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Editor's Note

Love needs reinventing, stated Rimbaud famously. Love has always renegotiated its pathways when the world has come around to the comforting notion that it has explained the concept of Love off to containment. The sheer power of Love to renege and rebel, to rise and resent persists. Obviously the idea of Love with its anti-essentialist, anti-capitalist, ideology has been under the scanner of regimes with rightist reservations and consumerist makeovers. Loves defy and bring in a capacity for thinking out of the selves. Even when the focus of love-object shifts from that of a human being to that of an ideology, a material, a school of thought, a geographical location or a media tool, the intense longing and epic capacity to identify with it, defying the given and the coerced, it turns a political tool. If political hegemonies begin to read a threat in love, it is because of the seismic power it carries to topple the reigning narratives. Still, what do we talk about when we talk about love? What need we talk about when we talk about love?

Singularities, the Peer reviewed International Trans-disciplinary Research Journal, has been in publication since 2014. We have brought out eight volumes, spread over the last eight years. Through the years, the journal has explored the contemporary and the contentious, cutting across the academic disciplines and ideological bounds. The Journal has also established itself as a significant floor for intellectual deliberations and academic thought-sharing, proving itself to be a significant voice of the region, through the Annual Singularities Conferences (SICON). Following up on the previous editions of the Annual Conference- SICON Power 2016, SICON Space 2017, SICON Beauty 2018, SICON Truth 2019 ,SICON Time 2020 and SICON Liberty 2021 - Singularities Journal, in collaboration with the Kerala State Higher Education Council, Teresian International and the Postgraduate & Research Department of Sociology, St. Teresa's college, Ernakulam, deliberates "Love" in the 'Singularities International Conference' on 11, 12 & 13 January 2022.

This SICON Love '22-Conference issue of the journal carries select papers accepted for presentation in the Conference which negotiate the concept of Love: the evolution, the current configurations and multiple manifestations over ages and the challenges and resistances across domains.

P. K. Babu., Ph. D
Chief Editor

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Jeremy Fernando

Translating Love

Abstract

This paper meditates on the possibility that not only is love a fundamental aspect of translation — after all, what even compels one to do something like that, particularly in this day and age where such endeavours barely count in accounting ledgers, hardly register as productive, are often even frowned upon as indulgent — and that there is no love without translation (as all attempts to connect to another entail, or even are, moments of reading), but that translation — being the most sensitive of readings, in which one is opening oneself to the possibility of the text, the possibility of another — and love, whilst not quite the same thing, are potentially inseparable from each other. Which also means that translation, even when done out of love, while attempting to have as much care for the text, for another, as possible, always also runs the risk of transforming the text: changing it in ways that might fundamentally alter it, for better or worse. Where the translator is always also potentially a traitor. Who (s)he betrays though — the text, herself, the other, their relation — that might be the question.

Though, as my dear friend Neil Murphy once told me, Ç reading literature with your head is always a mistake È.

So, instead of attempting to rationalise a text — and by extension, reign it in, make it safe, tame it — perhaps all we can do is to open ourselves to a work.

And listen.

And hope that, as Berlin might sing — along with all the risks that it might just — Ç take my breath away È.

Key words: love, translation, text

> *The translator is indeed a strange, nostalgic man: he experiences in his own language, but in the manner of something missing, everything promised him in the way of present affirmations by the original work (the work which remains a moreover — he can't reach it since he's not at*

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[1]Maurice Blanchot, 'Traduire' in L'Amitié, as translated by Peggy Kamuf, and read in Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: texts and discussions,* translated by Peggy Kamuf from the French edition edited by Claude Lévesque & Christie McDonald, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988, 155.

> *home, at rest in the language but is an eternal guest who doesn't live there). That's why, if we can believe the testimony of specialists, he is always in more difficulty as he translates with the language to which he belongs than at a loss with the one he doesn't possess.*
>
> - Maurice Blanchot[1]

A notion that came to me, rather accidentally it must be said, whilst I was reading — if one can ever be said to be reading — a text by another, ostensibly Jacques Derrida, whose signature is on the text, on the cover of the text, who had signed-off on the text, perhaps even undersigned it, continues to underwrite it; and not just any other, for the question of *testimony* which Maurice Blanchot opens here is precisely the one JD reads in MB's beautiful tale, *L'instant de ma mort*.

And here, we should bear in mind that this stunning passage from Maurice Blanchot comes to me through a translation, through the words, thoughts, lines, of Peggy Kamuf — who herself was translating from the original transcripts (that is, if we can ever call a transcription original) by Claude Lévesque and Christie McDonald, who were inscribing a moment in time, a roundtable discussion that was held in Montreal in 1979, and first appeared in the French in 1984 (so a transcription over time), and then in the English a few years later (so also, a transference through time).

Oh yes, and let us bear in mind, in a footnote.

As an aside.

One that begins — beautifully ironically — with a note (on a note) by Peggy Kamuf, which opens with: « but can any note take up the slack here, in this situation? » The easy answer surely being *no*, but that would be too easy. For, it is not the role of any note — or translation for that matter — to play the currently-fashionable role of *facilitator*, to make reading (*lit*) easy (*facile*), even as that might make one feel more comfortable, lull one into a state of being at ease.

And, as importantly, the note, the aside, the footnote, as a *supplement* to the text; thus always already both anaddition-to, perhaps subtraction-from, and always also part-of and apart from, at the same time. Where the relationship between the note — and whomever annotates, notes on, makes a note-of, maybe even notifies us of —the supplementary inscription, and the so-called main-text, manuscript (but who decides which *manus* counts for more), might well be found in the « slack ». Not in the sense of any lack, but perhaps more intriguingly that of a *bounce* — that of a line, whose movement as Kleist tries to never let us forget is also that of the soul[2].

[2]Heinrich von Kleist, 'On the Marionette Theatre', translated by Thomas G. Neumiller, in The Drama Review: TDR, vol. 16, no. 3, The MIT Press, 1972, 22–26.

Where, each time we read — each time we attempt to balance the language to which we so-call belong and the one we don't possess (can one ever possess a language; or are we possessed by it?) — each time we attend to a text, we might well be in the realm of the funambulist. Whose role, even task, as Jean Genet reminds us — through his note written for, his love-letter to, Abdallah — is to « give your metal wire the most beautiful expression, not of you, but of it ».[3] Where, it is never about you, nor the one who has written the text, nor maybe even the text itself, but the relationship between the three.

So, always also a connection to another: quite possibly an opening of oneself to an other. Which does not necessarily mean that the other becomes any clearer, any more known, to us. For, as my dear teacher, Avital Ronell, reminds us, « the connection to the other is a reading — not an interpretation, assimilation, or even a hermeneutic understanding, but a reading»[4].

In other words, where *reading* might be nothing other than opening ourselves to the possibility of reading: nothing more and infinitely nothing less.

But then, what might *my reading of a text*, let alone *my translation of a text*, even begin to mean?

> *« My » — what does the word designate?*
>
> *Not what belongs to me, but what I belong to, what contains my whole being, which is mine insofar as I belong to it.*
>
> ~ Søren Kierkegaard[5]

Even as it is no longer fashionable to speak of relation, being in relation-with, perhaps even less of love, in that manner. But here, one should try not to forget that *to belong to* is not to *stake a claim on*, but to open oneself to the possibility of a possession. To the risk even of being possessed by the loved one. Of opening oneself to the possibility of seeing the world — as Alain Badiou, in a conversation on love with Nicolas Truong, says — of being in the world, « no longer from the perspective of the One but from the perspective of the Two »[6].

One might even posit: to seeing the world in a manner in which one is always also taking-up, taking-on, *the slack*, of the other.

Which also means that: one is fundamentally changed by the other. For, opening oneself to the possibility of being-in-relation-with opens oneself to being contaminated

[3] Jean Genet, 'The Tightrope Walker', translated by Charlotte Mandell, in *The Criminal Child: selected essays*, New York: The New York Review of Books, 2020, 99.

[4] Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 380.

[5] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Seducer's Diary*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong & Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, 146.

[6] Alain Badiou with Nicolas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, translated by Peter Bush, London: Serpent's Tail, 2012, 29.

by, being inseminated with, another. After all, the *bounce* of the wire vibrates through you, echoes inside you, writes itself into you.

But in ways that might remain unknown, hidden-from, veiled-from, one; even after it has happened. For, as Badiou continues, « an encounter is not an experience, it is an event that remains quite opaque andonly finds reality in its multiple resonances within the real world »[7].

That is, *traces* to be read.

And if this makes it sound as if a text is a mysterious entity, perhaps even to the point of being *otherworldly*,one should bear in mind Jacques Derrida's beautiful response — to a question about the seemingly *sacred* nature of the text in Walter Benjamin's conception of translation, of the task of the translator — when he, that is JD, reminds us that « a sacred text, if there is such a thing, is a text that does not await the question of whether or not it is necessary that there be such a thing»[8].

For *things*, as Heraclitus continues to teach us, « things, they keep their secrets »[9].

Where, even if one is attempting to, trying one's best to, find the appropriate word, phrase, line — to express, catch, the mood, tone, feel, of — to translate with,to maintain a fidelity to the text, one might well also be appropriating, taking-over, making it one's own (*sa propre*), propping oneself with it. So always also a question of *place*, of *placing*, of putting in a proper place (and who gets to decide what is proper?), of *putting it in its place*, of shelving, so perhaps putting aside, even if on a pedestal; of using it to put oneself on said-pedestal[10].

A matter of place — and placement

Which is what happens each time a work is placed, put, housed, is enframed, one might even say entombed — behind the strictures of conventions, of culture,

[7] *ibid*, 24.

[8] Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 147.

[9] Heraclitus, Fragment 10 in *Fragments*, translated by Brooks Haxton, with a foreword by James Hillman, London: Penguin Classics, 2001.

[10] Perhaps though, everything is in the saying of it, on the accent given to something: keeping in mind that accents are often also what place us, give us away, that the manner in which we speak, that the saying of it, is what puts you in boxes, categorises you, as fluent, as a native speaker, of having a language as your mother-tongue, of not being from there, of a being stumbling in a second language, of being a permanent stranger regardless of how long one has been somewhere, even if one is born there, of being never good enough, let alone belonging.

The irony that language fluency is linked to, tied with, our mothers whilst nationalities, names, family lineage, ethnicities are marked mainly through patrilineal lines should not be lost on us here. The question of what makes a language one's mother tongue, of what gives one the right to call a language one's mother tongue (does one ever have the right to make a claim on a language), is one that certainly should also be meditated upon: for the moment though, perhaps all that can be posited is that it is not just a matter of proficiency, aptitude, fluency.

One might even say that one's mother tongue is precisely the language in which one stumbles, that one stutters in, that one utters when one is stuttering, stumbling, when one is beside oneself, out of control, angry, bereaved, bereft of reason, stricken, dreaming, dream-speaking, trying to find one's footing, has lost one's tongue … in love.

requirements, genre, grammar itself; has to remain within boundaries, keep within the limits of polite society —even if this veiling claims to preserve, to maintain, to even help to flourish.

Much like when they are taken (*prendre*) by, taken into, one's grasp — placed under one's conception, one's comprehension.

Which certainly makes it doubtful whether reading, writing, translating, is doing any good to the work — even as we know, think, certainly hope, this is what keeps works alive, maintains, sustains, them across times, cultures, geographies, fads, fashions, histories, official-versions of stories — or bringing harm onto them. And, if we are to maintain the fact that one is attempting to translate, write, read, *in fidelityto* the work, there is always also the possibility that this harm, this potential ruin, even destruction, might come from the work itself. That the work might be the one that decides its time were up. After all — despite the fantasies of dictators, censors, bureaucrats, and all of the ilk that want to curb, control, even dominate, works, perhaps even more so those who believe they are protecting people from works, the do-gooders who want to guide works, make them useful to society, to serve the function of *bildung*— it would be incredibly vain to think that one has any power over a work, let alone have the ability to vanquish it.

However, where there is *doubt* — which as Salman Rushdie, through Gibreel himself, reminds us is precisely what separates us from angels[11] — therein lies the ability to question, the possibility of being free from the grip of God, to extricate oneself from the hand (*manus*) of daddy; that is, the possibility of *emancipation*.

Which suggests that to be free, to be emancipated, always also entails writing, creating, other manuscripts, reading other scripts which have thus-far-been hidden away in, been hiding within, the tales that have been transmitted to us, rescripting stories that we've been given, that have been taken as given.

That is, telling other stories.

And, as my dear teacher, Chris Kraus, tries to never let us forget,

« to tell a story is an act of love »[12].

Bearing in mind that love always entails a risk —it is never safe; and the one in love opens themselves to its dangers; where there not only is the possibility of an invasion, an intrusion, even when one has been invited, is a guest in the other's ear, but that the one who tells, the lover, might well become lost in the other, might never be able to fully extricate themselves, might find that the other has disseminated themselves into, all over, them, has inseminated themselves in them, that one has hosted another so well that one has been effectively kidnapped.

[11]Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses, Dover: The Consortium Inc., 1988, 92-93.

[12]Chris Kraus, *Aliens & Anorexia*, Los Angeles: Smart Art Press, 2000, 121.

For, as Anne Dufourmantelle continues to teach us, « love, here I dare to risk the word, with apprehension of course, is an art of dependence. It, therefore, assumes that we risk it »[13].

And, if knowledge entails a relation to and with the world, to something beyond ourselves, to something outside us, to another, truly knowing is always already also unknowable, might well lie in the unknown. So, not just that knowing that we know is unknowable, but that unknowability is not only the limit but always also the condition of knowledge itself. That, the foundation of knowledge is its unknown, is a non-foundation; where unknowability is not its antonym, but its own foregrounding of its limits each time it professes, testifies to its knowing, to knowledge. Which means that each profession of knowledge is always also knowledge testifying to itself, bringing itself forth, a telling of itself — attempting to narrate what it is.

So, always also a moment of fiction, *literature*.

A writing of itself.

But how then does one read a text that is aware of itself as it is being written, that calls out to be read (*lit*) under erasure (*sous rature*), that might well be aware of its own writing, aware of itself being written, whilst being written, foregrounds itself as being written, is undoing itself, even erasing itself, as it is being read — and where reading is an opening of, an unravelling of, the webs that have been written, woven — where what is left are *cinders* of itself as a text that has been written.

Where, each time we read literature, what we might well be doing is *reading as unreading* — a reading that cannot be repeated (even as one can go back to the very same words), is singular. And where, since unrepeatable, can never be verified, not just by another but even your own self.

And where the translated text — what is inscribed of that reading — might well be *ashes of time*.

Though, as my dear friend Neil Murphy once told me, « reading literature with your head is always a mistake »[14].

So, instead of attempting to rationalise literature — and by extension, reign it in, make it safe, tame it — open ourselves to a work.

And listen.

All whilst trying not to forget that the one who has inscribing these words, these worlds, is the same one who has been translating whilst transcribing, who is translating as (s)he is transcribing.

[13]Anne Dufourmantelle, *Éloge du risque*, Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2014, 23. The translation from the French is mine.

[14]This conversation took place sometime in June 2006, at a bar — so, there is a distinct possibility that we might have been attempting to speak about literature, think about reading, whilst blind-drunk.

Transforming: moving between forms.

Not so much bringing something from another form into one's own — and here it is not too difficult to hear echoes of Walter Benjamin again —making it fit a frame of one's making,but instead, welcoming it, hosting it, opening the new form to it; one might even say, cultivating a form in which something that occurred in another can sustain itself, be nourished, even grow.

Along with all of its attendant risks: of making improper incisions, ones which occur too soon, interventions which happen too early; of being overly impatient with the time needed for growth, some perceived lack of growth, being imprudent by attempting to direct too much, giving too much direction; of letting it grow for too long, being too patient, misrecognising a cancerous growth for what one considers flourishing, mistaking an infection for healthy growth.

For, even when done with the best of intentions, even if in fidelity to the text — perhaps even to the spirit of the text, as Benjamin sets as the task of the translator — every translation, movement, runs the risk of talking over, taking-over, where the one who translates, transfers, moves, overtakes the text itself, takes the place of the text (s)he is supposed to, even trying desperately to, care for, attend to, attune themselves to.

Où le traducteur est toujours aussi un traître.

Or, when the text takes over to the extent that the translation itself becomes gibberish, where the boundaries of the form into which it is taken are completely ruptured, broken, over-flowed, to the extent that no one can make head or tail of what is allegedly in front of them. And in which the text itself fades away into complete nothingness, where it disappears.

Who (s)he betrays though:

that might well be the question.

Perhaps though, what one is attempting to translate is the very name of the signature-text, text-signature itself: not so much the name on the text (by way of the name the text bears, the name of the one who signs, nor the title, even as both always remain to frame the text, and potentially accuse it of what it might not even have done) but the *name of the text itself*.

Its proper name.

So not so much the « I » of the one who has so-called written the text, who has signed-off on the text, nor that of the « I » who reads-translates, is translating-reading, but the « I » of the text itself: an « I » which quite possibly does not exist prior to this reading-writing-translating, and maybe not even after.

And of which there might be nothing that can be said.

Which might well be *a secret name*: known only should the text itself (is there a gender to a text? or might genre be another of those strictures we attempt to place on a text, in order to act like we know what a text is) decide to reveal it to us, whisper in our ears …

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Reifying Love: A Study of Conceptual Metaphors Related to The Emotion of Love

Abstract

Metaphor has been used as a figure of speech and a means of literary expression for centuries. This ubiquitous yet powerful tool continues to demand the interest of theorists and practitioners of various fields like linguistics and philosophy. Traditionally considered an embellishment to poetic language, the understanding of metaphor has changed in the past few decades with scholars becoming increasingly interested in the study of metaphor. The "turn" brought in by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory changed the position of metaphor from being a rhetorical device to being an integral part of human cognition. Human emotions like love are abstract domains that are expressed in terms of concrete domains through the use of metaphors. Examining these metaphors can explicate human emotions and help in understanding how emotions like love are expressed by humans. Love, being a universal human emotion, is a recurring and everlasting theme in literature. A study of literary metaphors related to love can pave a way to understanding how this complicated emotion is represented in literature and identifying patterns (if any) of this representation.This research paper, by using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, analyzes the conceptual metaphors from Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's debut collection of short stories titled "Arranged Marriage". Analyzing the concrete domains that are used to describe the emotion of love in these short stories, this research paper attempts to arrive at a dominant source domain that is used by the author to describe the emotion of love.

Keywords:*Love Metaphors, Conceptual, Emotion, Source domain, Cognitive metaphor.*

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the word Metaphor as "a word or phrase used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful" (Hornby et al. 976). This definition of metaphor comparing two things based on their similarity has been in use from 4th century BCE when Aristotle wrote his influential works, *Poetics* and *Rhetoric.* In *Rhetoric,* Aristotle saysthat metaphor is a form of figurative language that gives style lucidity and charm and nothing else can appeal in the same way. Furthermore, creation of metaphors is a mark of genius and cannot be taught(Aristotle 4799). This "traditional" view that metaphor is an

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embellishment to language, changed with Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 pioneering work *Metaphors We Live By* in which the idea of Conceptual Metaphor was proposed. Using diverse examples of metaphors that find place in everyday language, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphor is not only a linguistic device, but it also has a cognitive dimension and is fundamental to human thought. Human conceptual system which drives our *thought processes* (emphasis in original) is metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson, "Metaphors we Live by"6). A conceptual metaphor can be represented by A is B where the letter A stands for the abstract target domain and B for the concrete source domain. A systematic mapping from the source domain to the target domain is crucial in understanding the conceptual metaphor. For example, in the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, vocabulary related to the concrete domain of WAR (source domain) is typically used when we talk about the abstract domain of ARGUMENT (target domain). Expressions such as "he *defended* his claims", "she *won* the argument", and "with great points, she *attacked* his argument" etc are linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR.Kövecses, in *Metaphors of Anger, Pride, and Love* opines that in conceptualizing abstract concepts like love, conceptual metaphor theory is the most extensive and detailed theory that can be used (9).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award winning Indo-American author whose works include novels, short story collections, poetry, anthologies and children's literature. She is a versatile and distinguished writer who writes primarily about the experiences of diaspora in relation to migration, cultural dichotomy, hybridity, acculturation and assimilation, experience of love, and marriage in her novels and short stories. Divakaruni's work has received critical acclaim all over the world. Two of her novels *Mistress of Spices* (1997) and *Sister of My Heart* (1999) have been adapted into an English movie and a South Indian television series respectively. *Arranged Marriage* (1994), Divakaruni's debut collection of short stories was on the best seller list and won an American book award, a PEN Josephine Miles award, and a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. This research paper analyzes the conceptual metaphors related to the concept of love in Divakaruni's collection of short stories titled *Arranged Marriage*.

While the expectation is for it to be uncomplicated, the language of love is not only insufficient but also indirect and is filled with metaphors (Kristeva 1). There are various conventional metaphors that conceptualize love using many source domains. Linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphors like LOVE IS A JOURNEY ("we have *come a long way"*), LOVE IS FIRE ("he is *hot* for her"), and LOVE IS MADNESS ("she is *crazy* about him") are prevalent in everyday language.A close reading of *Arranged Marriage*revealed various conceptual metaphors that the author has used to describe the concept of love. In the examples used in this research paper, words/phrases have been italicized to add emphasis. Similarities or differences between different kinds of love (romantic, parental, platonic etc) have been called out wherever necessary.

One of the most famous conceptual metaphors related to LOVE is the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, which manifests in everyday language in expressions like "this relationship has been through a *bumpy* road" and "we have *come a long way*". The mapping in LOVE IS A JOURNEY forms a relationship between the concepts of love and journey by mapping suppositions related to journey to those of love, thereby enriching the concept of love (Lakoff and Johnson, "*Philosophy in the Flesh"* 66).

LOVE IS COMING TOGETHER OF COMPLEMETARY PARTS is another metaphor that is common when expressions like "*perfectly matched* couple" (Divakaruni 187) or "each of us *freeing the other* before it is too late" (Divakaruni 271) are used. It is noticed that this metaphor is also used in describing love between friends in expressions like "we used to be *inseperable* back home" (Divakaruni 190), and "*united further* by our act of wickedness" (Divakaruni 206).

LOVE IS A FORCE comes up in *Arranged Marriage* frequently. It is seen in "*surge of electric* up your spine" (Divakaruni 61), "I'd *fallen* in love with another man" (Divakaruni 266), and "of *falling* from a great airless height" (Divakaruni 266). It should be noted that the related metaphor BEAUTY IS A FORCE is evinced in phrases like "found me *attractive*" (Divakaruni 114) where the FORCE is a magnetic force.

LOVE IS FIRE is another metaphor that is used frequently in everyday language in expressions like "there is no more *fire* in the relationship", "her eyes *sparkled* when she saw him". It is noticed that this is not specific to romantic love and is used also for other types of love. For instance, "I'd felt the *flaming* rush of it" (Divakaruni 75), "real and primitive and *dangerous*" (Divakaruni 75), and "love for her sister would *sweep* through her" (Divakaruni 125) indicate that the LOVE IS FIRE metaphor is used also for familial love. The first two examples above are in the context of motherly love and the third one for sisterly love.

LOVE IS A WAVE metaphor is expressed in common utterances like "they were *immersed* in love" and "he got *carried away* by her love". This metaphor, like the LOVE IS FIRE metaphor is also used to describe parental/familial love like "that *tidal-wave swept*everything else away" (Divakaruni 98-99), "Love for her sister would *sweep through her*" (Divakaruni 125), and "*swirl* around me" (Divakaruni 108). Related to the familial love is the CHILDREN ARE VALUABLE POSSESSIONS metaphor which is demonstrated in "parents*clung to* departing children" (Divakaruni 112), "forge a *chain that would hold him to me*" (Divakaruni 276).Another related metaphor, CHILDREN ARE A PART OF PHYSICAL BODY is evinced in idioms like "my child is the *apple of my eye*" and expressions like "I feel *handicapped* without my daughter's help" etc.

In conceptualizing some concepts, Kövecses opines that the consideration of 'related concepts' is crucial. For example, in the case of romantic love, related concepts like admiration, respect, desire, beauty and caring are important in understanding the concept

of love. Furthermore, these related concepts have different gradations of relationships with the concept of love (Kövecses, "Metaphors of Anger"74-75). Concepts like desire might have a "stronger" relationship with the concept of romantic love and concepts like caring with familial love whereas other related concepts might exhibit weaker relationships with love. However, studying these relationships can contribute to understanding and conceptualizing love.

One of the related concepts that has an interesting relationship with love is marriage. In westerns cultures, love leads to marriage whereas in traditional Indian culture, marriage leads to love. Nevertheless, the relationship between marriage and love is indubitable. Naomi Quinn, from her research on American marriage, opines that the cultural models for marriage are literal and metaphors are not integral to the understanding of the concept of marriage, metaphors "merely reflect" the literal understanding of the concept of marriage (Kövecses, "Metaphor and Emotion" 86). In contrast, Kövecses takes the conceptual metaphor theory as base to opine that metaphors are an essential constitutive part of a concept like marriage (Kövecses, "Metaphor and Emotion" 122). In *Arranged Marriage*, the conceptual metaphor MARRIAGE IS GLASS can be seen in "*shatter* her sister's marriage" (Divakaruni 147) and "marriages can be *broken* in half the time" (Divakaruni 217). Furthermore, MARRIAGE IS A CONTRACT is very prevalent in the text and is seen in "I agreed to the marriage *only on condition*" (Divakaruni 107), "but wasn't ready to be *tied down by* marriage" (Divakaruni 39), "*reneged* on the unspoken wedding contract" (Divakaruni 61), and "marriages can be *broken* in half the time" (Divakaruni 217).

INTIMACY as one of the principal concepts associated with LOVE, is a metaphorical parallel to PHYSICAL CLOSENESS (Kövecses, "Metaphors of Anger" 75). The relationship between love and related concept of intimacy is shown in "he *reached for* her" (Divakaruni 188) and "as she *snuggled* against him" (Divakaruni 193). Similar to other related love concepts, intimacy is representative of love in several metaphorical manifestations of conceptual metaphors related to love.

Love as an abstract concept has not one but various source domains from which metaphors are derived from.These several metaphorical ways of conceptualizing love propose that there is no unique cognitive model for concepts like love and different instances use different models (Gibbs 148; Kövecses,"Metaphors of Anger" 36). The conceptual metaphors analyzed from *Arranged Marriage* align to this proposal. Different instances and kinds of love sometimes use the same model and sometimes a different one. While LOVE IS FIRE and LOVE IS A FORCE occur more frequently in *Arranged Marriage*that other metaphors, these are not indicative of the whole concept of love. People of different cultures form and explicate emotions in different ways, especially universal and complicated emotions like love. While it is probably impossible to universally generalize the concept of love, more intensive research on love metaphors

from different cultures will help in forming some generalizations related to love that are common across cultures, which will help in further conceptualizing this universal yet unique concept.

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Dr. Chandrasekharan Praveen

An Appreciation of Love Poems Using the Rasa Theory

Abstract

Centuries of colonial rule have resulted in Indian academia seldom referring to the ancient Indian aesthetic theory of Rasa. In the past, appreciation of art sans the Rasa theory was unthinkable. And if one attempts a study of ancient Indian literature,the performing art or even the plastic arts, one can see artists meticulously following the basic tenets of the Rasa theory in order to evoke the highest aesthetic experience possible for their audience.

While it is true that art work reflect the general tempo and prevailing style of the culture in which it has evolved, influences of artistic precepts of far off lands are common in art work across the globe. The amalgamation of Western and Eastern styles in architecture is a case in point. But when it comes to composition of love poems, the investigator found that foreign influence is often rare and the poet's own personal experience tend to throb in every written line, triggering the sensual feeling in the reader. While in modern readers, love poems excite in Freud's term the libido, from a sociological perspective, it excites a passion which helps fulfill a physiological need. But, little do we realize that in ancient India, the reader as per the Rasa theory had to rise to the level of the 'Sahridaya', that is, one who can identify with poet's attempt to communicate the emotive meaning of the poem. This however can best be understood only with a familiarity of the ancient Indian aesthetic theory of Rasa and its application in art.

To illustrate the possibility of employing Rasa theory, the investigator attempts a comparative study of popular love poems in English with ancient Indian love poems (in translation). The study reveals how several popular love poems in English evokes carnal pleasures in the reader's mind, while ancient Indian love poems written following the precepts of the Rasa Theory, despite overt sexual references evoke a 'sublime' literary experience. The study also sensitizes the reader to the possibilities of employing the Rasa theory to art work in general and literary genres in particular for fostering an enhanced aesthetic sensibility.

Key words: Aesthetics, Appreciation, Love, Poems, Rasa

> "Emotionally immature readers may, of course, read merely to satisfy an unhealthy curiosity, but a sound judgment of the work itself, and of the author's intention

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> as far as it is evident in the work, would conclude that the work is not of its nature seductive or sexually stimulating."
>
> -'Erotic Literature' in Encyclopedia.com

Introduction

O'Riordan in 2009 wrote a post on erotic poetry in the website of 'The Guardian' with an archival photograph from 'Just A Gag' (1925) displaying a couple huddled together reading a book with the title 'The Arts* Making Love'. According to the author of the post, erotic poetry allows us to engage our imagination and be titillated or turned on. The post goes on to suggest that erotic poems help us understand our impulses and they become a place to play our irrational fears or indulge in our deep-seated desires. Towards the end of the post, there is a reference to the general tendency to condemn and re-evaluate the boundaries of good taste.

Rationale for the study

Are love poems in good taste? Can we perceive them as art? Here it is worth recalling the observations of Shklovsky on the purpose of art and Auden on the function of poetry. To Shklovsky, imparting the sensations of things as they are perceived is a purpose of art. And to Auden, poetry as of all the arts, make us more aware of ourselves and the world around us. But the emergence of theories such as Structuralism, De-construction and Modernism have made literary appreciation quite problematic. It is this state of affairs which prompted the investigator to suggest the use of the ancient literary theory of rasa, which owing to centuries of colonial rule in India, seldom found a dominant place in academic discussions. This paper draws on the Rasa Theory which basically focuses on the nine basic human emotions, with special focus on the Rasa-Sringara (love) found in popular love poems in English and ancient Sanskrit love poems.

Theory of Rasa

Rasa is the ancient Indian aesthetic flavour which is an essential element of visual, literary or performing art. (Encyclopedia Britannica). It is only when the spectator or the one who appreciates, 'the rasik' imaginatively participates in the creative process, that the aesthetic experience is achieved. (Rasa: The fountain of life) Rasa is invariably accompanied by feelings of pleasure and enjoyment and affect our body and mind. Fear, for instance we know changes the smell of our bodies. To Bharata (dated between 200 BCE and 200 CE) rasas emerge from 'basic states of consciousness' (sthdyi-bhdva) such as love, merriment, grief, anger, effort, fear, repulsion and surprise.(1) They are essentially different from the 33 transient feelings such as envy, languor etc. (Mukerjee)

Sringara Rasa

Sringara rasa translated as erotic love, romantic love or attraction to beauty is the mother of Rasas and in performance art gives scope for a series of emotions such as anger, jealousy, compassion etc.The playful exchange between lovers evoke Sringara rasa. (2)

Literary appreciation and Sahridaya

Kuijpers & Hakemulder (2017) examined the relationship between levels of literariness, perceived comprehension, appreciation and reading experience. They found that an increase in literary appreciation is related to increase in perceived comprehension and is independent of the level of literariness. Nilsen and Donelson (2009) identified seven stages through which literary appreciation occurs. The seventh level relates to aesthetic pleasure in which the avid reader, appreciates the artistic value of reading. Either way both studies suggest a kind of scholarship in the person who attempts to appreciate the literary piece.

Abhinava Gupta (c950-1016), the philosopher, aesthetician from Kashmir, compared the heart of the reader to a touchstone for testing the true gold of all emotions in the work. So a Sahridaya is one who has the ability to identify with the heart of a poet through the emotive meaning of the poem. A mere sentence 'the newlyweds were very much in love' is not likely to give the hearer what love is like. (Ingalls, 1990: 19). This however can be done through suggestion and in ancient Indian poetics, this is called 'dhvani' (poetic diction) which is a means to reach the rasa goal of literature. In fact, the effectiveness of a literary composition as per ancient Indian aesthetics is largely dependent upon what and how it is stated employing words, grammar and rhythm which helps suggest the experience of rasa.(Hanley,2012)

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to draw on the Sringara Rasa for appreciation of select love poems in English and ancient Sanskrit poems (in translation). The specific objective is to attempt a close reading of lines in the poems to identify its ability to evoke Sringara rasa through the use of poetic devices and special use of language.

Method

The study commences with an identification of popular love poems in English and ancient Sanskrit poems available in websites. Poems with similarity in treatment of the theme is identified for comparison. Then a close reading from the standpoint of a 'Sahridaya' is attempted focusing on the poet's attempt to stimulate feelings of love which in the process also transforms the reader.

Comparison and Discussion

For ease in comparison poems in English and Sanskrit in translation that have a

similarity in content focus were identified. The content identified in the poems focus is 1.Body 2.Dress 3.Sweet talk 4.God and love 5.Nature 6.Anger and rage of lovers and are closely related to the emotions related to Sringara Rasa. Further, to make reading less complex, instead of taking the entire poem, sections of the poem which have a direct reference to love or eroticism is taken up for close study.

Appreciating like a Sahridaya

For a fuller and engrossed appreciation of the emotions evoked by the lines it is essential to assume the garb of the lover. A lover, we know can be one whose affection for the opposite sex is pure. And when it is a first time experience, in the presence of the lover, one is likely to display the emotions by blushing, palpitation, quick beating of the heart, and absence of courage to look into the eyes of the lover and by frequently glancing sideways at the lover. In addition open adoration of the qualities of the lover, praising the lover to own friends, appreciating the hair, dressing etc. of the lover are all common. And in times of proximity, a tendency to get closer, touching the lover as if accidentally, inhaling deeply the smell and perfume of the lover is likely. There are also love that is forbidden and is carried on surreptitiously by both lovers unknown to anyone save the two lovers and perhaps a close friend. Then, the lovers are likely to take the necessary precautions which involve cautious moves and roving eyes in search of a potential enemy. The meeting of lovers in the open space like a park or behind the bushes hidden from others or inside closed doors can evoke in the lovers expressions of love that can vary from kissing and groping or even undressing and engaging in the sexual act. Here too, if it is forbidden love, the fear of getting caught, the fear of committing a sin can all affect the intensity of emotions evoked.

The appreciation of poems that follow is built on the assumption that any attempt to appreciate the lines in the poems without assuming the role of a sahridaya who ignores the feeling of the lovers mentioned above can affect the sringara rasa evoked by the author. Here it becomes imperative to make a specific mention of the discreet rejection of two popular love poems in English for analysis in this study. The first one is entitled '**The Shower' by Charles Bukowski. According to Jha (2014) the poem was intended to evoke** concrete cynical eroticism **with direct reference to the sexual organs:**

*I grin grin grin, and then I wash her. . . first the ****,*

*I stand behind her, my cock in the cheeks of her ****

I linger perhaps longer than necessary,

*then I get the backs of the legs, the ****

The second poem, '**The Platonic Blow' by W. H. Auden describes the homosexual act in the following lines:**

I glanced as I advanced. The clean white T-shirt outlined

A forceful torso, the light-blue denims divulged

Much. I observed the snug curves where they hugged the behind,

I watched the crotch where the cloth intriguingly bulged.

Both poems were not taken up of interpretation using the Rasa framework because trying to appreciate poems with the mindset of one who is given to get excited through pornography perverse sexual acts such as sodomy, oral sex or a 'threesome' found in Kahjuraho sculptures is inappropriate for arousing the pure Sringara Rasa that helps one gain a higher aesthetic experience.

What follows is a brief discussion. For the text with their sources juxtaposed with similarity of content in English and Sanskrit poems in translation, please view Appendix.

A. Poems with content focus on 'body'

The British writer, D.H.Lawrence attained cult status among writers of erotic novels through 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. So a poem by an artist adept at penning an engrossing novel that dwell on the release of sexual feelings cannot be inferior. In fact, that is precisely what D.H.Lawrence, the consummate artist achieved in 'Gloire de Dijon'. If lexical words could be projected on the readers mind, like a digital screen, the images that blossom with crystal clear clarity are akin to Graham Greene's ability to write episodes matching cinematic shots in the 'Power and the Glory'. In fact, even without the framework of the Rasa theory, the lines tickle the reader's rasa as in:

She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts

Sway like full-blown yellow

Gloire de Dijon roses.

Caurapâñcâśikâ is presumed to have been written by a person languishing in the prison awaiting his execution for having loved and engaged in a roaring sexual affair with a princess. To fully appreciate the poet's recall of sensuous moments spent with the lover, all the fifty stanza needs to be read. Even as he awaits the day of execution, the rapturous moments he spent with his lady love emerges in the lines:

Still I recall the graceful coquetry

Of those curved limbs…

…

Her slipping garment showed her lovely breast…

B. Poems with content focus on 'dress'

Dress made of silk or cotton can reveal the body when light rays seep through them even as a gentle wind blows. And if the person who wears the dress is a lover or one with a

sensuous body, the moment can excite the viewer. While Robert Herrick captures the magical vision by using the phrase 'liquefaction of her clothes', Kalidasa's description originally in Sanskrit excites the reader even in the translation:

They cover their sexy round plump behinds

…

They make their lovers hearts throb

walking around thus flimsily dressed

C. Poems with content focus on 'sweet talk'

Ones who has fallen in love, tend to occasionally recall with passion the titillating talk engaged with ones sweetheart. E.E.Cummings achieved fame through his remarkable ability to capture the essence of an emotion through simplicity of expression. Though in the poem chosen 'may I feel', it required stanzas to capture the exchange between the lovers, Bhavahuti achieves it with a minimum of lines:

we spoke…

words issued slowly from us,

orderless, softly, touching

all subjects like lovers

D. Poems with focus on 'God and love'

Recently a controversy arose in Europe when a religious head suggested that before engaging in sex, the couple should pray to God. In many cultures, the boundaries between the Divine and mundane/material are clearly demarcated. So when Megan Fally's ironic title, 'The Atheist' equated the utterance following the 'act' reminiscent of the divine, the naughty thought amuses the reader.

Engaging in forbidden sex can evoke a feeling of remorse after the act. But when one gets an ecstatic feel, sheer reckless thoughts can follow, equating the person who gave the feeling of bliss with God, which Amaru, the 7th century poet captures in the following lines:

the lovely woman's eyes droop

from the fatigue of riding her lover.

Long may her face protect you.

…

who needs the gods now?

E. Poems with content focus on 'Nature'

Flowers and fragrance, birds singing on the trees etc. have always been a source of inspiration for poets. But Emily Dickinson's poetic imagination transforms the scenes from Nature to express her inner most desire:

Come slowly – Eden!

…

… sip thy Jessamines –

As the fainting Bee –

Kalidasa's reference to the seasons have been perceived as the pinnacle of poetic imagination and the following lines even in translation evokes our senses:

Everything prospers in this season –

…

Mango trees full of flowers

…

The women glow in their lust and wander

…

These lusty women are pleasure to behold…

F.Poems with content focus on 'anger and rage of lovers'

Falling in love, rejection of sexual advances, getting angry are all common among lovers. But when distanced by lack of affection it is natural to strive to set things straight. Some resort to argument as Marlowe does:

It lies not in our power to love or hate

…

The reason no man knows…

Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

While philosophizing is one way, daring to make a bold move is a pragmatic approach as

Amaru suggests:

Who steals a kiss from a

proud woman flashing her eyes

drinks *amrita*.

Limitations

In attempting to appreciate the love poems using the Rasa Theory, the choice of poems was based on popularity rating in select websites and is likely to be challenged. And the application of the Rasa Theory related to the linguistic aspects of the poems in Sanskrit was restricted to their translation in English. No attempt was made to identify the sentiment and thoughts that emerge from the sounds of the verse as it appears in the oral or written tradition by considering its meter, alliteration, onomatopoeia etc. This cannot be over looked and is a limitation because Sanskrit unlike other languages has vibrant phonetic features which create an aesthetics of its own.(3)

Further Research

An application of the theory of Rasa for appreciation of scenes depicting Sringara rasa in Ballets, Pop songs, and verses in great literary works like the plays of Shakespeare is worth attempting.

Summing up

The study has attempted to show how the application of the Theory of Rasa in appreciation of Love Poems with a focus on the emotions that are triggered from the perception of a 'Sahridaya' can lead to higher levels of aesthetic appreciation. Here, it is worth noting that only when the poet and the 'Sahridaya' join hands, do real appreciation take place. Perhaps it would only be appropriate to conclude by quoting once again from the same source from which this article commenced :

Only an insensitive reader would focus more on Juliet's physical attractions in Romeo and Juliet and works whose exclusive appeal is to sensuality cannot be works of literary merit.

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According to Saha, while engaged in the process of composing literary work, the authors draw on their own *Sthayibhava*, and compose lines that indicate to the reader, the character's mental conditions *vibhavas* (stimulating cause) and *anubhavas* (determinants) . This in turn calls upon the Sthayibhava of the reader into play leading to extreme pleasure. (p6)

In performance art, Sringara rasa is invariably classified into four heads:

Samkshipta, Sampanna, Sambhoga and *Viralambha*. These are depicted by shyness; Situation in which lovers reunite after long separation; Use of garlands, depictions of seasons, glances, graceful bodily movements; Sleeplessness, jealousy, craze, uneasiness etc. caused by separation of loved one.(Kalyanikalamandir)

The vowel-consonant pronunciation of the Sanskrit alphabet is unique and its combined utterance is perceived as one syllable unlike in other languages.(Encyclopedia of Authentic Hinduism)

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Appendix

1. Content focus : Body	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
Gloire de Dijon When she rises in the morning I linger to watch her; She spreads the bath-cloth underneath the window And the sunbeams catch her Glistening white on the shoulders, While down her sides the mellow Golden shadow glows as She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts Sway like full-blown yellow Gloire de Dijon roses. -D.H.Lawrence Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47353/gloire-de-dijon	13. Still I recall the graceful coquetry Of those curved limbs, the loving sidelong look, The golden earrings beating on her cheeks As sweat-pearl glistening her body shook. Her slipping garment showed her lovely breast; Her lip was dented where my teeth had pressed. - Bilhana 11th century Kashmiri poet - Caurapâñcâśikâ, (A Thief) Source: https://ocbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/1971-The-Fifty-Stanzas-of-a-Thief-Mahfil-vol-VII-No.-3-4-pp.-175-186.pdf

2. Content focus : Dress	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
Upon Julia's Clothes Whenas in silks my Julia goes, Then, then (methinks) how sweetly flows That liquefaction of her clothes. Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see That brave vibration each way free, O how that glittering taketh me! -Robert Herrick Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47339/upon-julias-clothes	They cover their sexy round plump behinds with short silk skirts dyed in red, and their full bulging breasts in see-through silken bras dyed in brown, yellow and red. They make their lovers hearts throb walking around thus flimsily dressed. (6-4) **-Kalidasa (Ritusamharan, Spring, Chapter 6)** Source: https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/kalidasa-s-ritusamharan-spring-chapter-6-translated-from-sanskrit-into-english/
3. Content focus : Sweet talk	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
may i feel said he (i'll squeal said she just once said he) it's fun said she (may i touch said he how much said she a lot said he) why not said she (let's go said he not too far said she what's too far said he where you are said she) may i stay said he which way said she like this said he if you kiss said she may i move said he is it love said she) if you're willing said he (but you're killing said she but it's life said he but your wife said she now said he) ow said she (tiptop said he don't stop said she oh no said he) go slow said she (cccome?said he ummm said she) you're divine!said he (you are Mine said she) -e e. cummings Source: https://allpoetry.com/may-i-feel-said-he	Leaning in touch toward each other, cheeks touching, we spoke… words issued slowly from us, orderless, softly, touching all subjects like lovers gentle with each other's flesh, deeply entwined in each other and time, so the hours floated, the night spent with our words, but only the night… -Bhavahuti (Uttararamacharita, 1.27) Source: https://journals.sfu.ca/capreview/index.php/capreview/article/view/511/511

4. Content focus : God and Love	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
The Atheist The first time we made love I realized why I never prayed. One human can only say *Oh God* so many times. - Megan Falley Source : https://www.scarymommy.com/sex-poems/	Who needs the Gods? With her tangled hair in disarray, her earrings swinging wildly, and sweat wiping off the mark on her forehead, the lovely woman's eyes droop from the fatigue of riding her lover. Long may her face protect you. Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva- who needs the gods now? -Amaru, 7th century Source: https://www.exoticindiaart.com/book/details/erotic-from-sanskrit-anthology-naq480/
5. Content focus : Nature	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
Come slowly, Eden Come slowly – Eden! Lips unused to Thee – Bashful – sip thy Jessamines – As the fainting Bee – Reaching late his flower, Round her chamber hums – Counts his nectars – Enters – and is lost in Balms. -Emily Dickinson Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52136/come-slowly-eden-205	Everything prospers in this season - Swimming pools brimming with water, Mango trees full of flowers Clear skies glow under the moonshine. The women glow in their lust and wander around showing off their lovely bodies adorned with shining jewels on belts, tied around their slender waists. These lusty women are pleasure to behold in this season of spring. (6-3) **-Kalidasa (Ritusamharan, Spring, Chapter 6)** Source: https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/kalidasa-s-ritusamharan-spring-chapter-6-translated-from-sanskrit-into-english/
6. Content focus : Anger and rage of lovers	
Poems in English	**Poems in Sanskrit (in Translation)**
Who Ever Loved That Loved Not At First Sight? It lies not in our power to love or hate, For will in us is overruled by fate. When two are stripped, long ere the course begin, We wish that one should love, the other win; And one especially do we affect Of two gold ingots, like in each respect: The reason no man knows; let it suffice What we behold is censured by our eyes. Where both deliberate, the love is slight: Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight? -**Christopher Marlowe** **Source:** http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/christopher_marlowe/poems/14799	4 Tender lip bitten she shakes her fingers alarmed— hisses a fierce *don't you dare* and her eyebrows leap like a vine. Who steals a kiss from a proud woman flashing her eyes drinks *amrita*. The gods -- fools -- churned the ocean for nothing. -Amaru, 7th century poet (From Amarushataka) Source : https://www.cse.iitk.ac.in/users/amit/books/schelling-2004-erotic-love-poems.html

Govind R.

Caught between Individual Autonomy and Sociolinguistic Determinism: Myriad Shades of Love in Literary Representation

Abstract

The coarseness of the suggested analogy may prima facie sound distasteful and cause disturbance to the reader, but the plain fact is that while all other creatures of the animal kingdom whose consciousness is largely biological, "mount" in love, man alone seems to be compulsively doomed to "'fall' in love". Man's love, in its multitudinous denotative orientations – maternal, filial, marital, heterosexual, homosexual, incestuous, oedipal, and so on – has been metaphorically and metonymically circumscribed into a sociolinguistic discourse that turns this most spontaneous and intensely subjective of human experiences into a matter of objective analysis, public scrutiny and sociolinguistic definition. Hence, for the human unconscious that is structured like a language, 'to love' is to "fall into the destabilizing trap of love". As a consequence, for the socially conformist individual, love often turns synonymous with 'suffering'. Literaturedown the ages, right from the time of the epics, has demonstrated to the world that the point of clarity in love, rather affirmation of love, is concomitantly the point of genesis of the pangs of confusion about love. May be, the only way to surmount the deep-rooted apprehensiveness about love in the human mind is to go with the non-conformist creed of the Existentialist who believes that "there is no love apart from the deeds of love; no potentiality of love other than that which is manifested in loving." (Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism") The paper titled "Caught between Individual Autonomy and Sociolinguistic Determinism: Myriad Shades of Love in Literary Representation" traces the tension between individual experience of love and the social norms that tend to attach an element of anarchy to the otherwise centripetal force of love, through diverse genres, authors and texts.

Keywords: individual autonomy, social structuration, discourse, linguistic determinism

Love which could ideally be conceived as a benignly inclusive and expansively fulfilling emotional experience of the human consciousness, often becomes in reality a painful experience of guilt, self-torment and self-denialfor individuals caught in the confines of a psycheshaped by the conservative norms enunciated by a prescriptive society. An institutionalized distrust of love as a sui generis destabilizing force emanating

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from an unruly part of the human mind seems to be subtly, yet indelibly, inscribed into all sociopolitical contexts of man through the instruments of linguistic organisation and literary expostulation. The temporal, spatial and psychic characterization of this unique instinct of the specific mind, as it gets depicted in traditional literary narratives and the visual arts, is mired in compulsive images of oddity and eeriness. The depiction of the meeting of lovers under cover, in secluded places, in odd hours, and in apparently pathological states of anxiety, is often symbolic of the continuing social perception of love as a dangerous instinct of the mind. Perhaps more disappointing is the attempt to strike a forcefully synthesised dissociation between the two inseparable, rather mutually reinforcing, dimensions of love – the physical and the psychic. Even as a grudging recognition of the psychic affinity becomes palpable, carnal or sexual attraction and physical interaction are kept outside the purview of propriety, and are often signified in such denigrative terms as lust, mania, immorality, etc. Literature, from all parts of the world, has evinced a tendency to proffer a set of respectable categories and boundaries of interpersonal love, and most of these are integrated to the idea of conjugality: all permissible modes of love apply to relations among individuals circumscribed by marital and familial interaction. An inherent anomaly in the conjugal circumscription of love by the patriarchal society, has been the superimposition of the controlling idea of 'authority' over the liberal notion of love. This, has had disastrous consequences on individual lives, as obedience came to be acknowledged as more or less a byword for love, and from obedience one does not have to traverse a long way or while to reach a condition of servility.

Even as the sanctity accorded by the patriarchal societies to the affinities functional within the ambit of the familial structure prevails, it is not absolutely devoid of seemingly innocuous conditionalities and qualifications. Restrictions and regulations could be seen to be metaphorically attached to such relations too. Depicted through epics and myths, they tend to wield a controlling and tempering influence on such relationships through the conceptualization of limits and limitations as applicable even to maternal love. The *Bhagavathapurana* of ancient India, which depicts in the persona of the demigod *Krishna*as an ideal son, ideal lover, an ideal husband, and an ideal man of action, seems to lend itself as an example for this kind of metaphorical containment of the potential course of love as it functions in the most authentic relation between the mother and the offspring. Krishna, as a literary character, is hypothetically shown to have been nurtured by three mothers at three different stages of his life – *Devaki* who gives birth to him in incarceration and willingly suffers parting with the infant for the sake of sustaining him in life, then *Yasoda*, the foster mother who selflessly enjoys his infantile mischiefs, and forgives and often defends his childish and juvenile pranks, and finally a second version of *Devaki* to whom he returns at the age of ten for the facilitation of his mental maturation into an adult who is to take up his duties as a future king. Inferred at the tropological or the moral level, ('tropological' or moral level is one among the four levels of literary

interpretation suggested in Hermeneutics, the other three being the 'literal', the 'allegorical' and the 'anagogic' or spiritual) the deep structure of the narrative involves a socio-ethical definition of the ideal contours of maternal love if it is to be congenial for social well being. It strives to strike a balance between maternal love as a personal, liberal and exotic emotion and the mother as aninstrument to facilitate the integration of the offspring to the social edifice. The metaphorical import of the narrative is the patriarchal conception of the figure of the mother as a conglomeration of mutually exclusive impulses as represented by Devaki and Yasoda: the mother who suffers the self-limiting, rather incarcerating, conditions of pregnancy and the pangs of childbirth, the mother who condones and even enjoys the pranks and mischiefs of the child which would otherwise be punished, and then, a more abiding guise of the righteous mother who steers the son to the paths of ethical consciousness ('*dharma*') duty) (*'karma'),* material prosperity (*'ardha'*)and salvation(*'moksha'*), all in adherence to the values and courses prescribed for personal fulfilment of the individual life.

Viewed from this perspective, Krishna's love for Radha, immortalised in the ancient lores, especially by Jayadeva Goswami, the twelfth-century Sanskrit poet in the court of Shri Lakshmana Sena, King of Bengal,in his work *Gita Govinda* could also be inferred dichotomously. As the epitome of love defined as complete organic union between the male and the female, Radha and Krishna's mutual affinity is physically and psychologically comprehensive; but it remains unconsummated in marital union. Interpreted at the lower realm of 'literal 'or' historical' perspective, it appears natural that the socio-moral discourse of the patriarchal society under which the narrative took shape, would not consolidate the unequal alliance between the simple milkmaid and the semi-divine, heroic, central figure of the future turn of events. The social codes of the time would not permit their perennial union, and Krishna has to naturally, rather compulsively, detach himself from the affections and affinities of his juvenile life in *Gokulam*, including Radha and his flute, if he is to launch himself on a path of self-invigoration and self-realisation as a male. He is depicted to flourish in life, marry from royal houses and lead a life of prosperity after extricating himself from all to which he had been bound in his childhood. And Radha is left to be aesthetically celebrated in arts and poetry as the immortal figure of self-sacrifice, eternally tormented in the fire of love. However, at the superior levels of tropological and anagogical interpretation, the love between Radha and Krishna becomes metaphorically elevated to a higher plane that signifies the ulterior principles of "bhakthi" in its purest form in the devotee, on the one hand, and the *"hladini shakti*" of the detached, divinely ordained soul: "Srimati Radharani is Lord Krishna's pleasure potency, or ahladini shakti. What this means is She cannot be separated from Krishna because energy cannot be separated from the energetic" *(*Balramdas*). Radha thus becomes a cosmic symbol of the, "*Queen Nature [which] always longs for her togetherness with that God as she knows none else. But that God, as a knight of cosmic-roads, will never stay put with her for a long time"(Jayadeva:*Gitagovindam:*

Introduction).It is contended that Sage Shuka desists from mentioning the name of Radha in his narration of the *Bhagavatapurana* to King Parikshit who is left with only seven days of life, for the fear that it may put him into an extended trance and swerve him off the task at hand: such is the enormity of this Absolute Theology represented by the love between Radha and Krishna, rooted in the notion of *bhakti* as the route for a transcendental union with the divine.

Moving to the Western cultural sphere, it could be seen that at a certain stage the term 'Romance', insinuating an excess of imagination in stark deviation from reality, becomes almost synonymous with the depiction of love in literature. As man incrementally subjects himself to the regulatory principles and controlling agencies and institutions of society, love becomes a problematic and it comes to be equated with irrationality or insanity of the mind. Shakespeare's equation of the lover with the lunatic and the poet critically caters to a settled social view that love has its genesis not from the right frame of the mind, nor does it take the mind to a fine state of balance.(A Midsummer Night's Dream,V.i.6 - 7). The word '*Deewana*' in Hindi, (indicating a state outside the right frame of mind) used to address the lover, also makes the same import. Love's potential to challenge and tumble the power relations and class structures in society has rendered it to be looked upon with scepticism and apprehension. Hence, an almost formulaic foundation for the literary compositions during the post-Renaissance Age of Reason was that, "The course of true love never did run smooth"(A Midsummer Night's Dream, I. i.134). The progress of romantic love gets tardy in the face opposition from social forces codified as family, class, race and other concerns of conservativism.

The western distrust of love must have been a later development during a phase of greater consolidation of the sociological organisation of human life, as it is evident from the fact that the Greek mythological stories attribute a bio-instinctive and spontaneously psychodynamic rationale for love. Not only is the attraction between the male and the female, but homoeroticism too, that becomes psychosexually explained to be a predetermined affinity by Aristophanes' (c. 447 BC – 338BC) in his speech at Plato's Symposium which mythically conceives the origin of human beings in three kinds of double-bodied creatures – the male (from the sun), the female (from the earth) and the androgynous (from the moon)(ARLT Foundation).Thesedouble-bodied creatures were of immense power, and could challenge even the gods. Apprehensive of their invincibility, Zeuscutthem apart and ordered Apollo to turn their heads to the make them face their wound, to be constantly reminded of the punishment. From the moment of their severance, the predominant instinct of the two had been to reunite, and when a reunion happened, they would forget everything else and starve themselves to death. To avoid this, their genitals were moved to the front so that they could have frequent union through sexual intercourse and move on to other things in life too. This instinct which pertains to the mind and the body in the form of love and lust respectively, though *prima facie*

mythical, points to certain otherwise inexplicable psychological truths about love: (1) in love one is not attracted to a quality or a set of qualities in another person, but to the person as an organic whole. This implies that there are reasons and impulses antecedent to the socially conceived 'reason' that approves or disapproves of love on extraneous considerations of class, caste or racial compatibility in the modern times. (2) Contrary to the romantic idealisation of love as an attribute of the human mind, often in total neglect, even denigration, of the carnal impulse, it is to be acknowledged as an autonomous and composite instinct that involves both the body and the mind.(3) Homoeroticism, contrary to the modern attitude, was deemed to be normal, and even respectable in the ancient times as "Aristophanes applaud[ed] male-male relationships between men and boys since such couples value[d] boldness, braveness, and masculinity, both in themselves and in others"(ARLT Foundation).Thus, the Greek mythology, which also carries stories of the affinity of Apollo for Hyacinth, or of Eros for Psyche, depicts love as primal, psychosomatic, rational and antecedent to social structuration. Spontaneous, liberal and irresistible, love was perhaps not even a matter of choice but inescapably preordained for the Greeks. Instead of opposing or anathematizing it they only tried to categorize it into such diverse shades as Eros (passionate and sexual), Philia (authentic and loyal friendship especially among males), Ludus (playful and flirtatious), Storge (familial or parental – unconditional), Philautia (self-love), Pragma (committed and companionate) and Agape empathetic and universal). They saw love as a pure category conducive to ecstasy, and kept it mostly unscathed by fears of anarchy and disorder.

By the Middle Ages, love is seen to become incrementally denatured, and eventually pulled down from asublime state of spontaneity and robust individual energy, to place a materialistic burden on the chivalrous hero, who is bound not only to love his lady but also to protect her honour. The Chivalric Romance as a genre could be found to fabricate and standardise love as a calibrated component of the courtly conduct of the aristocratic hero. Against the feudal backdrop of the society, only love between men and women of equal social status could gain approbation, and it became the point of genesis for "the bold and the beautiful" idiom in language, whereof the love of the lady gained in strength and intensity in direct proportion to the valour and heroism of the warrior hero. For the same reason there remains a latent strain of tragedy associated with the chivalric romance, where the possibility of the death of the hero remains a logical corollary to the imperative of the military profession of the hero. The Chivalric Romance gains significance in the discussion on the treatment of love in literature for two reasons. First, the Freudian notion of the working together of Eros and Thanatos as conjunctive drives of the human mind could be traced into these narratives. Death is conceived as a sublime mode of consummation of love as it precludes love from dissipating into coldness, perfidy and nullity. Then, in fact, these stories could also be marked as the germinal stage of a subtle incorporation of Christian notions into the depiction of love in literature. Lancelot's love for Guinevere is in contravention of both the Greek principle of 'Philia' and the ninth

commandment of the Catholic faith, "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." It has also been highlighted that chivalric love was conveniently projected as an alibi for procuring the approbation of the church for economically viable marriages among young men and women from aristocratic families. Laura Ashe, in her essay "Love and Chivalry in the Middle Ages" remarks:

For the nobility, almost all marriages were arranged by the couple's families, often when the bride and groom were no more than children. But the Church insisted that the sacrament of marriage was only valid with the full, willing consent of both husband and wife. So, we can see another cultural purpose to this literature, which is full of love at first sight, love as recognition of beauty and status which are always combined with virtue and loyalty. This literature shows its audience an aestheticised version of their economic reality, making beautiful the transactions of aristocratic marriage.(Ashe)

In any case the Arthurian legends themselves carry hints for the future literary depiction of romantic love as a tumultuous, hurdles-ridden affair, as they portray the conduct of the Knights and Aristocrats as mutually competitive, often entailing subterfuge and rivalry. The feuds between the aristocrats which created schisms amidst the chivalric class must have reached a stage where the course of true love between young men and women of rival families came often to be thwarted, and had to go through a strenuous course to reach consummation. Later romantic narratives are seen to thrive on a track where love often becomes synonymous with appreciation for heroic qualities like valour, martial prowess, compassion etc. on the part of the male, and a corresponding set of arbitrarily codified female virtues like chastity, modesty and female beauty, often proceeding on predictable lines, in gross negation of its unruly, and anarchic potential. Literature here becomes a subtle means to tame love into submissiveness. Romantic literature, especially during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, in its anxiety to depict an idealized human state of unfluctuating mutual appreciation and perpetual happiness, proved disastrous for the whole notion of love and relations based on love, as it precluded from the organic ambit of love such natural aspects as transformation, evolution and erosion. The idea of constancy in love came to be celebrated as a virtue that was to be upheld even in the face of gross dissatisfaction and discomfort in the relationship. Romanticism also committed the naïve mistake of concatenating love to beauty, more often exterior rather than interior, fetishizing a fallacious version of "love at first sight" that was devoid of the force and purity of the affinity envisaged in the mythical account of Aristophanes. Often in romantic narratives love is encountered as a category of sceptical perception whereof the lover finds himself in a compulsive predicament of self-vindication through ludicrous and even hypocritical protestations of love. Romanticism, in short, replaced instinctive drives with reflective feelings as the rationale for love, admitted no error in love, and preordained true love to culminate in marriage that lasted for life. The hightide of the romantic tendency to idealise love as a reflective virtue rather than treat it as an organic drive of the human 'being' occurs with American

Transcendentalism, (perceived to be an offshoot of German Romanticism)which conceives a higher form of human affinity that detaches amour from the personal scale to embrace a universal feeling of vicarious kinship that transcends the material confines of time and space, and reach a metaphysical realm.

The eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries which witnessed a great deal of intellectual advancement by way of the industrial revolution, scientific advancement and political enlightenment proffered a compulsive recalibration of the phenomenon of love in a society that was increasingly felt to be coldly planned, rigidly organized, bureaucratically controlled, and rational instructed.Two literary narratives, separated by a gap of sixty years, one produced during the*Sturm und Drang* movement in Germany, and the other produced in Victorian England serve as appropriate records of the reformulation of love in the wake of modernization in Europe. While Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of young Werther* (1774) makes a sympathetic portrayal of the tragic potential inherent in socially untenable love, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848), subtitled, *A Novel without a Hero*, depicts love in perpetual degeneracy as it becomes subservient to opportunism, enticement, deception, and crass materialism. Goethe depicts a young man named Werther who is passionately in love with a young married woman called Charlotte who fascinates him with her beauty and intelligence. The socio-realistic tone of the narrative renders Werther's pursuit of Charlotte impractical,as it is taboo in a Christianised society, but what strikes the discerning reader is Goethe's sympathetic acknowledgement of the agony of the protagonist. The skeletal form of the narrative presents Werther as an artist who has a predilection for idealism rather than pragmatism, and his irresistible passion for Charlotte also proceeds from the same sensibility. In his career at the court as an attaché to the ambassador, he professes antipathy to the class structure of the society and believes that a man's worth should be gauged by his success. But the gentry reject his notions and evict him unceremoniously from their midst. His existential despair in the face of rejection in love culminates in his suicide, but not before eliciting a genuinely passionate response from Charlotte who kisses him in acknowledgement of the undeniable truth of his love for her, though her socially oriented sensibility immediately makes her feel horrified at the thought that she has betrayed her husband.Sixty years later, in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*,Werther's tragic idealism is found to be replaced by an absolute pragmatism that motivates Rebecca Sharp to deploy love as a convenient means to attain self-advancement in a society that practices the same class distinctions to evaluate the worth of men and women.With Rebecca Sharp, who can blush and cry at will, who repents her secret marriage when her husband's immensely wealthy father proposes marriage to her, who makes lavish use of her charms to gain favours from a series of aristocratic gentlemen, all natural attributes of love turn to be carefully nurtured and schematically utilizedcapacities.Ironically, also present in the novel is Amelia Sedley who declines the true love of William Dobbin as she remains dedicated to the memories of

her deceased husband, Captain George Osborne without realizing that he had planned to elope with Rebecca Sharp.*Vanity Fair* seems to be planned as a narrative that charts love's revenge on a social system that has for ever been obstinate in putting dogmatic obstacles in its natural course.

The tension between the individual aspirations and the prescriptive social norms with respect to love gets more expansively addressed in the plays of Anton Chekhov.Chekhov's literary sensibility seems to be founded on the conviction that all human misery could be traced to the failure to find harmony in love. The young men and women of his plays suffer due to their inability to rise above their egotistic engagement with the convoluted values of a society in rapid transition. They are either in distrust of love as something that would swerve them off the path of their material aspirations, or they simply shy away from acknowledging or expressing their love due to their false pride. Kostya Treplev and Nina Zarechnaya in *The Seagull* (1896) constitute a more legitimized replica of Goethe's Werther and Charlotte: Kostya commits suicide as Nina gets sucked off into the vortex of a hypocritical social system that attaches the greatest importance to success in life, professional, financial or artistic. The plays, *A Marriage Proposal* and *The Wedding*, both produced in 1889, could be construed as subsurface tragedies, as marriages in these plays get consecrated not in the bliss of love but in mutual distrust and ill will.However, in an admirable twist,Chekhov gives free reinsto love in its most spontaneous and tumultuous outburstto get restored to its original force and clarity, in the play,*The Bear* (1888). The short play with just ten scenes turns out to be an epic written in the service of love. Popova, widowed for seven months and in mourning, and Smirnov visiting the house to demand the money Popova's deceased husband had borrowed from him, engage each other in a protracted quarrel during the first eight scenes, and their ill-tempered exchange culminates in a challenge for duel in the penultimate scene. In the final moments of the tenth scene Chekhov dramatically induces love to make itsparadoxically impetuous entry: Popova and Smirnov fall into each other's arms in a sudden outburst of the pent-up love in their hearts; they get locked in "*a long kiss*", without ever bothering to justify itthrough the perspective of 'reason', either to themselves or to the others.

Love which ideally must be experienced as the phenomenal certitude that elevates one from the realities of mundane existence to an ethereal terrain of stringless flight on the wings of joy, has turned in the modern times, in reality and in representation, a matter of doubt, dispute, despair.When societies tend to be subjected to rigorous processes of spatio-temporal structuration into planned, bureaucratic and calibrated systems of values and behaviour, the spontaneous aspects of life are assigned a secondary importance.Postmodernity holds forth the potential, as it has done with all other aspects and facets of social and individual life, to liberate the human experience of love from the clutches of a socially determined epistemology.

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Jasna Nafeesa P K

Love for Freedom: Exploring Paolo Bacigalupi's Windup Narratives

Abstract

An exciting story about industrial espionage, civil war and political struggle, filled with heart thudding action sequences, sordid sex and enough technical speculation The Windup Girl (2009) forecasts a future where oil has run out, calorie companies dominate nations and bioengineered plagues run rampant across the globe. Paolo Bacigalupi is a writer to watch for in the future. He presents a futuristic world based in Thailand in the twenty third century where global warming has raised the levels of world's oceans, carbon fuel sources have become depleted and manually wound springs are used as energy storage devices. The Windup Girl has been labeled as 'biopunk', a story taking humanity's ten-thousand-year-old penchant for tinkering with biology to logical, if not absurd, commercial and scientific extremes.

Emiko, the windup girl of the title has been trapped by her own DNA, designed to be nothing but a servant and a sex toy. Spliced together from human and possible Labrador genes, Emiko is faster and stronger than the human beings but she is programmed only to serve. She is one of the New People, invented by Japanese scientists, who are genetically engineered creatures grown in test tubes and trained from birth to be obedient to their owners. When Emiko is first introduced in this novel, she waits for the signal from Kannika that it is time for her humiliation. While the men like and enjoy her body, she feels disgusted. There is a contradiction of love and disgust in this novel. This paper will try to explore the boundaries of love and disgust in dystopian fiction.

Keywords: Love, Civil war, Espionage, Politics

"The biggest problem we face is a philosophical one: understanding that this civilization is already dead. The sooner we confront this problem, and the sooner we realize there's nothing we can do to save ourselves, the sooner we can get down to the hard work of adapting, with mortal humility, to our new reality" (Scranton).

An exciting story about industrial espionage, civil war and political struggle, filled with heart thudding action sequences, sordid sex and enough technical speculation *The Windup Girl* (2009) forecasts a future where oil has run out, calorie companies dominate nations and bioengineered plagues run rampant across the globe. The American novelist Paolo Bacigalupi is a writer to watch for in the future. He presents a futuristic world based in Thailand in the twenty third century where global warming has raised the levels of

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world's oceans, carbon fuel sources have become depleted and manually wound springs are used as energy storage devices. The Windup Girl has been labeled as 'biopunk', a story taking humanity's ten-thousand-year-old penchant for tinkering with biology to logical, if not absurd, commercial and scientific extremes. This Climate Fiction or Cli-Fi novel can aptly be considered as an ecodystopian fiction because, it sets the tone and raises awareness about the major threats of climate change focusing on a genetically engineered nightmare of the complete failure of oil-based market. Humanity has survived an economic calamity brought about by the depletion of oil. The world is climbing out of the disaster, but the institution of capitalism and government are little changed. It's still all about money and power, only this time the fight is over control of bioengineered foods and alternate energy sources. The future of humanity's food and energy are central to the novel.

John Stuart Mill first used the term dystopia in 1868 and the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines it as, “an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives” (“Dystopia”). Dystopia is an imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic. Being an antonym to utopia coined by Sir Thomas More, dystopias are often characterised by dehumanization, tyrannical governments, environmental disaster, lack of hope, or other characteristics associated with a cataclysmic decline in society. Dystopias are presentations of imagined societies that-as a noted definition reads – “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived” (Sargent 9).

“...dystopia is Bacigalupi's self-admitted 'natural zone.' A generic sibling of utopian fiction, dystopian literature “takes what already exists and makes an imaginative leap into the future, following current sociocultural, political, or scientific developments to their potentially devastating conclusions” (Canavan 180).These developments...are the “ethical, economic, and epistemological assumptions and consequent practices that prevail today and structure modern life; the “devastating conclusions” are the rationally extrapolated but ungenially rendered environment and social costs of the present” (Canavan 180). Patrick Murphy claims that the “purpose of dystopian literature is not horror, but forewarning” (Murphy 26). Forewarning is crucial in regards to climate change; dystopian novels warn readers about the threats to our world and lifestyles if immediate action is not taken. In fact, many scholars argue one of the goals of dystopian literature is to motivate the type of social action required by the climate crisis.

The twenty-first century, like the twentieth, has seen a flourishing of dystopian novels in which human actions and institutions have created powerful and destructive societies that control and manipulate human beings. Perhaps even more than the twentieth century, the twenty-first has seen an outburst of post-apocalyptic narratives that tell the story of what human life on earth is like after cataclysmic events that wipe out many people and

institutions. The authors present their dystopias in order to educate the readers about the ominous trends of totalitarian state and lack of natural resources and to warn us, so that we can act to try to prevent, mitigate, or reverse the dystopian tendencies.

Bill McKibben writes that the impacts of climate change are "completely unprecedented in the ten thousand years of human civilization" (McKibben 45). Climate Fiction, a genre of fiction which deals with climate change and global warming, popularly abbreviated as Cli-Fi, forces us to confront the incipient death of the planet. The term 'Climate Fiction' or 'Cli-Fi' is coined by the journalist Dan Bloom. Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* can be seen as the latest amongst science fiction novels that deal with climate change. This kind of fiction may take place in the world we await or in the near future. The first novel to engage directly with what we name climate change is Arthur Herzog's *Heat* (1977), a plausibly imagined future history dominated by global warming. Another milestone novel is George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987, published in the United States as *Drowning Towers*), which oscillates between far and near futures beset by dramatically rising sea levels.

Lawrence Buell argues that "no genre potentially matches up with a planetary level of thinking 'environment' better than science fiction does" (Buell 57), noting that "for half a century science fiction has taken a keen, if not consistent interest in ecology, in planetary endangerment, in environmental ethics, in humankind's relation to the nonhuman world" (Buell 56).

Many studies have been conducted on climate change fictions. In*Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change (*2015), drawing on climatology, the sociology and philosophy of science, geography, and environmental economics, Adam Trexler argues that the novel has become an essential tool to construct meaning in an age of climate change. As an extremely timely contribution to the urgent discussions of climate change and culture in the Anthropocene, *Anthropocene Fictions* deserves high praise for carefully documenting the longer history of climate change novels as well as projecting forward into the uncertain futures of post-apocalyptic writings. With admirable thoroughness Adam Trexler has traced over one hundred and fifty novels that are about climate change in one sense or another. Trexler says, "climate change and global warming are easily bracketed as prognostications that yet be deferred, but the Anthropocene names a world- historical phenomenon that has arrived" (Trexler 4). Trexler argues that in an era characterized by global warming scepticism, "the novel maintains a problematic relationship with the truth of climate change" (Trexler 29).

In *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (2017), the French philosopher Bruno Latour explores the political and philosophical challenges proper to a time defined by an environmental and socio-economic crisis. Latour starts his argument by proposing that three distinct phenomena-or "diseases"-of contemporary societies share a deep connection. The processes of deregulation and globalisation, rising inequalities

(including the current massive migratory movements) and climate change denial are specific manifestations of a historical and political period. This book is a short but lucid effort towards making sense of the fundamental dilemmas derived from climate change: nature is no longer an inert background from which resources are extracted for human activities; rather, it has reclaimed its role as an active agent in the fate of the planet.

There is a research paper entitled "The Adaptation of Disaster: Representations of Environmental Crises in Climate Change Fiction" by Solvejg Nitzke in the year 2018. This studyfocuses on texts in which climate change is represented in regards to its establishment as knowledge and to the consequences that are derived from this knowledge.

Emiko, the windup girl of the title, bred to suit the whims of the rich, has been trapped by her own DNA, designed to be nothing but a servant and a sex toy. She is one among those who are engineered as slaves, soldiers and toys who form the new underclass in the future generations. Spliced together from human and possible Labrador genes, Emiko is faster and stronger than the human beings but she is programmed only to serve. If she tries to run, fight, or generally get out of the line, she risks overheating to death. She is one of the New People, invented by Japanese scientists, who are genetically engineered creatures grown in test tubes and trained from birth to be obedient to their owners. Some are easy to identify as biological machines: the 'ten hand' workers who tend the fields of Japan, for example. Some are dangerous, like the military grade windups fighting in Vietnam or the windup attack hounds. And some are merely beautiful, useful heechy-keechy, as they are derogatorily called by the Thai. Emiko belongs to this last category. With genes encoded with the need to serve and obey, she was once owned by a Japanese businessman who brought her to his bed and told her not to be ashamed of who she is. Then he abandoned her in Thailand for the sake of his money. She might have been better off mulched. Her kind are not only looked down on, they are illegal in Thailand, and while she looks human, her movements are "stutter-stop flash-bulb strange" and visibly mark her as a windup. If she moves very slowly, concentrating all the while, she can achieve smooth gestures, but otherwise she is a tick-tock designed to never be mistaken for a real human. Predictably, perhaps, the only place a New Person like Emiko can survive is in a brothel, where men pay good money to watch her beaten and raped by another prostitute, an act she performs night after night. They pay even more, if they dare, for the kinky experience of sleeping with her.

When Emiko is first introduced in this novel, she waits for the signal from Kannika that it is time for her humiliation (Bacigalupi 34). While the men like and enjoy her body, she feels disgusted. It is clear that her body is not hers to control. She is genetically programmed to orgasm and so she climaxes onstage for her audience, even as tears leak from her eyes and her contorted limbs ache. Because she cannot sweat, she overheats, a further parallel between her and simple machines. But like humans, she feels, thinks, eats.

Except for her physicality, it is impossible to distinguish between her and a human. She is viewed as a new kind of intelligent machine, less than human.

In Japan Emiko was a wonder. In Thailand she is nothing but a windup, a kind of genetic trash. The men laugh at her strange gait and make faces of disgust that she exists at all. She is a creature forbidden to them. The Thai men would happily mulch her in their methane composing pools. In Kyoto New People were common, where they served well, and were sometimes well respected. Not human, certainly, but also not the threat that the people of this savage culture make her out to be. Emiko wonders if she were a different kind of animal some mindless furry Cheshire, say, if she would feel cooler simply because she wouldn't have to know that she had been trapped in this suffocating perfect skin by some irritating scientist with his test tubes and DNA confetti mixes who made her flesh so smooth, and her inside too hot. Emiko is trained to be clinical about everything. The creche in which she was created and trained had no illusions about the many uses a New Person might be put to, even a refined one. New People serve and do not question. She is an alien toy, a windup for everyone to play with, to break even. Her self is utterly exposed and humiliated.

Raleigh, the club owner tells Emiko that whatever they want to do with her, money is money, and nothing is new under the sun. Nothing that Kannika conceives to hurt her and make her cry out is truly different. Except that she draws cries and moans from a windup girl. This, at least is novelty. Emiko feels that her body betrays her. Her body performs just as it was designed - just as the scientists with their test tubes intended. She cannot control it no matter how much she despises it. The scientists will not allow her even a small disobedience. Always Kannika is hissing Emiko that she is nothing, and will always be nothing. Whenever Kannika gets hold of her, she drags her out to where the men can all examine her. She makes her walk in the traditional Japanese windup way, emphasizing the stylized motions of her kind. She makes her turn this way and that, and the men joke about her aloud even as they silently consider buying her once their friends have gone away. This she experiences every day.

Gendo-Sama used to say that she was more than human. He used to say that he thought it a pity New People were not more respected, and really it was too bad her movements would never be smooth. But still, she has perfect eyesight and perfect skin and disease resistant genes. Her hair would never turn gray, and she would never age as quickly as human beings. Mizumi-Sensei, her creator, made sure that Emiko never showed a trace of rebellion. She taught her to obey, to bend before the desires of her superiors and to be proud of her place. The in-built urge of a New Person to obey is too strong. Now she is nothing but a silly marionette creature all stutter-stop emotion with no trace of the stylized grace that her mistress trained into her when she was a girl in the creche. There is no elegance or care to her movements now; the tell tales of her DNA are violently present for all to see and mock. She is a hothouse flower, dropped into a world too harsh for her delicate heritage. She fights for an acquisition of pride.

Emiko, a piece of property, true, but respected nonetheless. She was not a transgression against niche and nature, but an exquisite valued object. Anderson Lake gave her a reason to live that there is a place for windups. She aspired to become a part of her kind. She was built well, trained well. She knew the ways of pillow companion, secretary, translator, and observer, services for her master, that she performed so admirably that she had been so honored. Now she tries to convince herself that she appears eccentric, rather than genetically transgressive. Her true clan awaits her, if only she can find a way. Actually, Emiko has been enslaved to think against New People, even when she herself is one of them. She admits that her soul wars with itself. That she does not actually know which part of her are hers and which have been inbuilt genetically. She feels like a puppet. She thinks better to be dead than a windup.

Fear is the emotion that Emiko ultimately raises in others, especially after she sets herself free by discovering that despite her training, she can disobey and even harm those who have hurt her. Her love for freedom and dignity gave her the courage to fight.Her programming ensures, however, that she hates herself for it. In fact, she is the one who causes the civil war. When Somdet Chaopraya and his entourage sexually humiliate and degrade her, she snaps and kills them and Raleigh before seeking refuge with Anderson. At last Emiko has showed her potential of rebellion. She begins to disobey the programmes which made her a plaything. Emiko waits for her clan to live with. The Windup girl has achieved her own valuable freedom.

Similar to Emiko, Lidia, in The Fluted Girl, a short story in *Pump Six and Other Stories* (2008)always imagined herself as a rabbit, just like the ones Madame Belari kept in her cages: “small and soft with wet warm eyes, they could sit and wait for hours” (Bacigalupi n). She was always been compelled to ignore the sore protest of her body. Whenever Lidia tries to hide herself from others, they always hunted her like an innocent pray trying hard to survive from the hounds. Lidia's parents had come for patronage, but Belari's evaluating eye had not fallen on their artistry. Instead, she selected the biological accident of their twin daughters: delicate and blond with cornflower eyes that watched the world blinkless. Their trade flourished now thanks to the donation of their children.

Lidia compares herself with an orchid saying, “we are beautiful prisoners”. When Stephen finds out Lidia after her hiding, he was springing on her like a wolf. His hands wrenched her shoulders. His fingers plunged into her pale flesh and Lidia gasped as they stabbed her nerves into paralysis. She was like an unsteady pale fairy dwarfed by the looming monster. It was difficult to tell where the jackal, dog, and human blended in the man. His joys were hunting, capture, and slaughter. As a present for her hiding a current charged up Lidia's arm and she cried out, shivering as electricity rooted through her body. Belari would use electricity, or isolation, or some other humiliation cleverly devised.

Lidia was too delicate to destroy. Sometimes she was surprised at what broke her. A gentle bump against a table was apt enough for her to shatter like a glass. Belari would be

angry at the careless treatment of her investment. She remained a valuable investment as long as she can amuse and attract men. Stephen was a comfort for Lidia when Belari's depredations become too much. Always she has to be careful of the bones. She was a delicate fluted girl. Her hidey-holes were her search for identity and freedom. Her final attempt to destroy Belari is her final attempt to protect her self-identity and dignity. She values her freedom more than everything.

When we analyse the windup narratives of Bacigalupi, we can apply a narrative called the "lifeboat ethics" proposed by Garrett Hardin's 1974 article "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case against Helping the Poor." Michael K. Potter writes that although the idea dates back at least as far as the eighteenth century, the term "lifeboat ethics" denotes a position first proposed by influential Texan ecologist Garrett Hardin (1915- 2003), whose ethical perspective traces back to the tragedy of the commons. In two substantially identical essays published in 1974, Hardin used a lifeboat metaphor as an alternative to the then-popular metaphor of "spaceship"which is under the control of one captain, for the notion of a spaceship that runs by committee, or through democratic elections, is senseless.

If we divide the world crudely into rich nations and poor nations, two thirds of them are desperately poor, and only one third comparatively rich. Metaphorically each rich nation can be seen as a lifeboat full of comparatively rich people. In the ocean outside each lifeboat swim the poor of the world, who would like to get in, or at least to share some of the wealth. What should the lifeboat passengers do? Some say they feel guilty about their good luck. The lifeboat narrative, with its politics of exclusion, informs a version of ecotopia that focuses on the dangers of over population and the protection of the environment. At stake in this discourse is the question of who will be allowed on the lifeboat, i.e., whose bodies will be included in the nation.

The fundamental error of spaceship ethics, and the sharing it requires, is that it leads to "the tragedy of the commons" (Fiskio). In *The Windup Girl* Emiko is somewhat considered as a tragic figure. She is obedient to Raleigh and Kannika who belong to the lifeboat. At the same time Anderson Lake is a lifeboat member and he also joins hands with Emiko. Here, we can make use of another narrative called "the collective," a narrative articulated in Rebecca Solnit's work, *A Paradise Built in Hell* (2009). Solnit recounts a series of disasters, natural and unnatural- earthquakes, 9/11, Katrina- to argue that spontaneous communities form in response to disaster. She offers through these accounts a luminous portrait of the way ordinary people come together to care for one another. It is the collective with its "authentic solidarity" that creates the possibility of a future for humanity in this hell. The ecotopic vision of *Parable of the Sower* parallels Solnit's description of the collective narrative: "When we talk of social change, we talk of movements, a word that suggests vast groups of people walking together, leaving behind one way and travelling toward another [....] This is one of the major rewards of activism- a new community offering a new sense of shared purpose and belonging" (Solnit 286)

In *The Windup Girl* both Emiko and Anderson Lake form the "collective" community. Whereas in *The Fluted Girl* Lidia and Stephen form the "collective". They form an active community trying to revolt against the lifeboat members. Stephen's attempt to kill Madame Belari and Emiko's final rebellion are part of their identity formation. Their self-love and love for freedom are evident here. We can take some characters from The Water Knife to implicate the power of a collective identity and self-love.

In the second narrative, which Fiskio calls the "collective," humanity is imagined as essentially courageous and generous in the face of climate chaos. Maria, a Texan refugee turned into a party girl, considers bold action in the face of climate chaos and apocalypse. She could achieve her identity only through shooting Lucy. Thus, befriending Angel and being promised a heaven for her dust-stricken dreams. Toomie too possess a kind of agency only in the endwhich is evident through his words; "we're all each other's people. Just like we're all our brother's keepers. We forget it sometimes" (Bacigalupi 250). Toomie, instead of taking Maria's money, let her have a burned *pupusa* he would have given to a mangy mongrel dog that hung close by the construction site. He called her his little queen. Together Angel, Maria, and Toomie created a "collective" community in *The Water Knife.*

Another narrative is that of *Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor* by Rob Nixon. Slow violence, in Nixon's conception, is "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Scott). It remains obscured, he argues, precisely because it is not what we expect violence to be: explosive and sensationally visible. Instead, slow violence is incremental and accretive, and it jumbles expected conclusions between spatial and temporal scales. Nixon's concepts like surplus people", "developmental refugees and "dispensable citizens" are used here.

"...Bacigalupi's fiction is of a piece with non-fictional modes of social commentary like critical journalism and documentary fiction that expose why, how, and to what effects" (Canavan 182). Paolo Bacigalupi's novels demonstrate what happens when a capitalist economy persists during the climate crisis, capitalizing on dwindling natural resources. A primary focus of his novels is the demonstration of how even in the face of global catastrophe, without social change many of today's dangerous systems will persist. They demonstrate a persistent lack of social change, despite wide-scale famines and drought. Whereas the environmental features predominantly as background noise or setting in Atwood's novels, it is deliberately in the front and centred in Bacigalupi's novels.

Women have borne the brunt of successive waves of dispossession (Nixon 140). The situation Bacigalupi portrays is terribly haunting.Texas refugees, especially women were advised to "stay in a relief zone and starve instead of going where God still poured water

from the sky" (Bacigalupi 38)Maria, just another irrelevant piece of Texas topsoil that had accidentally blown up into the city couldn't figure out "how rich people always come out good, and poor people always get nothing" (Bacigalupi 92). Maria and Sarah were chained by the claws of vultures like Damien, Vet and Sebastian. They treated them as if they are small animals anyone can prey on. People like Vet has no idea they have something called emotions or rights.

Bacigalupi portrays the pathetic condition of women in the dystopian future by stating that Maria and Sarah were "supposed to keep sweating and screwing and dying until there wasn't anything left of them" (Bacigalupi 129-130).Maria's eventual escape has a soothing effect which proves her determination to live a life of her own. Where Lucy failed to assert her individuality and presence Maria could carve an identity of her own may be for the first time in her life.

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Alicia Jacob

Devouring Bodies: An Exploration of Love Through Food Representation in *The Lunchbox*

Abstract

Food is central to man's existence as well as cultural systems and practices and, therefore, cannot be removed from social inscriptions. Food choices can represent a conscious affirmation and expression of individual, social, ethnic or national identity. Food choices, as well as food restrictions, can convey aspects of an individual's identity and emotions, thereby making the communicative dimension of food impossible to overlook. Both verbal expression and consumption of food happen through the locus of one's mouth. Additionally, socio-cultural associations ascribe meaning to food, creating a form of metalanguage often exemplified through visual media. The performative role of food is an emerging area of study. Food and associated practices are gendered, sexualised and often eroticised, making them a powerful vector for the expression of love on big screens. Food becomes a metaphor for consumption, symbolic of sexuality, agency and gender. Indian culture being conservative in nature, often rely on implicit images of expression within media. Although, recent changes in trends within the film industry has exalted the position of food representations in films.

Objective: *The paper aims to explore the discursive nature of food and the performative element associated with food in Indian cinema in its representation of love taking the 2013 film, The Lunch Box as a case study.*

Research Methodology: *This research follows a blend of explorative and descriptive approaches integrating textual analysis at the core of the study. The primary source identified for this study is the movie The Lunch Box (Hindi)written and directed by Ritesh Batra. The movie, although not branded as a food film has intricate meaning hidden within the mundanity of food. Through the analysis, the researcher aims to present how food as a metalanguage best portrays the element of love in Indian Cinema.*

Conclusion: *The role of food is multi-dimensional. Food consumption is essential for our existence. Similarly, films engage the audience through visual and emotional consumption. Food, as a metaphorical signifying system, exemplifies meaning in movies and, in this case, acts as a substitution for the expressions of love. Further, the paper identifies the role of body politics ingrained within food culture that often hinders the expression and reciprocation of love.*

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Keywords: Food, Performance, Indian Cinema, Love, metalanguage, Gender, The Lunchbox

Introduction

Evidence suggests that human settlement originated based on the availability of food and associated resources. Food being a central element to our existence is often overlooked as a site for hegemony and representation. Food practices are engrained within social structures and can be considered as a tool that contributes to economic, social, cultural and national identity thus ascribing layers of meaning to food and associated practices. Carolyn Korsmeyer in her book *Making Sense of Taste* (2002) associates Nelson Goodman's proposition of three symbolical levels of art to food and its symbolic meaning; the same being representation, exemplification and expression. Representation, which is largely denotative, alludes to the pictorial representation of the object. Meanwhile, exemplification focuses attention on the properties of the object that is represented and expression alludes to the idea, mood or emotion associated with the object (115-18). Like art, food is also a form of expression. Hamburg et al (2014) in the paper "Food for love: the role of food offering in empathic emotion regulation"(3) argues that food interactions regulate emotions. Procurement, preparation and consumption of food are all symbolic of the expression of love. The deprivation or absence of food, overeating, or indulging in certain food groups are all representative of emotional responses.

Food and film are both offered to consumers for visual as well as emotional consumption. Food representation has gained increasing visibility and screen time within modern cinema. Food that was considered as a mundane part of our existence within the screen is now packed with intricate layers of meaning. Lindenfeld and Parasecoli (2016) argue that "the evocative potential of moving image is reinforced when cuisine and ingestion are used to convey dynamics and feelings that would otherwise be difficult to express visually or verbally" (22). Similarly, through a sociological analysis of visual images, Roland Bathes, in his The Photographic Message, rightfully argues that a photograph or visual image, although structurally autonomous when linked with a semantic structure, produce layers of meaning (196). Food and cultural practices associated with food has taken up space within cinematic representations.

Love or the lack of it, for a person, idea, or a socio-cultural establishment has been a central emotion that has been a driving force within every plot of a movie, especially in the Indian cinema industry. Adopting food as a tool for disseminating meaning has been a recent development within Indian cinema and is often unintentional. Ritesh Batra's debut feature film, *The Lunchbox*, released in 2013 is an epistolary love story at its core. Critic Rajeev Masand of CNN-IBN gave a rating of 5/5 to the film stating, "The greatest love stories are the ones that make you root for the protagonists to come together, despite their destinies. This film illustrates how love transforms the unlikeliest of people."(Masand).

Here food becomes a secondary tool not meant for conscious consumption but at the same time pregnant meanings. This paper aims to explore the discursive nature of food and the performative element associated with food in Indian cinema in its representation of love taking the 2013 film, *The Lunch Box* as a case study.

The Lunchbox as a food film

Anne Bower in *Reel Foods* defines food films as movies that provide central focus and attention to food and associated spaces like kitchen, eatery or dining room. She argues that in such films "the characters negotiate questions of identity, power, culture, class, spirituality or relationship through food" (18). Cynthia Bacon in her article "Dinner and a movie: Analysing Food and Film" argues that the manner in which food is emphasised and incorporated into the narrative, the screen time dedicated to food and its associated elements determine if a film can be categorised into the genre of food film (9). Similarly, various academicians provide multiple definitions for the genre of food films. Films inherently being a form of art is subjective and therefore, the criteria of inclusion in the genre of food film should also be subjective. Ritesh Batra while talking about *The Lunchbox* in an interview at Toronto International Film Festival (2013) says that the movie is a love story between two lonely people (DP/30: The Oral History Of Hollywood). Although the writer and director, Ritesh Batra, never intend to make a food film, he unconsciously dedicated the majority of the screen time to food and associated elements along with the busy city of Mumbai. Considering how *The Lunchbox* clearly presents food as an arena where identities are negotiated, influencing the way we perceive, represent and perform ourselves as gendered individuals or a part of a community, one can only argue that *The Lunchbox* is inherently a food film.

Moving away from the trends of Bollywood commercial films, *The Lunchbox*, written and directed by Ritesh Batra, is a slow-moving feature film that presents a spotlight on alienation and isolation that is at the heart of a busy life in Mumbai city. Released at the Cannes International film festival in 2013, the movie received worldwide acclamation and went on to win numerous awards in various film festivals and award shows. The movie evokes the love story of Nala and Damayanti, only here the messenger, the Hamsa is replaced by the Dabbawallas of Mumbai. In the article "*The Lunchbox* and Mumbai's Dabbawallahs: Creating Spaces of Desire1" (2018) the authors conducts a spatial analysis of the movie shedding light on the socio-economic exclusion of the lower caste as well as the deprived domestic labours based in Mumbai, a metropolis that is an epitome of modernity. Similarly, Sangita Ghodake in her article "Transcending Life through Romance: Mumbai Tiffinwalas and the Lunch Box" (2016) delves into the intricacies of life in a metropolitan city. The paper romanticises Mumbai as a city "that never gives up" (11) through the platonic relationship between the protagonists Saajan and Ila. Although the city of Mumbai, as well as the Dabbawallas, are contributing factors to the movie's success, the role of food as a means of expression is undeniable. Rahman (2018), focus on the representation of Indian cuisine as a diasporic symbol and places the movie within

South Asian Diaspora exploring issues of globalisation and transnationality. Although space is a relevant fragment within food studies, this paper looks at food as a metalanguage used to communicate emotional responses and how food is gendered through social structures.

Channelling love through food

Food has been invariably associated with the expression of love. From a mother feeding a child to a philanthropist distributing food among the needy are all expressions of love and compassion. As the director advertently claims loneliness as its central theme of the movie, loneliness arises from the feeling of being neglected or due to a lack of love. The movie begins with the female protagonist, Ila, cooking a scrumptious meal for her husband, following the advice of her neighbour and confidant Mrs Deshpande, in the hopes of rekindling the spark in her dull and monotonous marital relationship. Mrs Deshpande stands by the popular dictum ' the way to a man's heart is through his stomach' and instructs Ila to follow the recipe to the dot. Ila is confined within the walls of her house, divulging in domestic duty day in and day out. Cooking becomes her only solace. While engaging in other domestic activities, we find her listening to recipes on the radio. She is elated when the dabbawala returns with an empty tiffin and waits for her husband's return. She grooms herself in the hopes that his love for her food will convert to a passion for her, She hopes that her husband after devouring her food would come home and devour her body with the same passion that she put into cooking the food. In *Carnal Appetites,* Probyn juxtaposes food and its preparation as a manifestation of one's sexuality. Ila who has been devoid of intimacy from her husband is expecting to rekindle their passion through food. Soon she finds out that her husband had not received her food although she doesn't disclose this to him. Mrs Deshpande hearing the news is furious at her husband because he failed to realise that the food he had was not cooked by his wife. This incident clearly shows that Ila nor her cooking is appreciated by her husband. The rift between them is so wide that he can't identify her taste or style.

Meanwhile, the tiffin was delivered to Saajan Fernandes, a grumpy widower who is on the verge of retirement. Saajan's association with food is contradictory to Ila's. He sticks to the gendered stereotype associated with food and is presented as the consumer. The misdelivered tiffin kindles his tastebuds, which is otherwise accustomed to restaurant food. He even goes out of the way to appreciate the cooking of the chef at the restaurant that sents his tiffin. However, this mix up is brought to light when he receives the letter from Ila, placed in the tiffin career. Ila prompted by Mrs Deshpande writes a letter thanking Saajan along with her husband's favourite paneer. Although, Saajan never said a word of thanks the empty tiffin communicated his love for her food. Meanwhile, he responds to her letter by criticising the dish “as too salty.” His criticism of her cooking prompted her to make him a spicy dish to convey her disapproval. Despite the initial tug between the two, they soon take on to each other's company. Soon enough the only thing

exciting about their life becomes their communication through the lunch box.

Ila opens up to him through her letters and this is again symbolically represented through her cooking of lady's finger. She guts the lady's finger; symbolic of disclosing all the intricacies of her inner self. The image also has a sexual connotation where she is preparing herself for his consumption. The lady's finger symbolises the female reproductive organ and the pleasure she finds from cooking for him and their relationship is represented. James Keller in *Food, Film and Culture* asserts that the manipulation of food imagery on screen can allude to sex. The desire for the body is superimposed on food, which is, in essence, an object of desire by itself.

Further, the spring apple curry signifies the progress from the platonic to the physical. The connotation of apple in literature is often associated with the image of sin. Her offering of apple and him eating it can be connotative of the transition from the platonic relation to the bodily relation. This idea is further exacerbated by the cooking of brinjal/eggplant which is a phallic symbol in popular culture. Along with the food she sends an invite to meet in person. She is infuriated when he fails to show up to share her favourite meal and sends an empty lunch box which communicates her disapproval of his actions. He pacifies her saying that he is too old for her.

Love is a universal emotion felt by everyone. Similarly, the expression of love through food is also a global phenomenon experienced by all despite socio-cultural or economic differences. From the food choices made by each of the characters, we gain insight into their religious/cultural beliefs. Throughout the movie, Ila is involved with vegetarian food and therefore we can assume her to be from the Hindu or associated religious group. Saajan Fernandes as the name suggest is from a Christian faction and Sheikh as his name inscribes is a Muslim. Both these men consume meat which can again connote masculinity. However, even when the socio-cultural backgrounds of these characters are drastically different the way they convey love through food is indeed universal.

Dining Space

Saajan eats alone. Shows his isolated life. He voyeurs into her neighbours household longing for company. The arrival of Sheik changes things a little. He tries to break the walls that Saajan has built and most of this is done through food. He praises the aroma of his lunch and forcefully joins Saajan during lunch and they start sharing food creating a father-son bond between them. He has bananas for lunch which mostly conveys his economical status. But once Saajan starts to share his food with Sheik she brings apples too. This alludes to the economic disparity between the two and even the amount of respect Sheik has for Saajan. Sheik inviting Saajan for Dinner with his fiance and then to his wedding shows how he considers him to be family. Thus reducing Saajan's feeling of loneliness. However, Ila is only seen in the company of her family during dinner. But a discord in their relationship is evident as her husband indulges in Television while eating. And there is bare minimum communication between them.

Gender Disparities

The movie includes three prominent female characters; Ila, her mother and her confidant, Mrs Deshpande. All three women are constrained within gender roles and have toiled all their lives taking care of the family. Mrs Deshpande has been taking care of her husband who has been in a coma for nearly a decade. Similarly, Ila's mother is also tending to her husband who is bedridden. Both these characters have dedicated their lives to their husbands' well-being while being denied love in any way or form. After Ila's father's death, her conversation with her mother clearly portrays how dissatisfied her mother was with life and his death, to her is a form of release. Her hunger alludes to how she was deprived of love all through these years and is suddenly craving for it. Both Ila's mother and Mrs Deshpande are victims of patriarchy who had internalised the gender norms set out for them. Ila followed their footsteps confining herself within the walls of her kitchen only to realise her dilapidated state. She gains insight from the lives of her mother and Mrs Deshpande and realises that she is destined for the same doom that awaits these women. This encourages her to take matters into her own hands and she decides to leave her husband and move to Bhutan.

Meanwhile, the three major male characters, Saajan, Ila's husband and Sheik are farther away from domestic duties and busy with their jobs. Both Saajan and Ila's husband are removed from domestic duties and mere consumers. They devour the food prepared by Ila but does not associate themselves with domestic duties. Chen Liu (2016) argues that gendered domestic food work that includes men's agency into the domestic sphere increase intimacy in relationships (97). This is indicative of the character of Sheikh who seems to blur the lines of gender roles and is actively involved in domestic tasks. We find him chopping vegetables during train rides and offering to cook dinner for Saajan. He is the only one who is involved in a happy and healthy relationship.

Cooking as Empowerment or Enslavement

While domestic roles tend to suppress women it is often argued that women are often decision-makers and therefore held in a place of power within the confines of the kitchen. The provisioning, procurement and preparation of food are responsibilities of a woman. Ila is ascribed to that power. Even when she realises her husband is eating the same dish meant for Saajan, repeatedly and after her husband complains about bloating she refuses to act on his behalf. Although, she has the power to make a decision on what to cook and what not to. The minute the food reaches the dining table her power is drowned in the voices blaring from the TV operated by her husband. Cooking, although a form of solace, gives Ila a feeling of pseudo authority. Cooking becomes a means of inclusive exclusion. She relies on cooking to save her marriage unaware that the internalised patriarchal beliefs will always keep her in its reins. The authority she derives from a form of derivation fails to empower her.

Conclusion

Food and Film are forms of expression that are meant for consumption. The food here becomes a metaphor for love, a metalanguage that communicates the unspoken. The representative role of food in Indian Cinema is on the rise. Be it a movie with food as a central element of the plot or where food works at the periphery, food adds layers of meaning and even become harbingers of change. The Lunchbox, at its core, is a movie about the isolation and loneliness felt by the lead characters in one of the most densely populated cities in India. An absence of love and alienation resonates within the film. Love is not overtly expressed through words on-screen but is reciprocated through food and cooking. The universality of the expression of love through food is also presented in the movie. But the representation of food is not restricted to the manifestation of love. Although unintentionally, the gendered nature of duties and love is obliquely presented within the movie through food representations questioning the systems of patriarchy that work towards oppressing both men and women. Food apart from verbalizing emotions, also reveal cultural, religious, economic and gender perspectives which are implicitly presented within the text. Additionally, the paper identifies the role of body politics ingrained within food culture that often hinders the expression and reciprocation of love.

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Locating Same-Sex Love in Malayalam Cinema: Ligi J. Pullapally's *Sancharram* (2004) as a Lesbian Text of Resistance

Abstract

Malayalam Cinema has remained reluctant to portray the fluid gendered manifestations of love other than thosein the heterosexual vein. Even stalwarts have only ventured to linger on the fringes of homosociality, keeping explicit homosexuality at bay. Considering the stronghold of hegemonic patriarchy that looms as an unwritten ideology over the most popular culture industry in Keralam, any attempt to overstep the established boundaries of heteronormative gender roles and expectations has been marked as a transgression instigating masculine modes of intercession and severe censorship. It is into such a socio-political context that the Indo-American director Ligi J. Pullapally launched her debut film in Malayalam: Sancharram (The Journey, 2004), the act by itself being revolutionary owing to the film's narrative theme and its time of production and release.

Sancharram follows the coming-to-age love story of Kiran and Delilah, two female teenagers who are romantically/sexually attracted to each other, and the resistance that they face from the orthodox heteronormative society that considers homosexuality as an aberration. The research paper explores the cultural as well as cinematic contexts in which the film was produced, identifying how the film reflects the moment of its production, resonating with the same-sex agitations and suicides that marked the late nineties Keralam. It tries to study the visual and diegetic aspects of Sancharram, also focusing on its treatment of the sensitive theme of homosexuality, making it a text of love, gender, and the complications that ensue.

The theoretical basis of the paper is informed by the theories of gender performativity by Judith Butler, theory of the abject by Julia Kristeva, theories of feminist agency compiled by Lois McNay, theory of intersectionality by Kimberle Crenshaw, along with queer theoretical inputs that complete a critical presentation of the paper. The methodology adopted for the paper is essentially textual analysis; elements of visual methodologyinterfere occasionally as the primary text is a film. The major findings of the paper understand Sancharram as a text of literary/cinematic coming-out of the lesbian relationships hitherto repressed within the cultural psyche of Keralam. Not only does it echo the mainstreaming of the marginalized; but it also becomes a resistance to the use of

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cinema as a medium for the compulsory interpellation of the film-going-public into the hegemonic patriarchal ideology. The scope of the paper lies in exploring the visual media's manifold representations of same-sex love, its critical and commercial reception, and their long-standing consequences in the socio-political milieu that shape every culture.

Key Words: Performativity, Heterosexuality, Homosexuality, Lesbian, Hegemonic Patriarchy, Resistance

Introduction

Romance and love affairs have remained the staple ingredients of a majority of films produced in Malayalam Cinema that spans a history of over eight decades. Various variables like class, caste, age, and religion of the two partners in concern have featured as stumbling stones in the path of the lovers' union. However, their genders have always steered clear of becoming a roadblock, as the naturalized norm imagined in a romantic relationship in Malayalam Cinema involves exclusively the heterosexual man and woman. The lack of even a few examples to substantiate the presence of same-sex relationships in Malayalam filmspoints a finger towards the taboo status attributed to homosexuality on screen.

Though a male homosocial environment is not alien to Malayalam films that utilize it as a trope to enhance the macho-masculinity of the male lead, female homosociality is itself a rarity. Second wave feminism, for which female bonding of myriad forms was a political project, reflected in regional cinemas portraying female camaraderie. Random examples of female homosocial bonding that figures in Malayalam Cinema may be found in *Mohiniyattom* (Dir. SreekumaranThampi, 1976), *RanduPenkuttikal* (Dir. Mohan, 1978), *Shalini Ende Koottukari* (Dir. Mohan, 1980), *DeshadanakkiliKarayarilla* (Dir. Padmarajan, 1986), *EnnuSwantham Janakikutty* (Dir. Hariharan, 1998), *Pranayavarnangal* (Dir. SibiMalayil, 1998), and *RanduPenkuttikal* (Dir. Geo Baby, 2016).

Nevertheless, these films lingered on the fringes of homosociality, keeping homosexuality at bay. For instance, Mohan's *RanduPenkuttikal* (1978) was based on the eponymous novel by Malayalam author V. T. Nandakumar. The novel was lesbian in theme; but the film substituted it with a mere romantic friendship, resolved "appropriately" with the entry of heterosexual partners for Girija and Kokila, its originally lesbian couple. Similarly, Padmarajan's*DeshadanakkiliKarayarilla* (1986) dealt with an intimate female friendship interrupted by the possibility of a heterosexual affair for one, and a redeeming into the system; the failure of which ends the two teenagers' lives in suicide.

Dr. MuraleedharanTharayilanalyses Malayalam Cinema's reluctance to engage with the complexities of sexuality as a fabricated "cultural blindness that refuses to decipher

non-normative desires and social interactions" (171). He examines the narrative traditions and patterns of reception established by mainstream cinema as serving the heteropatriarchal ideology, thereby restricting the immense narrative possibilities of the fluid sexualities. However, alternate sexualities have found visibility in mainstream Malayalam Cinema lately, *Rithu* (Dir. Shyamaprasad, 2009), *Ardhanari* (Dir. Santhosh Sauparnika, 2012), *Mumbai Police* (Dir. Rosshan Andrews, 2013), *English* (Dir. Shyamaprasad, 2013), *NjanMarykutty* (Dir. Ranjith Shankar, 2018), and *Moothon* (Dir. Geethu Mohandas, 2019) being a few examples.

However, the first Malayalam film that explicitly discussed lesbianism as its thematic focus was *Sancharram* (2004), a feature film directed by a Chicago-based, South Asian filmmaker, Ligi J. Pullapally. The film narrates the story of two female teenagers Delilah - a Catholic- and Kiran -a Nair- who fall in love with each other. They are "discovered" by the heteropatriarchal society, which tries to align them into heteronormative women through the imposition of heterosexual marriage. As a work of art that is conveyed through the most popular culture industry in Keralam, *Sancharram* made headlines both in the affirmative as well as the negative vein. Though it was screened at several international film festivals across the globe and won many accolades, in Keralam where the story is set, the film received much criticism. This research article tries to read the contextual and the intertextual concerns that intersect in *Sancharram*, making it a lesbian text of resistance.

The Sexual Debates of the Nineties Keralam: A Precursor to *Sancharram* (2004)

The cultural context into which *Sancharram* was produced serves as a background to the text. The nineties was a happening decade in the socio-political sphere of India, particularly with regard to its gender and sexuality debates. Most of India's metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, and Calcutta witnessed a series of same-sex "coming-out" which considerably strengthened the alternate sexualities with regard to their marked presence in the public sphere. One of its manifestations in the popular culture was Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* (1996), which represented the lesbian relationship of two women. The film portrayed two women, rejected by their husbands (who are biological brothers), finding solace in each other's bodies and desires.

Though *Fire* was momentous in the cultural history of queer politics in India, and was critically acclaimed outside India, it received much criticism across the country, especially from right-wing Hindu activists (Dasgupta 667). The film was labelled as a corruption to the cultural aesthetics of patriarchal India's values and traditions. *Fire* may be considered as a pan-Indian film, thematically representing an upper-caste Hindu family settled in a North-Indian urban landscape, and metaphorically named as Radha and Sitha, crucial names in Hindu mythology (both abandoned by their lovers). Interestingly, the first screening of *Fire* happened in Thiruvananthapuram, as part of the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), where it received mixed responses. Later,

when it was released commercially, the film was surprisingly a box-office success in Keralam, while it provoked temporary banning in major metropolitan cities in India.

The political feminist movement that flourished rather late in Keralam -during the nineties- also brought forth discussions on alternate sexualities in its wake.The nineties witnessed a series of suicide pacts by same-sex couples, mostly women who tried to survive their hostile societies that opposed homosexuality.

> This suicide series deserves to be read as a stint of mass "coming out" in Kerala, even though it involved the unfortunate loss of many valuable young lives. By deleting their existence, these young men and women were forcefully registering their presence in a hostile society. It was a unique way of gaining social visibility. Joint suicides involved a powerful statement of protest, as well as the public announcement of new identities. New desires were being inscribed into the social imaginary; new history was being written. (Muraleedharan 73)

In addition to the suicide pacts that garnered significant media attention, local sexual-minority associations were founded in Keralam, *Men India Movement* (an association of gay men, 1996) in Kochi and *Sahayathrika* (an association of non-normative women, 2001) being examples.

Mainstream Malayalam Cinema's response to the feminist and queer activism of the nineties was that of antagonism. This was illustrated through the fashioning of macho-male, upper-class/caste feudal lords, often wronged by society, who intervened in a series of crises and single-handedly set things right. The female lead remained a mere prop in the hands of the male protagonist; educated, bold, and beautiful, the female lead was no more of a pawn that helped the story progress while themselves remaining flat characters that never evolved or possessed agency. Women were relegated to "the eternal mother" (Rajendran 62) or the item dancer, while Malayalam Cinema gave way to Malayalam film industry, with the emergence of male superstars, fans associations, and media as its parasitic partner. "Starting from the 1990s, Malayalam cinema's over-investment with stardom, starting with Mohanlal and Mammootty, and moving on to lesser actors such as Dileep, provides symbolic goods strong enough to defeat earlier socialist paradigms, create and endorse new age caste and gender romanticisations, and reinforce social hegemonies" (Pillai 53).

It is in the context of the aforementioned feminist activism, queer suicide pacts, the release and reception of *Fire*, and the mainstream Malayalam Cinema's response through the valourisation of the masculine superstars and simultaneous marginalisation of alternate genders that Ligi J. Pullapally produces *Sancharram* (2004), a lesbian film, the first of its kind to be produced in Malayalam. Making an analysis of the "regionalism"

(located between the "global" and the "local") in *Sancharram*, Gayathri Gopinath contrasts the film from Meera Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) and Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996), suggesting that "*Sancharram* dislodges the universalizing tendency within Indian nationalist discourse that presumes the representative status of urban, Hindi-speaking North India" (345). Pullapally has herself admitted that through her film, she intended to bring the national and international media attention to the double suicides of lesbian women in Keralam during the nineties (qtd. in Gopinath 345).

The *Journey* of Self-Actualisation: Feminist Politics of *Sancharram*

Sancharram did not release in the theatres in Keralam, despite the wide acclaim that it received nationally and internationally. The reasons for its rejection (despite the commercial success of similar-themed *Fire*) may be traced to the intersecting structural factors that shape the socio-political milieu of Kerala, where the story is set. First proposed by the black feminist-activist Kimberle Crenshaw, intersectionality, as an analytical framework, studies the formation of an individual's subjectivity shaped by various vectors like gender, caste, sexuality, national identity, ethnicity, etc. "Institutional power arrangements, rooted as they are in relations of domination or subordination, confound and constrict the life possibilities of those who already live at the intersection of certain identity categories, even as they elevate the possibilities of those living at more eligible (and privileged) points of intersection" (Cooper 392).

The subjectivities of Kiran and Delilah, the protagonists of *Sancharram*, are intersected by various factors that dictate the societal frameworks of functioningwithin which they are situated. Primarily subordinated because of their gender in the patrifocal families that they belong to, both of them are further segregated by their religion and caste: Kiran is a Hindu (Nair) and Delilah is a Christian (Catholic); nevertheless, they hail from upper middle-class families. Another factor that mark their subjectivities is their sexuality, which takes the centre-stage in the plotline of the film. It is the mire of traditional customs associated with their caste, religion, and gender that overshadow Kiran's and Delilah's desire for each other, separating them in the course of the diegesis.

Hegemonic patriarchy looms over the narrative of *Sancharram* as the overarching ideology that dictates life in the village. Though Delilah is brought up by her mother and grandmother, whom she acknowledges as agentic and efficient, her mother constantly identifies her status as a wife (though her husband is long dead), rather than as an independent woman. Kiran returns to Kerala to live in her mother's ancestral house, making her mother owner of property, and reminiscent of her matriarchal past. Moreover, Kiran's father is only a distant presence in the film, though he is represented as a supportive character. Thus, though Kiran and Delilah live in a world of women, Delilah is constantly made aware of her patriarchal morality, while Kiran is inspired by her matriarchal roots.

Anyhow, it is her father's advice that leads Kiran into a writerly personality, as he considers "playing with balls is only for boys." Kiran does not desire to get made up or to wear ornaments. It is only because of Delilah's insistence that she pierces her ear. Her clothes are plain, and mostly gender-neutral. Unlike her, Delilah is flirtatious and embellishes herself in ornaments and colourful clothes. Kiran's mother urges her to wear ornaments, but she refrains from choosing gold. Both Kiran and Delilah are trained to perform their gendered identities that reflect heteronormative femininity; Kiran resists it in her own ways, while Delilah falls prey to it.

The old glass bangle that Kiran picks up from the gold ornaments that her mother offers her is a metaphorical reference to Kiran's fascination for her agentic great-grandmother, and her absence of interest in jewelry. Later, in a moment of physical intimacy, she gifts the bangle to Delilah. This indirectly depicts her choice of Delilah as her life partner. However, the bangle is broken while Delilah is violently beaten up by her mother after having discovered their affair. It makes a wound on her hand, signifying the end of their affair. The wound also indicates the rupture of the long tradition of heterosexuality that is broken by the "unnatural" (as described by Kiran's mother) affair of homosexuality between Kiran and Delilah.

Unlike her great-grandmother who lived life on her own terms, Kiran's independent agency is curbed by the hegemonic patriarchy that also replaces the matriarchal familial framework. (This is not overlooking the real pathetic plight of women in matrilineal kinship system despite its celebration of female legal authority.)[1] In a series of legal interventions made from 1887 by the British government in the colonial India and Western-educated native reformers in post-independent India, matriliny was abolished in Kerala by 1976, when the Kerala government promulgated the Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act (Jeffrey 651). Kiran's family passes through a phase of transition wherein matriliny slowly gives way to patriliny. Though Kiran nostalgically falls back to her feminist past, she is represented as a daydreaming poet unaware of the patrifocal nuclear families that have replaced matriliny.

Judith Butler writes in her book *Gender Trouble* that the subject is in fact the *effect*, rather than the *cause* of the system. Each subject is expected to perform in certain ways; for instance, in the "melancholic heterosexual matrix" (69) in which we are situated, heterosexual men and women are required to perform heteronormative masculinity and femininity respectively. She writes, "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of

[1]Matrilineal kinship system refers to the vesting of lineage and inheritance through the female members of a family. This was followed predominantly by Nairs, an upper-caste in Hindu varna/jati system, and imitated by Muslims and some Christians until the latter half of nineteenth century. The matrilineal system had its downfalls as well, as men had no legal responsibility to help manage the household, severe mobility restrictions that surrounded women, and many unmarried women who had to live inside a house for the whole of their lives, without access to education or the outer world. Sociological research into the aspect has significantly contributed to understanding the nature of matrilineal kinship practices in Kerala: Arunima 1995, Jeffrey 2005, Kodoth and Eapen 2005, etc.

repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Any deviation from heterosexual masculinity or femininity causes an act of aberration. Thus, homosexuality becomes an aberration in a heterosexual society.

By refusing to perform the role of the heteronormative women and venturing to explore their lesbian love for each other, Kiran and Delilah overstep the boundaries established by the society. Kiran uses the guise of Rajan -their classmate who is already in love with Delilah- to express her fascination to her through love letters; however, Delilah realizes the real author. To Kiran's delight and the others' (including spectators') horrifying astonishment, Delilah reciprocates her love.The scene of sexual intimacy between them on the steps of a pond is rich in implicit actions like a hand on the waist, fingers caressing the cheeks, and a foot hitting the water, all suggestive of a sexual encounter, but which eludes explicit depiction of sex. Though Pullapally has revealed the demands placed on her by the censor board regarding showcasing lesbian sex on the big screen, Gayathri Gopinath reads this as "gestures to the alternative desires and subjectivities that exist beneath the threshold of the visible. These desires evade the scrutinizing gaze of the state, and cannot be contained within developmentalist nationalist, gay or feminist narratives" (350).

Rajan, who reports Kiran's and Delilah's affair to Delilah's mother, is a minor, but a significant character in *Sancharram*. Rajan represents the rejected heterosexual male, perplexed at this new kind of love that not only excludes him, but also poses as a threat to his dominant desire. Delilah flirts with him, but mocks his masculinity, and chooses Kiran over him. It is the (sexual) anxieties of his hurt ego that find vent by annihilating the threat to his masculinity; this is realized through his reportage. Though his initial intention is satisfied, later he gets upset when Delilah's mother arranges for her marriage with a doctor with better prospects. While Rajan cries out loud on having lost Delilah, Kiran remains numb, exhibiting more "masculine" self-restraint.

Marriage as a patriarchal establishment that does not take female agency into consideration finds expression in the film. It is another institution where elements that structure an individual's subjectivity, like caste, religion, class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity fuse. The late nineties was also a time period that witnessed an increasing number of mixed marriages, owing to the formation of new cities accompanying the globalization and liberalization of Indian economy. Though the village in concern remains remote -even pristine, often invoking the "God's own country" image celebrated from the diasporic perspective- from the modernization that otherwise transformed the face of Keralam, love affairs and the ensuing troubles are not alien to it. In a side-plot, the film portrays the teenage love and ensuing elopement of a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy, both classmates of Kiran and Delilah. The news of their elopement spreads, and they are brought back by their families. This is intended as a lesson for all the couples who

overstep the moral codes of conduct prescribed by patriarchy and religion.

Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject defines it as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). The abject is the Other; it does not align with the Self or with anything associated with the Self.In a society defined in heterosexual terms, homosexuality is the Other, the abject. Kiran and Delilah transgress their roles as heteronormative women by engaging in a lesbian relationship, thereby subjecting themselves to abjection. Kristeva theorizes that the abject is perverse, because it does not respect prohibitions, rules, or laws; instead it denies them, challenges them, and makes use of them (15). Thus abjected, Kiran and Delilah pose a threat to the established patriarchal systems of sustenance, and the system awakens to deal with them.

Kristeva writes that "an unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside" (16). She goes on to identify Religion, Morality, and Law as the tools used by the society to escape abjection. For Delilah, her patriarchally oriented family and the church become the "redeemers." Her mother tries to punish her by locking her up in a room, beats her up, and advises her. Delilah's mother is symbolic of the patriarchal subject who has internalized the patriarchal ideology, and cannot recognize the inherent subjugation that it brings forth to her identity as a woman. The priest admonishes her to refrain from sin, homosexual affinity being the sin in concern. The verger suggests the antidote to the "affliction" that Delilah suffers: a heterosexual marriage.

Delilah is thus recuperated back to heterosexual normalcy, even though the film does not conclusively close in on her ultimate decision. Just before she succumbs to the "divine promise" of marriage, she is seen running out of the church screaming Kiran's name. However, her family and the church authorities follow her, probably indicating her *journey*'s (emphasis mine) dead end as the wife of a heterosexual man. Quite surprisingly, Delilah's grandmother -who dotes on her and who is visibly shaken by the discovery of her relationship with Kiran- assumes a liberated stance by asking Delilah's mother to do what makes Delilah happy, instead of dragging her into a forced marriage only to convince the society. However, she does not voice her opinion in public, and does her duties during the wedding ceremony as the eldest member of the family. She may be considered as a representative of the generations of women who had been conscious of the suffering they bore under the overbearing clutches of patriarchy, unlike Delilah's mother who internalizes hegemonic patriarchy.

Kiran's journey takes a different turn after she is "found out." To understand the nature of this journey, it needs to be placed in the context of feminist agency. In her compilation of the theories on agency and its position in feminism, Lois McNay writes, "Agency denotes a cluster of actions considered to be categorically distinct from the types of unreflective, habitual, and instinctualbehaviours which are held to be quasi-automatic

responses to external structural forces" (40). While Delilah falls prey to these external forces, Kiran emerges agentic. She exhibits commendable courage by openly admitting to her parents about her sexuality, going to school without being scared of her friends' reactions and remaining rather numb to them, and devising plans to elope with Delilah to a faraway place where they wouldn't be subject to humiliation and unwanted scrutiny.

Kiran's determination is nevertheless shattered when she is rejected outright by a now-repentant and confused Delilah. Though she is mentally broken and is pushed to the verge of a suicide, she does not succumb to the emotional turmoil within her. Instead she emerges optimistic, resisting her family's and society's opposition. She is portrayed as smiling at the blue skies; a butterfly that emerges out of a cocoon flies around her, metaphorically representing herself, implying her independence from a conservative society that opposes her sexual orientation. In the narrative resolution, she emerges as a "prototypical lesbian feminist subject" (Gopinath 349). While Delilah returns to the dark interiors of a house, Kiran walks out of it, towards sunlit paths and widened roads. However, her path is not a bed of roses either; resisting a whole system to establish a tabooed version of human sexuality is not an easy task to achieve.

Conclusion

Unlike films like *RanduPenkuttikal* (1978), *EnnuSwanthamJanakikutty* (1998), and *Pranayavarnangal*(1998), *Sancharram* does not end in suggesting a heterosexual marriage as a "remedy" for lesbian bonds. Neither does it advocate death and oblivion as in *Shalini Ende Koottukari* (1980) or *DeshadanakkiliKarayarilla* (1986). It is also unlike *Fire* (1996), which depicted lesbianism as an alternative choice opted by two heterosexual women neglected by their husbands. JanakySreedharan writes that "search for alternative family spaces, for gay/lesbian bondings, animates this film as it projects lesbianism as a natural sexual choice born of free will rather than out of hatred or bitterness towards men or any other social constraint or emotional deprivation" (91).

Despite being situated in a regional hamlet and produced in a regional film industry as Malayalam, *Sancharram*raises a transnational concern through its resisting narrative that overcomes traditional barriers. The single journey of a lesbian couple diverges into two different journeys, one into the heterosexual wifehood, and the other into a global feminist subjecthood.*Sancharram* is unique in the history of Malayalam Cinema for its honest portrayal of a same-sex relationship, which no other film hadhitherto ventured to engage in explicit terms. Nonetheless, fact remains that the film was rejected in theatres in Keralam, despite the critical acclaim that it garnered at several International Film Festivals across the globe. This points towards the hostility still faced by alternate sexualities in the socio-political sphere of Keralam, of which cinema becomes a reflection.

However, *Sancharram* does have its pitfalls with regard to its diegetic representation of a same-sex relationship. The film seems to imitate the "master-slave"dialectic that

forms the basis of a heterosexual relationship, where man is the norm and woman is the aberration, the objectified Other, even while it flaunts a homosexual -lesbian- affair. Kiran's character is sketched in ways and manners reflecting a man's persona. The name Kiran itself is a unisex name, that often invokes a male bearer. Tall and plain, Kiran is also simple-dressed, does not like to embellish her body, and exhibits courage, unlike Delilah, flirtatious and feminine. It is Kiran who proposes to Delilah, and adorns Delilah in her ancestral bangle, in the scene imitating a man proposing a woman as showcased in mainstream cinema.

The sequences that portray Kiran and Delilah post their "discovery" is reminiscent of Partha Chatterjee's classification of social space into *ghar* and *bāhir* in the post-colonial framework:

> Applying the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into *ghar* and *bāhir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical conditions reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence should remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation. And so one gets an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bāhir*. (624)

Kiran inhabits the *bāhir* (outside), as she makes phone calls to her uncle from a telephone booth, pawns her jewelry and makes money, purchases clothes from the town, and courageously ventures into Delilah's room on her pre-wedding night to call her to lead a life with her. But Delilah remains within her room, sometimes locked by her mother, and at other times due to despair, thereby playing to the normative-feminine, whose ideal place of existence is the interior. Later, when Delilah rejects Kiran and she pulls herself up from an impending suicide, Kiran completes her masculine shadow by cutting off her hair that was always a burden to her. Kiran's act of cutting off her hair is indicative of liberating her Self from the clutches of patriarchal strongholds that her family had built around her.But the act also aligns her all-the-more with masculinity, and represents her dominion over Delilah, her meek and feminine counterpart.

Sancharram will be etched in the history of Malayalam Cinema for its courageous depiction of homosexuality as its central theme. The film does mainstream the otherwise marginalized and tabooed lesbianism. It is also a resistance against the established norm of heterosexuality that drives forth mainstream cinemas. However, its representative politics, on closer scrutiny, reveals its implicit alignment of an unequal partnership even in a homosexual relationship, wherein Kiran takes precedence over Delilah, making it a

heterosexual relationship of inequality in disguise. More films from regional cinemas that explore alternate sexualities that cross-cut class and caste questions would enable better perspectives into the lives of the marginalized communities and individuals.

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Fathimath Sahla

Configuring the Queer Arab Muslim Self: A Queer Critique of Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*

Abstract

The construction of the identity is focused on a series of conflict involving cultural constructs like gender, sexuality, religion and region. The queer subject is relatively obscured in recent Arabic literature. The limited treatment of the same-sex relationships in modern Arab literature in contrast to classical literature is somewhat puzzling. Recently, modern Arab literature has started to break the wall of silence and literary narratives increasingly include homosexuality. Saleem Haddad's Guapa is a daring attempt in this direction. Haddad's debut novel Guapa was released in March 2016 by Other Press. The wrenching debut novelGuapatells the story of Rasa, a young man living in an unnamed Arab city. The entire story, set in the course of a day, tells Rasa's conflicts in coping up with his identity as a gay and as an Arab Muslim. As someone who is both queer and Arab, Haddad never sees himself represented accurately in dominant narratives, both English and Arabic. Haddad is of the opinion that Arabs are represented terribly in Western narratives, and queer people are similarly demonized in Arab narratives. The novel problematizes the queer identity in the context of religion and region: how complex and intricate a queer Arab Muslim identity is. The paper deals with the multifaceted queer Arab Muslim identity; the sense of alienation and Otherness experienced by the queer Muslims both in the theocratic and western countries.

Keywords: Arab Muslims, Queer, identity, otherness.

This paper isan analysis of Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*from the queer perspective. It portrays the outcry of the queer who are suffering because of their deviant identity. Though the queer identity is innate in their nature, they are marginalized for their gender identity and sexual practices. The experiences of the queer are universal; in such a regard, *Guapa* is a kaleidoscopic view on the sense of alienation and Otherness experienced by the queer Muslims both in the theocratic and western countries. A queer in the Middle East is alienated from the main stream society, the Muslim and queer communities, their families and often from themselves.*Guapa*shows the alienation and Otherness experience by the Muslim self both in the matter of queer identity and Muslim identity in theocratic countries.

Guapa (2016) is a gay fiction which narrates the storyof an Arab gay man in an unnamed Arab country. The novel takes place over the period of twenty-four hours, with

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flashbacks to previous occasions thrown in for good measure. Rasa, a 27-year-old man who works for a translation startup company with his friend Basma, is the main character. It unravels the sense of alienation and Othernessexperienced by Rasa and the other queer characters in the novel as they try to carveout a life for himself in the midst of political and social upheaval.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Haddad explains that the ambiguous setting was chosen to prevent 'exposing any particular LGBT group to scrutiny' (Haddad, I Put everything). However, it is intended to be a nameless Middle Eastern city. He says in one interview, "the burden of having to represent hundreds of thousands of queer Arabs - with their own unique experiences and challenges - initially paralyzed my writing. Ultimately, I could only write once I absolved myself of the need to represent anyone" (Haddad, I Put everything).

The novel opens with a shocking revelation by Rasa that his grandmother Teta has caught him and his boyfriend Taymour in his bed. They wake up from sleep by hearing Teta's hover over what she has just seen in front of her eyes, by hovering "Yalla Rasa, yallahabibi!." This behaviour may shock the traditional sensibility, but in the modern context, the situation of Rasa's needs is to be explored liberally and sympathetically. In this novel, Haddad has tried to force the readers to give their thinking a new approach.

> The morning begins with shame. This is not new, but as memories of last night begins to sink in, the feeling takes on a terrifying resonance. I grimace, squirm, dig my fingers in my palms until the pain in my hands reflects how I feel. But there is no controlling what Teta saw. (3)

Teta, a pure patriarchal breed, may not be able to think out of the shell since she has been brought up within the conventional thinking. In all her life she might not have seen or heard about homosexuality. She cannot accept the fact that the child whom she brought up is a gay. As reaction to it she yells at Rasa: "I thought you were doing drugs. It didn't even cross my mind" (4). This remarks of her shows the shocking outlook of the society where harmful acts like using drugs is acceptable while homosexual act is considered highly venomous and harmful for both the society and the person.

As reviewers have pointed out, the novel is braide with shame. In her review of Guapa, Sian Cain concludes that '[b]eneath all the blood and the smoke in Saleem Haddad's debut novel Guapa lies an overwhelming shame. But it's not quite shame as we understand it in English' (np) and Deborah Baker notes that '[i]n Rasa, Haddad has created a character who is intent on discovering the meaning of shame in a shameless world' (27).

Rasa feels so much tortured and unhappy at his being a gay that his agony bursts out: "I'm an animal, dirty and disgusting, madly hunting after my desires with no care for what is right and wrong" (5). Most of the queer people can't even overcome their anxiety,

loneliness, fears and trauma. Rasa cannot resist his sexual orientation as it is deeply rooted in his body and psyche, but he is traumatized as an impart of it. He believes that his desires are wrong which would only result in complete distress, both for him and his family. Haddad's novel is an outcry of these people who are suffering for something which is innate to their nature and therefore to resist or change their sexual orientation is not in their control.

Guapa elevates Haddad as a literary voice capable of narrating untold stories of the modern gay experience from one of the most complicated parts of the world. This novel travers through the themes of traditional restrictions, gender rigidity and the conflicts between heterosexuality and homosexuality in the context of the strictures of family, marriage and patriarchy. If sexuality is to be categorised by acts, there exists certain socially accepted institutions that often harbour the hidden sexual behaviour. Marriage is seen as one such institution which acts as a safe transitory alternative that helps to generate a facade of heterosexuality.

For every homosexual people heterosexual marriage is a nightmare where their body and mind are shared with someone whom they cannot even find any attachment. This compulsory heterosexuality, through the institution of marriage throws the homosexuals to a traumatic life. In the novel, Rasa feels distressed by thinking about his future. Even a single thought of marriage and child-rearing is a nightmare for him.

> Nightmares of marriage traumatized me. While I felt affection towards many women, I could never imagine myself with one. Whatever attraction I felt was due to the social acceptance that courting a woman might bring. I resigned myself to the inevitable prison sentence of marriage. I could marry and have children and live every night in fear, curled up in the far corner of the bed, anxious at the thought of touching my wife. I would be unhappy and alone, and any future of children would be nothing more than a gift to Teta for her years of hard work. (105)

Until the time he met Rasa, Taymourwas going through a period of dilemmas regarding his identity. Even though he has been aware of his sexual preference he is forced to hide it for the sake of himself and his family. He has been sacrificing his pleasure for the people around him. Taymour opts to such a safe alternative by marrying Leila which is likely to be a dead marriage. Taymour by opting the marriage with Leila has adopted a form of camouflage as way to escape from the possibilities of social censure and rejection in this repressed, conformist, colonial society.

Taymour is conscious of the fact that if their true identities are revealed, they would be reduced to pathetic creatures with their guilt-ridden, tortured psyche.His sacrifice of Rasa over Leila is metaphorical to his sacrifice of homosexuality to heterosexuality. The

marriage he chooses is just a tool to keep himself secure from the society's preying eyes. On one occasion Taymour exclaims to Rasa that their love life would never be sanctioned by society and it will always be in secrecy. When Rasa asks Taymour when they are going to lead a normal life, he replies, "In a less cruel world, perhaps" (55).

One's central experience of identity is related to oppression; one is forced to conform to a socially constructed identity category which one does not actually identify with. It upsets Rasa for not being able to divulge Taymour's name to the society. When Rasa's colleague Nawaf is discussing about his love life and its complexities, he suddenly asks "how is your girl?" Here Nawaf assumes that the lover of Rasa is from an opposite sex. He couldn't even imagine that there are alternatives. It upsets Rasa immensely, but in order to survive in a conservative society where heterosexuality is the only choice, he hides the truth by naming Taymour either as Tara or Tamara. But Rasa worries that even all these answers eventually lead to the next questions until the entire secret reveals itself:

> It pains me not be able to tell him Taymour's name. I have considered feminizing it, perhaps as "Tara" or "Tamara," but, like picking at a knotted piece of string, introducing a first name would inevitably lead to questions about a last name. (35)

Rasa lives under perpetual fear that the truth about his sexual identity will be exposed someday.

In the "imprinting theory" of John Money, sexual orientation is irreversibly set once and for all in early childhood, though it may take an individual many years to recognize and accept his or her sexual orientation (qtd in Francoeur 511). In the novel, Rasa and Maj have realized their deviant gender identity in the childhood itself. In the case of Rasa, it occurred when he was fourteen years old. On returning home from his tuition, he hired a taxi, the man behind the wheels sexually used Rasa. Even though Rasa was not conscious of his sexual preference at that time he felt a strong affection towards the man. Rasa says: "The first time I operated purely on instinct" (26).

The plights of transgenders are of no difference. Gender stereotypes imposed by society and family explicitly demarcate the separate worlds of transgenders who are perceived as the Other of society. The plight of transgenders in Arab world is more deplorable. Maj in Haddad's novel is a drag queen. Maj's sexuality is negotiated solely within the confines of gender- male and female. His exclusion from both boys and girls suggests that Maj himself inhabits some third space in between these two, but that third space is a ghetto place where oppressions, inferiority, isolation, and agony prevail. Like Maj, every transgender, drag queens, drag kings and others suffer great psychological stress and try to live in a body that is alien to their gender-identity.

Homosexuality is an abominable crime in many of the Middle Eastern countries and is punishable by death in most of these countries like Sudan, Soudi, Yeman, Qatar, Kuwait

and Iran. Many residents of the Middle East have been reported to claim homosexuality as a Western problem.

The present history of the Arab culture demarcates homosexuality, but the past history of the Arab culture shows that homosexuality has been there in the history of Middle east. Although the Quran and the Sharia hold homosexuality as a crime and advocate severe punishment for the offenders, homosexually inclined men are visible in every rung of society. There appeared a large body of mystical poetry in Arabic and Persian, dealing with same sex love between men. Khaled El-Rouayheb, in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500 -1800,* argues that Arab-Islamic culture of pre modernity was familiar with the concept of homosexuality and the modern binary of homosexuality/ heterosexuality is an import. He argues that writings from the earlier period do not evince the same attitude toward all aspects of what might be called homosexuality today.

Homosexuality is haram in Islam, which indicates it is a forbidden thing from which one should keep away.Islam is used as justification for the arrest, detention, and murder of homosexuals throughout the Middle East. Homosexuals can be roughly translated in Arabic as "the people of Lot" which is the basis of many anti-homosexual interpretations of the Quran and later it has become a cultural norm to interpret Qur'an as being anti-homosexual. The use of Islam as a basis for cultural norms has led to many arrests on charges such as contempt of religion for those perceived to be different. Muslim scholars through the centuries have misinterpreted the "rain of stones" on the town as meaning that homosexuals should be stoned, since no other reason is given for the people's destruction:

> We also (sent) Lot: He said to his people: "Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practise your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds."And his people gave noanswer but this: they said, "Drive them out of your city: these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!" (Surat al-Araf: 80-82)

After listening to this Surat form Qur'an an identity crisis occurs in Rasa. He happens to learn that a person who commits such indecency, the haram act, is a "Louti." The fear of hell frightens Rasa by causing the psychological stress. He says: "Louti. I went back home, turned on the faucets, and said the word in front of the bathroom mirror "Ana louti." Sodomite … All it did was remind me I was going to hell" (102). This kinds of moral classes based on religion in the Arab world is one of the main reasons why the people are entrenched with the feelings that homosexuality is a heinous crime and even the looking at a homosexual brings wrath to the person. To make matters worse, this Surat from Qur'an which receives various interpretations from various scholars according to their will, is a protected truth.

Our society is not open to the matter of sexuality.Therefore, any deviation from the

mainstream heterosexuality from their part leads them to think that they are doomed beings, and distress and other psychological problems follow them like a shadow. Judith Butler, in her preface to ***Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,*** refers to the terror that prevails in the life of homosexuals:

> The terror and anxiety that some people suffer in becoming gay, the fear of losing one's place in gender or of not knowing who one will be of one sleeps with someone of the ostensibly same gender. (Preface xi)

The gender of one's sexual partner reveals one's sexual identity and the attendant anxiety.

The institution in the patriarchal and theocratic society are not receptive to alternative forms of sexuality. Rasa's lover Taymour keeps a balancing act throughout the novel. He tries to keep both the social norms and his homosexual identity within his fine balance. His marriage to Leila on one hand and his continuation of the secret relation with Rasa on the other constitutes a balancing act to sustain in society: “He was right when he told me once that he had one foot in and one foot out. It was a balancing act, and he navigated it effortlessly. But I was his one foot out, wasn't I” (117). Taymour is not ready to offend the sensibility and morality of society.

A number of LGBT Muslims in the Unites States long to find a way back home to the tenets of Islam, but they are ostracized; they find themselves indefinitely victimized by stigma, discrimination, self-hate and religious institutions. Queer Muslims struggle to balance several identities, especially the identity as both a queer and a Muslim. Since the signature surreptitiousness of gay life has not disappeared from theocratic countries, queer Muslims long to fly away from their countries. Most of them like to reside in the West with a new hope of throwing away the mask they have been wearing in their country and embracing their real identity without any restrictions. But the reality is bitter in the case of a queer Muslim.

Diasporic Arabic writing, according to ZahiaSmailSalhi, is always hybrid. Novels like Guapa, according to Salhi, are part of a "new Arabic literature" that bears the stamps of both the "country of origin" and the "host" country, but belongs to neither (3). Rasa could envisage where and how he can integrate into his motherland in the hybrid area of 'betweenness.' He searches for tangible and symbolic venues and groups in which to be himself as he comes to grips with his sexual impulses and his queer identity. Guapa, on the other hand, offers an alternative transnational space to the binaries of 'home' and 'host' identities that academics like Salhi use to analyse diasporic identity.

The novelshows the dilemma's faced by the queer Muslims in the Western

world, an inherently complicated and rather intriguing identity group. The novel also depicts the sense of alienation and Otherness experienced by Queer Muslims in the West,

who are depicted as alienated from the main stream society, the Muslim and queer communities, their families and often from themselves. Even in the Western countries, the identity of Muslim creates trouble for every queer. In their own Arab nations and in the Western nations their identity as a Muslim creates trouble for the queer. If it is the Muslim identity based on Islam that puts Rasa in dilemma in his own country, in America it is the very term Muslim that is causing issues for him. In America he is trying hard to hide both his identities as a queer and as an Arab Muslim. Rasa says: "I thought about my life, digging through my roots to understand the way my branches grew. My Arabness, this new identity foisted upon me" (162). A queer may be acceptable in the West, but not an Arab Muslim queer.

Although Saleem Haddad has been outspoken in his criticism of the treatment of queer people in the Middle East, particularly those who lack the economic and political power to defend themselves, he has also been careful to distance himself from narratives that can be co-opted into orientalist, homogenising Islamophobia. Condemning both 'the authoritarian regimes who trample on queer bodies for moral legitimacy' and 'the western human rights groups who enforce their own narratives to "save" these bodies' (Haddad Myth np), Haddad explains that '[a]s a queer person in the Arab world, everywhere you turn someone wants to use your body, your story, or your life for their own purposes' (Haddad Myth np). Haddad rejects narratives that victimise queer Arabs. Instead, through a process of intricate linguistic doubling and geographical elusiveness Guapa creates a space in which to explore queer Arab communities united by ties that transcend national loyalties and conventional

In the novel Rasawanted to leave his country for America hoping that it would be a different world, of freedom and acceptance. He dreams of a world where no one asks him what he is doing and would be free to do what he likes. He dreams that he would able to become the person he is meant to be. He thinks that in America it would not be matter who he is and where he is from. But soon he is proved wrong. Rasa goes to America with myriad hopes regarding his gayness.

Amin Maalouf, a French author, speaks of identity as malleable and subject to the whims of society. According to him, an individual identifies most strongly with the aspects of his identity that is under attack. For Rasa, it is not only his gayness, but also his Arabness that is the abject. There is conflict going on between Islamophobia and homophobia in the life of every queer Muslim who lives in the West. Theologically based homophobia has given rise to negative social representations of homosexuality in Muslim communities around the world.

In the novel, Haddad also portrays how Islamophobia goes hand in hand along with homophobia. Haddad shows how the Orlando massacre shooting in America by a Muslim creates trouble in the life of all the Muslims living in America. This incident happens soon after Rasa reaches America with new hopes. All of a sudden Rasa realizes that all his

hopes are shattered because of his identity as a Muslim. He senses doubt and fear in the eyes of every person around him. After the massacre by the Muslim man, he sees only detest in the eyes of Westerners. He mourns: "Stepping into the cafeteria for breakfast, the eyes of the other students followed me as I piled food on my plate. Something was different" (160). The tragedy has worsened the attitude of the American to Muslims. He also adds: "For so long I had felt different from everyone else. Now I was lumped together with anonymous mass. An Arab. A Muslim. I was one of "them"" (160). His acceptance in the gay community was hindered by his identity as an Arab Muslim.

From living in America he realizes the fact that everywhere, Whether it is in theocratic countries like his own or in Western countries, a queer will be a queer whose identity lies with torture, shame, dilemmas, pain and conflict. Finally, Rasa realizes that a queer will always be an alienated soul as the patriarchal mind-set always rules the society:

> Being gay, that wasn't for me. My homosexuality would leave me alienated wherever I went. In America the gay world touched my life at the margins, through references and images and occasional conversations with men and women who celebrated their homosexuality with pride. As far as I could see there was nothing to be proud about. There was only pain, humiliation, and shame. If I were to join this, I would have to act proud and hide my feelings of rejection and loneliness. (244)

Patriarchy and religion always collude to keep the queer away from the mainstream society.

In the end of the novel Rasa embraces his real identity, that of a queer. He has no choice left with. Rasa does not want to blame Islam or his Arabness for the problem he faces in his life as a queer. In America, he realizes that it is not his queer identity which makes his life vulnerable. There it is his identity as an Arab Muslim which haunts him. In his country it is not his Muslim identity which creates him trouble there; it is his identity as a queer Muslim which demarcates his life. But Rasa realizes that both his Arabness and Muslim identity do not have any specific role in his rejection from society. It is the patriarchal and racist mentality of the society that make him believe that his identity as a Muslim is the main trouble. From his life in America he realizes that the society is always the same whether it is in Middle East or West:

> … if I were to show these men and women that I was terrified for my future, I would be regarded as misguided or a victim of of Islam and Arabness. But if there was one thing I was certain of it was that there was nothing misguided about my feelings, and I did not feel that Islam or my Arabness was to blame. (244)

Through the novel *Guapa*, Saleem Haddad explores the complex question of

competing, closeted and performed sexual identities of queer Muslims. He shows how the notion that queer sexuality poses a civilizational threat to Islam beget the queer Muslim's life more vulnerable. There is an identity conflict in the life of the queer Muslim: the religious identity is in a tension with the sexual identity. Consequently, the queer Muslims belong to nowhere: neither to the queer world nor to the Arab world. A hidden battle being waged in every Queer's life: the war on denial of human rights due to choices of sexuality. Only with the cessation of these hidden battles and advocacy of human rights for all people will human beings truly achieve peace. A person's identity must be recognized irrespective of his race, class, gender or sexuality. Only in such situations will a queer be accepted and acknowledged as a human being.

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Crossing Boundaries in Search of Hope and Love- Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* - A Traumatic Journey

Abstract

Boundaries of a nation define the dissimilarities of the internal and the alienated external, dissociating others from the convertible self. The apex of love seldom surpasses the boundaries of a land. When people are forced to cross boundaries, seeking asylum in strange lands, possibilities of unacceptance of cultures and loss of native culture is high such migrants become products of hybrid culture. The ideologies of boundaries and borders do not serve the purpose. A longing for the lost land and people is predominant in Migrant literature.

Literature can create new subjectivities and identities. Migration literature focuses on identity crisis, separation, trauma, nationality, culture conflicts, and much more. Migration literature can also be considered to directly address and critique representations of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. It is at times autobiographical in nature. Critical analysis of such literature has been identified as a recent phenomenon that began in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Movements termed as 'migration crisis' gave rise to such literature and criticism.

Writings on refugees can prove the connection to individuals and communities. Writings of this kind by themselves have an impact on readers and it can help to trace displaced communities with concern and care. This paper focuses on the traumatic experiences of the refugees who seek asylum in Canada from Sri Lanka. Published in the year 2018, the debut novel of Sharon Bala, a Canadian writer, fetched the author's international recognition. Inspired by true-life stories, the author has woven the plot intricately from the perspective of the other characters in the novel. Applying the notions of traumatic neurosis elaborated by Sigmond Freud and Joseph Breuer (Studies on Hysteria 1895), that "... it is not so much the traumatic event itself as the memory of the trauma that acts like an agent provocateurin releasing the symptom"(Waugh 499), The Boat Peopleis analysed.Loss of love and land being the central theme, the paper aims to delve deep into the traumatic experiences of the asylum seekers.

Keywords: Boundaries, Love, Loss, Migration, Hybrid, Trauma

Boundaries of a nation define the dissimilarities of the internal and the alienated external, dissociating others from the convertible self. The apex of love seldom surpasses

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the boundaries of a land. When people are forced to cross boundaries, seeking asylum in strange lands, possibilities of unacceptance of cultures and loss of native culture is high such migrants become products of hybrid culture. The ideologies of boundaries and borders do not serve the purpose. A longing for the lost land and people is predominant in Migrant Literature.

Literature can create new subjectivities and identities. Migration Literature focuses on identity crisis, separation, trauma, nationality, culture conflicts, and much more. Migration literature can also be considered to directly address and critique representations of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. It is at times autobiographical in nature. Some of the features of Migration Literature include:

Uprootedness

Extraterritoriality

Geographical limits (borders and boundaries)

Imaginary or adopted identities

Liberation.

The role of literary discourses becomes crucial when it comes to addressing the issues of refugees. Though literature of this kind cannot prevent wars or violation of human rights all around the globe, it can definitely create awareness which can be further translated into action against injustice. The fact that literature never got anyone out of prison or changed the course of a war is true. However, as Judith Butler in *Frames of War(2009)* rightly says, it does "… provide the conditions for breaking out of the quotidian acceptance of war and for a more generalised horror and outrage that will support and impel calls for justice and an end to violence" (9-11). Refugee literature can be viewed as a tributary of the mainstream postcolonial studies as it has a lot to do with injustice, power politics, violence and violation of human rights in the current world. It provides a wide scope for research as it "… constitute seminal experimentations with forms, genres, and languages, indicating especially in an ecological vein, directions for postcolonial futures." (Gallien 721)

Critical analysis of such literature has been identified as a recent phenomenon that began in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Movements termed the 'migration crisis' gave rise to such literature and criticism. Historical perspectives trace such a crisis as a long-term pattern, and it has its own literary representations. A diachronic analysis of such a crisis shows

1. The understanding and impact of migration and
2. The forces that lead to it and how it works in modern society.

Writings on refugees can prove the connection to individuals and communities. Writings of this kind by itself have an impact on readers and can help to trace displaced communities with concern and care.

This paper entitled, **Crossing Boundaries in Search of Hope and Love- Sharon Bala's*The Boat People* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's*By the Sea* - A Traumatic Journey** focuses on the traumatic experiences of the refugees who seek asylum in Canada from Sri Lanka.

Sharon Bala was born on April 3rd 1979 in Dubai. Her undergraduate degree in Psychology and History is from Queen's University and her MA in History is from the University of Toronto. *The Boat People*, her debut novel was published in the year 2018. It fetched the author international recognition. Inspired by true life stories, the author has woven plot intricately from the perspective of the other characters in the novel. Applying the notions of traumatic neurosis elaborated by Sigmond Freud and Joseph Breuer (*Studies on Hysteria 1895*), that "… it is not so much the traumatic event itself as the memory of the trauma that acts like *an agent provocateur* in releasing the symptom" (Waugh 499), *The Boat People* is analysed. Loss of Love and Land being the central theme, the paper aims to delve deep into the traumatic experiences of the asylum seekers. These refugees are traumatized physically and mentally. Trauma theory and its application on a text will provide an interesting study and this paper aims to justify that.

Trauma can be defined as a wound or external bodily injury in general. In the beginning, it only meant physical (piercing and wounding). It was in 1895, that the definition was contradicted and referred to as 'psychical'. Trauma theory takes its roots from the theories of Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer. According to them, "...it is not so much the traumatic event itself as the memory of the trauma that acts like an 'agent provocateur'…." (Waugh 499) Sharon Bala's*The Boat People* is a traumatic journey indeed.

The Boat People is a work of fiction, but many of the circumstances depicted in both Sri Lanka and Canada are based on facts. The book opens with a bomb freighter, with 500 passengers as human cargo, with the smell of skin, raw animal stink- a journey that had been for weeks and months. Traumatized by the mysterious look on every single person's face, Mahindan, the protagonist is also on board with his son Sellian- six-year-old- clinging onto his father all the time from fear of being separated or lost. Adding on to this comes the next blow. Sellian had to part with his father to be taken along with the women hoping for better facilities whereas the men were taken to a prison.

Canada assured safety to Mahindan and all more relieved he was that Sellian was alive, unharmed with him. "Their new life. It was just beginning" (4). He agrees to send him with another lady only to have him safe and secured. The trauma both Mahindan and Sellian go through during the separation evoke the sympathy of the readers. From the day Sellian was born, it was Mahindan who took care of him, Chitra, his wife died soon after

she delivered Sellian. Their union was possible only if Mahindan could prove his identity and gain refugee status, which was a long process:

> The first step was to prove their identity. The government would inspect their documents. There were many forms to fill. There would be a review to decide if they could leave jail, then a hearing to determine if they could ask for refugee status. And then another hearing to see if they would be *given* refugee status. It was a process, and the process would take time. No one could say how long. (26)

Each time they presented themselves before the adjudicators, their expectation was just sympathy but on the contrary, they were only suspected to be terrorists.

Mahindan's traumatic experiences in the prison reach its height when he is told that Sellian has been adopted by a couple as it is good for his future to get educated. True freedom to him meant not to be separated from his own child. He felt his son was stolen from him. Mahindan was traumatized by the memories of his wife, their life as an ideal couple, and his helpless situation that led to the death of his wife. The author has chapterised the book in such a way that the movement is backward and then to the present. As mentioned earlier more than the event the memories traumatize the characters.

Refugees experience trauma due to political, religious oppression, war, displacement, migration and so on. The effects of such events will haunt them and the memories of it can cause a lot of stress. Sharon Bala describes the political circumstances under which Mahindan and the other refugees fled their homeland.

> For the past decade, the LTTE-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam-had been running the north, Tamil Eelam in the making with Kilinochchi as its capital. Here, everyone spoke the same language and worshipped the same gods. Tamil had their own police force, banks, and businesses. The Tigers had built a bubble where the government's quotas and language laws, all the rules designed to disenfranchise the Tamil minority, had no power. Now all that was needed was for the Sinhalese to make it official-section off the island and let the Tamils have their own country. (34&35)

The war and its results were terrible. Prices went up and life became unsafe to many. Separation from families, rape, imprisonment, harsh life in the camps were also experienced by the people. Pre and post migration stress affected the well-being of individuals.

Loss of love was experienced by Mahindan for the second time in his life- the first being the loss of his wife who died due to the shortage of medicines and blood in a hospital at the time of the Civil War in Sri Lanka. Mahindan went through the trauma of watching his wife breathe her last with tears wetting her hair and the baby breaking the silence with

his wail on the other side.

SavitiriKumuran, to whom Sellian was handed over, is another character in the book with a traumatized psyche. One of the refugees, SavitiriKumuran too is an asylum seeker. Basically, a teacher from Killinochi (a known Tiger stronghold) gave the officials all reasons to be suspected as a Tamil Tiger. Her poker face during the interrogation was proof enough to reveal the numbness of the beaten psyche. With no emotion she revealed, the death of her two sons and her husband, "Bombs were falling. My husband was hit. We had to leave him. No choice." (110). The memory of the vent is played for the readers with numbness that seems to be devoid of any emotion, but the impact of the incident was that Mrs. Kumuran was diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and depression. It was presented to the officials as a strong reason to be freed from detention. A sum of twenty thousand rupees and some jewellery were the cost to flee from her land. "Better to die in the ocean than in that godforsaken camp" (110) was her feeling about losing her land forever.

After weeks of listening to the gory details given by the asylum seekers, another was on its way about the woman named Hema. She lost her husband in the bombing. She had two teenage daughters. Hema lost everyone near and dear. Her elder daughter was taken away one evening and was sent back the next morning only to be discovered to have been raped. "The dogs. Not a dog" (134) she said. The trauma of the mother seeing her child being preyed on by animals caused a depressed state.

Ranga had been with Mahindan all through the journey and his dream was to be let free. As days went by, he realized that it was time to give up. Loneliness, hopelessness, and being mistaken for a terrorist leads to depression. He concluded that nobody is going to believe him. Deportation orders were permanent was the talk around. More and more people were slowly being released and Ranga was nothing but skin and bones- the only one who became thinner day by day. His trauma was the fear of being held captive all through. Finally, he decides to kill himself and succeeds. It was after his death that four out of every five were granted freedom.

A traumatic psyche finds no hold but must survive. Mahindan's loss of his loved ones, Chitra and Sellian are irreparable and the purpose of leaving his land does not get fulfilled.

Sellian on the other hand lives in fear from the time he is introduced to the readers - clinging onto his father from the time of his birth - loses his mother and soon his father. He keeps crying despite all the comforts available in his foster parents' house.

Hema is traumatized by the memories of the physical assault (rape of her daughter) and is living just for the sake of her children.

Savitri Kumuran's psyche gets beaten with the loss of her husband and two sons and leaves her homeland preferring death in an ocean rather than in a camp.

Ranga, the only human who refused to even feed himself and became thinner and thinner day by day only hoping to be let free. He finally gives up in a fit of depression.

By the Sea (2001) is another novel by Abdul Razak Gurnah which brings out the refugee crisis. Abdul Razak Gurnah born on 20th December in 1948 is a Tanzanian novelist currently living in the United Kingdom. The Nobel Laureate was himself a refugee and moved to the United Kingdom in the 1960's. Some of his notable works include *Paradise (1994)* and *By the Sea (2001)*. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (2021) for his contribution to postcolonial studies. He has addressed the gulf between cultures and continents in his works.

The story begins in 1960. Omar was the owner of a prosperous furniture business currently living as a refugee in Britain. He was befriended by an unscrupulous Persian merchant, Hussein that resulted in an enmity. The plot is an interconnection of the lives of these two men. An encounter between the two after years reveals the fact that Omar has used Hussein's father's name to seek asylum. The conflict however is over the family house but it opens other avenues like slavery, racism, genocide, exploitation of women, colonialism and its impact, cultural conflicts and much more.

On arriving at the airport in England, Omar pretends to not follow or speak English. He repeatedly utters “refugee” and “asylum-seeker” to escape being deported back to his country. He dwells as a refugee in detention camps first and then in a small flat. He has a fascination for maps. The underlying idea is Europe being the center around which other nations revolved. The author foregrounds the struggle of the migrants in re-drawing the new territories they are forced to adapt to.

Gurnah's experiences as an exile, throws light on the historical background against which the book is written. “ Gurnah's fiction on exile is therefore caught between discourses inextricably haunted by racial divides. In fact, the loss of freedom constitutes the binding theme in Gurnah's writing about the forces of separation that afflict one's identity as an exile” (Kharoua 128). The author left his native land after the post-independent revolution that marred the peace of the island with thousands slaughtered, communities expelled and many held captives. The entire scenario was traumatizing and people were forced to cross boundaries to survive. The same is pictured in the novel too. Age was not an issue for people to flee from their native lands. Saleh begins his account of his arrival by stating, "I am a refugee, an asylum seeker. These are not simple words, even if the habit of hearing makes them seem so."(Gurnah 4). Asylum seekers only hope to be received with love in an alien country. Hospitality is not what is offered but it is associated with recognition. Recognition is to humanize. The host country retains the sovereign right to confer, deny or revoke hospitality. From the 1960s onwards, the increasing attraction of displaced people from different parts of the world to Europe led Western nations to retreat further from the definitions laid down in the 1951 Refugee Convention and to qualify the terms by which someone is eligible for asylum. Reclassified as an asylum seeker, the

refugee is made an increasingly conditional presence dependent on the discretion of the host. The plight of these people is pitiable and Gurnah justifies his Nobel Prize through the narration and style that makes his book gripping.

Migrant literature thus, does not aim only in bringing to light displacement, uprootedness, statelessness, etc. but views the asylum seekers as "socially situated subjects". Asylum seekers leave their homeland, crossing boundaries, in search of hope for a new life filled with possibilities. Life on a strange land is not what they expect many a time. Alienation, separation and their traumatic past and present pushes them into unending depression, leaving the readers to reflect on the need of love for the betterment of the human race. Literature is more interested in making these voices heard. Literature of this kind can change the minds of the readers that can lead to transformation in society.

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Nisa Teresa John

The Promise and the Threat of Future: A Study on the 21st Century's Love-Hate Relationship with Fashion

Abstract

Introduction

Fashion makes fool of some, sinners of others and slaves of all. We are a society hooked on and bombarded with fashion. Previously, style was the monopoly of the elite but now it is being marketed to the masses at an ever-quickening pace. These days we are crazy about fashion. The thought of fashion is driving even rational people to near lunacy. We can hear it in the grumbling stomachs of dieting men and women on the quest for a perfect body. We can smell it on the wrists of the fashionistas who dutifully buy a designer's perfume solely for the name on it. We feel it every time when we cram our feet into uncomfortable shoes and tell the salesperson "I'll buy them".

At the end of the 20th century, fashion became increasingly spectacular. Catwalk shows by world famous designers are theatrical displays commanding international press attention and a host of celebrity guests. Designers are at a pressure to produce elaborate displays in their shows. They are forced to market and advertise their products in such a way that they would attract media and public attention and thus obtain financial backing as well as consumer sales.The resulting focus on luxurious fabrics, extravagant accessories and glittering cosmetics affected all levelsof the fashion industry. The consumers are enticed into a new world that offers them a hope to escape from the colourlessness of reality into the colours of fashion.

Objective

This paper tries to make a study of the love-hate relationship that the new generation has with the emerging trends. Combined with the glamour of the fashion industry there is a disquieting feeling of anxiety. Fashion displays the promise and the threat of the future. It tempts the consumer with new identities that shiftsfrom season to season. The resultant novel cultural moralities are fragmented and ambiguous.

Research Methodology

Rooted in cultural studies, this paper makes a qualitative approach geared towards creating a complete and detailed description of the topic at hand by contextualizing and interpreting the data gathered.

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Conclusion

Fashion presents the interplay of contradictions: self-expression, self-creation, sensual desire counterbalanced with ambiguity, threat and anxiety. The key themes relating to power and status, violence, sex and gender within the context of developing attitudes towards fashion and fashion imagery shows that fashion is inherently contradictory, revealing both our desires and anxieties and constantly pushing at the boundaries of acceptability.

Keywords: Fashion, Body, Love, Culture.

The cultural critique of fashion from a philosophical point of view is of special interest for researchers and students in the fields of cultural studies, media studies, sociology and the like. Fashion is usually considered as something superficial. A number of philosophers including Plato and Aristotle tried to find an eternal answer for all the ever changing phenomena in our lives. Fashion as a cultural phenomenon is a manifestation of human creativity. The promoters of fashion heave on the deeply rooted human desire for social recognition and the desire to beautify oneself.

Baudelaire described fashion as a possible source for quenching an artistic thirst (Baudelaire 1988, 9). According to Kant, fashion adheres to the law of imitation by which, “the human being has a natural tendency to compare his behaviour to that of a more important person, the child with the adult, the lower-ranking person with those of higher rank) in order to imitate the other person's ways” (Kant 184) (Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point Of View, CUP 2006, pg. 142).

Fashion plays a key role in the construction of the concept called 'body' and how it is displayed. Fashion provides a platform for the image-makers to experiment with and work upon the notions of physical display.

The modern generation's adherence to fashion is often frowned upon by many a critic as the fear to remain in their real self. They call these new-gen fashionistasFashion Victims as the modern wo/man is someone who follows trends slavishly, a person who is not necessarily captivated by the mere novelty of a garment and the social standing it conveys than by its beauty. In everyday life, the people we typically refer to as Fashion Victims are tagged as such for one simple reason: they don't look good.

The Fashion Victim is the balding small-town male hairdresser who pours himself into tight leather pants, wild imported silk shirts, and fluorescent-green alligator boots; the bulbous-bellied talk-show guest in stripper-esque spandex who slaps her own behind while howling, “I look good”. The Fashion Victim is all around us. The Hollywood starlet who's personally dressed by Donatella Versace is no less a Fashion Victim than the small-town salesgirl who hops on every fad at her local JC Penney. (Lee 8)

Fashion Victims seldom realise that fashion at some point in their lives had been able

to manipulate their brains with some sort of ninja mind control. It's anyone who wears an attire of the latest trend not because it is comfortable, but because it simply looks good. It's anyone who owns more clothing than they reasonably need. But most of all, "Fashion Victims are people who, no matter how many frustrations they can list about fashion—the cost, the tyranny of style, the ridiculousness of trends—heartily continue to play along" (Lee 12).

Some reasons why we cling on to fashion, often making ourselves addicts and victimsare as follows:

1. Man is a social being who continually seeks to gain attention from other human beings. In this ordeal, among the many techniques he has to resort to self-staging too. In this staging of the self, an ideal is imitated. This ideal can be either imaginary or a simulation or a reality. In the social theatre, fashion offers an imitation of the ideal models in guise or disguise.

2. Man's natural aesthetic sense demands him to beautify himself and his life in a 'holistic' way effecting on the body, mind and soul. When spirituality, cleanliness and meditations help to work on the issues of mind and soul, beauty and associated matters go a great way in addressing the questions related to body.

3. A new trend or the emergence of a new fashion metaphorically stands for a new birth. Man's endeavour to look young is not just a physical demand but a spiritual and intellectual one too. Spiritually it might be called the striving for eternal youth, reincarnation and immortality, on the other hand, physically, fashion transports us from the mundane realities of our day to day life to an ideal world populated by models and film-stars.

Fashion plays a key role in the construction of identity. Not just in the Western culture, but as we move on to the 21st century, but in the Eastern world also, identity is so often judged by appearance. In the greatly consumerist world that we are now living in, a huge web of meanings and emotions are attached to both products and images that are used to lure the customer. The irony is that, not just the image-makers, but the consumers are also well-aware of the power of the images to manipulate, seduce and ensnare the customers. However, this awareness has not lessened their fascination with the promise that such images hold out. Fashion plays a crucial role in redefining the power relations of status and identity. The rising questions connected with the desires and fears of the 21st century population are well answered by fashion. Men and women are drawn into the fashion realm as a means to construct a new self that satisfies their desires rather than needs.

"As shifting employment patterns, widespread joblessness and ever-expanding cities have alienated people from more traditional notions of status linked to their work and environment, consumption acts as the salve for this lack, driving the economy, yet seeming to assuage the inequalities it enforces" (Arnold 9).While the members of the

upper class fought to maintain their status by asserting their superior taste and financial strength, the marginalised group seek to create an imagined status for themselves through the construction of styles which, they believe, render them immune to the taunts of their supposed betters. Thus fashion provides a fantasized freedom to women and other marginalized sections of the society like gay men and coloured youth to riot against the social constraints by rebuffing the social standards of taste and high culture.

Fashion plays a great role in our collective memory. Styles are often nostalgic and are "traces of the past" (Arnold 22). They record individual and group experiences and evoke familiar, yet upsetting, instances from earlier histories. For the younger generations which did not remember the hardships of the past, the glamour of the 1940's fashion would be appealing.

Some designers remark that it is a sad fact that we are addicted to fashion, or are defenceless victims. But it is argued otherwise by many a fashion theorists. They say that we are not such defenceless victims of fashion. On the contrary, we are victims by our own volition. The Victorian costume of corset was criticised by fashion historians as a sort of torture imposed upon women by their contemporary men with the wicked hope of making them quite literally the weaker sex. For years, fashion historians referred to the tight laced garments as a sort of torture chamber imposed on women. However, writers like Victoria Steele in her work, *The Corset: A Cultural History*, argues that the modern woman who dresses in two-pieces, microminis and low-cut blouses isn't necessarily succumbing to the masculine power structure, but may instead be exerting her own feminine force through self-expression.

However, fashion is not some mighty force that sweeps over us, making us vulnerable in the making of rational decisions. Throughout history, people—women, in particular—have been regarded as slaves of fashion, whose concern with dress branded them as vain or foolish. Modern theorists have put forth the image of malleable consumers pushed in certain directions by an oppressive fashion system, and even today, there's a tinge of shame associated with caring too much about fashion.

Fashion is a constant search for the perfect look. We are forced to reinvent ourselves each season when a new trend is brought into the mainstream. We are thus forced to achieve an assumed degree of perfection. "It's also about being 'brainwashed.' Fashion intimidates us into thinking we never look good enough, are never adequate enough until that new thing comes along: Prada show, Gucci bag, Chanel jacket, YSL peasant blouse" (Lee 13).

Fashion has become a huge part of our lives. Clothes and costumes have been attracting humanity always. Our clothes represent, as it is said, who we are and who we want to be. Just take a look at your shoe collection one day.

Lisa Greenstein of El Cerrito, California, paints still-life portraits of people's shoes as

visual representations of their personalities. The shoes we buy—sexy, athletic, comfy, quirky—speak volumes about us, she says. Nearly every piece of your wardrobe can do the same: Are you a free spirit? A trend junkie? An uptown society girl? An artsyBohemian? The styles and labels we wear reveal our membership incertain groups". A jacket is not just a jacket, but also a lifestyle ingredient.As Ralph Lauren once said, "I don't design clothes. I design dreams.(Lee 16)

When a man buys a Checked Casual shirt and a slim tapered fit jeans from the Polo store, he's not just buying an outfit; he's buying an attitude. Fashion takes us to an attractive world associated with glamour—a fusion of art, entertainment, and business, all rolled into one. We're drawn to the sheer excitement of everything we think it stands for.

Fashion is built on contradictions. It's fun, but exasperating. It's creative, but commercial. Fashion brings people closer together, but also drives them farther apart. It can make us feel beautiful—or ugly. The more we pursue fashion, the more we start thinking about those that we do not have. These contradictions in fact create a love-hate attitude toward clothing. We would be happy when we have a nice outfit to wear one day, but the very next day, we can get frustrated if there is nothing good to wear. We love shopping for clothes to relieve stress, but hate looking at our credit card statements at the end of the month. We love how high heels make our legs look, but hate covering our blisters with Band- Aids the next morning. Fashion, as enjoyable as it can be at times, often highlights how confused society's priorities can be these days. Today, being well-dressed can elevate a person to mythic proportions. We see film actors wearing all sorts of stylish dresses which gathers them much popularity and public attention.

Fashion shields us from our own common sense. It also has the uncanny ability to brainwash us into overlooking our moral convictions.Under fashion's spell, our vision of right and wrong blurs. Like good art, fashion is often best when it pushes the envelope. But it sometimes crosses the line, offending individuals, groups, religions, even entire cultures. Thus in our love-hate relationship with fashion, the 21st century seems to be completely lost so as to make a decision on how live a life hand-in-hand with fashion.

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Bonds and Boundaries: Intimacy- Geopolitics in Bollywood

Abstract

The question whether inter-religious heterosexual love can be identified as a transcending force in the face of ethnic violence becomes pertinent in multiple contexts including popular stories, films and personal narratives that form the larger repertoire of revisionist histories on partition. Diverse manifestations of inter-religious love has emerged as a subtext in many Bollywood films such asBombay(1995), Gadar: Ek Prem Katha (2001), Veer Zara(2004) with tragic endings suggesting the political limits of domestic intimacies in cross-religious conjugality.The paper attempts to understand the ambivalence of these narratives seeking to probe the political and cultural geography of the genre and its socio-aesthetic ramifications. Our analysis is informed by the theoretical framework of Pain and Staeheli(2014) who explains intimacy-geopolitics as the 'inseparability of politics from emotional geography'. Given that the colonial hegemony, partition and communal divisions have played a persuasive role in shaping and transfixing the identities of people, representation of inter-religious bondsin Films like Earth(1999) and Pinjar(2003) may be viewed in the context of the transience and impermanence of the moral geographies that inform the parameters of intimacy in the visual narratives that carry forward the inherited historical legacies of conflicts.

We argue that through valorisation and tragic victimization of intimate bodies, these narratives subscribe to a model of secularism that is hinged on compelling the minority to either integrate themselves into majoritarian secular values or being branded as leaning toward sectarian communalism.We also propose to demonstrate how these films which navigate through the politically delicate sites of religious affect and othering also become complicit in the project of modernist secularism.

Finally, the paper also tries to investigate how Bollywood films embody the individual negotiations with the 'other' during moments of affection, aversion, and sexual transgression under the overwhelming shadow of national and communal meta-politics that envelop them. Reading intimacy through geopolitics, thus reveals how the state and communal politics constitute the individual relationships and how individual affect gets addressed as an act of political control, terror, transgression or resistance.

Keywords: Intimacy Geopolitics-Bollywood-Interreligious Relationships-Partition-

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Feminist Historiographies-Micronarratives

When territories and their demarcated boundaries became prerequisites for defining modern nations for the colonial powers, borders were drawn across lands, cutting apart people, communities, families and individual lives. Just as the British drew borders across Ireland, across Mandatory Palestine they also divided South Asia resulting in the catastrophic division of the Indian subcontinent, cutting lives asunder. These geopolitical boundaries that led to the birth of India and Pakistan and the long-drawn contentions over national, religious and ethnic identities that were consequential to it, are still experienced in the most intimate or emotional bonds that determine individual lives.

The impact and inter-relations between the international/national circumstances like war, migrations or calamities on individual lives, the intimate emotions which are formed, negotiated or compromised through it are theoretically analysed in contemporary geopolitics. Intimacy geopolitics criticizes the separation of the intimate/domestic realm from international politics. Geopolitics is not defined as macro-scale political discourse and action that impacts on intimate, embodied and emotional life, rather the two are co-constituted and entangled (Pain qtd. in Barabantseva et.al 345). In new historical methodologies that imaginatively connect historical and fictional narratives, micro-histories of individuals are often revisited to demystify macro-histories of communities.

The intricacies of partition and communal violence have been an important element in the construction and contention of the inter-religious heterosexual relationships in Post-colonial India that was a recurring theme in several Bollywood films. These narratives of intimacies which transgress the traditional boundaries of religion and nation are often seen to culminate in tragic endings. The formulaic conclusions drawn out from these narratives are often part of the larger public discourse about inter-ethnic relationships.

Fresh critical insights into partition like that of Ayesha Jalal (2013)reveal how the cultural nations of India and Pakistan do not limit neatly into the strict boundaries of the political nation. Drawing a distinction between religion as faith and religion as identity, Jalal questioned the all-too-easy attribution of 'communal violence' into political turmoils that were the aftermath of partition. In retrospect, emerging critical narratives find neither of the two nations or the 'two nations theory' itself tenable, and also reject even the 'one nation' that could have been. Post-1992, and especially post-2002, two landmark years drawing the contours of a violent decade of fanaticism in India, there has been many self-reflexive engagements and critique of Indian secularism. Most of these agreed in blatant and nuanced forms that the onus for the entrenched communalization of India lay not only with the Hindu Right but also the official Indian secularism (Needham and Rajan,16).

We argue that through valorisation and tragic victimization of intimate bodies, Bollywood narratives subscribe to a model of secularism that is hinged on compelling the

minority to either integrate themselves into majoritarian secular values or be branded as leaning toward sectarian communalism. We also propose to demonstrate how Bollywood sustains the macro- narratives of Indian secularism and navigate through the politically delicate sites of religious affect and othering. In contrast, the micro-narratives of individual struggles unveiled by feminist historiographies of partition presents experiences from the other-side that has hitherto remained invisible.

Partition and Communal Segregations

In India, the process of partition and transfer of power worsened the hostilities among its people whose social structure was dominated by the discriminating boundaries of caste and religion. The partition of 1947, negotiated by Governor Mountbatten was entirely based on religious lines, based on an imagined compartmentalization of two religions into two nations. Pakistan, apart from a nation now used interchangeably for Muslims itself, came to be understood as a space located outside the boundaries of democratic-secular values, plural co-existence and 'Indianness'.

Post-partition animosity among the communities culminated in several undesirable incidents including the demolition of Babri-masjid (1992) and Gujarat riots (2002). For the formation and survival of a majoritarian Hindu-India, the projection of an 'other' was necessary. The violent norms of community segregation are most impactfully effected at the realm of specific religious institutions, political entities and the family itself that calls for an internalised segregation from the outsiders of their religion or caste. Political and communal polarization demands check on 'mixing' of caste and creed. The rhetoric like 'protection of our women' 'love jihad' and 'honour' are popularized for instilling fear of the 'other'.

In tracing the historiography of the propagandist notion of 'Love Jihad' Charu Gupta notes that as one of the most fevered fantasies of Hindutva. 'Love jihad' has its predecessors in the violent communal tensions of colonial undivided India. Everyday life and sexuality of women was a significant arena for the Hindu 'publicists' of the 1920s (Gupta,13) to lead campaigns against the growing 'Muslim menace' and there were widely dictated and circulated terms spread by the Arya Samaj and other Hindu revivalists for even casual acquaintances between Hindu women and Muslim men. These campaigns culminated during the historical event of Partition when thousands of women were abducted, raped and exchanged between the two nations in the name of religious honour.

Propaganda like 'Love Jihad' do reflect the deep-seated anxieties of Hindutva politics regarding female free will, the subversive potential that they find in love, in pliable and ambiguous religious identities, and syncretic socio-religious practices (15). When subjected to further historicizing, these propagandist practices may be found to be visibly entrenched in many state-sponsored, culturally legitimized events and mainstream

rhetoric and narratives emerging from Bollywood as well.

Bollywood and the macro-narratives of intimacies

Bollywood, which dominates with its massive production, has an enormous impact on the mass audience not only in creating a national public culture but also in shaping an alternative historical past of the nation. Nationalist narratives in Bollywood have been a serious subject of academic discussion in works of scholars includingBandyopadhyay(2008),Vasudevan(2011), Mubarki(2014) and Roy (2018) where they have argued how films from this genre have tried to re-visit Indian history for the construction of an innocent past which represents an inclusive and harmonious society.

When examining some popular controversies related to Bollywood films, we can discern how inter-religious heterosexual representation becomes highly problematic in India. *Bombay* (1995) vexed the Muslim leaders for portraying the Muslim heroine wedded to a Hindu hero (Vasudevan, 246). Charges were levelled at *Jodha Akbar* (2008) directed by Ashutosh Gowariker for distorting history by KarniSena, a Rajput community organisation. They were enraged by the portrayal of Rajput Queen Jodha Bhai along with the Muslim Emperor Akbar which taints the honour of the Rajput community. But it should also be noticed that both the films had skilfully 'secularized' the 'Other' to fit into the Hindutva/ National imagination of Indian spectators (Mubarki,3).

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Bajirao Mastani*(2015)and*Patmavat*(2018)appropriated history to negotiate the inter-religious relationship between the protagonists in the film. Bajirao I is depicted as a chivalric and courageous warrior who tries to defend the honour of women at any cost. While in *Patmavat(2018),* the character of Alauddin Khilji was portrayed in the most demeaning manner as a cruel despot having homosexual interests, lusting for women and juxtaposed against the well-mannered Maharawal Ratan Singh. The film narrative shows the 'barbaric' Khilji destroying the entire kingdom to possess Padmavati. Padmavati was elevated into a national icon who performs *Jauhar (*self-immolation) for preserving her chastity and honour from being tainted by the enemy (Roy,19).

Through these films, the ambivalent relationship between the men and women from the different communities in India are depicted as normalized violence, akin and aligned to the assumed violent core of communal politics. The Muslim men are characterized as disrespectful towards their women and in a predatory position to the women from other communities. The inter-religious intimacies turn out to be more of a politicized form of public imagination in these films.

Film narratives of *Earth* (1999)and*Pinjar*(2002) are indicators of this Indian ethos which imagines the Hindu Female body as a site of sanctity that is constantly under the threat of being violated by the men of the Muslim community who are branded as

invaders of ancient India. This threat also defines the barriers of their ambivalent relationships.

Earth (or *1947: Earth*) released in 1999, directed by Deepa Mehta is the film adaptation ofBapsiSidhwa's novel, *Cracking India* (1992) set against the gruesome violence happening in Lahore during the partition. Santa, the protagonist, is shown as the victim of lust and communalism of 'extremist' Muslims like Dil Nawaz. Reading underneath, the narratives of love, revenge and riots, the relationship between Santa, Dil Nawaz and Hassan is rather complex. Santa is an orphan who stands outside the traditional Indian family order, which enables her to 'choose' her partner, that too from the Muslim community. As both her suitors are Muslims, the question is who adheres more to the modern- secular vision of India? Submissive, soft-spoken, tolerant Hassan, who is willing to convert into Hinduism and relocate to Amritsar is contrasted with the violent, revengeful and extremist Dil Nawaz. When Hassan's conversion to Hinduism is translated as an act of love and sacrifice, Hari's conversion to Islam is shown as forced and violent.

The murder of Hassan and rape of Santa by DilNawaz along with the Muslim mob which was rather implied and not shown on the screen indicates the threat of the extremist Muslims not only to the Hindu women but also to the 'modern secular vision' of India which welcomes the cohabitation of Hindu and Muslim. Santa's abduction, rape and marriage with Dil-Nawaz and her becoming a 'courtesan/prostitute' in a Kotha is depicted as the epitome of horror which can befall a Hindu woman. It also visualises the possible havocs caused by inter-religious intimacies both by choice or otherwise. Santa is victimized and her fate is vulgarized to suit the tales of horror that were built up by the high political narratives about thousands of abducted women during the partition who were saved and brought back by the state.

The rape and abduction of Hindu and Sikh women by Muslim men formed the backdrop against which accusations were levelled at Pakistan for being barbaric, uncivilized, lustful. The very formation of the nation of Pakistan out of Bharat (or, as we shall see later, the body of Bharatmata) became a metaphor for the violation of the body of the pure Hindu woman (Butalia,67).

Earth also erases the parts of the novel which talks about the return of Santa to Amritsar and the obsessive love of Dil-Nawaz for her which makes him cross the border. Santa's story in the film ends abruptly with her being carried away by the Muslim mob in a bullock cart which nullifies the multiple possibilities of her life. As Kavitha Daiya observes, *Earth* imagines an idyllic world of middle-class bliss, a romantic pre-partition world and a 'delusive veil' over many other aspects of segregation of the Indian society that were inherent in the crisis (59).

Pinjar(2002)directed byChandraprakash Dwivediwhich is the screen adaptation of a Punjabi novel of the same title by Amrita Pritam, also centres around the abduction of

Hindu women by the Muslim men during partition. After abduction, Puro, is forced to live as a Muslim with the name 'Hamida' tattooed in her arms. After much protest and aversion, she chooses her abductor over her family which is unwilling to accept a 'polluted woman'. Apparently, *Pinjar*follows the same nationalist narrative which presents Rashid as a lusty kidnapper and Puro as a hapless victim. The family feud is equated with the communal violence and associated with the partition involving largescale abduction of Hindu/Sikh women by Muslim men who are either married or kept as servants or sex slaves. The 'fear of other' is deeply ingrained in Puro which is shown to be erased through a slowly evolving romantic association with Rashid, who is portrayed as a faithful husband and tender father who regrets what he did to her.

Puro's condition was part of a complex issue during the Partition in which the repatriation of abducted women became a national responsibility. The Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Ordinance was passed in 1949 in India for recovering the Hindu women abducted by Muslim men to Pakistan. The act itself was the outcome of the agitations by Hindu organizations which equated the abducted Hindu women as the 'property' of India.

In the popular political parlance during partition, reclaiming the women also meant reclaiming the honour of the nation itself. But as these women cohabited with the men of other communities, their families considered abducted women as tainted. Like many other abducted women, Puro was also unwelcomed, and could have possibly been sent to the ashrams or mercy homes that were common for the rehabilitation of such women following partition. In *Pinjar,* we find that the women's actual choices were subsumed to the rhetoric of 'honour', interestingly, a rhetoric that was common to both communities across the border. The abducted women belonged to no country, and their citizenship rang hollow.

Micro-narratives of Intimacies

Two ground-breaking non-fiction works on the historiographies of partition which came up in 1998 namely Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: The Voices From the Partition of India* and Ritu Menon and K.Bashin's*Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* addressed a long-standing lacuna that the secularist histories about forged unities failed to reflect on. While the secularist stories either valorised, victimized or romanticized the women, amplified their suicides as martyrdom, and glamourized their choices as romantic, the feminist historiographies that unearthed micronarratives of partition from actual lived experiences of women refused to do this (Rashmi Luthra,336)

Bhutalia records a social worker who observes how women who were born into perpetual poverty and hunger, suddenly find men who brought them silk dupattas and jewellery. If they refused to leave these men and go back to their 'home country' they were deemed *ghaddars*(traitors) and *khafirs*(non-believers) (Butalia,150). Also recorded are tales of women who amid the turmoil, marry the men of their choice and turn it into

opportunities. Thus, other than the tales of victimization or valour we find here spaces from where there came up different stories about bodies and pleasures(Menon and Bhasin,118).

Mainstream Bollywood, just as the canonized partition-tales of South Asian literary and cultural domain has always played a complicit role in supporting and adhering to the secularist principles even as they seemingly presented radical contexts for its subversion (Lichtner and Bandyopadhyay, 437). It is after the archiving of the feminist historiographies of partition began, that some complex working of women's agency as they manoeuvred through and negotiated with limited choices and circumstances, began to emerge into visibility. For instance, Menon and Bhasin record not only how women were abducted and forcibly married into other countries, but then were also forcibly repatriated in most cases against their wish to determine 'their' country. Feminist historians of religion have always been vocal about the contradictory relationship that women have with religion, for no religion ever offers full membership to women. The vital question that they ask is then why should women show subservience to any single religion at all? Border narratives of partition that come from such counter-historiographies provide ample spaces to discuss the way women and men negotiated with the restricted choices offered by religion.

Micro narratives of partition also underline the class differences within the women's tales of partition that shifted the burden and chances of women's bodies in very nuanced ways. While lower class women directly took the brunt on their bodies as sexual honour to be violated or protected and weaved up the silence shrouding the actual incident of rape itself, more privileged women felt and experienced the burden and transformed the passivity to the agency by dwelling on the domestic aspects of the upheaval, by domesticating the cataclysmic event. Intersectional analysis of stories of partition based on gender and class also brings out differences in asserting agency where women like Puro were offered choices: they could either return to their country and re-join their family or stay back with their spouse and assimilate with Pakistan. But Santa neither did have a family to go back to, nor she wanted to be with her abductor/husband. Such crucial class differences embedded within the macro-narratives ought to be highlighted too.

As we can see in Earth, Santa's rape and what she went through were rather absent from the screen and only recollected by Lenny. Similarly, Puro's romantic or sexual intimacy with Rashid is not shown on the screen. Shrouded by the macro narratives of the over arching political discourses, sexual intimacies between inter-ethnic people thus become part of an omission and silence.

The shrouds of romantic love that form the major focus of these narratives hide the political processes of rehabilitation, the acts and procedures of the state, like the Recovery of Abducted Persons that were in turn aligned to the rhetoric of honour. This is not only an

omission that renders it impossible to broach the subtle tonalities of women's negotiation through the power systems of religion, omissions that thereby completely negates their agency, but these are also strategic omissions that recurringly reinforce both the shallow secularist narratives of religious harmony as well as the absurd fundamentalist narratives like love jihad.

The feminist historiographies of partition attempts to make visible the silences that are embedded in the macro-narratives. This omission, needless to be said, not only involves the understanding of gendered violence on women's bodies, but that on men as sexual subjects too.

Alternative geopolitics is enacted through the formation of inter-religious conjugal relationships and possibilities of a life which negates the accustomed biases. When women's assertion of agency beyond communal honour is justified in *Pinjar*, films like *Earth* subtly nurtures the double standards of modern secularism in India by glorifying the assimilation into the Hindu majority. They endorse the popular imaginary of the communal Muslim who chose Pakistan vs secular Muslim who chose India. The other nation is always pointed out as a wasteland of extremists, which exists at the other side of 'secular democratic India' always open for the Muslims who have no right in this land.

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Anju Mary

Transformed Identity: K.R Meera's *Hangwoman* as a Narrative of Love, Power and Resistance

Abstract

The basic desire to live a descent life gives every individual an ability to show their resistance towards the devastating power barriers overpowering them. Such resistances can also be a result of one's unconscious mind that influences and urges one to make changes in one's behavior and personality. A completely alien conceptof a lady public executioner in a typical Indian scenario becomes the unique matter of discussion in K.R. Meera's Hangwoman: Everyone Loves a Good Hanging, an English translation of her famous novel, Arachar.

Different theoretical dimensions give numerous possibilitiesto analyze this novel under the concepts of feminism, gender, sex, etc. This paper seeks to examine how the thread of love gets tied within the conflicting self of a woman and establishes a new self, even when she undergoes the trauma of being pulled out from the socially constructed gender roles.

For the achievement of this objective, the novel Aracharis being analyzed and studied under the purview of the theory of Psychoanalysis. The theoretical analysis of this work brings out how ChetanaGrddhaMullick, the titular character of the novel develops her new self and manages to be the first hangwoman in India, expressing great valour and fortitude. The courageous awakening of women, like that of Chetana results greatly in strengthening their ego and make them fit for survival. The extra ordinary resistance attained by women also becomes a part of their desire for survival and hence help create a new identity.

K. R Meera through the novel expresses her deep concern for those women who undergo serious issues of internal conflict and suppressed emotions. She brings to forefront how far the recurrent events in an individual's life shape his or her unconscious and thereby transform their self, through the portrayal of her character Chetana. In theoretically analyzing the novel under the discourse of Psychoanalysis, the interconnected concepts like love, influence of power and resistance showcased by a young woman within the novel is understood in relation with the common thread of conflicting human psyche that runs within these concepts.

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The basic desire to live a descent life gives every individual an ability to show their resistance towards the devastating power barriers overpowering them. Such resistances can also be a result of one's unconscious mind that influences and urges one to make changes in one's behavior and personality. This is exactly what the Malayalam novelist K R Meera attempts to trace in *Hangwoman* an English translation of her famous novel, *Arachar.*

A completely alien concept of a lady public executioner in a typical Indian scenario becomes the unique matter of discussion in the novel. Different theoretical dimensions give numerous possibilities to analyze this novel under the concepts of feminism, gender, sex, etc. This paper seeks to examine how the thread of love gets tied within the conflicting self of a woman and establishes a new self, even when she undergoes the trauma of being pulled out from the socially constructed gender roles.

For the achievement of this objective, the novel *Arachar* is being analyzed and studied under the purview of the theory of Cultural Studies. The theoretical analysis of this work brings out how Chetana Grddha Mullick, the titular character of the novel develops her new self and manages to be the first hangwoman in India, expressing great valour and fortitude. The courageous awakening of women, like that of Chetana results greatly in strengthening their ego and make them fit for survival. The extra ordinary resistance attained by women also becomes a part of their desire for survival and hence help create a new identity.

One of the most revolutionary voices in contemporary Malayalam literary scene, K R Meera is a major Malayalam novelist and short story writer. Meera is also a journalist, columnist and screen writer who started her career at Malayala Manorama in Kottayam in 1993. She has to her credit many short story collections including *Ormayude Njarambu, Mohamanja, Ave Maria,* etc. Apart from *Arachar*, some of her other published novels include *Meerasadhu, Yudasinte Suvishesham,* etc. Meera's 2012 master piece novel *Arachar,* translated into English by J. Devika under the title *Hangwoman* is the winner of numerous honours including the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award, Odakkuzhal Award, Vayalar Award and the coveted Central Sahithya Academy Award.A. M Pettigrew, in his book *The Politics of Organizational Decision Making* states that in order to find a solution, the "demands have to be communicated" (233). Literature opens up a wide platform for the unnoticed to be a part of history. Powerful women writers have made tremendous contributions to the literary world, focusing the unresolved matters of freedom, thus helping women to subvert the existing gender bias. The great enthusiasm with which these writers have penned their experiences and imagination, have given birth to strong, rebellious, powerful female in their novels.

K.R.Meera's Aarachar explores the life of an evolving female character Chetna Grddha Mullick. Meera's attempt to bring out the various elements and inspiring qualities that shaped the memorializing character Chetna elevates the novel to the status of an epic.

The novel's protagonist Chetana Grddha Mullick, as Meera puts it "a symbol of strength and self- respect to the whole world" is not born as one of the kind, but becomes one. (Meera 71) Set in the unnoticed corners of Calcutta, the novel traces a revolutionary transformation of Chetana from a voiceless obedient daughter to India's first hangwoman.

When the novel begins, Chetana is portrayed as an ordinary girl silenced and confined within the four walls of her house, just to live her life like that of her mother and grandmother. But her skill in creating a perfect noose should never go unnoticed, as she has it in her blood and not taught by anyone else. Chetana proudly proclaims that, "the truth was that from the time I was in my mother's womb, I was already tied up in the umbilical cord.

My mother's belly had to be cut open so I could be taken out. Thakuma bragged that the noose I'd tied even as a foetus was a faultless one". (Meera 3)

The strong and unbreakable noose that she creates makes her powerful enough to break open the shells of patriarchy bound with conventions. The financial constraints that stood as a challenge to the Mullick family have put an end to the young Chetana's right to get higher education after her schooling. A girl bereft of everything good during her childhood struggling hard suddenly finds a revolutionary path of transformation by becoming the first woman executioner of the country. The position to which she was lifted was indescribably strong that it awakened her weary spirit.

There are a number of instances in the novel that talks about different realms of love expressed by different characters as well as the different ways by which those characters experience them. Love, for Chetana, the protagonist was not only an emotion, but also an instrument that helped her find her way of self-realization. Meera cautiously conveysChetana's fluctuating emotional status throughout the novel. The love she feels towards the journalist, Sanjeev Kumar Mitra is being compared to that of "…monsoon in Kolkata which did not cool the air…" (Meera 158) During the initial part of the novel, Chetana's level of confidence and comfort she receives while spending time with Mitra is all the more devastating. As Chetana says, "Rather than giving me peace, it (love) left me terrified" (158).

The familial love and care that she was denied during her childhood days too reflects the oppression and patriarchal monopoly that Chetana experienced inside her family. Since she belongs to hangman's family, Chetana unlike other children had grown up hearing stories from her grandmother about her valorous ancestors specifically about hangings. While telling stories about hangings, Thakuma swells with pride and manages to tie and loosen a noose on an imaginary cord about which Chetana says, "That was a habit common to all the woman of our family. While we spoke we obsessively made and unmade nooses with the ends of our garments, be it a sari or dupatta. That must have been a psychological necessity". (Meera 13)

Being a woman, Chetana received terrible experiences from her professional life as well. It was during when she was working with Maruti Prasad as a proof reader in Sri Maruti Press, she first tasted the bitterness of male violence. Maruti Prasad's attempt to molest her made herself strong and bold, helping her realize her true blood spirit. The noose she had made for him proved Chetana as the perfect embodiment of female power. The noose she made always did lie hidden inside the dark corners of Chetana's heart, which became lively again on the very day that Sanjeev Kumar Mitra made his maiden comment upon Chetana, "I want to fuck you hard, even if only once!" (Meera 27)

Even though the novel portrays a deep feeling of love felt by Chetana towards Sanjeev Kumar, she at the same time is aware about its shallowness. Chetana repeatedly feels as if she is a prey to the hypocrisy of the man whom she loves. She says, "My heart felt as helpless as a bird trapped in the hollow of a burning tree, feathers stiff and throat parched, able neither to fly nor burst into flames". (Meera 158) But the love she experiences as indicated in the novel has the language of death. She makes it emblematic of her death, just as she feels love as a noose tightening around the neck, between the third and the fourth vertebrae. It is not just love that is equated to death, rather the happiness she experiences also smell death as she says, "a noose of sheer happiness tightened around my neck" (26).

"The nature of power in the modern world is that it is also constructed in relation to political, moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological, sexual questions" says Stuart Hall whenanalysing Gramsci's concept of hegemony (170). In a society dominated by patriarchy and suppression, it is obvious to find the boiling issues of power and resistance. The power exerted by her own father upon her and the power exerted by Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, her lover creates a dilemma in her. The novel portrays many instances that make Chetana stand before the unanswered question of self-existence. While she expresses her weakness by describing herself as "a rain drenched lotus bud, yearned to bloom", she at the same time gets trapped within the labyrinth of her intense longing for Sanjeev Kumar Mitra (69). Resistance takes different forms especially when it is from the suppressed women folk. In the novel, *Hangwoman,* Meera enumerates different ways by which her suffering characters resist the oppression of dominating folk. Ramuda, Chetana's armless, crippled, bed ridden brother, when captured in frame by Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, shuts his eyes tightly, the only act of resistance he can muster in his present state. Chetana on the other hand, courageously grabs the camera and throws it on the ground with all her strength, Chetana's first act of resistance against Sanjeev Kumar leading him to utter the extremely voyeuristic statement, "I want to fuck you hard, even if only once!" (Meera 27)

Meera, as a part of moulding Chetana to a new and independent individual, travels through the psyche of the suffering woman. She manages to details every minute improvement of Chetana's evolving personality. The nervousness and fear that once

govern her leaves her when she wears the attire of a hang woman. It is at this moment the element of power within Chetana takes birth. Her desire was not to become an assistant to her dominating father rather to be the first official hang woman. At a particular moment, Chetana adopts the act of smiling as her way of resistance. Meera in this novel talks about various female characters from history who inspire Chetana a lot. One such character is Annapurna about whom it is said, "Annapurna's spiritual journey started when she began to smile to herself in the middle of unending domestic chores". (Meera 271) The smile Chetana fixes in her face, when retorting to Sanjeev Kumar is very powerful such that his "face went red as if it had been slapped hard" (274).

Whenever Chetana encounters a question of the upcoming case of hanging she has to perform, she never makes mere mutterings or babblings that everyone expects from an ordinary girl of her age. She has clear vision about how she carries out the things she is assigned with. For instance, while facing the questions in CNC Channel, Chetana answers to Mitra "as though he were my equal or even my inferior". (Meera 138) She retorts with utterconfidence: "Look here, Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, there are many things in a hangman's life that you cannot understand…" (138).

The most notable fact regarding Chetana's transformation is the inspirations she gathers from history. She gets deeply attracted to the myths of Kadambari and Pingalakeshini. Such characters play a major role in giving Chetana new insights. These strong incarnations of female power push Chetana to adopt their roles to make her enemies kneel down before her and to warn her tyrannical lover against women's power. Chetana's statement: "Some women's anger is such that it cannot be satiated with the death of just one man" marks the degree to which she has gained confidence and faith in the strength of female body. (Meera 177) The truth that her father and her lover despite all other masculine characters Chetana knows, played the most notable role in her transformation cannot be denied. The novel also places Goddess Durga, the embodiment of power and strength as

Chetana's one of the greatest reliefs. Chetana during different stages of her resistance associates herself with Durga who provides her great strength to confront her enemies with necessary vengeance. As the goddess wipes out all her obstacles with her power, Chetana too becomes a power pack indigestible to the conventional society. Towards the end the writer questions the span of male ego and proclaims: "The statue of Durga is made out of soil taken from the beshya's doorstep. That is because the ego of the man who crosses it unravels and falls on the ground there" (432).

Towards the end of the second half of the novel Chetana is portrayed as powerful enough to openly declare that she can neither submit to the will of her father nor the lover, not even her husband or children in the future. Through her own life and experience she opines bravely about what she feels about menfolk and compares men to tortoises that tremble in fear when their shells break open. Her vengeance finally reaches its perfection,

when she tactfully hangs her hypocritical lover Sanjeev Kumar Mitra by demonstrating the act of hanging inside the studio making him stand as the culprit before the media. The studio where she was burned with shame and dishonour multiple times changes to the most satiating platform of revenge. She feels greatly honoured to have Sanjeev Kumar in the position of a culprit (though as a part of demonstration) as she tastes her self-evolved sweetness of feminine power.

K R Meera's *Hangwoman,* is undoubtedly a strong narrative of love, power, and resistance coiled complexly around the unending questions of male dominance andsuppression. Being the story of Chetana Grddha Mullick's miraculous conversion from a little girl who finds solace in domestic chores and the warmth of her grandmother's tales to a strong lady who performs hanging, the plot explores the inner self of Chetana. It gives a poignant picture of Chetana's novel personality, more as a survivor than an ordinary woman sufferer. Some of her words and deeds together frame her strong identity. She, with utter ease proclaims that she does not want to be identified under the label of a hangman's daughter, rather wants to be the official hang woman. With this enthusiasm she shatters all the conventional and stereotypical outlooks of the then society. By outlining the obscure nook and corners of the buzzling city of Calcutta, Meera has given great care in bringing out oppressed characters like Chetana into the lime light. Her profession and the strong will she possess to show full justice towards her profession empowered her. Chetana's actions exist as a challenge to the phallocentric order of society as Laura Mulvey in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" says: "The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence…" (833).

Apart from tracing the revolutionary evolution of an ordinary girl, a critical study of the novel enables to travel through the psyche of the ordinary suffering folk. This multigenerational novel that gives way to penetrate deep inside the sobbing heart of a survivor becomes a record of love, power and resistance coiled together running parallel to the life of its characters. The struggle of women has never stopped yet. Millions of victims are still bearing the weight of their sufferings.Works Cited

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