emerging cities and they contemplated the proliferating social, psychic and feminist energies at work in the new urban milieu while investing the American scene with aesthetic significance.

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Superhero films: Invading Cultural and Private Spaces

Sourjya Roy

The genre of super-hero films came into vogue with *Adventures of Captain Marvel* (movie –serials) in the year 1941 and it was followed by other movie-serials like *Batman* (1943), *The Phantom* (1943), *Captain America* (1944), and *Superman* (1948). Primarily the target audience for these films was children but as the subject matter grew more complex, it began to appeal a wider audience. With years, themes of these films grew graver and it became a heterotopic world as Foucault would have called it, with a conglomeration of both real and unreal, and a solution for everything where people in trouble could seek refuge. Superheroes became the vigilantes of this 'new world' and created their own religion based on scientific methods and logic. But this parallel world also mirrored some of the problems regarding faith and exposed the shortcomings of it and triggered a cultural interplay. A dying genre in the late twentieth century, it re-emerged with more psychological depth and shifting traditional notions, creating a parallel virtually real space with the power to affect mass consciousness .

Superhero comics first came out as comic strips in newspapers in 1930s' but a modern day book format of Superman was the first book to get published in the year 1938 by Action Comics. Since then this genre of popular culture enjoyed a worldwide reader base which chronicled the time and culture in a subtle way with its gradual progress. The naissance of this celebrated category of literature was sandwiched between two World Wars which played a huge role to shape the characters and stories of various comic strips. This birth

was not only threatened by wars, it witnessed other political and financial crises which not only influenced nations but also riddled the lives of common people. The slow end of the imperial world which was based mainly on capitalist politics, found it difficult to cope up with problems like Communist upsurge or Spanish civil war and largely with a threat posed by 'The Great Depression'. 1930s' saw the capitalist world trying to fight out these problems with a promise of better future. The call for equality, especially in the United States, was replaced by the 'Great American Dream' which promised a wealthy and content family life to all the Americans as is evident in several literary creations of that time like *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams or in the emergence of new popular modes of art like *Jazz* and *Blues* music (the later one tried to fill in the common psyche with a sense of nostalgia). But this turbulent time was asking for something entirely different; a new faith system which can bind the people with one single thread and at least provide an escape route if it cannot solve the problems for them. The horrors of World Wars and poverty led the people into believing in the absence of God or at least in the lack of a Christian God and this fading belief, to some extent, got replaced by the superheroes, a psychological state which Freud would call *Verschiebung* or 'displacement.'[1] Superheroes stepped in with their super powers, better judgments and sexuality[2] to fill in the void created by traditional cultures. Superhero films became a perfect instrument to serve the capitalistic purpose with its brands and merchandizes and it created a pseudo world to bring an order to the chaotic time. Comic books were cheap, portable and with tales of good triumphing over evil and the stories were often identifiable which made it easier for the readers to imagine themselves as superheroes. But these were not the only reasons. While discussing the popularity we often ignore the value of these books as fantasies which allowed a parallel breathing space to

children in a time when natural growth was often hindered by socio-political instabilities. But eventually this genre meant for the kids, evolved gradually. My focus is mainly on five films that explored characters created by comic books: *Man of Steel, The Dark Knight Trilogy* and *The Avengers.*

The population of the United States, despite its ethnic diversity, is mainly Christian. Historically speaking, there was and is always a conflict going on with other religious groups to prove the superiority of the Christians. While Christianity plays a major role in the formation of such graphic novels, pagan influence can also be felt. Interestingly this genre of superhero comics is a fusion or sometimes a subversion of traditional faith systems which is evident in recent films. The root of this ethnic unification can be traced back to the American Revolution in 1776 only after which the United States as a country started to exist. Most of its residents were common European people and fugitives who in search of fortune or reversal of fate had settled there. It was also a 'new world', and the failure of the idea of a Utopian society in Europe brought the Europeans with a promise to start afresh. These 'puritans'[3] thought that a new civilization can find a cure but ended up with the original crisis of a dystopian world. And this failure gave rise to different cultural and sub-cultural spaces[4] which further complicates the interplay. Washington Irving while expressing his concerns regarding this crisis first used the word 'Gotham' for New York City in his work *Salmagundi,* a name that also inspired the creation of Batman series. Twentieth century saw a realization of this illusory 'new world' in the fantastic world of superhero comics and the God-figure was substituted by a more justifiable God or savior, supported by the technological brilliance of the century.

The first film of the *Dark Knight Trilogy,* that is *Batman Begins,* displays a cultural conflation where the city of Sodom and Gomorrah

become Gotham city (New York City becomes a microcosmic view of the world) Biblical Yahwey is Ra's Al Ghul and Batman is Abraham who is trying to save his city from a pseudo god. The only difference is that Yahwey eventually destroys the city whereas Batman[5] is fighting against Ra's al Ghul. In the Bible, God is worried about the future and decides to start anew, He destroys it first but Batman on the verge of a probable doom's day is still hopeful and wants to give a chance to his people. One might also trace parallels between Batman's great great grandfather and Moses; Alfred describes him in the film as a man who helped in building railroads to free slaves just like Moses freed the Israelites.

Similar features can be found in the film *Man of Steel*, based on the stories of Superman. Nietzsche had discussed the idea of a superman or what he called *Ubermensch* in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885) and according to him we do not need a god, what we need is a superman or a man who is better than the rest. In the film, planet Krypton is under attack and Jor –El, father of Superman, decides to send his son to Earth as Krypton is crumbling and Earth is the only place where he can survive because of the similarities in atmosphere. But he knows that his son is going to display non-earthly power due to frictional and gravitational changes and he says: “He will be a god to them” and he names him Kal-El which in Hebrew stands for 'the voice of God'. Superman replaces the traditional God.

Later in the film, while escaping from the space capsule, Superman stretches out his hands just like Christ on the Cross, he is also sacrificing his wish to return to his planet and the promise of kingship to save mankind.

Christianity is now banking on this popularity of Superman to reemerge as a powerful belief system by creating a cartoon of the Pope imitating the iconic flying style of Superman and named it 'Superpope'.

Post 9/11, this genre coming out of a dystopian world, holds a Foucauldian 'mirror' where duality and contradictions co-exist. Films like *The Dark Knight* deal with a twisted version of the biblical story of Christ. In this film, after the onslaughts of Joker one can see a lot of burning cards lying around but a closer look reveal these cards to be a collection of Tarot cards with the images of dragon, snake and devil; symbols of Satan. Joker, the main villain, is a warped image of Christ. When Gordon interrogates him, the former finds no objects or clinical data in Joker's name which can help Gordon prosecute the villain and in one scene he burns a huge pile of money which shows his disregard for the materialistic world. He draws 'sick' men (morally corrupt and victims of Gotham's capitalistic attitude) and gives them an opportunity to prove their worth. And in the end he creates a situation where at midnight he is going to decide the fate of

the people of Gotham; the just and the unjust like Christ who is also supposed to decide the fate of mankind on the wake of Apocalypse. In the last confrontation between Batman and the Joker, the former shoves the villain out of a building and then catches the latter's leg with a rope and pulls him up. But that image of Joker with outstretched arms along with other attributes of him reminds the viewer of the symbol of Christ. With one leg tied to a rope he also resembles the figure of the Hanged Man in a deck of Tarot cards; the Hanged Man symbolizes sacrifice, suffering and of being suspended in time, all of these traits illustrates a remarkable similarity with the image of Christ. Joker is a Janus faced character, he is both good and evil and in many ways he is subverting and disrupting the existing cultural norms. His acts may place him as a villain but his attributes are that of a god, only we cannot associate the meek and kind god of Christianity with him, he is more pagan. Joker actually inverts the way we look at things. When he enters the hospital in a nurse's outfit he unsettles our conventional perception of a heterosexual villain. Laura Mulvey, while discussing gaze in films in her 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", argues that "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification," but Joker appears to contradict that, and his dialogue is not only a reply to what Harvey Dent asks him but also asks the viewer to question the conformative method they choose to shape their ideologies, and he says: "…You had plans. Look where it got you. I just did what I do best – I took your plan, and I turned it on itself." In *The Dark Knight Rises,* the character of Bane, a former protégé of Ra's al Ghul, comes to Gotham city to liberate the people from an oppressive government with a twisted promise of a revolutionary outcome: "… The powerful will be ripped from their decadent nests, and cast out into the cold world that we know and endure… The police will survive, as they learn to serve the true justice." Other superheroes like Thor, a Norse God, in *The*

Avengers, have a story of being cast out by his own father Odin with a stroke of thunder, a parallel to the story of the fall of Satan. And Loki in Norse mythologies is known as a mischievous god, constantly dwelling on the idea of liminality. Hulk is a scientifically created monster. His anger, Freudian symbol of id, is the main source of his power which he learns to control but this shows a frequently manipulated shift between his conscious and subconscious self, disturbing the notion of morality.

"Art is manipulating words and symbols to achieve changes in consciousness." –Alan Moore

This genre of Comic films not only displays a cultural interplay to develop a more scientific myth but it also lashes out at other religions. Its focus is also on creating a cultural supremacy by invading other spaces and by destabilizing them it creates a stronger base for itself. It affects the psyche of the mass and creates a sense of superiority in the minds of the Americans (production houses are mostly American and the target viewer as well). In the film *The Avengers,* Black Widow, a former Soviet spy joins the American S.H.I.E.L.D to save humanity and the implied message is that of the United States as the sole guardian of the human race. Norse gods like Loki and Thor are often humiliated in this film as inferiors to scientific superheroes of United States. Captain America, another character in the film is seen talking to Black Widow about Thor as: "There is only one God and I am pretty sure that he does not dress like that," thus inferring a cultural aggressiveness. In fact, after destroying the war machine together, Hulk is punching Thor out of sheer disgust for these pagan gods. Later after tossing Loki out of his senses Hulk addresses the latter as 'Puny gods'. The epicenter for all these apocalyptic troubles is the United States and mainly cities from northern America, the growing gap between the north and the south is quite evident and it tries to establish northern America as the face of the United states. It also

gives ample scope to the progressive nation to project itself as the vigilante of the world.

Furthermore, these films are justifying the role of the United States Government in the lives of its citizens after the terrorist attack of 9/11. After the attack, the United States had developed a few new measures, one of which indicates the level of threat on the country, to constantly assure the people how their Government is acting against these kinds of terrorist intimidations.[6] But recent cases like that of Edward Snowden reveal the ongoing spying activities of the National Security Agencies on people of the United States and on foreign countries. The Government tries to justify its position by putting the security threats above personal privacy.[7] The cause of the furor is a loophole created by the administrators themselves as they have promised personal freedom earlier while building the nation. President Barrack Obama while defending his security agencies said: "There is no point in having intelligence agencies if you are restricted to the things which you can read in the New York Times or in Spiegel." (*The Hindu, Jan 19, 2014*) Michel Foucault's idea of panopticon refers to this problem with surveillance; the 'big brother' who is monitoring all is also facing a disruptive internal attack where the U.S. citizens are questioning the necessity of this system. Superhero films also exhibit similar situations. In *The Dark Knight,* Batman starts to monitor the cell phones of the people in Gotham city and justifies it by saying that it is only to track Joker, a bigger cause than the private freedom. Lucius Fox reminds him of the perils as he is invading the private space of the people and thus robbing them of their freedom which a morally correct Batman cannot and should not do. Again in *The Avengers*, S.H.I.E.L.D is an organization which tracks all the possible dangers by breaching into securities. These superhero films act on the behalf of the authority and convince their followers that they are safe and they do it in two ways: by instilling a

faith in the common psyche about the Government and by carefully avoiding the depiction of killings of the commoners. If we observe these films closely we will find that most of these films while portraying the action scenes never show the commoner's dying face. This has two possible reasons; one, these films mainly aim children to cash in the box office and they cannot risk a censor board objection and two, they do not wish to instill any sense of insecurity in the viewer. Joker while explaining his methods also clears this aspect of human psyche as he said in the movie *The Dark Knight:* "Nobody panics when the expected people get killed."

"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." - John Milton

In the heydays of Modernism W.B.Yeats predicted an arrival of a Christ like figure who would be less kind and more destructive, to eliminate anarchy from the earth:

"Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand."

The heterotopic world of superhero films are offering a fantastic space which is continuously questioning the existing order with its often disruptive concepts and speculations where the idea of hero and villain, are constantly getting mired up with the stimulus of cultural politics. This particular genre has become an 'ideological state apparatus' which creates desire for a different space and then with its visual impact drive us to a much darker world where the hero becomes a 'dark knight'. This postmodern approach to films also deconstructs gender roles and in its futuristic projection of the world, includes science to define the socio-religious space, forcing us to create a pseudo-cultural identity which oscillates between the realms of real, unreal and surreal.

End Notes:

1. It is a kind of unconscious defense mechanism, described by Freud, where the mind substitutes an aim or an object, often considered as dangerous or unacceptable, with a new one. The traditional concept of god is getting replaced in these films with a more popular superhero.
2. Recent films always show the womanizing side of a superhero like Bruce Wayne in *The Dark Knight Trilogy* or Tony Spark or Thor in *The Avengers.* Women superheroes are also not very far from portraying their sexuality onscreen, Following Laura Mulvey's work on Gaze, characters like Black Widow or Catwoman, they always display a skimpily clad hour-glass figure which conforms a patriarchal objectification of women but is unsettled by a concept of traditional all powerful hero fused to it.
3. In *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, authors Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury discuss the psychology of the Europeans who later settled in United States and started to shape the country following their personal ideology of a utopian society.
4. Gives rise to different cults within Christianity and makes people to reconsider pagan myths.
5. Batman is like Christ, the face of justice in the film *Batman Begins* evident from the following conversation:

Ra's: "…you have become truly lost."

Bruce: and what path can Ra's al Ghul offer?"

Ra's: "The path of man who shares his hatred of evil…and wishes to serve true justice."

II Cor.5:10. "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, be it good or evil."

II Tim. 4:1. "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead." The idea of Jesus as a judge or an advocate is abundant in *Holy Bible,* but in The Dark Knight Trilogy, in an inverted world of the just and the unjust Crane is playing this role.

6. The threat indicator, as discussed by Michael Moore in Fahrenheit 9/11, is used mainly to assure people that the Government is fighting constantly against terrorism to protect them from future attacks. But a second interpretation points out the hidden role of the authority in creating pseudo terror which affects the mass consciousness. Thus it provides the Government with an edge when it comes to invading private spaces.
7. The United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights with Fourteenth Amendment protect civil liberties.

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The Poetics of William Carlos Williams: The Use of 'Rolling' in Paterson as a means of transfiguration of 'Actual'/ 'Linguistic' Space

Rupsa Banerjee

In William Carlos William's *Paterson* the individual's association with the land is seen to be essentially libidinal, mingling desire with the stoic, rational approach towards land, and through such a dialectics can be said to change the traditionally assumed relationship between American industrialism and the genre of Pastoralism in Poetry. Although there have been various ways in which critics have studied Williams' engagement and consequent transformation through language the space that he chooses to describe, in this paper I would like to focus on how the use of the word 'rolling' in the preface, firstly, captures the essence of modern American space, where the pastoral is never quite apart from the industrial and secondly conjoins landscape and language not only by effectively transposing the poem's flow onto the movement of the Passaic, but also by stressing the affective interconnections between the 'language of the Falls' and the 'language of the poet'.

The use of the word 'rolling' delineates the manner in which the language of technology becomes incorporated into the language that delineates the interaction of the people with their everyday surroundings. It does so because it contains within itself the dual referential function, at once referring to the Passaic Rolling Mills

industries and also towards the unbridled power of nature as manifested in the rolling Passaic river. "The idyllic section III of Book IV is built around the factory neighbourhood of Paterson below the Falls, and the mills which were powered by the old Race. We first see it in its rustic aspect: then there is a sudden transition to the early days of industrial revolution. Hamilton and L'Enfant's grandiose plans for an aqueduct to Newark, mentioned earlier in the poem, had vanished, leaving a small town depending on its manufacturers, but still tied to the land." (qtd in Sankey, 204) The fact that the inhabitants of Paterson are dependent upon the manufacturers but are still tied to the land is the most crucial aspect of American existence that Williams has attempted to capture within the poem.

One can argue thus that by playing upon the word's dual referential contexts, William Carlos Williams helps bring about the merger of the two kinds of spaces, essentially the 'space of consumption' (industrial space) and the 'consumption of space'[1] (pastoral space). This merger driving forth an eirenic reconciliation between the industrial space and the 'real' space generated for the satisfaction of our aesthetic needs is not forced but occurs with the characteristic smoothness of an artist himself trying to build a bridge between aestheticism and rationalism. The merger of these two kinds of spaces (the first being the space of industrial development within the city of Paterson and the other being the space of the 'elemental', the unaffected vestiges of nature present to let man enter into a better understanding between himself and the surroundings) show that within the space of industrial America there can be no permanent differentiation between the pastoral and the industrial (This will later be even more apparent by studying the word's ekphrastic relations to Charles Sheeler's painting).

The importance that William Carlos Williams gives to the word rolling and the way in which it is intimately connected to the history

of the land that serves as a referent for the poem shows that Williams' understanding of space is very different from the ways in which poets like T.S. Eliot apprehended it-

> "Williams feels very keenly about place, a concept which anchors his philosophy of "no ideas but in things". He disagrees with Eliot's rather glib assertion in the Quartets that place is only place, and that what is actual is actual only for one place. On the contrary, he believes that only in some one place, and that what is actual is actual only for one place. On the contrary, he believes that only in some one place does the universal ever become actual, and that therefore place is the only universal."[2] (Quinn, 92)

William Carlos William's primary objective in writing *Paterson* was to seek out newer ways in which language can relate to the world and how that can help establish a more immediate and intimate relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. In the beginning of Spring and All, Williams writes that "There is a constant barrier between the reader and his consciousness of immediate contact with the world. If there is an ocean it is here. Or rather, the whole world is between". (pg 501, Rainey) The task of the poet is to devolve this barrier from the level of sensory experience to the level of intentionally correlating the object of sensory experience with the mind that seeks to judge and appreciate it.

The concrete nature of experience remains at once 'rolling up' with the meaning-making mechanisms of mind, to gently drive in the fact that "no ideas but in things"-

> "To make a start,
> out of particulars
> and make them general, rolling
> up the sum, by defective means"

The word "rolling" is of great significance for understanding William Carlos Williams' use of language in Paterson and also helps to emphasize on the manner in which language bears upon the articulation of space in the poet's consciousness.[3] The repetition of the word "rolling" in the poem Paterson has been analysed by critics like Ian D. Copestake who argues that the use of the phrase "rolling up" "gives a sense of movement to the Preface because the continuous use of the phrase in these first pages, reflecting the derivation of the word "rolling" from the Latin "rotula", meaning a "little wheel" becomes structural. " Thus, Copestake takes the word "rolling" to be symptomatic of the structure envisaged by Williams for the poem. In a way that is uncharacteristic of Stevens', Williams makes the word "rolling" the very kernel from which he could investigate and elaborate upon the structure of the poem and also metonymically build a very strong bond with the land that produced it.

On the one hand I find the word "rolling" to be important because it presents itself as the necessary characteristic of a structure (essentially circular) which had very inordinately come to be the defining characteristic of the workings of American society. There is a particular cycle of squalor and disillusionment at work at the very heart of American society where the spiritually barren American woman comes to cause the American man to treat the "earth under our feet" as the "excrement of some sky/ and we degraded prisoners/ destined/ to hunger until we eat filth" (Nelson, 438) The only way out of this vicious cycle for Williams is to create a language that could allow for a co-mingling or "rolling up" of the communication between the male and the female, between man and his environment.

Therefore, the word "rolling" is telling of the manner in which the substance of the poem actually relates to the language used to write the poem. I think also through the etymology of the word "rolling"

we can actually strive to build a very integral relationship between the poem and the history of the city that the poem refers to. In his Autobiography, Williams writes, "I took the city as my "case" to work up, really to work it up…Paterson as Paterson would be discovered, perfect, perfect in the special sense of the poem, to have it- if it rose to flutter into life awhile-it would be as itself, locally, and so like every other place in the world" (Lloyd, 56) This perfect city that Williams refers to can very well be said to prefigure the shape of the proverbial circle, perfect in its conceptualization and the manner in which it is delineated by the poet.

In the late nineteenth century, Paterson had been taken up by American industrialists to be made into a city that would redefine the mightiest industrial cities in the world. Paterson in itself has a rich history as the United States' first planned industrial city, as well as containing some of the country's oldest textile mills and businesses. The Passaic Rolling Mill Company became one of the most famous manufactures of rolled iron and contractors and builders of iron road and railway bridges and similar structures in the whole country It was the first of the manufacturing centres that was able to supply quickly within itself the necessary material used in its various industries. It thus came to re-define the logic of self-sufficient industry and we find that the foregrounding of the word rolling by Williams in the Preface to the poem actually can be taken to be unconsciously hinting at this ideal of self-sufficient industries, something that for him was the necessary ideal of development for America.

David Trotter in his book *The Making of the Reader* talks of the many ways in which economy serves as a primary foil to the writer's choice of language. He quotes the words of Antonio Gramsci who enumerates the ways in which capitalism has actually engendered a new type of work in America, "In America 'rationalization' has determined the need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new

type of work and productive process' […] technology would purge the old type of man, the 'sedimentations of idle and useless masses living on "their ancestral patrimony", pensioners of economic history'." (Trotter, 56) We can see that Gramsci is here delineating an experience that is not negatively dependent upon the forces of technology. Instead, technology is seen to be engendering a new kind of being, giving rise to new beginnings, transforming the perception of reality. By letting the word's industrial referent co-exist with the particulars of everyday life it becomes apparent that Williams was accommodative of the practices of technology, of the changes it introduced into the lived space and the way in which it transformed the relations between the individuals as well.

The word "rolling" does not appear to retain any distinctions between the "particulars" that Williams talks of and girdles up all the myriad differences present between the "things" to-

> "roll[ing] up out of chaos
> a nine months' wonder, the city
> the man, an identity"

Don Scheese in his assessment of the relationship between the human and the non-human states, "the nonhuman environment is a dominant character in the worlds both inside and outside the text; [...] authors themselves subscribe to this belief;[...] and an important interaction occurs between nonhuman environment and author, place and text, which can result in [an] insistence on the primacy of a physical world." (Scheese, 8) In Williams' poetry we certainly find that there is not merely an emphasis on the "primacy" of the external world, but there is an active interaction between the human beings and their environment through whose mutual interaction the separate subjectivities actually come to form themselves. The word 'rolling' becomes the protean symbol around which the imaginative powers of Paterson can be centred. The word in itself through the myriad

associations that it draws in into the poem (primarily through the unconscious of language) actually helps calibrate the readers' experience of the actual, physical world and at the same time draw further illumination about the manner in which language functions to delineate the nature of man's experience of space. The phrase from Paterson that has come to be identical with Williams' poetic thought, "No ideas but in things", takes on a different meaning here all together because one finds that Williams' concern wasn't merely to separate the idea from the thing or to discount its existence, but actually to see it in close and intimate relation with the objects, in this case, the Passaic River (it's influence upon the lives of the people, its ability to produce enough water power to at once supply manufactured goods for the whole of America) and the Rolling Mills.

The unconscious of language which is at work through the use of the word 'rolling' also comes to be very significant when seen in light of the existing tradition of landscape poetry, thus allowing us to penetrate into the foliage of human thought pruning and re-pruning the world around itself in order to better understand the network of affects that are held in place around the individual and his space. Denise Riley in The Words of Selves, states that the author, no matter how hard he tries to keep his words from wayward associations, always comes to be "dethroned authorially" by being "spoken across by words (by the word's anarchic sound associations, by their echoing of other's speech)" (Riley, 2). This fact comes to be very important when seen in light of Williams' ceaseless desire to craft a language that was singularly American. Riley goes on to state that the manner in which the artist comes to make peace with the infinite ramifications of words and their affective cadence gets decided when the artist is able to locate the "solid history of words in the world". (Riley, 73 It is with regard to this that the use of the word "rolling" becomes significant as we find Williams insinuating himself into a

long intellectual tradition of poets attempting to delineate the space around them, through words that betray their affective connect with their surroundings.

In 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth can also be seen making copious use of the word 'rolling'.

" and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. – Once again"

We are aware of the fact that the Wye River Valley was the site of a big ironworks industry and as critics like John Bard McNulty say, Wordsworth made no disguises to the fact that the landscape was actually infiltrated by objects that were vestiges of modern day civilization. However, we find that though Wordsworth was actually genuine in his description of the landscape, yet he was not completely able to separate the object world from his own poetic self and this attempt to differentiate reality from actuality actually led to the creation of a poetic reality that was interfused by the consciousness of the poet. The adjectival positions of "blue", "round", "living" etc before the objects are telling of that -

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something for more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting sins,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and the mind of Man
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts
And rolls through all things."

The word "roll" thus comes to serve the purpose of a poetic consciousness that attempts to merge the idea so completely with the

thing, that in the end what remains is merely just another assertion of the idea, in the form of the imagination actively structuring the creative process of the poet.

In Williams' poem however we find, there is an understanding of the fact that the world as it appears to us in the form of ideas is a distortion of the external world that exists objectively, independent of our attempts to structure it into our consciousness. With Wordsworth, there is the feeling that the knowledge of the world is indeed "rolled" up in the course of our thought, but with Williams there is the genuine assertion of the fact that our knowledge of the world is at best incomplete and this can be read into the positioning of the word "rolling" in the Preface to Paterson. The word "rolling" is positioned either at the end of enjambed lines or placed in close proximity with each other through the omission of conjunctions, that almost give the verb a noun like quality.

Again, if we want to study how the verb "rolling" appears with relation to land in traditional American poetry, we can take an example from Emerson's poem-

"Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird;—
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole." (Emerson, 9) [4]

Here, the word has completely been stripped of its primal energies, and has been reduced to a mere qualifier, which is again in keeping with the larger romantic argument of making nature co-extensive with the subjective self. ("I yielded myself to the perfect whole"). However, in William's preface, we find that the word retains its enigmatic energies and effectively combines nature's wilderness, the nation's industrial fantasies, all through the perspective of a poet who sought to see the mechanical as nourishing the aesthetical experience of a city.

Again, I want to also argue that the word rolling also brings in many ekphrastic associations into the poem that also works to insert the poem in a different manner into the grander meta-narrative of American culture. Charles Sheeler, a precisionist painter of the same time as Williams (and also his close friend) had very much influenced Williams' perception of reality. William comments on his works saying, "I think Sheeler is particularly valuable because of the bewildering directness of his vision, without blur, through the fantastic overlay with which our lives are so vastly concerned, "the real" as we say, contrasted with the artist's fabrication". (Williams, 231-232) I find that there can be a trajectory drawn between the works of Charles Sheeler made in the 1940s, a collection of five paintings under the title Power, of which the painting 'Rolling Power' bears many formal similarities with the structure of the preface.

In the painting, Sheeler, rather than showing the entire engine or train, instead depicts two drive wheels, a bogie wheel, and engine parts of a Hudson-type New York Central locomotive designed by Henry Dreyfuss. The minimalistic manner in which Sheeler paints the painting is in fact admirable and in keeping with his understanding to render reality poised at the very delicate precipice of what a man knows and what a man sees. Sheeler painted it in pristine condition in a palette of browns and grays, and the only trace of movement in the painting is the vapour that exudes at the bottom right from the engine. In Williams' poem as well, we find that the proliferation of asyndetons do not actually yield up a sense of energy or vividness as we find that they often are present to serve the function of apposition. The lines,

"Rolling in, top up,
Under, thrust and recoil, a great clatter:
Lifted as air"

Attempt to delineate motion of the river but the movement of "great clatter" is carefully balanced in Williams' workings of the variable foot. From this we can actually argue that language can actually help present an ironic diminuation of real space, (a thing that had already been showcased in Sheeler's works.)[5]

The word 'rolling' within the space of the poem can thus be seen as playing upon its various referential contexts to free itself from its proverbial ankylosis in history whether it be through apathetic usage or by the calcification of the relation of arbitrariness between the meaning of the linguistic utterance and the manner of its expression, and through its own polysemous nature stress upon the multivalent nature of the space that engenders it and that it seeks to describe.

End Notes:

1. Henri Lefebvre calls the 'space of consumption' to be the space "which coincides with the historical locations of capital accumulation, with the space of production, and with the space that is produced […] a space which the state controls- a space, therefore, that is strictly quantified." (Lefebvre, 352) On the other hand, the 'consumption of space' is the space that is qualitative, the space that is aesthetically pleasing, the space that can be said to improve the quality of life.

2. On being questioned on the validity of his views formulated in a lifetime spent in a small city, Williams gives his apologia, "We live only in one place at a time but far from being bound by it, only through it do we realize our freedom. Place then ceases to be a restriction, we do not have to abandon our familiar and known to achieve distinction but far from constricting ourselves, not searching for some release in some particular place, rather in that place, if we only make ourselves sufficiently aware of it, do join with others in other places". (Quarterly review, 126)

3. Regarding the functionality of verbs, Fenollosa puts forward the argument that a new science could make progress in getting at the nature of things only if it refused to submit to the authority of classificatory logic. Then it might discover "how functions cohere in things" because it could express its results "in grouped sentences which embody no nouns or adjectives but verbs of special character." Correspondingly Chinese writing teaches us that poetry is richest when it "agrees with science, not with logic": "The moment we use the copula, the moment we express subjective inclusion, poetry evaporates. The more concretely we express the interactions of things, the better the poetry." "The true formula for thought is: the cherry tree is all that it does. Its correlated verbs compose it."(Altieri, 45) The verb "rolling" thus becomes very effective in the manner in which it brings out the material nature of language effectively transposing

itself onto the movement of the river, one of the most crucial symbols in the poem for maintaining a continuous relationship between nature and man.

4. Emerson's choice of words also needs to be seen in the manner in which he perceives land to be physically possessed by man (and not just mentally),"The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns the field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eyes can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of all these men's farms, yet to this their land-deeds give them no title". (Nature, 1836) We can obviously chart the difference in which the use and exchange value of land comes to be quantified within the theories of Marx. The representation of land becomes problematic in light of the fact that it at once retains a relationship with the idea that "land is the ultimate wealth" and is at the same time impervious to human possession while at the same time quantifying it in the form of aesthetic property. Perhaps the reason why for Emerson the possession of land is 'un-tabooed' within the space of the poem is because in the early nineteenth century, landscape could more effectively hide the social relations that were integral to its formation.

5. Charles Sheeler's works had been influential on Williams also by way of helping him to locate the object of representation in the artist's consciousness. Williams says with regard to his paintings, "His paintings give the impression that his subjects have happened to him: he has been able to find the form which expresses reality more truly than their original, natural shapes." (Rourke, 181) Again, Williams says, "I think Sheeler is particularly valuable because of the bewildering directness of his vision, without blur, through the fantastic overlay with which our lives are so vastly concerned, "the real", as we say, contrasted with the artist's "fabrication". […] It is the measurable disproportion between what a man sees and knows that give the artist his opportunity. He is the watcher and surveyor of that world where the past is always occurring contemporaneously and the present always dead needing a miracle of resuscitation to revive it" (qtd in Ostrom, 18) The manner in which the craft of seeing can actually transform the object of perception can be clearly seen in Charles Sheeler's 'American Landscape'. The very title of the painting is telling of the fact that Sheeler wanted to envision the industrialized American landscape as a "modern Arcadia." (Danly and Marx, 140) The painting showcases all the hallmarks of classical landscape painting and as Dominie Ricciotti notes, "[is] in keeping with a classical spatial system, add[ing] more breadth and depth" (Danly and Marx, 142). However Riccotti states, "For all its deliberate classicism, Sheeler's image of the landscape is nonetheless "American" because it acknowledges the economic transformation of the land while recalling through its design vision of the once natural landscape." (ibid) For Riccotti, this actually helps establish an association between the modern painting and the tradition of landscape art in America (as shown earlier the word 'rolling' also helps establish a connection between modern poetry and the tradition of landscape poetry in Europe and America).

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Conceptualizing The Tribal Identity in The Context of Space: Case of Manipur

Dona Ganguly

The accusation of marginalization and step motherly treatment by the Indian state against the states of the North East is widely prevalent not only in the political circles and in the academic world but also among the various people's movement that have emerged in this much misconstrued region. Central dominance and prejudices continue to determine most of the major initiatives of the Indian state towards attempted resolution of many claims of the tribal communities in this region. Within the Indian state for decades there has been institutionalized oppression, exclusion, discrimination and denial of rights in various forms against the *periphery*; i.e. those living in the *marginal space* like the Dalits, Tribals, Denotified tribes, Women, Religious minorities, Ethnic minorities and Sexual minorities. However from within this expansive categorization of what is acknowledged as the periphery, the various tribal groups of the seven north eastern states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura occupy a somewhat special place since the Constitution of India does not provide us with a precise definition of the term “tribes”. Article 342 of the Indian Constitution states that the President may with respect to any State or Union territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory, as the case may be.

What often remains unobserved in this tumult and uproar over marginalization and neglect by the Union is how even from within the marginalized; certain groups, through varied reprehensible and discriminatory practices continue to dominate and further marginalize the smaller groups. This contemporary tendency of *exclusion of the further smaller groups by the already marginalized minorities* represents the *neo-colonial practices* of the latter *to arrest the economic growth* and *to dwarf the identity* of the former in order to maintain the status quo and socio-cultural subordination coupled with political subjugation- a well calibrated attempt to deny the *living space* to the much smaller groups. The state of Manipur best exemplifies such practices.

The present state of Manipur is one of the eight states of the eastern most region of India bordering Burma (also known as Myanmar); a region categorized in popular discourse as the North East region (NER). It is bordered to the north by the state of Nagaland and to the west by the State of Assam and Mizoram to the south. Manipur can broadly be divided into two parts based on the topography of the state, the Hills and the Dales (Valleys). At present there are nine districts in the state, four of which are in the valley area with the remaining five forming the hill areas of the state. The hill areas constitute of five districts viz. Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul while the valley districts include Imphal East and West District, Bishenpur and Thoubal District. The valley areas (dale) of the state are inhabited by the Meiteis and the hill districts of the state are inhabited by the tribes either from the Naga ethnic group or the Kuki-Chin-Zomi ethnic group. The 33 tribes from these two broad ethnic groups account for 40 percent of the state's population and occupy 90 percent of total geographical area of the state. Despite of being the occupant of the major proportion of the total geographical space; the Hill tribes of Manipur are suffering from acute identity crisis which has led to the emergence of the

demand for the creation of the Autonomous Tribal State within the state of Manipur.

The demand for the establishment of an *Autonomous Tribal State* (ATS) within the state of Manipur under Article 244A[1] of the Indian Constitution has been advocated by the Zomi Council from Churachandpur District. The Zomis are the people known by outsiders as "Chin' in Burma, 'Lushai' and 'Kuki' in India and Bangladesh. They have been effectively fragmented by the colonial administrators to suit their selfish design; thus, leaving them to be a minority community in their own lands. Zomi Council, the apex body of the various Zomi tribes is presently representing six tribes of Manipur viz. Paite, Simte, Vaiphei, Zou, Tedim-Chin (Sukte) and Mate tribes. The Council have been tirelessly working to promote and protect the distinct identity of the Zomis, to create an Autonomous Tribal State (ATS) within the State of Manipur and to provide Constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule to the existing Autonomous District Councils in the state; to fulfil the socio-economic, linguistic, cultural and developmental aspirations of the people; preserve the indigenous identity and rich traditional practices; protect their rights over land and its resources and maintain the territorial integrity as well as security of the state and the nation. The assertion of identity or precisely the quest to establish a tribal identity through the creation of an autonomous tribal state is the manifestation of the decades of exploitation and oppression by the dominant Meitei communities. Some of the most prominent examples of the discriminatory and exclusionist practices of the Meitei majority are listed below:

A) Imposition of unwanted legislations to deprive rights of tribal people over customary land and resources in the state

Some of the initiatives of the Meitei dominated Manipur Government for imposition of legislations that deprive tribals of

self governance, rights over customary land and resources are as follows:

- *The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960*[2]

The Manipur Land Revenue & Land Reform Act, 1960 (MLR & LR Act, 1960) was enacted by the Parliament to consolidate and amend the law relating to land revenue in the State of Manipur. The Act intends to bring about uniformity in distribution of land throughout the State. However, Section 2 of the Act says: "It extends to the whole of the State of Manipur except the hill areas thereof provided that the State Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, extend the whole or part or any section of this Act to any hill areas of Manipur." Under the Act, hill districts do not automatically mean hill areas. According to Section 2(1) of the Act, hill area means such areas in the hill tracts of the State of Manipur as the State Government by notification in the official Gazette declared to be hill areas. The State Government had notified 1161 villages as hill areas in the 5 (five) Hill Districts for the purpose of this Act. According to the tribes, the extension of the Act to their areas is encroachment into their territory. So far 89 villages of Churachandpur district and 14 villages each of Tamenglong and Senapati districts had also been covered by the Act. There is also a special protective provision of the Act on the transfer of land belonging to a tribal to non-tribal. Section 158 says, "No transfer of land by a person who is a member of Scheduled tribes shall be valid unless the transfer is to another member of Schedule tribes; ….or the transfer is by way of mortgage to a co-operative society." Although the State Government had made an exceptional provision of the Act to the restriction of land transfer, the tribal population remains apprehensive of the fact that in case of the transfer made by way of mortgage to a co-operative society, the consent of the District Council and written permission of the Deputy Commissioner is not required. The co-operative society to whom the land is to be

transferred is not clearly identified. It is understood that the society would certainly be of general class/people. Taking advantage of this exceptional provision, some valley based co-operative societies had lured tribals with a fat dividend to mortgage their land. One such example is that the Chairman of the Tharon Village Authority in Tamenglong hill district had been lured to offer some areas of land to non-tribal individuals and co-operative farming societies on contractual farming. Moreover the recent Amendment of the Act in 2011 has enabled the valley people (the Meiteis) to settle down and own immoveable property in the hill areas.

- *The Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chiefs Rights) Act, 1967*

This Act authorizes the state government to acquire the rights, titles and interests of the tribal chiefs in the hill areas of Manipur. According to the Act, the chiefs are to be compensated on the basis of the following criteria: (1) the area of land under chiefs; (2) total number of households within each chiefdom; and, (3) compensation in instalment or lump sum. But because of the objection raised mainly by the Chiefs' Union (CU) among the tribal chiefs, the Act could not be implemented till today[3]. Manipur Hill Village Authorities Act, 1956 considers that the tribals have their own system of land holding based on customary and traditional practices. It is believed that the founder of the village took all risk and responsibility to establish a village and as such he earned the title '*Founder'*. Later on he became the chief of the village and the first owner of the entire village territory. Tribals claimed absolute ownership over their land. They believe that the lands they possess are acquired from the nature. As such the tribals do not have any land laws except that of traditional and customary base practices.[4] In 2011, the fourth amendment of the Manipur Hill Village Authorities Act, 1956 was introduced to convert the present Village Authorities into urban local bodies called Municipalities. This is a direct attempt by the plane leaders and the

state government to abolish the chieftainship and traditional customs and practices of the tribal people of Manipur.

- *Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 and Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council (Third amendment) Act, 2008*

In the 1960s, when the demand for the Union Territory of Manipur to be converted into a full fledged state was gaining momentum, the need for maintaining a separate administration for tribes in the hill areas was acknowledged. The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act was enacted by the Parliament of India on 26th December 1971 when present day Manipur was still a Union Territory. The Act, established six Autonomous District Councils (ADC) in the Hill Areas of Manipur: (i) Manipur North ADC now Senapati ADC (ii) Sadar Hills ADC (iii) Manipur East ADC now Ukhrul ADC (iv) Tengnoupal ADC now Chandel ADC (v) Manipur South ADC now Churachandpur ADC and (vi) Manipur West ADC now Tamenglong ADC. On 21st January 1972, Manipur became a full-fledged state. Subsequently, while exercising its rule-making powers, the Government of Manipur (GoM) through the Governor, framed the Manipur Autonomous District Council (Election of Members) Rules, 1972 to facilitate the process of electing Council members.[5]

Since its inception, the functioning of the District Councils was weighed down by a number of problems as follows[6]: **First,** any person (even a non-tribal) can vote and become a candidate to the District Council if he/she is registered as a voter to the Lok Sabha. Such provisions contribute to the inability of tribals to participate in decision-making where they are legitimate stakeholders. **Secondly,** the clauses of the Act empowers the District Council to acquire land for purposes which they think are 'likely to promote the interest of the inhabitants'; sell the land to non-tribals without consulting the people who are its real stake holders. The management of land and forest

should not be with the government and these provisions are ways through which the government seeks to covertly take control over the tribal land and forests: an integral part of their identity. **Thirdly,** the District Council can make recommendation to the Government to legislate on matters relating to the appointment or succession of chiefs, on the matters of inheritance of property, marriage and divorce and social custom. The lack of checks and balances on the limits and cases beyond which the District Councils can exercise these powers means that they can act on their own volition without consulting the people and without regard for the interest of the people can lead to corruption that would affect the core values and practices of the tribal people and their institutions. **Fourthly,** the provision that the District Council can recommend a village for recognition to the State Government directly interferes with the customs and the people's right to determine for themselves. **Fifthly,** District Councils neither have executive and legislative nor judicial powers. It only enjoys limited administrative powers under the pervasive control of the state government. **Sixthly,** District Councils lack financial autonomy since it cannot levy taxes and generate its own revenue but is dependent on grant-in-aid from the state government. **Finally,** the District Council's accountability to the Deputy Commissioner, a bureaucrat appointed on the whims and fancies of the government to preside over any meeting of the District Council goes against the very concept of democratic governance, thereby, defeating the whole purpose of the Act itself.

B) Imposition of Manipuri language

The imposition of the Meitei language (Meitei Mayek) in the education curriculum till the eighth standard since January 1999 is a prime example of the Meitei attempt to assert their dominance over the tribals. Despite protest this much loathed imposition is still in place. Nagas and the other tribals in Manipur rejected Meetei Mayek

outright as an instrument of cultural domination, and student organizations like All Tribal Students Union, Manipur (ATSUM), All Naga Student Association, Manipur (ANSAM), and Kuki Student Organization (KSO) protested against its imposition. The United Naga Council (UNC), the Naga apex body of Manipur articulated their opposition towards introduction of Meetei Mayek to the tribal communities. Linguistic conflict has further fractured the sense of a Manipuri identity. The struggle has been particularly intense in areas with significant and high populations of Nagas.

C) Violation of service quota and promotion rules in state government services

Although the Constitution of India prohibits any discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth but, while providing equality of opportunity for all citizens, the Constitution also contains special clauses to ensure reservation 'for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes'. In the interest of the integrity of the state of Manipur, the unwritten 'social contract' between tribals and the valley dwellers states that the general population could have access to the produce of the land while in matters of employment, tribals would share in the development of the state by 'representation' of one-third of the work force as a corollary to the principle of democracy.[6] This agreement was never fulfilled. As per the unofficial 2001 census, the population of the tribal peoples has increased to about 37%. However, reciprocal increase in reservation percentage is a far cry when even the present reserved percentage has also been under constant manipulation and is at stake from time to time.[7] Despite of the adoption of the Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Posts & Services (for SC and ST) Amendment Bill 2006 on September 18, 2006, the present position is

not very hopeful. With no effective watchdog to oversee the rights and privileges of the tribal peoples, they are continuously marginalized and exploited in matters of recruitment for services, admission in Government institutions and seats in Government sponsored courses such as medical, engineering and other technical courses. Therefore on reservation matter, tribes of Manipur are disappointed for two big reasons - **One**, their representation in government jobs and government sponsored institution is meagre and is not in proportion with their population. **Two**, the general community (the Meiteis to be specific) who constitute a little more than half of the state total population are getting more than 80% of all the government jobs and seats.

D) Imphal- Centric Administrative system

Manipur has sixty Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and two Members of Parliament (MP) - representing Inner Manipur (the Imphal Valley) and Outer Manipur (the hill areas of Manipur). Out of the total sixty MLAs, forty are from the districts of Imphal Valley– they represent Imphal East (9 MLAs), Imphal West (15 MLAs), Thoubal (10 MLAs) and Bishnupur (6 MLAs) which are Meitei dominant districts. The remaining twenty MLAs are from the tribal dominant areas representing the districts of Chandel (2 MLAs), Senapati (6 MLAs), Tamenglong (3 MLAs), Churachandpur (6MLAs) and Ukhrul (3 MLAs). Here, it is imperative to point out that Thoubal district in Imphal valley which has an area of 514 sq.km and a population of 4, 20,516 has ten assembly constituencies, whereas Senapati district (in a hill area dominated by tribes) having an area of 3271 sq.km and a population of 3,54,972 has only six assembly constituencies. The same goes for Imphal West District which has an area of 519 sq.km, a population of 5,14,683 and 15 assembly constituencies while Churachandpur district (in a hill area dominated by tribes) with a population of 2,71,274 and area 4570

sq.km has only six assembly constituencies. This clearly indicates the distorted, unequal representation of the tribal people as compared to the Meiteis in the Manipur assembly constituency. In addition to the disproportionate representation, Meitei dominated Manipur Assembly has encouraged the continued deployments of troops and imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)[8] in the hills. Under the pretext of securing law and order, Government of Manipur has meticulously isolated the tribal society by labelling the hills as "Disturbed Area".

The demand for autonomous tribal state indisputably guarantees the preservation of tribal identity and promotion of their indigenous rights and ways of life. But at the same time it unambiguously promotes the separatist movements which have often led to the loss of innocent blood and unremittingly paralysing the law and order situation in Manipur. So the question which agitates us: Is the process of fragmentation of a nation into several territorial spaces based on ethnic identity can be considered as an effective peace-broker? The integrity of the Indian Union if has to be preserved then the conflicting claims among the various identities have to be reconciled but not at the cost of fragmentation of the nation but by fostering a spirit of complex interdependence among all the ethnic identities; thereby consolidating a space called India which would be proficient in accommodating an assortment of diverse identities.

End Notes:

1. Article 244A of the Indian Constitution states that the Parliament may, by law, form within the State of Assam an autonomous State comprising (whether wholly or in part) all or any of the tribal areas specified in Part I of the table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule. (The Constitution of India)
2. Daimai K, Land Rights of Tribal and State Land Laws: Manipur, The Sangai Express, www.manipuronline.com (accessed on 08/12/2013)
3. Prof Dena Lal, Land Alienation and Self-Government in the Hill Areas of Manipur, Mizoram Express, www.manipuronline.com (accessed on 08/12/2013)

4. Daimai K, Land Rights of Tribal and State Land Laws: Manipur, The Sangai Express, www.manipuronline.com (accessed on 08/12/2013)
5. Riamei Joseph, Contestations Against forces of Marginalization: District Council and Tribal Resistance, Journal of Tribal Intellectual Collective India, Vol.1, Issue.1, No.5, pp.55-69, June 2013, p.57
6. Ibid, pp.60-61
7. Pulamte H John, Tribal Reservation in Manipur: A boon or a bane?, http://e-pao.net (accessed on 08/12/2013)
8. The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act** (**AFSPA**), was passed on September 11, 1958, by the Parliament of India. It is a law with just six sections granting special powers to the armed forces in what the act terms as "disturbed areas" .The Act has been at the heart of concerns about human rights violations in the regions of its enforcement, where arbitrary killings, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and enforced disappearances have happened.

Globalisation – The Normative and The Reality

Lopamudra Majumdar

The world that we live in today is a globalised world, much different from what it was atleast twenty years back -and the 'Era of globalisation' is fast becoming the preferred term for describing current times. The phenomenon of globalisation puts different societies and cultures in much greater direct contact with one another. It connects people to people much faster than people and culture can often prepare themselves. With advances in technology and communication, the world becomes de-territorialized, the constraints of geography shrink and the world becomes more singular and unified.

Sociologist Roland Robertson defines globalisation as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". Anthony Giddens argues that technological evolution has resulted in a universalisation and liberalisation of time and space, which he considers prerequisites for globalisation in an age of post modernity. He argues that globalising dimensions of interactions create 'stretched' relationship between 'local' and 'distant' media forms, with local happenings being for instance, shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.

Globalisation is the current buzzword for the 'shrinking' of our planet. Some historians of the 21st century consider the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – the symbol of the break- up of the Soviet empire – a milestone along the road to globalisation. The most widely recognised symbol of the globalisation system is the World Wide

Web, which unites everyone. The term 'globalisation' is also used to denote ' global economic integration', which despite all its problems, contradictions and criticism, now appears to be inevitable, built as it is on the backs of an irreversible 'technological globalisation process' and an integrated global communications systems (the WWW mentioned earlier + Satellite communication).

Globalisation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is a result of capitalist expansion, entailing the integration of all economic activity (local, national and regional) into a 'global' market place : that is a market place that transcends geo-political borders and is not subject to regulation by nation states. The practical manifestations of this integration are the dismantling of national barriers to external trade and finance, deregulation of the economy, export-driven economic growth, removal of controls on the transnational mobility of finance and the restructuring of local and national economies to facilitate free-market capitalism. These are undoubtedly vital economic dimensions of globalisation but its cultural and social dimensions are nonetheless equally important and certainly very interesting area for analysis and introspection.

The breaking up of space and time brought about by electronic media has enabled individuals to interact with one another and within frameworks of mediated interaction regardless of special disparities. The internet and the various activities in which people are involved when using it have fundamentally changed the meaning of temporal differences and their implications for physical mobility. Contacts between distant locations can take place on the internet at the same time. Internet activities, such as e-mail alter the dimensions of time in work and in social interaction releasing rigid time-patterns in the organization of work and other everyday life activities. Therefore, what we can observe is that while globalization has many facets – economic, political and cultural – it is cultural globalisation that

occurs through the media and as a result of this scholars like Robertson talk of a global culture and ' global,. consciousness'. Martin Albrow moves further arguing that globalisation results in a 'world society'. He defines globalisation as “all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society. It is true that globalisation connects the global and the local through a number of politico-economic, technological structures. The notion of a single global society implies homogenisation where cultural elements from all over the world combine to form a single, harmonious common world culture. But is cuitural homogenisation really taking place? When we look at the deeper dimensions of the process of globalisation, this professed connectivity / integration / unification of the local and the global is a camouflage for the inegalitarian, hegemonic politico-economic global order, transgressing the borders of honourable identity, dignity and autonomy of the people and the nation states, that are on the periphery of the global order. The neo-liberal march towards growth, abundance and development has not been able to abate poverty, inequity, and injustice either within the nation states or at the global level. The process is more a hegemonic process than a homogenised one which is more akin to a monoculture with respect to almost every aspect of an individual's way of life. The idea that each culture possesses its own wisdom and characteristics, its own novelty and uniqueness, born of its own individual struggle over thousands of years to cope with nature and circumstance, has been drowned out by the hue and cry that the world is now one, that the Western model – neoliberal markets, democracy and the rest is tempting one and all. This is nothing , but a very conscious and subtle way of dominating the developing world by the developed world. Sneakers, blue jeans, burgers, KFC, Hollywood blockbusters – Cultural icons of our times ? Or is it Cultural Imperialism? This can really be best understood as

Cultural Imperialism or domination of one single culture trampling over the rest of the cultures of the world. And this One single culture is that of the West or more specifically we can call it a phenomenon called 'Americanisation' where cultural objects like food, music, clothes, dance, language, pronunciation of the developing nations are undergoing wild and rapid changes to become " American".

At this juncture, we must remember that gone are the days of geographic imperialism or colonialism. Crude political domination has been replaced by a new form of capitalist subjugation of the developing countries. If we, for instance, take the case of a developing country like India, what one can witness is that Westward – looking liberalisation and explosive scale of globalisation of 1990_s have converted India into a typical industry society – steeped in crass materialism and illusory prosperity – which is socially insensitive and highly selfish. Urban Indian youth tends to emulate the American way of life as they consider it to be much more "superior" than what they have.

Ever since the time India opted to go global, sweeping socio-economical, political and technological changes have moulded the face of India. As for India, globalisation has become a buzz word after 1991 and day by day this buzzing is getting louder. It has touched all the domains of Indian life and experience. Globalisation is no longer a theoretical concept; it is a glaring reality; impinging upon almost every aspect of human existence. The fast growing cities and the overall urbanization that we have been witnessing across India are the direct effect of globalization. The day-to-day experience, demands of the time, challenges posed by it, personal hopes, aspirations and dreams in urban India have almost metamorphosed. The young generation possesses a sense of competition and at the same time they are quite ambitions and wants to do everything that is possible to climb up the career ladder as

higher as possible. Growing awareness of technology and the use of it have definitely exposed India to a new environment. This change has come about due to strong wish of youths to participate in the technological revolution that is going on all around the world.

Along with being competitive, ambitious and techno-savvy, the generation is trendy as well. The global trend has not left the society untouched. Due to free incoming of values, costumes, dresses and the living habits of Western World, the basis of Indian Culture has been greatly influenced. With the ever growing global scene, among various offshoots of globalization, consumerism came out as one of the major sprawling things. It is a kind of a craze to get hold of things when you do not even need them. Americans' insatiable urge to acquire things, whether or not they are necessary has indeed reached epidemic proportions. Actually one of the ways in which capitalism thrives is by constantly generating 'needs' among people, While some needs are legitimate, others are not. Consumerism has permeated and changed the fabric of contemporary Indian Society. Western fashions are coming to India. The traditional Indian dress is increasingly being displaced by Western dresses especially in urban areas. To promote this consumerist behavior, advertisement agencies play a very crucial role not only in shaping up people's choice behavious but also in forming their mindset and outlook to life. Advertisements showing a couple all smiles because they had just bought a toothbrush ; a group of friends giggling over their mobile phones ; a family happily feeding their kid junk food ; a young graduate jumping with joy clutching a credit card ; a girl holding seven shopping bags and beaming , have one thing in common :- “Everyone looked incredibly happy”. Shopping has become the most preferred activity of the urban Indians. Impulsive shopping, Internet shopping, shopping to amuse oneself are now part of the core cultural value of the mainstream Indians. The mall Culture has enslaved our urban

citizenry to crass consumerism. Consumption rather than production has become the major force of social change in India today. Today there is a perceptible shift towards a 'buying culture' with more and more stress on commodity consumption in urban and semi-urban areas. Even in rural India, the ethos of consumerism has reached an all-time high, in spite of the fact that a large segment of our population belongs to marginalized and backward sections.

Thus one cannot deny the fact in today's world that every individual is affected by the phenomenon of globalisation in one way or another. It is true that something profound is happening, that the world is changing, that a new world of economic, political and cultural order is emerging. These changes affect people's identities and cultural values which sometimes gets altered significantly. Whether it is between generations or intra-personally, new values cause dissonance and conflict with existing deeper-rooted values. Sometimes such transitions and changes can further cause difficulty with internal growth and development.

With growing urban mindset, a grossly compromising attitude is seen to be sipping in human behavior. When we take the case of India, we all should be proud that she is developing and trying to emerge as a major world power to be reckoned with, but what she ignores in the recent years is the case of erosion of ' Values' from our society. As a result of excessive emphasis on cut-throat competition for maximum acquisition of materialistic benefits, many cherished values of life are getting fast eroded - Value of Contentment, Value of Co-operation, Value of Self-restraint in Consumerism, Value of unbiasedness, Value of independence in thinking, Value of providing ideal leadership, Value of knowledge and Commitment as prime movers of action, the Value of duties as against right are all getting eroded in the highly materialistic paradigm of development and structural changes that are taking place around us with immense

speed and complexity. Cultures in developing countries are under siege from the forces of global economic integration which is controlled by the developed world. Today's flow of culture is unbalanced, heavily weighted in one direction, from developed world to developing world. It is true that people's lives are being linked more deeply, intensely and immediately than ever before as distance, time and borders diminish. But the unevenness of globalization and open markets are contributing to cultural insecurity in developing nations like ours, and neglecting community, custom and tradition that has prevailed for centuries.

The globalization in practice today has actually got transformed into a form of neo- colonialism – a domination of western socio-cultural traits, a digression from the normative concept of globalisation.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "I do not want any house to be walled in on all sides and any windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about any house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any one of them." It would be worthwhile at this point to remember Swami Vivekananda while trying to understand the real sense of the term globalization. Vivekananda well over hundred years back has expressed his idea of the real globalization as the emergence of a new society and culture which would be a synthesis of the best of the East and of the West. Globalisation should enlighten by exposing us to diverse cultures but at the same time it should not allow any particular to dominate or wipe out somebody's own culture. What is needed is a globalization that promotes cultural plurality, homogeneity and tolerance to diversity – this is true globalization.

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Collapsing the Boundaries of the 'Home' and 'World': Tagore's Visionary Humanism

Paramita Dutta*

Brought up under the vigilance of domestic workers, Tagore was introduced to the idea of the *Lakshmanrekha* not only through the stories of the *Ramayana* but also by the action of a servant who drew a boundary of chalk around the young boy. Tagore would stay inside the chalk boundary all day and stare through a window at a pool outside. That pool, according to Tagore, was a microcosmic image of the world and its daily chores. The situation of the boy in this context is obviously equated with the protective boundary around Sita, to whom the 'world', in the figure of Ravana, would arrive with disastrous consequences. Similarly, in his novel The Home and The World, written many years later, the drawing room in Nikhil's house is a window through which Bimala meets the world as she discards the *purdah*. To her, that small space was to become a microcosm of the outside world. The colours and complexities, the cacophony and the subtleties, which Bimala experienced there, became for her innocent soul 'the world'. In my reading of The Home and The World I perceived Bimala as a reflection of Tagore as a child. Sandip is obviously the mirror image of Ravana and Nikhilesh, cannot but be taken as the great Lord Rama, inspite of the flaws in his character. Tagore's earlier experiences of confinement definitely played their part in the conception of the novel, which deals with the idea of thresholds.

Tagore's childhood helped him to empathise with the world of

women who remained confined to the *andarmahal*, or the inner chambers of aristocratic households. For Tagore the comparative security of such a confined existence made the transition to the world outside fraught with anxieties and hazards equivalent to the crossing of the *lakshmanrekha* in *Ramayana*.

The connotations of the title The Home and The World go beyond simple binaries. The novel takes up intersecting issues of the personal versus the ideological; the nationalistic versus the humanitarian; the traditional versus the modern. But the overarching world-view that is manifest in the novel is one that arises from Tagore's conviction regarding the supremacy of human values over all other allegiances. It is this which leads him to question the conception of *Swadeshi* which forms the backdrop of the work. The term literally means 'of our country' and refers to a phase of the Nationalist movement which sought to boycott British goods and buy homemade products so that the British would suffer economically. The movement strove against the 'foreign' and espoused the indigenous. In terms of the cartography of the *Swadeshi* self, the 'home' particularly its inner chamber where the women resided, was the bastion of tradition and expressed the cultural core of a colonised nation endangered by the onslaught of an alien cultural tradition.

The 'world' on the other hand represented a space in which so-called notions of cultural authenticity were compromised. The challenge for Indians at the beginning of the century was how to balance the pulls of the two domains. Nikhilesh, a western educated modern young man was also an idealistic nationalist. His life, as depicted in the novel was an attempt at negotiating the contrasting spaces, both physically and psychologically. When he had important guests over he made it a point to decorate his drawing room with *Swadeshi*-made objects, preferring a common brass pot over an expensive European vase. In keeping with the *Swadeshi* logic the indigenous is equated

with the spontaneous, the organic and the homely, while the foreign vase represents showy, mechanical artifice.

The same man, however, adorned his wife in the latest fashions and hired a British woman to teach his wife English as well as modern manners. His actions were deemed transgressive by the other women in the household. Yet such transgressions were overlooked even by Nikhilesh's grandmother because of the affectionate bonds which triumphed over social prejudices. Tagore here seems to be implying that in a recent past which was less complicated by ideological complications, it was possible to accommodate the foreign even within the confines of the home. The advent of self-conscious ideological positions disrupted such possibilities by substituting human relations with abstract notions.

Bimala was not satisfied with Nikhilesh's quiet, dull, assertion of S*wadeshi.* She herself said,

" this colourless brand of *Swadeshi* didn't inspire us. On the contrary I always felt ashamed of the lack-lustre furniture in his living room, especially when the magistrate or any other foreigner came to visit."

The self-proclaimed champion of the *Swadeshi* cause shows here a remarkable tendency to compromise her fidelity to the cause because of her attraction for anything that is glamorous *and charismatic.* Probably this is the reason why she was swayed by Sandip's feigning *Swadeshi* rather than Nikhilesh's sombre devotion to the country and its people. In the portrayal of aggressive nationalism by both Bimala and Sandip, Tagore challenges the very notion of the nation as formulated in the course of political activism.

Ostensibly we see that Nikhil and Sandip shared the same goal - freedom from oppression. But while Nikhilesh's vision was one of enlightened humanitarianism seeking equality among all men and all nations, Sandip's ideas were parochial, belligerent and ultimately

self-serving. In this novel, 'home' does not refer only to the four walls of a house; it also stands for the nation, the homeland. Sandip proclaimed himself as the crusader for its emancipation, yet, the irony, as Tagore points out, lay in the arbitrary and repressive methods he adopted. His bands of devoted followers, as well as Bimala, the queen bee of the hive, had no real acquaintance with the grass-root reality of a colonised nation grappling with poverty. The Zamindars who burnt down markets in the name of *Swadeshi*, were no less repressive than the Raj that they were trying to overthrow. Tagore felt mortified when he saw many of the nationalist leaders turning to violence and ignoring the plight of the common people in following *Swadeshi* diktat. The economic exploitation of small landholders by the landlords which Tagore mentions in the novel also collapses the convenient shorthand of seeing the colonisers as the exploitative outsider and the colonised as one homogenous group. Nikhilesh insisted on seeing the country in its people, whereas for the likes of Sandip and Bimala the country was an iconic mother figure, more mythical than real. The essential difference between the husband and wife was in their conceptions of 'home' and 'world'. For Bimala, the home was bound by the *lakshmanrekha* of the women's quarters, the *andarmahal*, with its age old practices and prejudices, while for Nikhilesh it was in the wide world of nature and humanity. Bimala's transition into the 'world' is signified by her emergence from the inner chambers to the drawing room were the 'world' comes to meet her. Nikhilesh on the other hand realises that the 'world' is not just a mystical conception, it comes with all the complications of human nature, its greed, jealousies, inconsistencies, as well as its occasional nobility. The binaries of inner and outer, suggested by the title, therefore collapses in such a reading of the novel.

The idea of a national tradition and history is also problematized in this novel with the presence of the minor characters like Panchu,

Mirjan and the Bararani. While the problems of the first two represent the plight of the poor as they are caught in the crossfire between *Swadeshi* activism and harsh economic reality, the Bararani is a symbol of how the conception of the 'home' itself is compromised by the long history of injustice towards women. The widow of Nikhilesh's elder brother, with whom he shared a tender bond born out of a shared childhood, comes to Nikhilesh in his darkest hour with the 'voice of my home'. Yet, when he wishes that even in another birth he should have her as his sister-in-law, she answers that she did not want to be born a woman again. A whole history of lifelong suffering and deprivation is captured in this answer; a history of which Nikhilesh, as a man, could have no idea. It is this shared female history which, on the other hand, finally brings Bimala and her sister-in-law closer to each other towards the close of the novel. The home therefore, is not only spatially segregated into the men's quarters and the women's, it is also a terrain on which almost parallel histories are played out.

Finally, Nikhilesh's project of emancipating Bimala is also questioned by the hero himself. His desire to set Bimala free from domestic chores and take her to the outside world, establishing western ideas of companionship in marriage, reflects his desire to 'make' Bimala as he wished her to be, never asking her if she wanted to participate in such a project. In the end, he himself realises the tyranny of desire he had inflicted on her. The home too, therefore, is shown by Tagore to be a site of colonisation where the men exercised the authority they did not have outside. Even a liberal and idealised character like Nikhilesh cannot be completely exempted from this charge.

In conclusion, therefore, the very idea of the *lakshmanrekha*, as a protective boundary may be questioned. It may also have been a line that constricted the freedom of women and therefore created a

microcosmic reflection of all the injustices of the world outside, with the women deprived of almost all agency. If the 'home' was the last bastion of traditional values, the question arises: whose traditions? The answer in the Indian context can only be problematic.

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**Paper supervised by Dr. Suchandra Chakravarty, Associate Professor, Department of English, The Bhowanipur Education Society College.*

The relevance of William Wordsworth's Philosophy of Nature in the 21st century

Barnana Sarkar

It isn't the child peacefully cuddled in its mother's arms who is bothered by the growing urban jungles around; neither is it the old, waiting for the day of Judgement who are traumatised by the ever-changing catastrophe around. It's none but the youth who are pulled down, demoralised, saddened and left alone in the clumsiness of the endless development. Unlike the youth of the Romantic era, youth today are least at peace with themselves. They do not take short moral walks down the gardens or the lanes; they do not welcome the morning rays of the sun, they fail to recognize the serenity in their own music, they are clueless about the degrading innocence of the soul within-they walk blindly, unaware of who they are caged inside that burning bar of utter ignorance and pathetic oblivion. Unfortunately enough, these creatures can't even drink that magic potion to make them tall so that they can reach the key to Wonderland.

William Wordsworth, in his poem 'Character of the Happy Warrior' has asked: "Who is the happy warrior? Who is he whom every man in arms should wish to be?"-definitely the youth today have not found the factors that would lead them to become a happy warrior. They have started dwelling amongst those who find a guinea more beautiful than the Sun, and bag worn with the use of money has more beautiful proportions than vines filled with grapes. But none of these worked for that one great Romantic poet who contemplated with awe

the power within himself and the great possibilities of the human imagination - William Wordsworth! Possibly that one poet whose ways of escaping the loathsome hardships of human life have been the most convincing process of breaking down the cage which chains down all imaginations. Losing his parents at an early age which led to the loss of liberty in the hands of his confining relatives, his poetry is of protest born of his sense of having been denied a true home and the liberty to pursue the career of his choice because of an unjustly imposed condition of financial dependence. Somewhere down the line even today, in this particular era a youth too loses his/her liberty to the social prison of meaningless rules and regulations. They aren't accepted for the wild beauty in them rather they are given the minimal space...only if they abide by the "rules". So the life of Wordsworth was no less harsh than the life of a twenty first century youth. However, there was one quality that helped Wordsworth endure his pain-his imagination made him escape all the pain.

In most of his poems like 'The Prelude', 'The Excursion' or 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth uses Nature as the protagonist. It is like that one being whom you will never meet in your life, but who will always be there capturing the most significant place in your heart. With the gradual biological growth, human beings tend to leave back the warm meadows and the soothing lakes; all those become blurred. Wordsworth however pulls out the lost strings and ties them together to establish a chest full of memories:

"Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs

That on a wild secluded scene impress

Thoughts of more deep seclusion."

-Tintern Abbey

Wordsworth found solace, serenity, liberty, far away from the daily hustle of the ruthless city lights, in the lap of the calmness of Nature. For him it is not "a refuge from distress or pain, a breathing-time, vacation or a truce" but potentially at least Nature will provide a 'life of peace, stability without regret or fear.' Wordsworth is pretty well aware that rejection by the world gives rise to a despondent isolation in which self-certainty comes at the price of losing kinship with others; once one begins to trace emblems of oneself in the surrounding world, it becomes almost impossible to recover benevolent feelings of social sympathy. He, somehow, would not deny that Nature has formed him but wants to preserve a full sense of what it is that Nature has formed: an independent being who repeats, freely and with delight the loving behaviour which fashioned his independence originally. He has quite clearly proved through his writing that nature is nothing but a parallel that runs by our lives-natural brutality justifies an oppressive tyranny, natural harmony reflects not only God's order but the settled order of the established state, and natural feeling encourages the rebel to believe that his/her impulse of defiance is right.

Wordsworth thought of escaping into the world of Nature can be seen as the cleanest possible way of bearing the harsh realities even today. His imaginary Lucy, his long lost Tintern Abbey, his dancing daffodils assure us of the fact that our lonely mind can be our greatest form of freedom. He never nodded his head with the society around, rather he completely overlooked the industrial world and set up his own Utopic world of perfection. This relieves us as, we once again get assured that it's okay to be different from the rest and have a winged mind. Wordsworth always believed that the right thinking and the right feeling persons must feel and cannot choose but seek; so does the inner self believe.

Paradise Lost by John Milton: From the 21st century Perspective

Srijita Basak

During Milton's tour of Italy in 1638–39, certain remarkable images representing aspects of the Genesis story in Renaissance tapestries may have stimulated his imagination. The subject of *Paradise Lost* had been outlined from a drama, *Adam Unprais'd*, in about 1642. He had begun to compose it, we are told, in 1658; he had been blind for over five years and the poem took shape as a process of mental formation. A major part of the epic was written during his refuge from the new parliament when the Commonwealth was overthrown and Charles II was declared King in the restoration of 1660. *Publication of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline (1641) in England* marked the beginning of a career of political prose writing which would last almost until his death in 1674. For nearly twenty years, until the restoration, Milton devoted himself to politics and his abilities were exhibited only through prose pamphlets.

Milton was aware of his poetic gifts from an early age. After completing seven years in Christ College he devoted himself to the independent study of Greek and Roman literature, ancient and medieval history, philosophy, both moral and political, and the natural sciences. With that he immersed himself in theology (with Hebrew), Italian, and English poetry and drama. All this effort of self-education was dominated by his ambition to rise higher than any English poet, which later materialized in *Paradise Lost*.

A national epic was considered as the greatest kind of poem in

contemporary times. *Paradise Lost* is akin to a theological treaty in verse form, getting its inspiration as much from the Bible for its content as from Virgil's (70 - 19 BC) twelve-book Latin epic poem *Aeneid* for its form. Originally published in ten parts, a second edition embellished with minor revisions would follow in 1674. Homer and Virgil did not use rhyme, and Milton scorned it in heroic poems as a "troublesome and modern bondage". The poem deals with the Christian view on the origin of man, and refer to the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan as well as their eventual expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The first book proposes in brief the whole subject, "*Man's disobedience and the loss thereupon of paradise wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent or rather Satan in Serpent; who revolting from god, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was by the command of God driven out of heaven with all his crew into the great Deep."*

A long list of names of the fallen angels was preceded by an illustrious delineation of Hell and establishment of Satan as the aspiring protagonist through a series of epic similes. A prior knowledge of the blend of politics and religion in Milton's style, the importance of textual learning in his thought, and the unification of biblical and classical references, singularly, would reveal the Grand epic to its fullest expression to the reader's delight. The names mentioned were of Gods worshipped by various Pagan believers, largely Hebrew/ Judaic and oriental in origin. Furthermore, as the epic was inspired from great Italian and Greek epic writers, Milton has an extensive use of their ancient terminologies.

The names were-

Moloch: Sun God of the Ammonites (nomadic group)

Chemos or Peor : God of moabites

Ashtareth: God of phoenics

Thammuz: God of Lebanon

Dagon: Chief God of Philistines

Rimmon: God worshipped in Damascus

Osiris, Iris, Orus : central myth of the Egyptians

There were two primary reasons behind his pervasive use of this unconventional nomenclature. The first being, his attempt of making his epic style of higher stature than that of his past and contemporaneous writers and the second was to establish the supremacy and righteousness of the Christian religion over that of the other religions. It is needless to say, that his first motive was purely actualized as we still acknowledge and re-acknowledge his greatness and deduce theories from this theological as well as politically allegorical piece. However, the second purpose, according to me has lost its point to a certain level. The sacrilegious rendition of pagan religions wholly depended upon the manipulative alienation of the inhabitants of oriental countries and lifestyles. Thus, the usage of this typical phraseology acted as a weapon to degrade their faith and customs only to glorify orthodox Christianity among the people of England. Including great mythical stories that have inter-links with the events of the epic, addressing places by their legendary names, building a parallel universe dealing with Gods and daemons, led to the make believe authenticity of the demotion of Pagan Gods. This aided by the fact, that the general crowd wasn't thoroughly aware of the different cultures and its diversity around the globe nor had they developed an appreciating eye for things unknown to everyday life, contributed to the success of its basis. They were still stuck with their rigid believes until England plunged into worldly expeditions around the closing of the century.

This is totally unacceptable in today's time, to the audience of world-wide-web. Most novels are documented over the internet and they reach the pinnacle of popularity within a small span. If portrayal of a

belief system would be so blasphemous, the clan of people who hold allegiance to it would initiate a mass revolt across nations within hours. Perhaps, such violent uprisings have often muted authors and creators but it has even led to the formation of a ground where people have learnt to pay respect to other's faith and opinions. Although I vouch for this, I do not support the bounding of a creative mind – "as it would be wrong to throw out a style of literature that has tickled the human fancy for thousands of years for the trivial reason that it is not in accord with reality."(Isaac Asimov, on science fiction). Since we are merely humans, for the majority, we live in a world of fanciful imagination. However, seldom do we witness such marvelous characters as Milton's Satan, who will be considered an epitome of rebelliousness by the subsequent Romantics and free thinkers - "rebellious self-idolatry...philosophically as well as sublimely embodied in Satan of his (Milton) *Paradise Lost*." (S.T.Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual, or The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight)

Nonetheless, Milton's derogation of Pagan Gods can never mar the beauty and greatness of his work that is being praised over centuries and would be praised for many more to come. Classical elegy and satire, epigram, verse epistle, meditative religious lyric, and the country-house poem were the common genres of poetry at that time unlike this Avant-garde epic. If the epic is perceived as a political allegory then this is a riveting tale of an anarchist bringing a mass exodus by his sheer oratory and leadership skills and being punished as a sinner for being the nonconformist. The figure of Satan accommodates a wide variety of different allegorical interpretations. Modern day books that are written centering religious myths and legends would be *Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Daemons*, *Meluha Trilogy*, and *Satanic Verses* - their subject matter being debated all around the world.

As Isaac Asimov has argued "…*there must have been something that came before science fiction…filled the same emotional needs. There must have been tales of the strange and different, of live not as we know it, of powers transcending our own… The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science- the depiction of life as we don't know it* ... set in *a pre-scientific universe"*

Thus *Paradise Lost* can also be considered as the story that satiated the needs of a science fiction in men of the mid-seventeenth century interwoven with religious and political allegories.