

The Golden Line

A Magazine of English Literature

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Inaugural Issue
Volume 1, Number 1, 2015



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CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Interviews	
Interview with Prof. Shormishtha Panja on “How to Study English Literature”	2
Interview with Prof. Pramod K. Nayar on “How to Study English Literature”	6
Critical Articles	
The Function of Criticism at the Present Time <i>Maria-Ana Tupan, University of Bucharest, Romania</i>	11
Textual Hermeneutics: A Critical Investigation <i>Rob Harle, writer, artist and reviewer</i>	16
Escaping “the Pocket”: On Uses of Literature and Critical Theory <i>Reagan M. Sova, University of Louisville</i>	23
Moving beyond the Canons of English Literature: A Postcolonial Teacher’s Perspective <i>Mahua Bhattacharjee & Saswata Kusari Sarada Ma Girls’ College, West Bengal</i>	29
Why Read Dickens? - Discovering the Value of Sympathy in a Changing World <i>Robert McParland, Felician College in New Jersey, USA</i>	34
Pearl S. Buck’s <i>The Good Earth</i> : Condition of Women in China <i>Amrita DasGupta, Calcutta women’s College</i>	39
Mental Self-Exploration in Samuel Beckett’s <i>Molloy</i> : A Jungian Approach <i>Ali Jamalinesari, Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch, Iran</i>	43
The Unhappy Narcissism of J. Alfred Prufrock <i>Elham Shayegh, Miami University</i>	51
Studying Anglo-Indian Novels: A Forgotten Genre <i>Ayusman Chakraborty, Jadavpur University</i>	54
Reflections on Jayanta Mahapatra <i>Zinia Mitra, Nakshalbari College, Darjeeling, India</i>	59

Medical and Physical Terrorism in Dina Mehta's Play *Getting Away with Murder* 62
Bidhan Mondal

Home Ground-Foreign Territory: Study of Non-belongingness in Margaret 67
Atwood's *Surfacing* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*
Sutapa Roy, University of Gour Banga

Teaching Language through Literature: Some Probabilities 71
Mahua Bhattacharjee & Saswata Kusari, Sarada Ma Girls' College, West Bengal

The Importance of Recitation in Studying English Literature 76
Payel Chakrabarty, Bhatler College, Dantan

"English! Six armed god": Politics and Prospect of the English Language in India 79
Mir Mahammad Ali, Bhatler College, Dantan

Poetry

By Erica Warren, Abhishek Roy, Joyee Das, Jayati Das, Atul Singh, Wissem 87
Kheroufi, Sara Mehader, Sanjib Mandal, Sanchita Das

Short Stories

By Leah Burt, Sreeja Mallick, Mekhala Chattopadhyay, Rupam Sindhu Kalita 96

Artwork

Artworks by Soumitra Mandal 116

Digital Documentation

Fragments of Culture: Some Artefacts from Dandabhukti 121
By Students of the Dept. of English, Bhatler College

Editorial

We are happy to release the Inaugural Issue of *The Golden Line*. Few months back it was conceived as a collaborative platform involving teachers, researchers and students for creating a magazine on English literature, which would serve the needs of the students of English literature. We felt that students need both a magazine for access to better resources, particularly in India and a space for expressing their critical and creative talents and a network where students from various institutions can collaborate. We also wanted to open the windows to larger academic circle not just for students of our department, but also for students of other institutions. The online platform helped us to connect with contributors from various countries and from various levels, particularly from students from various colleges and universities. It is very encouraging to see that the contributors are very much talented and they may go long way if proper training and encouragement is provided and if the budding authors continue their passion of writing.

The focus of the issue, however, was “How to read English Literature” and we are very proud to have received valuable suggestions, ideas and clarifications from two great scholars: Prof. Shormishtha Panja and Prof. Promad K. Nayar. We are very grateful to them for managing time for long interviews with us.

We sought students-friendly critical articles from teachers and scholars from different parts of the world in the form of open online call. We were fortunate that many authors responded warmly to this and came forward with their valuable contributions. We hope to get more contributions from them in our future issues.

The Department of English, Bhatler College, Dantan has started a Certificate Course in Digital Humanities on experimental basis for empowering the students with new technological skills in studying literature and arts. Apart from their involvement in the making of this magazine, they were assigned with documenting some cultural artefacts at Dantan and they learnt few things outside the classroom in delightful mornings of the countryside.

The teachers of the department from the very start were much excited about this publishing project and they spent long time with the construction of the site and editing works. At the time of designing the site we faced a problem of a proper picture of a river in true artistic sense. Edith Spira, the visual artist from Vienna, allowed us to use one of her paintings on the site and on the cover page of the issue. We convey our sincere thanks to her.

We sought help from the Alumni Association of Bhatler College, Dantan and they also extended their hand of help just in time.

We are thankful to the members of the dynamic Governing Body of our college for all their encouragement for innovations in teaching-learning. Special thanks to our Chief Patron, Sri Bikram Chandra Pradhan, President of the Governing Body for his active involvement in our departmental activities, and to Dr. Pabitra Kumar Mishra, Principal of our college for his constant support and encouragement.

Interview with Prof. Shormishtha Panja on “How to Study English Literature”

About Prof. Shormishtha Panja



Shormishtha Panja is Professor of English, University of Delhi and Joint Director, Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Delhi. She received her PhD from Brown University, where she was awarded the Jean Starr Untermeyer Fellowship, and has taught at Stanford University. At Stanford, she was one of the first Indian nationals to be hired by the English Department. She has published widely in national and international journals and collections such as *English Literary Renaissance* and *Shakespeare International Yearbook* in the areas of her specialization: Renaissance studies, Shakespeare in India, gender studies and visual culture. Her books include (co-edited) *Shakespeare and Class* (Pearson, 2014), (edited) *Shakespeare and the Art of Lying* (Orient BlackSwan, 2013), (co-edited) *Word, Image, Text: Studies in Literary and Visual Culture* (Orient BlackSwan, 2009) and (co-edited) *Signifying the Self: Women and Literature* (Macmillan, 2004, rpt. 2007). She has been invited to lecture at universities in Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA. She has been awarded a Fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library, USA. At Delhi University, she has served as Head, Dept. of English, and Dean, Faculty of Arts, and has served as Chairperson, UCC, Arts Faculty (Redressal of Sexual Harassment). She has coordinated the project of producing English Literature e-lessons and video lectures at the Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of Delhi. She is the founder member of PEHEL: Delhi University Women’s Support Group and has been the President of the Shakespeare Society of India from 2008 to 2014. She is the author of a blog, *Delhi Musings*, on CNN IBN.

The Interview

In this interview Prof. Panja talks with Tarun Tapas Mukherjee, the editor of the magazine.

TTM: Greeting from the Golden Line! Thank you so much for managing time for the magazine out of your very busy academic life. I think both the students and teachers will be enriched by your opinions, advice, suggestions and guidelines.

Prof. Panja: Thank you for inviting me.

TTM: You are an exemplary academician, teacher, and an inspiration for both teachers and students worldwide. Please tell us something about how you became interested in the subject. Why and how were you attracted to studying English as a subject?

Prof. Panja: Thank you for the kind words. I don't know that I deserve such lavish praise. I was an avid reader all through childhood and initially wanted to be a fiction writer. My years at Presidency College introduced me to the fine art of literary criticism, my years at Brown honed my critical skills, and alas also curbed my creative writing!

TTM: Who were your inspiration as teachers? We are interested to know the academic condition of your times as student.

Prof. Panja: I can never forget Prof. Arun Kumar Das Gupta's lectures on Shakespeare and Keats in Presidency College. They were a revelation. I never felt that he was talking down to us undergraduates or diminishing the complexity of the text in any way. Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri too was an inspiring teacher. At Brown, Prof. Robert Scholes' graduate seminars and those of Prof. Barbara Lewalski were enlightening for their rigour and depth of scholarship.

The academic conditions of my student days was mostly listening to lectures in class, with very little interaction with the teachers, except for tutorials, long, very pleasant hours in the National Library doing research, and, at Brown, writing and presenting paper after paper (rather than listening to professors) and trying to find entirely original things to say even about Shakespeare's plays. It was great professional training.

TTM: You have vast experience as a teacher both in India and abroad. Do you now see significant change in the academic atmosphere and intellectual climate in India, particularly in teaching and studying English literature?

Prof. Panja: Vast differences. The students in Delhi are very different from the way we were in Calcutta in our student days, gratefully and silently drinking in information! The students today are much more competitive, well-versed in theory and not too interested in canonical literature. They prefer a cultural studies or post-colonial approach and study Indian literature rather than British or American literature, even in the English Dept.

TTM: How do you consider inclusion of various writings of Indian authors in English in the syllabi of English literature? What impact may it have for the subject in future?

Prof. Panja: I think it is a significant and healthy change. Students in India can relate to these texts in a way that they cannot relate to Chaucer or Wordsworth. However, I do think it important for them to study canonical texts as well. After all, they will have to teach these once they enter the teaching profession.

TTM: Now, we would like to learn from how students of undergraduate and postgraduate levels should approach drama, particularly Renaissance English drama in their syllabus in India.

Prof. Panja: I have always favoured close readings and looking at the annotations. The use of a reliable, authorized edition—eg. the Arden for Shakespeare—is indispensable. However, this should go hand in hand with looking at plays on stage or filmed versions of the same. The performance aspect of drama must not be ignored. Acting out scenes in class is a good idea.

TTM: What are the skills that are expected to be learnt by students while reading drama? And how can they master those?

Prof. Panja: I don't think there are any skills specific to any particular genre. Literature teaches us to read closely, to observe the human heart, to be eloquent.

TTM: The plays were written with the purpose of popular performance and not for the purpose of literature being read. Of course, in few institutions, Performance Studies is taught. But still, don't you think we need to incorporate the principles of Performance Studies in teaching drama in a class of literature?

Prof. Panja: Certainly. And there is a great deal of research currently carried out in performance studies.

TTM: How should teachers prepare themselves for teaching drama in effective way? Do you think there needs to be a course on teaching drama for teachers?

Prof. Panja: I think including new media in whatever form is an integral part of teaching drama. Take your students to see a play and write about their experience.

TTM: You have taught in various institutions abroad. Do you find any difference in intellectual climate and infrastructure between India and foreign countries?

Prof. Panja: There are enormous differences in climate and infrastructure. I can talk about the USA because I have been both student and teacher there. There is an abundance of riches available to students and teachers alike in terms of resources. You name the book, the journal, and they will get it for you. The library staff is enormously helpful. The professors impart professional training in every sense of the term. The emphasis is on original thinking and writing clearly and persuasively for the purpose of publication. Of course, the publish or perish syndrome is worrying, and, at times, the classroom teaching suffers as a result of the emphasis put on research. India, on the other hand, has brilliant teachers but not too many of them are publishing quality material on a regular basis. At times I feel that there is a lack of professionalism in Indian

academia. We have the best minds but not the best conditions for these minds to develop.

TTM: You had been the President of the Shakespeare Society in India for a long time. You must have noted how association with the Society at individual and social levels enrich the learning experience. But how can institutions located in remote rural corners of the country establish a fruitful collaboration with Shakespeare Society? Is there any plan to expand its area of operation by setting up units at district or university level?

Prof. Panja: I completed my second term as President in April 2014. Anyone can become a member of the Shakespeare Society and in fact we have as members a number of young teachers from small colleges in West Bengal, Haryana and Rajasthan, to mention a few locations. The Society cannot apply for UGC grants and so we collaborate with a college or university each time we have a conference, either national or international. In this way, we hope to travel the length and breadth of India. In our conferences, we make it a point to give young academics a chance to share their work.

TTM: What is your message and advice to the students of our college?

Prof. Panja: Enjoy these very precious years of your life! Read, write, be creative. Don't let your own opinion be cowed down.

TTM: On behalf of our students, teachers and college, thank you so much for sharing your invaluable time, experience, knowledge, suggestions and advice

Prof. Panja: I'm not very good at imparting advice. That's an evil word! I've enjoyed sharing my experiences. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Interview with Prof. Pramod K. Nayar on “How to Study English Literature”

About Prof. Pramod K Nayar

Pramod K Nayar teaches at the Dept. of English, The University of Hyderabad. His recent books includes *Posthumanism* (Polity 2013), the edited 5-volume , *Women in Colonial India: Historical Documents and Sources* (Routledge 2014), *Frantz Fanon* (Routledge 2013), *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) and *Writing Wrongs: The Cultural Construction of Human Rights in India* (Routledge 2012). He is currently working at a book on Human Rights and Literary Studies for Plaggrave-Macmillan, a book on ‘the culture of extremes’, and a book on the Indian graphic narrative. Due in January 2015 is his *Citizenship and Identity in the Age of Surveillance* from Cambridge.

The Interview

In this interview Prof. Nayar talks with Tarun Tapas Mukherjee, the editor of the magazine.

TTM: Prof. Nayar, sometimes the question—“Why Study Literature” is raised instead of “How to Study Literature”. Do you think such paradigm shift in our approach to literature can be more appropriate in guiding students rather than confusing them with the burden of evaluating something beyond their proper understanding?

PKN: I don’t see the two questions as separate – how we study Literature *is* why we study Literature. Our modes of making meaning, about, say, suffering or humanity in great pieces of Literature defines the reasons why we have come to the field at all. I doubt if the evaluation is beyond their proper understanding as you put it, simply because, if (a big IF!) we teachers do our job well, it isn’t too difficult to get them to ask the right questions about literary texts and by extension life itself.

TTM: What should be the first step of a student studying an undergraduate course of literature in general? What is your advice?

PKN: To enjoy reading and have a voyeuristic tendency! If you are a person who prefers the short-term pleasure of a tweet or an internet banner ad then perhaps this is not the field for you. If you enjoy being immersed in another world, made entirely by words, and if you have an interest in the lives of other people (we call them characters in books for convenience, but they are people!), then Literature is something you could do.

TTM: Generally the syllabi are divided in terms of poetry, fiction, non-fictional prose and certain applied aspects. How should students approach the structure of the syllabus? How should they prepare themselves for various genres?

PKN: First read adequate samples of each genre, to get a feel of the genres. Then read one text on approaching the genre – a textbook on reading fiction, another on poetry, etc. This will give them basic approaches, techniques of reading. The trick is to get them to understand the elements of every genre: characterization, plot, atmosphere etc in fiction, for example. Once this basic skill set in reading the genres is available to them they can read for the courses.

TTM: Would you suggest some general guidelines for reading and appreciating poetry critically?

PKN: I have in fact answered these two questions on fiction and poetry in the preceding one. There are plenty of wonderful beginners' books on the genres, which explain the constituent elements of the genres. I shall be happy to supply a list later, but I don't think it would be necessary. Once the basics of reading the genres have been mastered the students can be taught to examine larger dimensions, such as discourses, politics, ideologies, in the poem or novel. What has happened is with the increasing politicization of interpretation (by which I mean the increased interest in the politics of a text) we have stopped paying attention to foundational matters like the language and form of a text. Politics comes from the language of a text, and we have to first teach them to read a text closely, its language and form, its aesthetic principles, and then help them see that all of these (language, form, aesthetic principles) as also political. To jump straight at making sweeping generalizations about the 'politics of representation' or the 'politics of a text' without examining the mechanics of a text is, in my view, a very bad way of dealing with Literature. No critic anywhere in the world looking at politics ignores the language of a text – even the Marxists like Eagleton or Jameson are committed to the modes of a textual operation.

TTM: Why is the study of prescribed non-fictional prose works important for the students of literature? Are there some applied aspects to learn from their works?

PKN: Non-fictional prose is a highly respected genre. Some of the world's greatest polemics have been first articulated in the non-fictional prose of Paine, Marx, Freud, Gandhi, Ambedkar and others. The modes of presenting a case, an argument, that non-fictional prose reveals can help students read news analysis, serious political essays and other such forms of daily textualities. Autobiographies and biographies show us how people construct their pasts, organize their memories.

TTM: For the last three decades or so attempts have been made slowly but steadily to incorporate Indian Writing in English into the syllabi of English literature in India? How do you look upon this development?

PKN: A very necessary and socially relevant development that enables us to understand ourselves in certain ways, but also see how Western representations of us have worked, our role in the world, the world’s connections with India, etc. It brings us to an awareness of our immediate social realities in a different register of writing and, if we read them well, discern social commentaries, links to the world, etc

TTM: How should students prepare for Indian Writings in English?

PKN: Same as with any piece of writing – first an awareness of the language of texts, the contexts of their production and consumption and then their politics. I am against ghettoisation – that we should read IWE because we are Indians. That way we can extend the argument to say Malayalis will read Malayalam and Nagas will read Naga texts. The purpose of Literature is always, in my view, to read about the distant Other, the racially-culturally distant Other, to learn about difference, and not to go on reading about the familiar. It gives us the chance to not treat what we do not understand as monstrous. As Geoffrey Harpham puts it, ‘to hold the thought of the Other in our heads’. Literature is the last bastion of reading the Other and of respecting and understanding difference. If we start saying we should only read cultural familiar texts then we are one step away from demonizing the Other – which is what politicians do. So I would say we read IWE as Indian but also *worldly*, situating it within other postcolonial and world writings.

TTM: Generally the syllabi of literature in India are found to be lacking in applied and practical fields of study. More or less the pattern follows the one set by the colonizers here. Of course, changes are being made. Do you think there should be more applied aspects for the students? [If yes, what applied areas do you suggest for inclusion]

PKN: Digital humanities, Human Rights and Literature, Literature and Popular Culture (in Cultural Studies) are domains that need to come in, I would say. These enable the development of associated skills, of understanding other registers of language use, of politics in a new key.

TTM: Even if there are not applied aspects are not there in the syllabus, what should the students do to develop the applied skills which would be ultimately helpful for understanding literature better?

PKN: For me applied skills are not simply job driven – it is about critical thinking. This is about reflecting on how we arrive at meanings, how we contextualize interpretations of literary AND cultural texts, of the consequences of our readings.

TTM: The syllabi of literature are also found lacking in professional proficiency. A student may want to follow the career of journalism or script-writing, but little is included on such professional areas. Do you think new areas like Performance Studies or Media Studies or Digital Humanities should be included in the syllabi? Or any other area. Your views?

PKN: Digital Humanities is an addition yes, considering much of it is drawn from literary texts. Cultural Studies would include media and film and popular culture. I would definitely advocate a Cultural Studies addition to the programme. Am uncertain as to how we could do journalism and performance as well. Also, it cannot be the task of English/Literature depts. to do all of these, right?

TTM: If a student wants to follow such career, how should s/he start preparing from undergraduate level?

PKN: Developing specialized interests from year 2 of the BA would help, especially if we are in a position to offer a wider variety of courses beyond the Literature ones. Two papers or courses in the same field would help acquire considerable specialized knowledge they can build on.

TTM: Prof. Nayar, a new phenomenon occurred with the expansion of the internet and the web in India from 2000 or so. Studying literature is not confined to a physical library and conventional classroom. The web contains massive amount of study materials and resources. But again, the web can become a terrible distraction from study as it also unfolds a dark world of entertainment for the young eyes. How would you advise students in utilizing the web for the purpose of studying literature more effectively? And what should be the role of a teacher in helping students to utilize resources from both the offline and online worlds?

PKN: The online resources for studying Literature are simply enormous. Like all technological advancements, the Internet creates its own monsters if we let it. Discovering the treasures of the Shakespearean stage or the horrors of slavery online helps us contextualize texts better. Reading tools help us read them better. Teachers instead of complaining about the 'bad influence' of the digital (surely they complained about the arrival of print in the same way in the 14th and 15th centuries!), should demystify the Internet, use it for online discussions, resource sharing, etc.

TTM: In our time emphasis is being given on the use of ICT in classroom. But that is more connected with streaming out more information and with opening doors to many forms of other texts associated with a specific one. What should be the function of the teacher as the human source?

PKN: The teacher's job is not the supply of information but about imparting skills that enable the student to convert information into knowledge. We teach them, in Literature, how to read the word and the world.

TTM: In higher education much importance given on 'research' after finishing postgraduation in India and little on teaching. M.Phil and PhD are considered almost a kind of professional degrees for teaching. No formal training is arranged regarding

teaching literature and performing academic duties like invigilation and assessment of answer-scripts. What do you think about this?

PKN: These are different skills. I do not see how training in evaluation is connected to research abilities or writing skills.

TTM: Do you think there is a need to reassess and create new set of teaching methodology for literature in our time of multimedia experience and networked conditions? Should there be compulsory professional training courses for teachers?

PKN: Absolutely. Forms of writing and forms of reading have changed, and we have to account for this shift. Nothing compulsory works, as we both know (like Refresher Courses in India, from which very few really get ‘refreshed’!)

TTM: Finally an apparently absurd question. What if, instead of teaching a particular discipline of literature, say for instance English or Tamil or Bengali, an interdisciplinary course is prepared, like B.A in Literature, in which students will learn three languages—a foreign language (e.g. English), an Indian language other than the mother-tongue (e.g. Tamil) and a mother-tongue (e.g. Bengali) are taught? Would not such students be professionally more efficient? Would not the study of literature be more exciting for them with their access to varied forms of literature?

PKN: It would be wonderful of course provided the students have acquired the languages needed to read the literatures. Our students also come from very different backgrounds for whom one language itself can be sometimes a burden, so this has to be accounted for.

TTM: Thank you so much for your views. It is quite an enlightening experience for me. Thanks again.

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

Maria-Ana Tupan, University of Bucharest, Romania

Why are we posing a question which troubled Victorian Matthew Arnold in an age which is anti-Victorian if anything? Which, moreover, is anti-Arnoldian, in the sense that it has done away with such distinctions as that between high art and pop art, between poetics and politics, between culture and the historical world, working at the fuzzy boundary between text schemata and world schemata? Is scrupulous Arnoldian criticism of Kantian extract (epistemologically grounded) still relevant at a time of enraged battles between subscribers to various schools of postmodernist critical theory and anti-theorists? Siding with the former, we are trying to support our option through a single but telling example of the importance of New Historicist reconstructions of the epistemic background of the central concept in the Romantic poetics of T.S. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*: the imagination. The reference to Immanuel Kant is not new. Its refutation is. Let us play the role of a referee of sort...

Present day "sifting" of the "giants" may take such shocking twists and turns as a blunt "Goodbye, Kant!" in conclusion to an examination of *What Still Stands of the Critique of Pure Reason* - the subtitle of the book published by Maurizio Ferraris and Richard Davies in 2013. Less radical than they, Marshall Brown is not less dismissive on the topic of the Jena philosopher's influence on the romantics:

Blaming Immanuel Kant for the "exclusion of authentic selfhood from nature, the association of self-knowledge with passivity and mere continuity of existence, with a temporal experience compounded of stasis and frenzy, and ultimately with madness", Marshall Brown" (Brown: 73) points in the direction of Horace Walpole as object lesson of the philosopher's damaging influence on the emergence of Gothic types and generic landscapes: [...] "the true genius of Walpole's invention" is its "displacement inward [...] to the human inside of things [...], the thoughts and feelings of isolated individuals. [...]. Or even less, as Walpole's supernatural is full not so much of ghostly bodies as of parts - an arm here, a leg there, a nose elsewhere. Even the castle acquires something of the aspect of a body without organs, waiting to be animated by its rightful master [...]" (Brown: 28, 32).

One can only regret the stereotyping of critical vocabularies under the pressure of theory (we catch the familiar ring of a Deleuzian topos) or its insufficient assimilation in the context of "anti-theory" demands for relief from theoretic terror ...

Immanuel Kant uses concepts which are identical to those used by Coleridge in Chapter 13 of BL, the following excerpt from his master being absolutely necessary for a correct reading of his poetics, deliberately born of the alliance of poetry and philosophy:

“This synthesis of the manifold of sensible intuition, which is possible and necessary *a priori*, may be entitled **figurative** synthesis (*synthesis speciosa*), to distinguish it from the synthesis which is thought in the mere category in respect of the manifold of an intuition in general, and which is entitled combination through the understanding (*synthesis intellectualis*). Both are **transcendental**, not merely as taking place *a priori*, but also as conditioning the possibility of other *a priori* knowledge. But the figurative synthesis, if it be directed merely to the original synthetic unity of apperception, that is, to the transcendental unity which is thought in the categories, must, in order to be distinguished from the merely intellectual combination, be called the **transcendental synthesis of imagination**. **Imagination** is the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is **not itself present**. Now since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, owing to the subjective condition under which alone it can give to the concepts of understanding a corresponding intuition, belongs to **sensibility**. But inasmuch as its synthesis is an expression of spontaneity, which is determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely, and which is therefore able to determine sense *a priori* in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception, imagination is to that extent a faculty which determines the sensibility *a priori*; and its synthesis of intuitions, conforming as it does to the **categories**, must be the transcendental synthesis of **imagination**. It is an operation of the understanding on sensibility, and the first application of the understanding to objects of possible intuition, and at the same time the basis for the exercise of the other functions of that faculty. As figurative, it is distinguished from the merely intellectual synthesis, which is produced by the understanding alone, without the aid of imagination. Now, in so far as imagination is spontaneity, I sometimes call it also the **productive** imagination, and distinguish it from the **reproductive**, the synthesis of which is subject entirely to empirical laws, those of association, namely, and which, therefore, contributes nothing to the explanation of the possibility of *a priori* cognition, and for this reason belongs not to transcendental philosophy, but to psychology.” (Kant: &24)

Was Kant’s influence on Horace Walpole channelled into the triumph of reason or of its demise?

In a letter addressed to REV. MR. COLE, dated Strawberry Hill, March 9, 1765, the “Prince of English Letters” – to the point where his correspondence may pass for ingenious essays – is taking pains to explain away the supernatural in *The Castle of Otranto* in terms quite similar to Kant’s theory of the synthetic function of the imagination. Instead of “human inside of things”, Walpole mentions current, mundane

events which might have induced his sensational dream, casting about for a natural explanation:

“When you read of the picture quitting its panel,² did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland, all in white, in my gallery? Shall I even confess to you, what was the origin of this romance! I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle, (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story,)”

Horace Walpole goes on to enlist sites and objects he had known in his experience as traveller, perceived at different times and in different places, but whose common features his imagination had synthesized as belonging to a certain conceptual domain. It had subsumed them under the “medieval” or “Gothic” categories. Things as different as the Versailles Palace, a fabled bower (by Samuel Daniel in “The **Complaint** of Rosamond”), built by King Henry II for his mistress, Spenser’s epic of medieval chivalry, fairy tales, lived and read about are synthesized (relational identity) into the **generic landscape** of gothic space. The reverse, the representation of this landscape in intuition – in the first Gothic novel in the language – in the absence of the real *Anschaungen* and of the things themselves – is an example of what Kant calls Transcendental Deduction and of the workings of the **productive** imagination. Such “principles of composition” come closer to cognitive poetics or semiotic aesthetics than “the dreamlike animality of the madman” (Brown: 122):

“My bower is determined, but not at all what it is to be. Though I write romances, I cannot tell how to build all that belongs to them. Madame Danois, in the Fairy Tales, used to *tapestry* them with *jonquils*; but as that furniture will not last above a fortnight in the year, I shall prefer something more huckaback. I have decided that the outside shall be of *treillage*, which, however, I shall not commence, till I have again seen some of old Louis’s old-fashioned *Galanteries* at Versailles. Rosamond’s bower, you, and I, and Tom Hearne know, was a labyrinth:¹ but as my territory will admit of a very short clew, I lay aside all thoughts of a mazy habitation: though a bower is very different from an arbour, and must have more chambers than one. In short, I both know, and don’t know, what it should be. I am almost afraid I must go and read Spenser, and wade through his allegories, and drawling stanzas, to get at a picture.” (Walpole: web).

If we were to “correct” the philosopher in Lauren Golden’s patronizing tone, we would not suggest “the theory of evolution” as the appropriate answer to “*allgemeine Regeln, die wir nicht kennen*”:

“This was a difficult question for Kant to answer, and as stated previously, he was writing before the theory of evolution, it was impossible for him to consider that the brain/mind of an organism would develop according to the match between its

survival needs and capabilities. the categories contain the bases, on the part of the understanding, of the possibility of all experience as such.” (Golden: 71)

The aesthetic genius’s associative power can hardly be explained in terms of “theory of evolution” or “survival needs”. Actually Kant mentions the imaginative mind’s capacity to discover links between disciplinary fields. Imagistic poetics rose out of Alfred Binet’s proposition of replacing concepts with images in syllogistic ratiocination (image A triggers an association with image B, which also contains features common with image C, so that a new possible link is revealed to exist between A and C and so on) (Binet 130-145), as, unlike the classical syllogism, whose conclusion confirms the ... hypothesis, reasoning through images reveals new and significant connections in the phenomenal world (Logical circularity had previously been refuted by J.S. Mill).

Other related “sites” or “links” are Husserl’s eidetic reduction, non-locality of information in quantum physics, the reversibility of intrinsic/ extrinsic order (David Bohm), conceptual analysis reducing the infinity of utterances to eleven prototypical propositions of Artificial Intelligence computer programs, a.o. Leibniz was probably guided towards his proto-semiotic model of identitarian logic (relational versus essential identity) by his philosophy of monadic, all-inclusive entities, a form of monism. We incline to believe that, whatever “hints” Hume’s associantist psychology might have given Kant, the latter was never satisfied with less than universalist models of apprehension and judgement. In his 1798 *Anthropology*, the self-centred mind judging everything – in moral, in aesthetics, etc. – according to private norms, taste, standards is dubbed an “egoist”. One’s judgements need ratification from one’s fellow human beings, a token of universally accepted validity.

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Textual Hermeneutics: A Critical Investigation

Rob Harle, writer, artist and reviewer

Abstract

This paper gives a general background to exegesis and hermeneutics, then a critical analysis of the problems with existing methods and suggests an holistic methodology for deconstructing texts. Sacred texts are used as examples but the analysis, discussion and conclusions apply equally to all forms of literary texts. The contributions of Spinoza, Heidegger, Dilthey, Gadamer and Schleiermacher are acknowledged and discussed.

[**Keywords:** exegesis, Spinoza, Gadamer, textual analysis, Dilthey, hermeneutics, authorial intent, Heidegger.]

In this paper I look briefly at the history of the various modern theories of hermeneutics and then discuss in detail the main points which characterise these theoretical systems. I show through critical analysis that all these theories contain flaws and that none are definitive or can have the last word in the art or fledgling science of hermeneutics. From this critique I then offer, tentatively, an holistic approach to textual analysis including philosophical hermeneutics, with some guidelines from which to work. The holistic approach shows that texts, authors and words cannot be analysed independently of each other and certainly not without reference to the historical period in which they were created.

Hermeneutics can be defined as, “the theory or method used to interpret or understand the meaning of a text”. Although hermeneutics can be applied to understanding works of art and life (Being), it is primarily used for textual interpretation. In this paper I confine my discussion to textual hermeneutics with a slight emphasis on scriptural or sacred texts, mainly because these texts (or works of literature) were the first to be analysed in the post-reformation period. My analysis and discussion applies to all literary works including poetry, fiction, biography, philosophical treatises and scientific texts.

Modern hermeneutics developed from interpretation of religious texts, particularly Biblical exegesis in the 16th century. There were a number of important causes of the Protestant Reformation, one of these was that reformers wanted to remove the privilege of interpretation from the specialist clergy and translate the Bible, “...into the vernacular so that “ordinary” Christians as well as the priests and the aristocracy could read the words of scripture.” (Weeks, 1996. p.7). The Church had decided in the early centuries of Christianity that the Bible should be seen as unique to the religious tradition itself. The main point to realise from this is that the Church was not and could not have been

neutral, “Truth was what the Church taught on the basis of its traditions and its holy scriptures (Ling, 1968. p.318).

The Protestant Reformation theme of the “priesthood of all believers” and the growth of a large number of disparate branches of Protestantism show clearly that it is possible to interpret the Bible in different ways, even as committed Christians. In an effort to bring some balanced approach to Biblical interpretation, Spinoza developed guidelines for interpretation which are contained in his, “A Theologico-Political Treatise”, Spinoza’s main thesis is that, “...interpretation of scripture does not widely differ from the method of interpreting nature” (Spinoza, 1951. p.99). Just as the knowledge of nature is sought from nature so we must gain knowledge of scripture from scripture alone.

The universal rule, then, in interpreting Scripture is to accept nothing as an authoritative Scriptural statement which we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history. (Spinoza, 1951. p.101)

By history Spinoza means: (1) the language in which the Bible was written, by knowing this the interpreter can compare “every expression” (Biblical) with common language usage. In this case the interpreter must be competent in Hebrew. (2) An analysis of each book and its arrangement under headings of content, so comparison for ambiguity, obscurity and contradictions can be made. Spinoza insists that an interpreter must search for the meaning of the passages, not the truth, “...we must examine it solely by means of the signification of the words...” (ibid). (3) The circumstances of each book (Biblical), each author’s conduct, who he [sic] was and the provenance of each book. (ibid. pp.99-103). Spinoza insists that no matter how foreign to our reason a passage seems, we must not decide its meaning by using reason, we can only proceed using the above outlined procedure. He believed this method would show whether the intention of the author was metaphoric or literal and whether the text is direct reportage of historical events or whether it is second-hand reflective narrative and so on.

I think Spinoza’s great contribution to exegesis, not especially stressed in the literature, is that he shows there is a distinct difference between truth and meaning. Understanding the true meaning of the text is one thing, the truth of that meaning is a different matter. A matter properly located in philosophical debate, I discuss this further on.

Before looking at Schleiermacher, generally considered the founder of modern hermeneutics, it is instructive to note that these attempts to interpret the Bible were contemporary with the “Age of Scientific Reason”, and as such, the meaning of almost everything was evaluated in this new way of understanding (Weeks, 1996. p.11-12). It is almost impossible for us today to comprehend a world where meaning is not evaluated in a scientific way. We are so conditioned by scientific proof that to appreciate an alternative system, such as that of the Australian Aborigines, requires a courageous and intense mental effort.

Following Spinoza, with great influence from Kant and Hegel, the Romantic Movement or Romanticism developed. Perhaps the most important feature of Romanticism was the emphasis placed on self-expression and individual creativity, together with a rejection of the purely mechanical rules implicit in the Cartesian, “Age of Reason”. The vital influence for hermeneutics to come from this period was the new sense of history, that is, history was seen as essentially and distinctively human (ibid. p.14).

From Romanticism came the development of the Higher Criticism. It would seem obvious that to get to the true meaning of a text, that text should be an accurate version of the original. This requirement had not been addressed until the Higher Criticism, this movement was specifically interested in establishing, “...the original wording of Biblical texts from faulty copies” (Baldick, 1990. p.99).

Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics can be characterised by an analysis of authorial intention. He believes to understand a text we must understand psychologically the uniqueness of the author. And secondly, understand the influence of the cultural milieu upon the author, including such matters as the prevailing modes of expression and linguistic forms in use. Schleiermacher believed, “nature of language” was vitally important for hermeneutics because only through language could an interpreter gain access to “another person’s meaning”. As Eliade notes, in the early 20th century, “...the aim of interpretation was to discover the intention of the author” (Eliade, 1987. p.281). Schleiermacher’s methods had notably, insignificant influence on secular literary criticism.

Although Schleiermacher’s methods were within the spirit of the “Enlightenment”, it was Dilthey who proposed a discipline for the cultural sciences, the analysis of which would put them on a par with the natural sciences. Dilthey’s hermeneutics distinguished between these, in that cultural science is understood and natural science is explained. Whereas natural sciences are governed by Universal Laws, the analysis of cultural science, “...seeks to understand the action of agents by discovering their intentions, purposes, wishes and character traits” (ibid. p.282).

Dilthey maintains we cannot understand a text properly without a sense of history, that is, “...without understanding the external influences at work or the author’s development” (ibid.). Dilthey’s method could be termed, “a critique of historical reason”. He claims that because humans have a “shared universal human nature”, historical understanding is possible. The term *Erlebnis* means lived experience whereas, *Erfahrung* means scientific experience. Lived experience is what for Dilthey enables one human to understand another human’s life-experience, lived experience is that which contains new experiences which mediated by past experience anticipates the future (Warnke, 1987. pp.27-29). This obviously implies that an interpretation at age thirty, will necessarily be different than at age fifty. The consequences of this are, that it is possible, perhaps impossible to avoid, that a single text may be interpreted differently by the same interpreter at different times.

Even though Dilthey was concerned to show the distinction between cultural and natural science, Heidegger maintains that, “Dilthey was finally unable to overcome the subjectivistic tendencies of Western thought since Descartes...” (Eliade, 1987. p.284). Heidegger introduced clearly the notion that;

In all explanation one discovers, as it were, an understanding that one cannot understand; which is to say, every interpretation is already shaped by a set of assumptions and presuppositions about the whole experience (ibid.)

This for me is the single most important point to understand in the practice of hermeneutics. Bultman and Heidegger were close contemporaries, applying the Heideggerian concept of presuppositions and the “inherent historicity of human existence” Bultmann attempts to demythologise the New Testament. He shows how it is important, in practical terms, to minimise presuppositions. The interpreter must attempt to understand what vested interests he or she brings to the textual analysis (historical, psychological and so on). He is not suggesting that these presuppositions should, or actually can, be eradicated, only that an awareness of these will qualify the resultant exegesis. Bultmann insists that texts such as sacred texts must be analysed in an existential way. That is in the light of human existence in the here and now.

Gadamer builds on Heidegger’s hermeneutics and shows that, “The quest for a presuppositionless understanding is futile. Every text or object is interpreted from some standpoint in a tradition that constitutes the horizon within which anything becomes intelligible” (ibid.). Gadamer argues that hermeneutics is not to provide rules for interpretation but to, “analyze the inherent structure of understanding itself...” (ibid. p.285).

This axiom lands us squarely in the contemporary debate of hermeneutics and the second part of this essay, where I discuss the problems with past hermeneutical theories and offer some suggestions for future hermeneutical practice. Despite Gadamer’s admonition, I believe it is possible and essential to articulate certain guidelines or rules.

The first is that I believe hermeneutics should be approached on three levels. These levels though distinctive need not be mutually exclusive, in fact, grey areas necessarily have to exist. All levels need to be investigated to gain a comprehensive, though not essentially ultimate or absolute understanding of the text. This understanding is not to be confused with the basic meaning of the text.

The first level is the lower level, that of ordinary communication via the meaning of words. The second or higher level is the hidden meaning, if any. This would correspond to the deep and superficial meanings articulated by Chomsky and some Structuralists. There is not always a hidden meaning, when someone says, “Gee, it’s cold today”, for most people most of the time there is no more to it than a comment on the day’s temperature. Hermeneutics must endeavour to assess if and when there is or is not deep meaning. As a brief, simple example, a left-wing newspaper may print, “Politician

Bashes Striker!", this headline has four immediately obvious possible low level meanings: a worker on strike was verbally abused or physically hit; or the goal-kicker of a soccer team was verbally or physically abused by a politician. However, the deeper "intended meaning" may have been to show the politician as an aggressive, anti-unionist. Why this should be so is not the business of low level hermeneutics. As Spinoza insists, we must extract the meaning from the text not the truth.

The third level or philosophical level can only be approached after the first two levels have been examined. The philosophical efforts of Gadamer to understand understanding itself, although a noble enterprise, has produced a rift in classic hermeneutics and led to a kind of uncertain obscurantism. A kind of vicious hermeneutical circle.

The meaning of hermeneutics which is familiar to philosophers, theologians or jurists, according to which it is the art of interpreting classical, sacred or legal texts, consequently seems derivative in relation to the primary sense. (Bubner, 1981. p.27)

Heidegger's philosophical "primary sense" may see interpretation of classical hermeneutics as seemingly derivative but I believe without the lower levels of textual analysis the primary level has no relationship to textual interpretation. This is why I believe, to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of a text, we need the three levels of interpretation. It is the post-Heideggerian philosophy and philosophers such as Gadamer, Derrida and the Structuralists that have led basic textual interpretation astray.

The second guideline is to ascertain the authorship and type of text to be interpreted. Texts of antiquity such as the Upanishads are considered authorless in the sense that the authors can never be known. Texts of the Bible have both known and unknown authors but we can only know about them in a very limited way. Looking at texts such as, "Being and Nothingness", we know many details about the author, Jean-Paul Sartre.

According to Muslims the author of the Qur'an was God. Mohammed memorised and then transmitted orally the very meaning and words told to him by Gabriel the angel. One of the claims to authenticity of God's authorship is that Mohammed was a relatively uneducated man and could not have authored, what came to be the written Qur'an, by himself. So Schleiermacher's, "understanding the psychological subjectivity of the author" in this case would be impossible.

It can be seen from these examples that Schleiermacher and to an extent Dilthey's idea of knowing the author intimately (or at all), as being essential to textual interpretation, is at best limited and at worst absurd. Even when we know the author, it is problematic if we can know the author better than the author knows him or herself. This knowledge depends on the type of text being examined, if there is little or no biographical information about the author, then we cannot approach textual analysis from the

psychoanalytical understanding of the author's intentions. If however we know the author, such as Freud, we may be reasonably safe in ascertaining that Freud's work was driven by his own neuroses and this helps get a better understanding of his work. A further problem presents itself to this procedure. Which psychological or psychoanalytical system do we judge the author by: Freudian, Jungian, Rogerian and so on? A further interesting point to note is that sometimes the text may have multiple authors, as an example, newspapers. One author is the owner of the publication, his or her bias is combined with the individual journalist's and probably the editor's respective biases.

The third guideline is, if we wish to understand the original meaning of the author we must read the text in that author's original language. Again, Spinoza's foresight is evident. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, then translated to Greek and then to English. All but the most scientific texts lose or gain something in translation, some words are virtually non-translatable and we note this regularly in philosophical texts, one such example is Dasein. As the Bible should be interpreted from the original Hebrew, so should the Qur'an be interpreted in Arabic and the various Indian scriptures in Sanskrit. This of course implies that the hermeneuticist be familiar with and fluent in the language used at the time of the creation of the text.

The fourth guideline concerns the cultural milieu in which the text was created and that in which it is being interpreted. Most hermeneutical theories agree that an awareness of the cultural milieu in which the text was created is essential. It is also essential for the interpreter to be aware of the cultural conditions of which he or she is a part. As mentioned previously it is extremely difficult for late 20th century Western interpretation to take place outside a scientific paradigm and perhaps I should add a capitalist ethos as well. This is a general rather than specific presupposition.

The fifth guideline is that the interpreter must be aware of his or her specific presuppositions. Whilst Bultmann has covered this area, with its penchant for creating gross distortion of textual analysis quite extensively, it cannot be stressed how important it is for the interpreter to be aware of their own biases, agendas and perhaps even the ideological pressures they are working under.

In conclusion, it can be seen from the above look at hermeneutics, that it is a very complex subject, one which we still have much to learn about. I must agree with Weeks, in that Spinoza is, "...one of the formative figures behind the invention of modern Biblical and literary criticism" (Weeks, 1996. p.13). I hope I have shown in this essay that we can and must distinguish between basic textual analysis, through which we may arrive at the meaning proposed by the author and the philosophical interpretation of that meaning. The philosophical interpretation equates with Spinoza's "truth". The hermeneuticist of the future will ideally approach interpretation in this holistic way and be a scholar trained in the cross-cultural disciplines of: linguistics, history, psychology and philosophy, and if interpreting sacred texts, comparative religion.

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Escaping “the Pocket:” On Uses of Literature and Critical Theory

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Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory by Peter Barry is likely an example of what Valentine Cunningham refers to as “the exploding field of handy student handbooks and textbooks [in response] ... to those proliferating university courses called ‘Theory’ or ‘Introduction to Theory’” (26 – 27). Barry himself acknowledges the surfeit of texts in this genre, and even comments on the spate of texts in the 1990s with titles like “Post-Theory” or *After Theory*. Despite this however, he maintains that his text is still an indispensable tool for helping students approach and use literary theory because theory, he claims, has ceased “to be the exclusive concern of a dedicated minority and [has entered] the intellectual bloodstream as a taken-for-granted aspect of the curriculum” (1). As a thus engrained part of the curriculum, the dominant way in which theory is currently taken up and ‘routinised’ in literary studies is one of my main concerns in this essay. My aim is to articulate what I perceive as the hegemonic usage of theory, in its application to literature, a practice which has persisted now for decades. In my view, this hegemonic interpretive procedure has led to further cordoning off of intellectuals away from matters of political and cultural import. In addition to this critique, drawing from traditions in anarchism, cultural materialism, and presentism, I will attempt to briefly sketch out some core features of an alternative, interdisciplinary path for literary pedagogy and scholarship, one that will cultivate interdisciplinary conversations and better enable scholars to contribute to the ever-crucial task of identifying power structures and evaluating their legitimacy.

For at least the past thirty years continuing to the present, literary pedagogy, especially those courses early in the undergraduate major, seems to resemble a systematic and static procedure of application. In this hegemonic procedure, a certain selected theory is applied to a work of literature, which then produces a type of “reading.” In fact, we can see this interpretive procedure in play in the structure of Barry’s aforementioned text. In the table of contents, we find that the book’s chapters synthesize each major theoretical movement of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century – structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, feminism, queer theory, Marxism, new historicism and cultural materialism, post-colonialism, stylistics, narratology, and ecocriticism – and the chapters discuss major thinkers relevant to those movements before concluding with some guiding remarks for students. These guiding remarks describe to the student how experts apply the theory that has been covered in the chapter; they indicate “What [insert practitioner of theory] do” – e.g. “What feminist critics do,” or “What poststructuralists do.” The persistence, for decades, of this dominant interpretive procedure in the discipline is likely why Barry’s

book is now in its third edition and has remained relevant since its initial publication in 1995.

For an example of the way in which this hegemonic interpretative procedure is taken up in the undergraduate classroom, we can turn to Paul Fry, who teaches “ENGL 300: Introduction to Theory of Literature” at Yale University. Fry’s lectures for this course are available on the internet courtesy of Yale Open Courses. In his introductory lecture, which as of July 25, 2014 has over 224,000 views on YouTube, he tells his students, “Very frequently, courses of this kind have a [literary] text ... and then once in a while the disquisition of the lecture will pause, the text will be produced, and whatever theory has recently been talked about will be applied to the text” (Fry). Throughout his lecture series for the course, Fry demonstrates theoretical readings on a basic storybook for children, *Tony the Tow Truck*, so that his students may witness the application of a variety of theories on a simple subject. This pedagogical method also serves to instill a core feature of the hegemonic interpretive procedure in play; the diminishment of the literary object in favor of the primacy of the lens and the operation. Ralph Stevens of Coppin State University also has a similar series of videos. He instructs his students that the fundamental operational procedure of literary studies involves “taking a particular idea [the theory] and we’re saying, ‘Ok, how can we use that idea to understand literature?’” (Stevens). Stevens’ required text is *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* by Robert Dale Parker. Parker’s text, now in its second edition, takes a shape similar to Barry’s, in that it synthesizes major schools of thought and prepares students to apply those particular theories to whatever textual object is chosen by the student or instructor.

In the novel *Engleby*, Sebastian Faulks seems to understand this dominant interpretive method which has set the terms of pedagogical and often scholarly operations in literary studies. Set in the 1970s, Faulk’s protagonist, Mike Engleby, muses about a scholarly trend in English called “Theory” that looked “briefly promising” and “was just coming in” (22). He observes:

“The point about Theory was that it didn’t matter if you read *Jane Eyre* or a fridge instillation manual: what you were doing was studying how you studied them, and the important thing now was not the (anyway unquantifiable) “value” of the original work but the effectiveness of the theory. *Vanity Fair* or *Biggles* was the guinea pig; the vaccine being tested was the -ism (22).”

Later in the novel, Engleby, doubting the legitimacy of literary studies and even mocking his former colleagues along the way (“Ah. Dr. Stanley. I presume. How’s *Jane Eyre*? Married yet?” [33]), ends up switching his major to Natural Sciences.

Along with his understanding of the hegemonic interpretative procedure in literary studies, Engleby’s change in majors here is also significant when considering the historical tension between the humanities and the sciences. In *Literary Theory: A Reintroduction*, David Ayers reminds us that “Theory in its heyday [in the 1980s] was somewhat triumphalistic, and presented itself as a sort of enlightenment, a scientific dispersal of a mode of study previously mired in ideology” (55), even if, Ayers hastens to

add, theory also produced the notion “that narratives of scientific progress should be regarded as themselves mythological” (55). Antoine Compagnon similarly points out in *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense* that all the way back in 1895 the French literary critic Gustave Lanson critiques the scholars who had preceded him because “they had no ‘literary theory’” (8) – a polite way, according to Compagnon, of saying that these preceding scholars “did not know what they were doing, that they lacked rigor, scientific spirit, and method” (8). This long-observed pretense to scientificity in English studies intensified in the late 1970s after the proliferation of the dominant theoretical methodology I have been describing, and it came to the fore of conversation in the discipline after the infamous Sokal Hoax in 1996, an event widely perceived, according to Barry, as a humiliation of postmodern theory (286). Charges of theory’s pseudo-scientificity continue to this day from prominent voices in academia such as Noam Chomsky, and in 2005, Columbia University Press published a whole anthology, *Theory’s Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*, which presents related critiques and which claims to appear at “a moment when not only have theoretical discussions of literature become stagnant but articles and books are published in defense of the conceptual stalemates that have led to this very immobility” (1).

Beyond a seeming grasp for credibility (or viability) by the appropriation of scientific procedure – where one has a theory, an object against which to test that theory, and findings – Chris Hedges, in *Death of the Liberal Class*, further speculates that English departments have also gravitated towards theory and its methods of application as a way of avoiding controversy and politics. “Public values have been subordinated to torturous textual analysis,” writes Hedges, “There was nothing worth investigating, these poststructuralists insisted, outside of the text” (124). In essence, Hedges claim is that it is inside that space of inconsequential interplay, between theory and text, where academics may “hide out” so to speak, carrying on verbose analyses of texts, inaccessible to the uninitiated, not disturbing and hopefully remaining undisturbed by power structures on which they depend for their diminishing resources.

On this point, we can turn to another example of literature which critiques the critical practice of literary studies. Don DeLillo, in his novel *Underworld*, likewise seems to castigate this self-enclosed, feedback-loop-state of literary studies with the language he uses to describe “the pocket” – an underground military lair used for “exploratory research” (DeLillo 401). DeLillo writes that “They named it the Pocket after a creature called the pocket gopher that lives in tunnels it frantically digs under the furrowed dunes” (402). Later, he describes “the pocket” as:

“one of those nice tight societies that replaces the world. It was the world made personal and consistently interesting because it was what you did, and others like you, and it was self-enclosed and self-referring and you did it all together in a place and a language that were inaccessible to others” (412).

In *Underworld*, as with *Engleby*, we see contemporary literature that seems self-aware of the *operational methods* of its own criticism.

With this dominant interpretative procedure at the fore of the discipline, our resources and enrollment numbers in English studies in the United States have been decreasing as it appears that many prospective scholars, albeit for a variety of complex reasons, are choosing other paths of study. For the remainder of this essay, I will attempt to briefly sketch out what I hope will continue to expand the ledge of discussion about alternative ways to study theory and literature. In the words of Jesse Cohn, “I do not intend to invent anything here; that is, I will not propose *ex nihilo* to establish some new variety of theory (an as-yet unexploited brand?) that would be called” (404) ... “anarchist [literary studies].” What I hope to do, instead, is show how work in anarchist, cultural materialist, and presentist traditions could form the core features of an approach to literary studies that disentangles the hegemonic interpretative relationship between theory and text I have described and that also encourages interdisciplinary engagement, going beyond the “pocket,” to read and influence our ever-fluid contemporary situation(s).

An initial underlying core feature of any alternative method of studying literature which hopes to address contemporary matters of import should be the distinct tendency to seek out and examine power structures with the goal of determining whether those structures are legitimate, or whether they should be changed or dismantled in favor of a thoughtful alternative. Rudolph Rocker identifies this tendency as a “definite trend in the historic development of mankind” (Chomsky), and Chomsky further articulates this tendency by arguing “that at every stage of history our concern must be to dismantle those forms of authority and oppression that survive from an era when they might have been justified in terms of the need for security or survival or economic development, but that now contribute to – rather than alleviate – material and cultural deficit” (Chomsky). If we as scholars and pedagogues do not propagate this underlying tendency, sometimes referred to as anarchism, we may well never rise from the inconsequential interplay between theory and literature, or worse, if we attempt to address contemporary matters of import, we may end up appropriating the power of literature to forward reactionary goals. Cultural materialism, which has been taken up in the United Kingdom to a far greater degree than here in the United States, crucially recognizes this aforementioned tendency as a core feature of its methodology. Brannigan argues that “cultural materialism privileges power relations as the most important context for interpreting texts ... cultural materialists explore literary texts within the context of contemporary power relations” (9). (And while it is true that cultural materialism owes a great debt to Raymond Williams, and has roots in Marxist theory and in the Frankfurt school, “some critics, such as Tony Bennett, have disputed the claim that cultural materialism is necessarily a Marxist theory” (Brannigan 96). Furthermore, David Graeber notes, “There is no reason why one couldn’t write Marxist theory, and simultaneously engage in anarchist practice” (106).)

Another core feature of literary studies which hope to escape the “pocket” in order to address our ever-fluid contemporary situation should be the conscious orientation of concern with the present. Barry writes about emergent presentist critics in literary studies who “actively seek out ‘the present in the past,’ as we might call it, with the explicit aim of

speaking with, or negotiating with, the living” (293). Terence Hawkes is the foremost presentist scholar, and he takes his cue from Benedetto Croce who once said, “All history is contemporary history” (Qtd in Hawks 3). Hawks goes on to add that “it is impossible for historians or literary scholars to ‘make contact with a past unshaped by their own concerns’” (Qtd in Barry 293). In this sense, the desired ethic of situating one’s conscious orientation of concern in the present is one that seems to require only recognition on the part of the scholar because it is otherwise unavoidable. This is not to say though that one should remain interested only in contemporary events; here we can look to the work of anarchist writers and cultural materialist critics who are “invariably ... interested in history as a way of dislodging conservative ideologies of the present” (Brannigan 98).

Likewise unavoidable is the politicized nature of literary scholarship. An approach to literary studies which hopes to differ from current hegemonic methods will recognize as one of its core features the impossibility of resting cut-off inside a “pocket,” of remaining neutral to contemporary events. Drawing on sentiments expressed by Howard Zinn in *Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology*, scholars should recognize that “Surely, we want to be objective if that means telling the truth as we see it, not concealing information that may be embarrassing to our point of view” (6). However, Zinn rejects pretense to scholarly objectivity if that means claims of neutrality in power struggles, adding, “Indeed, it is impossible to be neutral. In a world already moving in certain directions, where wealth and power are already distributed in certain ways, neutrality means accepting the way things are now” (7).

Hopefully, the overlapping and interconnected nature of these three core features of an alternative literary methodology I have briefly sketched out here is apparent. However, there is one final crucial attribute of such a program of study that scholars should consider. We can turn to Cohn’s work in cultural studies to gain useful considerations about the ways in which we as literary scholars and pedagogues can recognize our own limitations. He points out how “anarchist scholars decline to play the role of a Leninist vanguard dictating correct ‘theory’ to activists charged with ‘practice’” (417) and encourages scholars “to find ways to prevent or at least limit the conversion of anarchist work in the academy into purely symbolic goods” (416). Along with recognition of and attempts to surmount certain institutional limitations, we can look to Laura K. Hahn and Maxwell Schnurer’s essay “Accessible Artifact for Community Discussion about Anarchy and Education,” where they consider the power of narrative itself as a way of “[helping] students [to] recognize their own agency, and [to] see the limitations of the spaces we convene” (149).

By adopting these core features – the tendency to question power, the recognition of the presentist and politicized nature of our work, and also the recognition of its limitations – scholars can position themselves to escape the systematized “pocket” of literary studies and instead interact with other disciplines towards the ever-crucial task of identifying power structures and evaluating their legitimacy. In this spirit, we can break with certain traditions to join with and draw from new or alternative interdisciplinary traditions such as anarchism, cultural materialism, geocriticism, and other movements of

scholars inside and outside academia who use their abilities to read, critique, and hopefully to improve our ever-fluid contemporary situation.

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Moving beyond the Canons of English Literature: A Postcolonial Teacher's Perspective

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“...it is common to see ‘literature’ defined as ‘full, central, immediate human experience.’
Raymond Williams. *Marxism and Literature*.”

“Why do we read literature?”- it is inevitably the first question that is asked to the undergraduate students of English Literature as they cross the threshold of school and come to the college with dream in their eyes of making it big. However, this simple and innocuous question seems to put the students in a fix altogether. The most familiar answer that we get is that reading English brings good jobs. So, as a teacher, active in the postcolonial period, it would be easy to conclude that they are living under a self-delusion and perhaps still suffering from a colonial hang-over. We concede the fact that English is needed to get jobs; but why would one enrol oneself to a course that is supposed to develop some ethics of reading, imagining and interpreting; and while doing so develop a keen sense of analysing the culture as literature itself is, possibly, the best form of cultural expressions. This leads us to some important questions regarding the politics of Education in our country itself. This paper, hence, would be interrogating the problems of perception and possible ways of overcoming these shortcomings regarding the notion of reading English literature.

The word job (*chakri* in Bengali; and *naukri* in Hindi) carries the connotation of servitude. It was during the colonial era that the native men started to recognize the essential need of *chakri*. In fact, the sermon singers of British imperialism, like Macaulay, wanted to breed up a class of Indians, brown in colour but white in taste, who would be able to serve the British Empire suitably. In that context, having apposite knowledge of English language became mandatory for securing a job. Ironically though, the texts that were taught in English curriculum were models of the great literatures of the West. Historians^[1] have repeatedly shown that such a curriculum was chosen to impart ‘superior’ cultural values to the natives with the hope of bringing them out of their intellectual slumber. While doing so, they were able to convince their Indian counterpart of their ‘inferior’ moral values. Though students learned the language and secured jobs, they gradually moved away from their respective cultures as such a curriculum failed to recognise the indigenous values. This cultural ethos is satirically projected by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in his short fiction ‘Babu’ where he ridicules this class of Bengali men who believe that the British are inevitably superior to them; and while

believing so, they seem to look down upon their own culture. With the idea that the natives are 'white man's burden' and they need to off-load it by educating them, the British chose curriculum not only for English but also for other subjects keeping in mind the European values as it suited their political need.

Teaching in a college situated in a semi-rural area of West Bengal, year after year, we have been encountering students who are not properly conscious of what reading literature is all about; as they have barely read any literature in their life-time. Most of these students come from Vernacular medium schools and have a very vague idea about Shakespeare and Wordsworth; and scarcely any idea about the Donne, Marlowe and other Champions of the language. As they progress with the course, they find themselves moving deep into the mud by the sheer credence of the *syllabus*. In this situation, it is very easy, as a teacher, to distance yourself from their misery and de-motivate them by saying that they should look for some other courses appropriate for themselves. Moreover, the irony lies in the fact that those who enroll themselves in English Honours course seem to have an illusion that they have already mastered the language. It is a reality that they solve grammatical problems rather nonchalantly; write essays and paragraphs quite brilliantly. However, grammar and writing are something that they have in their school syllabus. In our country, unfortunately enough, there is nothing beyond the syllabus. The schools that cover the most amount of syllabus are considered to be the best ones. Researchers of Educational science have shown that teaching more amounts of texts does not guarantee better and more efficient learning. In our culture, greater emphasis is placed on scoring marks in examination; albeit by cramming 'notes'. Students are seldom encouraged to think imaginatively, to read on their own, and write creatively. With such a dubious educational background, they come to college to pursue a course that demands creativity and imagination. Instead of believing in their creativity, students expect themselves to be spoon-fed by the teachers. And if that doesn't happen they resort to 'cheap' notebooks that provide 'answers' and they try to pass the examination by cramming them down. It is unfortunate but the situation is mostly like this. And by the time they realize that they have taken a wrong approach, it is inevitably too late. Instead of pursuing the study of literature any more, after completing their graduation, most of them look for jobs that have got nothing to do with literature.

There is a tendency in a section of the academia to consider the students as 'dumb'. However, we believe that such an attitude is highly erroneous. If we are to blame anything, it's primarily got to be the education system. We never try to cultivate the imaginative faculty of a student. Our syllabus is strictly based on the touchstone model popularized by Matthew Arnold where the texts written by much celebrated authors are crammed in with the view of showing the students how glorious English language and culture is. In the very first year itself the students have to read Metaphysical poetry, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and various other texts that are considered to be the marvels of English literature. However, these texts cannot be segregated from the culture that shaped up the imagination of these Poets and authors, and unfortunately though, students seem to have no perception of those cultures. In this respect, C.S. Lewis's observation becomes very handy, "Literature just adds to reality, it

does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become"ⁱⁱⁱ. In this respect, we might argue that it would be impossible for students to understand 'competencies that daily life requires and provides' by reading such canonical British texts. As literature is considered as an extension of the culture students have to read books to get a glimpse of it where these texts were born. However, such glimpses are of course not enough to shape up their imagination. Intimidated by the massive grandeur of these texts, students feel exasperated from the very beginning. Instead of appreciating the sheer beauty of a Shakespearean sonnet; or the magical charisma of Satan; or the brilliant arguments of the metaphysical poets most of the students are concerned about getting their answers ready for the exams. If the answers are ready-made, it is even better. It's all very good to teach them Shakespeare and Milton and Pope. But as long as they don't expand their understanding of the culture which produced these marvellous texts, their reading will never be complete. Will this situation continue to be as it is? Or can this negativity be turned into a positive atmosphere? Let us ponder upon some possibilities to come out of this apparent crisis that is going to breed even more mediocrity.

In order to eliminate the fear and inhibition, that we have seen students encounter regarding these canonical texts, we may resort to an interdisciplinary approach. According to Roland Barthes:

It is indeed as though the interdisciplinarity which is today held up as a prime value in research cannot be accomplished by the simple confrontation of specialist branches of knowledge. Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins effectively (as opposed to the mere expression of a pious wish) when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down — perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion — in the interests of a new object and a new language neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought peacefully together, this unease in classification being precisely the point from which it is possible to diagnose a certain mutation. (1470)

With an interdisciplinary approach we may encourage students to use her own cultural understanding in interpreting the text. We should try and intersect the study of literature and film; literature and theatre; and literature and fine arts. What this would probably do is to give a visual image of the text to the students. Instead of reading the text loud in the classroom we may start off by showing them a movie on *Macbeth*, which would give them a better perception of the Elizabethan and Jacobean culture rather than the printed words. The students will also develop a clearer perception of the minute nuances of English theatre as well. We believe that such an interdisciplinary approach will also encourage the students to come out of their shell, and if that happens, students would surely be able to expand their horizon of critical thinking. Such interdisciplinarity will also be achieved if the basic tenets other forms of knowledge (such as Sociology and Psychology) are corroborated with the interpretation of literary text. In our academia, such an attitude is generally taken in the Postgraduate courses. However, it will not be erroneous to look for such an attitude for the undergraduate students as well. With such

an approach, the students will be able to subvert the hegemony of Eurocentric literary criticism as well.

If students can clearly visualize the culture from where a literary text emerges, then they can indulge in the practice of close reading; and we are of the opinion that close reading itself is a political act. Why so? Every text is political in its own way. For instance, when Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* the text emerged out the dominant sentiments of an Imperialist where Prospero's (white man) victory over Caliban (native) becomes a symbolic manifestation of the world that the British imperialists wanted to see. Though appreciative of the beauty of the text, we, the readers of the third world should also be able to decipher the inherent politics of the age that finds a manifestation in this Shakespearean play. The Postcolonial critics have already shown how this text is an emblem of colonial discourse. By letting the students know about the culture we might enable them to interpret and subvert the text's hegemonic and Eurocentric parlance from their own perspective. In this respect, it also becomes important to resist the canonical and Eurocentric interpretation of these texts as well^{liiii}. Using Barthes words, we might encourage the students to look at the text as a 'subversive force in respect of the old classifications. (1471)'As Interdisciplinary models focus on real-world learning, students can use the text to understand their real life, and vice-versa, by subverting the hegemonic analysis and interpretation that are available to them by a subjective involvement with the text itself.

In sync with the arguments made in the previous paragraph, it becomes imminent now to talk about the changing trends in English literature itself. English, especially in the Postcolonial era, is going through a sea-change, and students, from the beginning itself, should be made aware of the paradigmatic shift of this changing dynamics of English. Britain no more has the stranglehold over literature. New literatures in English or Postcolonial literature have emerged out of this atmosphere of change. In its own way these literatures try to destabilise the existing patterns and discourses of English literature. Over the last few decades of the previous century many a country was decolonized. Along with the decolonization of the political spectrum, there has been a sustained effort in decolonizing the minds as well. However, as it stands, things apparently haven't really changed. The texts that were considered models of great humanistic values two hundred years ago are still considered the same. If one is willing to learn the use of rhetorical language, these texts should serve as models of excellence. However, one must be aware of the fact that such texts are also models of Euro centrism criticized by Postcolonial critics. It is not surprising that students, who have no idea of the British culture of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, find difficulty in reading between the lines and interpreting the text on their own. Instead of limiting their imaginative faculty, it would be more rational to present them some texts which would be easier to associate with. This can be corroborated with the aspect of interdisciplinarity mentioned earlier. From our limited experience we have seen that students tend to associate better with a text that talks about Kolkata streets or Mumbai squalors rather than those situated in the Elizabethan court. As they learn to read and interpret these texts on their own, they can aspire to be more creative; and if they become more creative,

the canonical texts will not pose a threat to them. Postcolonial literature, to be specific, is the expression of the third world people and students must be made aware of that expression from the early phases of their pursuit of English literature so that they can find a comfortable footing.

Suggesting a specific model of studying literature is fraught with tremendous risk as such suggestions run the risk of becoming a metanarrative in itself. However, the methods of study that we have proposed are in sync with the changing nature of the world politics, along with it, the changing nature of literature itself. We earnestly hope that by becoming more politically conscious of the cultural spectrum from which literary texts emerge students can think more imaginatively and write more creatively.

Notes:

[i] Gauri Viswanathan's important work *The Masks of Conquest* is an important contribution to this field of study.

[ii] This line quoted from Goodreads. Hyperlink: www.goodreads.com/quotes/30083-literature-adds-to-reality-it-does-not-simply-describe-it

[iii] By using the word resist we are trying to suggest that students must not avoid such interpretation. The politics of reading can only be realised when the students start subverting the Eurocentric, racist and heteropatriarchal reading of the text.

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Why Read Dickens? - Discovering the Value of Sympathy in a Changing World

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Charles Dickens is a world-class author whose messages to his Nineteenth-Century readers remain strikingly relevant for us in the Twenty-First century. The pragmatic philosopher Richard Rorty has suggested that Dickens is the kind of author whose works one would like to have nearby because his ideas and themes are the kind which can sustain human civilization. In Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), he says that Dickens writes the kind of book that is "relevant to our relations with others, to helping us to notice the effects of our actions on other people. These are the books which are relevant to liberal hope, and to the question of how to reconcile private irony with such hope" (141). This comment reflects a perception of Dickens's ethical merit that was held by Dickens's own Victorian readers. They too saw that Dickens's quality of sympathy speaks loudly of human values and ethical principles. As John Bowen observes, in Charles Dickens's novels we hear the voices of people of all classes that are "suddenly and overwhelmingly blown back toward us in the form of an ethico-political responsibility" (255-69). Dickens's stories continue to play a role among us today as a point of reference in our efforts to construct responsive societies of mutual respect and ethical integrity.

However, Dickens does more than this for the thoughtful reader. He has taught many people how to read English better, observes historian Jonathan Rose, who has documented the role of Dickens through the autobiographies of immigrants and workers in Great Britain. Dickens became quite popular in India among those who were literate in the English language. (Even so, he was outsold in India for a time by G.M.W. Reynolds, as Priya Joshi has pointed out.) Popularity, in Dickens's case, also led to longevity and influence. This is because Dickens's fiction is filled with claims about human responsibility for life that we might call universal. Dickens urges his readers to think critically through his English characters and settings about the world that they live in.

This challenge to think critically is an important feature of what reading literature holds for us. By imaginatively entering Dickens's stories, we are drawn to sympathize with some of his characters: particularly the innocent children he creates, like Oliver Twist and Little Nell, or the uncertain and awkward attempts at adulthood and sophistication of Pip in *Great Expectations*. We recognize the hopes of Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* and her search for her origins and her identity and we see the tragedy of Jo, the crossing sweeper, who is unable to read. Reading Dickens has led reformers to work to change the circumstances that people live within. For example, one American reader, Joseph Pierce, who borrowed *Oliver Twist* three times from the New York Society Library, used his

ample means to start two orphanages. Another reader in upstate New York founded a hospital for people suffering with mental difficulties. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881) wrote:

He had a heart which brought him into sympathy with all those phases of humanity which were intellectually interesting to him. He loved the rascals whom he painted, and enjoyed the society of the weakest men and women of his pages; and it is this sympathy which gives immortality to his novels. (71)

Wayne C. Booth, in his book *The Company We Keep* (1998), argued for a re-centering of ethics in our contact with literature. Booth, who spoke of “friendship with books” and of “the exchange of gifts” (3-6), proposed that we who are concerned with ethics are interested in any effect on the *ethos*: in this case, on that of a reader or listener. Powerful stories, he said, may contribute toward a conversation among us. So we are led to ask, what happens as we read? With what quality do I accompany these authors and these characters, plots, and scenes? Who am I as I read and with whom am I keeping company?

Charles Dickens was quite aware of the ethical power of fiction upon his audience and he consciously sought connection with his readers through an appeal to *ethos*. Indeed, for Charles Dickens, his relationship with his readers constituted the greatest love affair of his life (Butt and Tillotson, 1957). They, in turn, kept company with this author. Keeping company with Dickens offered them connection with each other: a means of sympathetic identification that they shared. They were a community of readers engaged month to month with a serial publication that urged them to be attentive to issues of justice and an ethics of care.

It takes a good deal of time to read a Dickens novel. With the exception of his novel *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens’s Victorian novels are quite long. In style they are of another century- a contemporary reader meets with long paragraphs, lengthy sentences, and curious descriptions of characters. Reading Dickens involves a reader in the fictional dream that is unfolding. In the Nineteenth Century, readers often read Dickens’s fiction in serial installments. They would read a bit of the story in a periodical and it would end on an exciting scene or problem and then they would have to wait for the next issue to see how that problem was resolved. Today the reader has to patiently read and allow the novel to create that fictional dream.

Dickens’s message to England of his time is equally valid in our own. It was a call to take care of the people: from the rising middle class to the struggling working poor. It was a reminder that people who work hard merit amusements, as he pointed out in his first edition of his periodical *Household Words* in 1850. He insisted on the remarkable and unexpected connections between people and issued a call for conscious awareness of aspects of society that were in need of repair, sympathy, and intervention. People laughed and cried as they read Dickens and his fiction was read across gender and class by a wide range of people of different races, ethnicities, occupations, and regional commitments. Dickens was read by workers seeking self-improvement, as well as by people who sought social and economic development. Most of all, he drew sympathy from his readers for his

characters. For example, in *Bleak House*, the plight of Jo, the crossing sweeper, is beset by poverty. However, he is equally poor in his inability to read. Jo is unable to make any sense out of the many signs he sees around him. In Dickens's creation of this character he expresses a call to recognize the urgency of promoting literacy and reading. This has become increasingly important in our information saturated world.

In addition, Dickens's novels raise important questions about whom and what we value. In *Great Expectations*, his protagonist, Pip, inherits a great deal of money. This changes his life situation from that of an apprentice blacksmith to that of an aspiring young professional in the city of London. However, this legacy he has been given by an anonymous benefactor is something he has not earned by his own diligence. He becomes conceited, proud that he can wear fancy clothes and be "a gentleman." When his stepfather Joe Gargery the blacksmith comes to London to visit, he is awkward in his new surroundings. Pip realizes that he has neglected Joe: a man who is far from sophisticated but who is genuine and sincere. Pip learns a lesson that material values are not as important as the character of people. In many other ways, this novel shows how Pip grows to become a more thoughtful and genuine person.

To write a long essay about Dickens's *Great Expectations*, one has to get absorbed in his long novel. As one is entertained by the story and his fascinating characters, it is important to consider one's own impressions. Sometimes it is helpful to jot these down on paper, or type them into a computer. Critical thinking about the novel may be developed by asking questions about Dickens's characters and the situations that they find themselves in. A long essay might focus on one main character's qualities and concerns, such as those of Pip. Asking questions about this character will lead the reader to some observations. It is then useful to propose a thesis: such as an assertion about this character and his or her motivation and goals. Or, one might write about how this character changes during the course of the novel. For example, one might write about how Pip goes from being a poor boy on a foggy heath in England to an adult in the city and what learns in the process.

Dickens enlists his readers in this sympathy for his characters: from the orphan Oliver Twist, who is forced to live on the street and is urged by the criminal Fagin to pick pockets, to Little Nell, a young girl who wanders the streets in search of her lost grandfather. It is this rich sympathy that the novels of Charles Dickens may encourage in readers. Of course, everyone reads a bit differently and one will not necessarily become more empathetic by reading Dickens's novels. But some thinkers, like the ethicist Martha Nussbaum believe they will. It is this sympathy in Dickens that Nussbaum pointed to in her advocacy of ethical fiction. Nussbaum, in *Poetic Justice*, examines Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) for its ethical imperative and call to sympathy and how the novel rejects "the economists' habit of reducing everything to calculation" and seeing only "abstract features of people and situations" (44). She echoes the idea of a "vast sympathetic participation in the daily life of mankind" that philosopher George Santayana saw in Dickens (59-60).

Philosophers have responded this way to Charles Dickens's fiction because it is clear to them that he was fundamentally concerned with ethical action and believed that novel writing and reading was a practice that was fully engaged with life. We read at the conclusion of *Hard Times*, Dickens's narrator's final words: "Dear Reader! It rests with you and me, whether in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be." Dickens here calls us here to create a just world- even where the Coketown of *Hard Times* or the London of *Bleak House* are unjust and characters like Stephen Blackpool or Jo the crossing sweeper die without justice.

This concern for disadvantaged people appears throughout Dickens's novels. In his panoramic cross-section of London, Dickens shows us people in poverty and in need. He prompts his audience to ask where justice is when bad things occur in this world. How can innocent Little Nell of *The Old Curiosity Shop* die so miserably? Why are there Poor Laws that send Oliver Twist out onto the streets? Why must Tiny Tim be handicapped and perhaps die so young? Why do villains get away with murder? Why does justice get tied up in interminable cases before the courts of Chancery?

Dickens appealed to a Victorian audience seeking moral grounding in a changing world. Critiquing institutions, bureaucracies, and legal systems, he sounded the call to make these institutions responsive and responsible. With *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickelby*, he criticized institutions responsible for the plight of poor children. With *Bleak House*, he examined the legal system. With *Hard Times*, he assessed the educational and personal losses of imagination to utility and fact. Beyond this, he urged the humanization of his characters. Dickens fictional creations, from David Copperfield and Pip to Sidney Carton and Eugene Wrayburn (and his readers) are led to ask the question, what ought I to be? In Dickens, the moral life is about discovering the ideals for human life and learning to embody them in one's life. He finds virtue and the wellsprings of life in sympathy.

The sympathetic and moral challenges of Dickens's fiction are an important resource for us, as they were for Victorians, who responded to the changing world around them: a crowded, diversified environment caught up in the engine of modernity. They remain a significant resource for people today in a developing, changing twenty-first century world.

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Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth*: Condition of Women in China

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Throughout most of history, women have had fewer rights, opportunities. Wifedom, motherhood were a woman's significant profession. This essay argues the status of women in the background of colonization and bondage of native culture in China inclusive of the elemental qualities of a man's attitude towards a woman putting aside the relationship between a ruler and the ruled. The diagnosed problem of women's inequality in society vividly portrays the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood. The representation of women in literature is one of the most important forms of 'socialisation' for providing the role models which indicate to men and women the acceptable versions of the 'feminine' goals and aspirations. However the growth of European capitalism in 1500s subjected women to "double marginalization". Apart from their subjugation to the native mechanisms of patriarchy and cultural mindset of men perpetuating sexual inequality they were also subjected to imperialism. European capitalism by displaying their control over spirituality, land, law, language, education, health, family structure and culture subjects women to double pressure, resulting in poor health, social disruption, low educational achievement, suppression of culture, language and spirit of the indigenous populations.

China was a special case in terms of colonization. There was high demand for Chinese tea, silk and porcelain in the British market, owing to which multiple countries colonized China except America who created the Open Door Policy stating that everybody can trade with China. Not only did China have economic and materialistic variety but it also had cultural diversity. Drawing inspiration from such a country Buck decided to write her novels. In her blossoming years, Pearl witnessed a political upheaval in China, where hatred against the foreigners resulted in the Boxer Uprising of 1900. Chinese soldiers in this era were indistinguishable from bandits, who lived by rape and plunder. The one child policy Act of 1938, exercised its power permitting female infanticide, female neonaticide and filicide to gain ground. Many a times pearl found bones, fragmented limbs, attached head and shoulder so tiny lying in the grass, that, she knew, belonged to dead babies, maybe girls suffocated or strangled to death at birth. Her frequent visits to China countryside awarded her the sight of abandoned baby girls, left for the dogs to devour. China was always plagued with bad health conditions. Even she lost her siblings Maude, Edith and Arthur at an early age because of dysentery, cholera and malaria respectively. Cries of women railed on the streets of China, she grew up listening to them, calling back the spirits of their dead babies.

In unison with degrading political and health situations was the age old painful Chinese traditions inclusive of the bizarre foot binding tradition, wife purchase and girl

child trafficking. Such early exposure to the negatives of the society left a lifelong impression on her, vividly expressed in her highly acclaimed novels hence, she acknowledged her growth years in China as the “fantastic era.” Women liberation was pressing forward whereas sexual revolution was still to pave its way. Buck made a rational approach to the subject of women subjugation, well portrayed in her novels *East Wind: West Wind*, *The Mother*, *Pavilion of Women*, *The Good Earth* and *Peony*. The best perspective of a woman’s role during this era can be properly perceived only after reading *The Good Earth*. The gruesome role of women as detailed throughout the novel underlines their social status being embedded on their contribution to the *Amour Propre* of the male protagonist reminding us of Simone de Beauvoir’s statement made on the history of humanity as a history of keeping women in silence. In spite of being an apparently simple novel, it expresses intricate feminism through the characters of O-lan and Lotus.

In her personal life Buck was very disillusioned, she found out that the man she had married stifled her most fundamental needs resulting in her broken marriage. She even had a handicapped female child finding expression in the handicapped eldest daughter of Wang Lung. The wise O-lan in *The Good Earth*, the self taught Jade in *Dragon Seed*, the “vigorous and lusty” Carie Sydenstricker in *The Exile and My Several Worlds*, are all women who often suffer at the hands of men who cannot acknowledge and frequently do not even comprehend their emotional needs. Pearl counted herself among these women, and every story bears an impression of her personal life.

O-lan is introduced in the very first chapter of the novel. At the age of ten she was sold off to the Great House of Hwang to be raised as a slave girl. Sometimes in the 20th century in China, poor families would often sell their daughters off for slavery or prostitution. Looking at his wife Wang Lung sees no “beauty of any kind in her face” but rather “a brown, common, patient face with no pock marks on her dark skin.” Her lack of beauty not only confines her as a kitchen worker in the Great House but also prevents her from receiving spousal love. But Wang Lung could not afford a beautiful wife. On their first meeting Wang Lung notice the unbound feet of O-lan highlighting her denial of the tradition which presented respect and recognition to women in their in-law’s house, after several years of suffering. Such tiny feet are praised even beyond dowry, as an unquestionable proof of a woman’s capacity to suffer and obey Even though O-lan has unbounded feet, she stands apart as the illuminated instance of an obeying wife. While preparing hot water for her father in law she states “I took no tea to the old one I did as you said.” She not only performs household responsibilities, but also struggles to find ways to please her husband. A typical Chinese peasant woman who is strong but silent. She gives birth to four children, pointed out as a mockery of “modern childbirth” by Barbara Lebar. She bears her children alone without a doctor, midwife or husband. This event validates the point of Wang Lung’s unaffectionate attitude towards her wife. After marriage she was forced to discharge her duties as a servant rather than a marital partner. On giving birth to a son, she takes pride for bringing glory to her husband’s ancestry by fulfilling a wife’s principal function of bearing sons. Forced to flee or die out of starvation their family due to famine their family arrives in the city, joining thousands of peasants to

beg on the streets. When it seemed that all was lost, a combination of good luck and O-lan's will to survive conspired to return them to their home with undreamt of wealth but, money only breeds deception, mistrust and heartbreak for the woman who saved them. Even after supporting her husband through tough times, Wang Lung fails to appreciate her qualities. To avoid such sorrows in her youngest daughter's life, who is unusually beautiful, she binds her daughter's feet. The next main female character in the novel is Lotus, who is a concubine. She is projected as a foil to O-lan. Wang Lung's shame for having a plain wife leads him to the tea shop in the town where he meets this beautiful prostitute. She excites him with her flawless beauty, ultimately making him fall for her. She is a woman of delicacy and elegance, the complete opposite of O-lan. She is materialistic, demanding for jewels, clothes and food from Wang Lung. Both the women come to hate each other and are sheltered in the opposite parts of the house to avoid conflict. It was a common practice in China, where a man could keep two women under one roof, one for pleasure and one for household chores. Whenever Wang Lung's father sees Lotus he shouts out "There is a harlot in the house!" giving rise to comic relief within a tense novel. As chaos reigned in the early gold rush age social conventions were thrown to the wind with no one left to be concerned about the qualities of a proper woman. Wang Lung is so mesmerized by Lotus that he gifts her a pearl which was kept aside for his first daughter. His emotions of love are based on the skin colour of women as he remarks "Why should that one wear pearls with her skin as black as earth? Pearls are for fair women!" Wang Lung takes interest in fair women and gazes at them whenever he gets an opportunity. This questions the power of the colonizer who controls a country for economic benefits but fails to control the actual nature of human beings, their desires and aspirations. In such a situation the ruling party is just reduced to the inferior status of a hollow posing dummy.

Such display of women subjugation is the centripetal force of the novel. The women characters are developed as stereotypes to convey a social message and shatter the facade veiling the original meaning of traditions. The responsibilities of a wife that a woman must fulfill for the well-being of her family is stupefying. The idea of strangling a child at birth or selling her off as a slave or prostitute is itself a shame. It is shocking that women of different classes are compelled to such disrespect. Through the dynamics portrayal of women. In this novel, Pearl not only displays the reality but also empowers us to sympathize with them. This inferior status granted to women by traditional China was the major impetus behind the emotional impact in most of Pearl's story.

The question arises: in spite of being from America, a place equally against female freedom in ancient times considering a woman's place to be "at home". Still she takes up China as the background of her novels. It may be due to her roots being anchored in the land of red dragon, exposure to whose culture, made her an alien among her American counterparts.

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Mental Self-Exploration in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*: A Jungian Approach

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Abstract

*Samuel Beckett is categorized as an absurdist dramatist. Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of Absurd*, states that absurdist writers dealt with the theme of man's sense of anguish and torture caused by living without any purpose. All characters of Beckett's dramas are deformed just like Molloy who deteriorates as the novel comes to an end. Actually, Beckett's characters are wanderers who try to establish a sense of meaning for their existence; they are in search of self. As his works represent, Beckett uses Jungian archetypes in order to show the aspect of self. This article tries to demonstrate the lack of identity in Molloy's Characters in the light of Jungian archetypes throughout the story.*

[Keywords: *Molloy, Samuel Beckett, Archetype, Jung, Self, Deterioration.*]

1. Molloy

Molloy (1977) is a novel which has two parts; the first part includes Molloy's search for his mother, and the second part is about Moran's search for Molloy. In the first part, Molloy is trapped in his mother's room, writing a report which every week a stranger comes and gets these papers and in return gives him money. One day, as he was looking out of the window, he saw two persons "A and C on a road who were going toward each other, unconscious of what they were doing." (1977, p.5) Later after seeing them, Molloy decided to go after his mother whom he did not know where she was. At the beginning of his journey, Molloy suffered from one of his stiffening legs. He used his bicycle and set off his journey. On his journey, first he went to a city where he did not know where it was. In the city, the police arrested him and took him to the police station. There he was investigated to say his name and show his identification card, but soon he was freed on the occasion that they discovered him a miserable man. After that, on the way to his journey he hit a dog on the street with his bicycle. The owner of the dog, Lousee, asked him to help her with the dog to bury him and wanted Molloy to stay with her all long. Molloy accepted and stayed with her for some months; there Lousee treated him like a mother, but after sometimes Molloy decided to follow his journey. He left his bicycle and the things he had there and continued his way without knowing where to go exactly. He passed the streets and reached the jungle where now his both legs stiffened. As he went more and more, he became weaker and weaker. In the jungle he saw a charcoal-burner, who invited him to his hut; but Molloy killed him. Gradually, Molloy became weaker and was not able to

walk. Therefore, he crawls on the ground and finally he was trapped into a ditch. There he waited for a help regardless of his disappointment.

The second part of the novel is about Moran, a detective who is obliged to find Molloy. Moran is a detective who works for an organization which is managed by Youdi. One evening Gaber, a messenger from Youdi, came to Moran and said to him that he had to find Molloy. Moran took his son with him for the journey. From the beginning, just like Molloy, one of Moran's legs stiffened. On their way, they passed a forest just like Molloy. Moran gave his son some money in order to buy a second-hand bicycle, and stayed in jungle for rest. On the first day, when his son left him, he saw a stranger who came near to him with stick. To him he was too old, and dressed in such a way that he had not seen before. The stranger asked bread and Moran gave him one, and after that the stranger went away. On the second day, again Moran saw a man who was in search of a man with stick, whom had been passed by earlier. At this time, Moran killed the man, and waited for his son to return. On the third day, his son returned with a second-hand bicycle. After some days they reached to Ballyba, Molloy's city. They took refuge in a camp and rested. Due to his bad behavior toward his son during the journey, the day after reaching the city his son left him. Moran was so weak and his other leg began to stiffen, too. At this time, Gaber arrived and said to him that his mission was finished and he had to return home. When he returned home, he saw that everything had been changed. His family had left him, and his house had been collapsed. At the end like Molloy, he had to report everything to his organization.

2. Jungian Approach on *Molloy*

As Jung (1969) claims, anima is a female aspect within a man. In fact, it is the opposite sex which appears in literary works. In *Molloy*, anima appears with Molloy's mother, Lousse, and Ruth. Since Jung states that the mother archetype can be regarded as a kind of anima, first there is the exploration of mother archetype in the sense of anima.

Molloy cannot remember his mother's name. It shows his bad memory of the past or his ignorance and reluctance toward his mother. He called her 'Mag', which resembles to the word 'Ma'. Molloy says that:

I called her Mag, when I had to call her something. And I called her Mag because for me, without my knowing why, the letter g abolished the syllable Ma, and as it were spat on it, better than any other letter would have done. And at the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly. For, before you say mag, you say ma, inevitably. (1977, p.15)

Molloy does not have a good view point about his mother. Actually, he hates her and this hatred is shown in their communication that they did not have, except the moment when Molloy knocks her skull in order to make a communication. (1977, p.15) He even states about his mother's appearance "the shrunken, hairy old face" (1977, p.15), which is not satisfying to him. He claims that his mother was not able to talk, or

understand anything. He calls her “the poor old *uniparous* whore, deaf, blind, impotent woman.” (1977, p.17) In fact, Molloy’s mother represents the negative aspect of anima or mother archetype. He convicts his mother of having born him into this world “that old bitch, gives a kind of her lousy unconquerable genes.” (1977, p.89) At first, Molloy did not intend to go and find his mother, since there passed a long time during his life and he did not search for his mother; it seems that his mother was not important for him. But when he saw A and C, and heard the angelic voice, he decided to go after his mother. At the end, he did not find his mother and just he was in his mother’s room, lying down. Therefore, his search for his mother was not successful. And since searching for mother means searching for the meaning and self, consequently, he did not find meaning in his life and did not reach his self.

Another woman in the story is Lousse, whom Molloy hit her dog with his bicycle and killed it. Lousse might be regarded as a Jungian mother archetype and anima. When Molloy killed her dog, she forgave him on the condition that to help her to bury the dog. She helped him, provided food, and treated him like a mother “they had carried their impertinence to the point of washing me, to judge by the smell I gave off... They have shaved me.” (1977, p.39) In fact, these actions have been done based on Lousse’s orders. In this regard, Molloy is treated as a son and Lousse is like a mother, and he is satisfied in living there:

I could not prevent her having a weakness for me, neither could she. I would live in her home, as though it were my own. I would have plenty to eat and drink, to smoke too if I smoked, for nothing, and my remaining days would glide away without a care. I would as it were take the place of the dog I had killed, as it for her had taken the place of a child. I would help in the garden, in the house, when I wished, if I wished. I would not go out on the street; for once out I would never find my way in again. I would adopt the rhythm of life which best suited me, getting up, going to bed, and taking my meal at whatsoever hours I pleased...All she asked me was to feel me near her, and the right to contemplate from time to time this extraordinary body both at rest and in motion. (1977, p. 50)

On the other hand, Lousse is described as a negative character, in spite of being described more positive than Molloy’s mother. Molloy believed that she was going to poison him gradually “and doubtless she had poisoned my beer” (1977, p.49), in order not to let him go away from her. Because, for several times he asked Lousse that where was he now and which way he had to go, but she did not reply him; because she wanted him to stay there. Therefore, he is suspicious about her with poisoning his beer. In fact, Lousse or Sophie Loy (another name for Lousse which Molloy uses because he does not know her exact name) represents Jung’s archetype of wisdom. In Jung’s theory the name Sophia is the feminine archetype of wisdom. Here, Molloy spoke about her as a seductive person who tried to poison him. Ironically, here Molloy draws a negative picture of Lousse, who is trying to prevent Molloy from his journey. Consequently, Lousse functions as a negative anima. Finally, one day Molloy escaped from her house secretly and continued his journey. In this regard, once again Molloy was not able to accept his anima and failed to reach his self.

The third woman who represents Molloy's anima is Ruth, whom Molloy had a sexual relationship with her. Molloy saw Ruth in "a rubbish dump." (1977, p.61) Like Lousse, Ruth's identity is not clear, since Molloy called her as Ruth and sometimes as Edith "she went by the peaceful name of Ruth I think, but I cannot say for certain. Perhaps the name was Edith." (1977, p.60) But, he was suspicious that if that was a true love or not "perhaps after all she put me in her rectum... but is it true love in the rectum?" (1977, p.61) Moreover, Molloy doubted that even if she was a man as he states that "Perhaps she too was a man." (1977, p.61)

Molloy actually is searching for a fellow; that is why at first he decided to go after his mother. Then he saw Lousse and Ruth. But, in fact, he was not able to find his mother, and was not able to communicate with Lousse and Ruth. Actually, whenever Molloy wanted to know a woman and make a relation with her, immediately he disgraces her and moves away. Therefore, he was not able to achieve his self.

As Jung (1969) declares, one of the aspects of achieving the process of individuation is mandala, any circle image with squares. In this story, Molloy faced this aspect but unconsciously left it. After leaving Lousse and Ruth, Molloy continued his search for his mother. When he left the town, he reached the forest, where he came to the center of it, to the crossroad. He says:

The forest was all about me and the boughs... From time to time I came on a kind of crossroad, you know, a star, or a circus, of the kind to be found in the even most unexplored of the forest. And turning then methodically to face the radiating paths in turn, hoping for I know not what, I described a complete circle, or less than a circle, or more than the circle, so great was the resemblance between them. (1977, p.91)

The mandala image shows the psychic wholeness of the person that one can reach it through recognizing it. In the forest, in this crossroad, Molloy saw a charcoal-burner, who invited him to his hut to rest and stay with him for the rest of his life. Molloy asked him the way to the nearest town but he did not answer him and just wanted Molloy to stay. Actually Molloy does not know the charcoal-burner's name or if his job is really that. He just guessed that by the evidences "I say charcoal-burner, but I really do not know. I see smoke somewhere." (1977, p.92) Therefore, the charcoal-burner represents Molloy's ego-consciousness. Since Molloy wanted to find his mother, he refused to stay with him. But the charcoal-burner tried to prevent him and Molloy killed him by his crutches and left the place. In Jungian terms when a person recognizes this image, he will find his wholeness. But, here, Molloy unconsciously left it in order to find his mother which is the symbol of meaning for him, despite his failure for that, too. Actually, he thought that if he leaves the place, he will find the meaning through his mother, but he was wrong. Consequently, Molloy moved from his wholeness toward the worse aspect of his nature which is his beastly aspect, because he killed the charcoal-burner just like an animal.

As mentioned, when Molloy saw A and C he made up his mind to go and find his mother. When he saw them, he described one of them (C) as "bare-headed, wore sandals, smoked a cigar... followed by a dog" (1977, p.8) and "he looks old and it is a sorry

sight to see him solitary after so many years, so many days and nights unthinkingly given to that rumor rising at birth and even earlier.” (1977, p.6) This rumor at birth can be an allusion to Christ's birth, which this man considered to be a Christ figure who symbolizes the wise old man. Therefore, Molloy decided to follow him “I watched him recede, at grips (myself) with the temptation to get up and follow him, perhaps even to catch up with him one day, so as to know him better, be myself less lonely.” (1977, p.7) These words show Molloy's desire for getting knowledge and having a fellow man. In spite of having desire for knowledge, Molloy was not able to reach the man and states:

But in spite of my soul's leap out to him, at the end of its elastic, I saw him only darkly, because of the dark and then because of the *terrain*, in the fold of which he disappeared from time to time, to re-emerge further on, but most of all I think because of other things calling me and toward which too one after the other my soul was straining. (1977, p.8)

In this aspect, Molloy failed to reach the wise old man because he did not talk to him or even reach him. Another aspect of the wise old man is the shepherd whom Molloy saw when he decided to find his mother. Actually, shepherd is the traditional sign for wise old man, Jesus or prophets. One morning when Molloy opened his eyes he saw a shepherd with his dog watching him laid down. At this time Molloy asked the shepherd a question that if he is taking the flock to the fields or slaughter house; because the field for Molloy represents the salvation, the right way, and fertility. By these words, he wanted to know whether his soul can achieve this salvation and the right way. But the shepherd did not answer him and moved on to his way. In this story, all the wise old men were not able to answer Molloy, fulfill his curiosity, and save him; they fail to cover their role. In Molloy's story, one can trace the archetypes. Based on the Jungian theory, the process of individuation is the bridge for a person to achieve his self and identity. Since Molloy was not able to integrate all these archetypes into his consciousness, and his search was not a successful one, therefore, he failed to reach his self.

Moran is a detective who is obliged to find Molloy. He has a son and a maid. It seems that he is a wealthy, religious man from a good family who has a high rank in society. Like Molloy, he is in search of the self and meaning. Actually, Moran has a social mask. Based on Jung's archetype (1969), persona (mask) is a kind of mask that each individual wears in order to hide his true nature and identity from the others. In this novel, Moran is described as a religious man who goes to church every Sunday and pretends to have a strong belief in God. When Gaber came to him and gave the instructions the time passed and Moran says, “It was too late for mass. I did not need to consult my watch to know, I could feel mass had begun without me. I who never missed the mass, to have missed it on that Sunday of all Sundays! When I so needed it.” (1977, p.105) This shows that he was sad by missing that Sunday worshipping. On the other hand, he even forces his son to go to the church on Sundays too, and he doubted that if his son has really gone to the church that day and asked Father Ambrose “if he had noticed his son at the last mass.” (1977, p.111) All of these show that he is so strict in his beliefs. But later, little by little he loses his faith. For example, when he was disappointed and confused with his journey he asked “the Lord for guidance.” (1977, p.112) Later, he

says that “God is beginning to disgust him,” (1977, p.117) or in the last part of his journey when he was lying in forest he asked himself some theological and religious questions that “would I go to heaven? Is it true that the devils do not feel the pains of hell? What was God doing with himself before the creation?”(1977, p.189) These ideas make him disappointed and gradually shatter his beliefs.

The other mask that he has is his relationship with his son. Actually, he loves his son as he states, “did he love me then as much as I loved him?” (1977, p.134) But, he is so strict and serious toward him and wears a violent paternal mask about his son. When he reprimands his son he feels pity on him, too. He says:

I was sometimes inclined to go too far when I reprimanded my son, who was consequently a little afraid of me. I myself had never been sufficiently chastened. Oh, I had not been spoiled either, merely neglected. Whence bad habits ingrained beyond remedy and of which even the most meticulous piety has never been able to break me. I hoped to spare my son this misfortune, by giving him a good clout from time to time, together with my reasons for doing so. (1977, p.106)

This shows that he just wants to act severely in order to treat his son in a best way. In fact, this is his mask that he has for his son, just as Jung says that one has a mask even in his familial relationship. Moran sets a kind of father image to his son, a kind of father who acts like a paternal shadow. Jung (1956) explains that “the father acts as a protection against the dangers of the external world and thus serves his son as a model persona” (p.208), consequently, whatever Moran denied in himself, and whatever he wished to be, tried to make in his son. For example, he says, “I controlled myself. He was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, a thing I do not like to see. But there are nastier gestures, I speak from experience.”(1977, p.110) Therefore, Moran’s violence toward his son increases and he tries to suppress his son’s actions. For instance, he states:

Out? I said. Where? Out! Vagueness I abhor [...] to the Elms he replied. So we call our little public park. And yet there is not an elm in it, I have been told. What for? I said. To go over my botany, he replied. There were times I suspected my son of deceit. This was one. I would almost have preferred him to say, for a walk, or, to look at the tarts. The trouble was he knew far more than I, about botany. Otherwise I could have set him a few teasers, on his return. (1977, p.111)

In other parts, during his journey with his son, one can see more instances of these cruelties. For example, he wants his son to pedal the bicycle regardless of his sickness. Consequently, with these cruelties and bad behaviors, one morning his son left him. (1977, p.181) In this regard, one can trace the concept of mask in Moran, who in his social interactions and familial relationships with his son hides his real nature. He did not have a strict belief in God or religion, but just pretends to be the one like. Moreover, his reaction toward his son shows that he loves his son but wants him to act in a good way; but it had a reversal effect.

The only woman in this story is Martha who works in Moran’s house. It seems that there is not a good relationship between them. Moran is cold and strict to Martha and at

the same time he is afraid of her too with regard that she may hurt him. For instance, when Moran says to her “you will not go out today” immediately “knowing her capable of poisoning him”, he gives an opportunity to her to go out the next day to avoid her from poisoning him. (1977, p.108) In addition, Moran does not like to let Martha interfere to his personal life and he tries to put her away from his affairs. For example, he did not tell her that they were leaving the house because he could not trust her:

I had not yet told her we were leaving. I would not tell her the last moment, one foot in the stirrup as the saying is. I did not wholly trust her. I would call her at the last moment and say, Martha, we are leaving, for one day, two days, three days, a week, two weeks, God knows, goodbye. It was important to leave her in the dark. (1977, p.116)

But his effort is vain since she knows about their leaving, as she says, “you ought to eat something hot, before you leave. And who told you I was leaving? [...] I am not blind, she said.”(1977, p.131)

Consequently, this kind of relationship shows that Martha and Moran are not able to communicate and trust each other and try to hide everything; in fact, they try to overcome the other side. Although Martha is the servant in the house, she tries to insist and impose her ideas on Moran:

The rocking-chair, she would have you believe, was the only possession to which she clung and she would not have parted with it for an empire [...]. It is interesting to note that she had installed it not in her room, but in the kitchen [...]. In the kitchen all must be of wood, white and rigid. I should mention that Martha had insisted, before entering my service that I permit her to keep her rocking-chair in the kitchen. I had refused, indignantly. Then, seeing she was inflexible, I had yielded. (1977, p.121)

This matter shows that Moran and Martha just try to come along with each other. There is not any love between them. But, when Moran wants to leave, he goes to see Martha for the last time:

I went to the kitchen [...]. Martha watched me in silence, lolling in her rocking chair [...]. Then almost in the same breath, seeing her so old, worse than old, ageing, so sad and solitary in her ever-lasting corner, There. I advised her [...] to have a good rest while I was away and a good time visiting her friends [...]. I carried this sudden cordiality so far as to shake her hand by the hand [...]. When I had finished shaking it, that flabby red hand, I did not let it go. But I took one finger between the tips of mine, drew it towards me and gazed at it. And had I had any tears to shed I should have shed them then. (1977, p.135)

This part of reaction shows that Moran for a short time feels pity on her, which during all his life he was not aware of her. Therefore, although Moran feels pity on her again he is not able to say anything and show his sympathy. On the other hand, Martha did not say any words to sympathize with Moran and just was wondered if “Moran was

not on the point of making an attempt on her virtue.” (1977, p.135) So, Moran’s integration with anima again fails.

Moran faces with wise old man too, like Molloy. When he and his son go to Ballyba, they see a shepherd with his dog and the flock. By seeing the shepherd, Moran decides to go to them “leaving my son I went toward them [...] now I was in the midst of the sheep.” (1977, p.179) Moran did not say anything to the shepherd and no words were exchanged between them; in his longings he wanted to say “take me with you; I will serve you faithfully, just for a place to lie and a little food.”(1977, p.180) Finally, the shepherd and his flock leave him alone. Here, one can see the failure of the integration of Moran with wise old man, since if the shepherd represents the wise old man, he must help him with his journey. But here they did not talk to each other and Moran’s desire as a faithful follower remained without any result.

3. Conclusion

According to Jung (1969) every man can achieve his self through the process of individuation. In order to achieve the process of individuation, one must integrate the archetypes into his conscious mode. In Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy*, the characters of Molloy and Moran were not able to integrate their animas to their consciousness. Moreover, the wise old man was not able to help them. Apart from all, Moran wore a mask too. The characters did not reach their selves; so, since the process of individuation did not take place and the archetypes did not integrate to the conscious where it is a place for identity, the characters did not achieve their meanings and deteriorate through the ending of the story. As one can see, Molloy at the beginning of his journey was able to walk, while at the end of story he could not walk and crawled on the ground.

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The Unhappy Narcissism of J. Alfred Prufrock

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“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is the reminiscence of a session of psychoanalysis. Similar to a patient revealing his mind to a psychoanalyst, T. S. Eliot’s “patient... upon a table” talks his mind throughout the poem. “The Love Song” reflects the anxiety of a young or middle-aged man (or person) to confront the external reality. Hesitant to address his “overwhelming question” to the women in the party, Prufrock never dares to endanger his situation by establishing a connection with their world. It seems that the melancholic atmosphere of the poem is the result of Prufrock’s anxiety from confrontation rather than an outcome of an actual confrontation: “They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”... They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!” (Eliot 40-45). In condemning the external world, Prufrock restores his anxiety. According to Sigmund Freud, “[...] anxiety can be resolved by psychical working-over, i.e. by conversion, reaction-formation or construction of protection” (Freud 1990: 16). Shaping a protective shield against anxiety, Prufrock turns his attention away from the external world into himself. This conversion or “withdrawal from the external world” is what Freud would call “narcissism”(57). According to Freud there are two stages of narcissism: primary narcissism and secondary narcissism. Primary narcissism, which appears in childhood, shows the fact that “human being has originally two sexual objects—himself and the woman who nurses him”(Freud 1991: 18). The child’s love for himself is called “primary narcissism.” This primary narcissism may reappear in later stages of life as a result of psychic tensions, for instance at the loss of a love-object, the ego reduces psychic tensions by replacing the lost object with another object i.e. itself. This substitution of love-object with the subject’s ego is called “secondary narcissism.” “When the ego assumes the features of the [lost] object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the id as love-object and is trying to make good the id’s loss by saying: “Look you can love me too—I am so like the object’ (Freud 1990: 25). The ideal image of self or the ego-ideal “is the substitute for the lost narcissism of childhood in which [the person] is his own ideal” (Freud 1991: 24). According to Freud this ideal image can be:

1. What he himself is (i.e. himself),
2. What he himself was,
3. What he himself would like to be,
4. Someone who was once part of himself (Freud 1991: 20).

It seems that Prufrock’s narcissism is the third type: What he himself would like to be. What we see at first glance is an anxious disgust rather than a loving attitude toward himself, the anxiety about his body (“I have seen my head grown slightly bald” (Eliot 82)) and about his mental abilities (I am the “Fool” (119)) reflects his disapproval of the present Prufrock. Simultaneously, the poem depicts an ideal image of masculinity: “In the room

the women come and go. Talking of Michelangelo.” Michelangelo as the sculptor of male beauty is a representative of an ideal masculine body. The desire for a perfect masculine body comes and goes in Prufrock’s mind while women are talking about Michelangelo. Instead of Prufrock’s sexual desire, women provoke his longing for an ideal masculine body. Prufrock’s desire for such an ideal body is a narcissistic one. The society of Prufrock presents a scattered body of women, an image of a feeble man (himself), and an ideal image of distant men (Michelangelo, Hamlet, and John the Baptist). Prufrock presents women in bits and pieces (“eyes,” “arms,” “hair,” “perfume”), while using a large number of allusions to picture masculinity in its complete perfect form.

The body/mind dichotomy is presented among male figures in the poem. While Michelangelo represents ideal body, Hamlet and John the Baptist stands for an ideal mind. Possessing neither an admirable body, nor mental power, Prufrock sees himself as Polonius, the “Fool.”

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord...
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool (Eliot 109-118).

Is Prufrock happy of being an attendant lord? Is he satisfied with who he is? If he is, why should he introduce himself as the prince’s (Hamlet’s) advisor and not simply any advisor? The answer comes in the line that contains John the Baptist: annoyed with not being a prophet, he reveals his dream:

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat (Eliot 84).

Here, we face another speaker who is in contrast with the “attendant lord.” His physical and mental features do not arouse admiration but Prufrock desires it by imagining a better self through what Freud would call “sublimation.” Sublimation occurs when “a special institution in the mind constantly watches the real ego and measures it by the ideal” (Freud 1991: 25). In the process of sublimation picturing himself as a poor creature insufficient for people’s affection, Prufrock produces an ego-ideal in form of Michelangelo, Hamlet and John the Baptist to be pursued and desired by others and by him. Male body as depicted by Michelangelo is the body that Prufrock loves or in Freud’s words “would like to be.” Love for his ideal body takes his attention away from women as objects of desire into himself what Freud would call “subject’s desexualization.” “Sublimation is a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct’s directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality...The transformation of object-libido into narcissistic libido which thus takes place obviously implies an abandonment of sexual aims, a desexualization—a kind of sublimation, therefore” (Freud 1991: 24-25). In a process of sublimation, his ego-ideal becomes Prufrock’s love-object desexualizing his relationship with the world.

Prufrock's relationship with himself is an amalgam of love and hate. He roughly despises himself and eagerly loves himself. The best of Prufrock's self-love appears in the images of illness and death. Who is the "patient" on the table whose face is "yellow" and pale, who is "asleep," "tired" and "malingerers"? The resonance of self-pity is obvious in the poem: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (Eliot 73). He is so involved in self-pity that people's reactions, cares and concerns make no difference in his condition: "And I have known the eyes already, known them all—" (55). Not only has he already known the people, he also holds in mind a ready picture of all events and circumstances: "For I have known them all already, known them/ all...evenings, mornings, afternoons" (50). Maintaining a ready-made image of reality, Prufrock's fixation helps him to successfully replace others by himself.

In narcissism, the factor that encourages life (i.e. the "sexual instinct" in Freud) is replaced by a personal desire for self or the "ego-instinct." The "sexual instinct" is "the incarnation of will to live" or life-instinct, whereas the "ego-instinct" is the "impelling towards death," thus "death-instinct" (Freud 2003: 54, 63). The ego-instinct in Prufrock leads him to a desire for death. "Death-instinct is driven by the influence of narcissism" (Freud 2003: 69). This time, Prufrock introduces himself as Lazarus: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead" (Eliot 94). Prufrock desires to go through the experience of death and come back like Lazarus to talk about it. His desire for self-sublimation ends in his ego-ideal reaching its absolute form in death where a complete destruction of ego occurs. The poem starts and ends with images of death. In epigraph, Dante's character, Guido da Montefeltro, is talking from the depth of inferno as if Prufrock longs to hear from death or desires to be in the place of Montefeltro. The ending scene in which Prufrock sets free from party and its people sinking in the ocean among the harmless mermaids ("I do not think that they ["sea-girls"] will sing to me" (Eliot 125)—another sign of desexualization) shows his longing for becoming one with his ego-ideal. The "you" of the poem in this sense ("Let us go then, you and I" (1)) is not a person apart from Prufrock. It is a part of him with whom he wants to walk, talk, go to party and die. Death in this sense is not the end of relationship of "you" and "I" but the unification of the two, and the becoming one of the narcissistic character's ego and its ego-ideal.

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Studying Anglo-Indian Novels: A Forgotten Genre

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The aim of this article is to introduce the students to Anglo-Indian Novels. This area of English Literature is largely neglected in schools and colleges. Though individual writers are sometimes taught, the genre as a whole receives little attention. Hence an effort has been made here to describe the genre in a few words.

What do you mean by Anglo-Indian Literature? To the uninitiated the answer might appear simple – it is the literature created by the Anglo-Indians. As examples they may cite works by Derozio or Ruskin Bond. To a student of English Literature, however, the term has a special meaning. Anglo-Indian literature was a term coined in the nineteenth century to denote English writings on India. ‘Anglo-Indian’ then was a term used to denote Englishmen and women living in India while ‘Eurasian’ was the term used for the people known today as Anglo-Indians.

Interestingly, Anglo-Indian literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth century did not refer only to works written by the Britons. Any work written in English from India was described as Anglo-Indian. Thus the works written by Indian writers like Toru Dutt, H. C. Dutt, Shosheer Chunder Dutt, and Michael Madhusudan Datta fell within its ambit. Brijen K Gupta in his annotated bibliography includes even Manik Banerjee, Manoj Basu and Bonophul in his list of Anglo-Indian authors. Since 1950s the Indian authors writing in English has been classified as ‘Indo-Anglians’. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak informs, “In the late 1950s, the term ‘Indo-Anglian’ was coined by the Writer’s Workshop Collective in Calcutta, under the editorship of P. Lal, to describe Indian writing in English.” (Spivak 126)

Strictly speaking, Anglo-Indian Literature is a branch of English Literature produced by Englishmen who lived in India at least for some time. It is the literature of the Empire – a product of British encounter with India. Edward Farley Oaten, one of the earliest critics of Anglo-Indian Literature, describes its origin in the following manner:

In India for the first time since the era of Asiatic Hellenism, the spirit of Western Literature came into vital contact with the imaginativeness, dreaminess, and mysticism of the Oriental temperament. There was no real union between them; and yet it was impossible that each should remain unaffected by the other.

Such a meeting, though it was long sterile of result, could not remain permanently so. New conditions produced new emotions, and new emotions always call for new literary interpretation. And so there grew up in British India a literature, English in form and language, which is unique among the literatures of the world.” (Oaten 4)

To put it simply, Anglo-Indian Literature was born when two different spirits – that of the East and the West – came into contact. The main themes of Anglo-Indian Literature, as Oaten recognizes, are:

The first is the ever-present sense of exile; the second an unflinching interest in Asiatic religious speculation; the third consists of the humorous sides of Anglo-Indian official life; the fourth in Indian native life and scenery; the last and perhaps most important, in the ever-varying phases, comic, tragic, or colourless of Anglo-Indian social life. (Oaten 194 -195)

According to Oaten, Anglo-Indian Literature had its proper beginning in 1783. This was the year when Sir William Jones (1746 -1794) arrived in India. Though a few travelogues and letters were written before this period, they were devoid of any literary merit. It was Jones, who with his Hindu hymns and translations of *Vishnu Purana* and Kalidas's *Sakuntala*, successfully inaugurated the genre. Anglo-Indian Literature had its greatest author in Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), who was also the first English author to receive the Noble Prize for Literature in 1907. The first few decades of the twentieth century can be considered as the golden age of Anglo-Indian Literature. Anglo-Indian Literature died its natural death with the Independence of India and the dissolution of the British Empire. Though a few authors like Philip Mason (1906-1999) and John Masters (1914-1983) continued to write after Indian independence, they were the last of their kind. Today, Anglo-Indian Literature has become a thing of the past. Works on India may still be written by British authors. But they can be no longer considered as Anglo-Indian Literature.

Anglo-Indian novel forms a branch of Anglo-Indian Literature. The first Anglo-Indian novel appeared as early as 1785. Anonymously published, it was entitled *The Disinterested Nabob*. This was followed by *Hartly House* in 1789. These novels centred more on Anglo-Indian life than on India proper. The first novel to successfully depict native life was written by William Browne Hockley (1792–1860). Hockley wrote five novels– *Pandurang Hari* (1826), *Tales of the Zenana*(1827), *The English in India* (1828), *The Vizer's Son* (1831), and *The Memoirs of a Brahmin or the Fatal Jewels* (1843). He was followed by Philip Meadows Taylor (1808 -1876) whose novels – *The Confessions of a Thug* (1839), *Tippoo Sultaun*(1840), *Tara* (1864), *Ralph Darnell*(1865), *Seeta* (1872), and the posthumously published *A Noble Queen* (1878) – set the standard for the later writers. Among Taylor's immediate descendants, mention must be made of Alexander Allardyce (1846 -1896) who wrote *The City of Sunshine* (1877), George Tomkyns Chesney (1830-1895) who wrote *The Dilemma* (18) and H. S. Cunningham (1832-1920) who wrote *The Chronicles of Dustypore* (1875). The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the rise of two great authors – Flora Annie Steel (1847–1927) and Rudyard Kipling. From the point of popularity they were the first successful Anglo-Indian authors. They were followed by a host of writers among whom the important ones are Maud Divers (1867–1945), Bithia Mary Croker (1849-1920), and Edmund Candler (1874 – 1926). In 1924 E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* was published, which may be considered as the last Anglo-Indian classic. Anglo-Indian novelists continued to write after the Independence of India. Philip Mason and John Masters are the most important authors of this period.

In his classic study entitled *The British Image of India* Allen J. Greenberger identifies three periods of Anglo-Indian novels, which he names the Era of Confidence (1880–1910), the Era of Doubt (1910–1935), and the Era of Melancholy (1935–1960). The authors writing during the first period had faith in themselves as the ruling race. They valued British civilization and thought that the Empire was meant to be permanent. This attitude began to change during the Era of Doubt. The novelists of this period became increasingly less confident. Greenberger divides them into three groups. There were those who still supported the Empire and reacted aggressively to Indian nationalism. Another group hated the Empire and attacked it in their writings. The third group stood between the two extremes. During the third period or the Era of Melancholy the writers became convinced that the Empire was at an end. Their writings were filled with nostalgic recollections of the good old days of the Empire. Though the attitude of the writers changed with age, their writings had one thing in common. Greenberger explains:

The emphasis is always on England rather than on India. It is events in England, and the West in general, which determine the image held of India at any particular time. (Greenberger 6)

Greenberger's division of Anglo-Indian novel into periods is certainly helpful. However, his study does not take into consideration all those authors who wrote in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Following Greenberger, we may call this period the 'Era of Romance'. To the novelists writing during this period India appeared as a land of romance where anything was possible. They were fascinated with the country and their writings reflect this fascination. Interestingly many novels of this period are completely free from British presence. Taylor's *Tara*, Captain Rafter's *Savindroog*, and James Blythe Paton's *Bijli the Dancer* may be taken as examples. British characters play a peripheral role in most of the novels of Hockley, except *English in India*. This is a unique feature of the novels of this period. As the British Empire consolidated, the Anglo-Indian authors became more obsessed with themselves. Hence the Indians were relegated to a secondary position in most of their novels.

Another notable feature of the novels of this period has been identified by Susanne Howe. Howe points out that in the twentieth century novels homesickness becomes an obsession. She writes:

Nowhere in literature, one is tempted to believe, is Home spelt with a larger capital letter. These Anglo-Indian novels contain some of the most shameless exploitations of nostalgia that can be used deliberately to sicken the heart and play upon the sympathy of the reader. From being merely a common human emotion, homesickness in India becomes a prevailing disease, almost a neurosis. (Howe 34)

This element of homesickness is absent in earlier novels. Hence Howe calls this period "the Happy Years" of Anglo-Indian novels. (Howe 39)

Of all the different branches of Anglo-Indian Literature, it is the novel whose production has been most prolific. Indeed critics old and new—like Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall, Bhupal Singh, Susanne Howe, and Allen J. Greenberger—have studied the novel to

the exclusion of everything else. This does not mean that these critics are content with the quality of the production. On the contrary, many of them have expressed their disappointment with the Anglo-Indian novel. As Susanne Howe remarks, “Novels about India provide more vicarious discomfort than anyone is entitled to. They are among the unhappiest books in the language.” (Howe 32)

Critics have put forward various reasons to account for the banality of Anglo-Indian novels. It has been argued that Anglo-Indian novels are parochial in nature. Obsessed with depicting Indian experiences the novelists neglected contemporary concerns. This in turn estranged the common readers who could not find anything interesting in their novels. Moreover, the British public were profoundly uninterested in all things Indian. Susanne Howe believes that India induced a “defeatist state of mind” in the Englishmen. (Howe 37) They were not prepared to take up the challenge of understanding a society as complex as India. Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall, himself an Anglo-Indian author, explains:

For the modern reader will have nothing to do with a story full of outlandish schemes and characters; he must be told what he thinks he knows; he must be able to realize the points and the probabilities of a plot and of its personages; he wants a tale that falls more or less within his ordinary experience, or that tallies with his preconceived notions. Accordingly, any close description of native Indian manners or people is apt to lose interest in proportion as it is exact; its value as a painting of life is usually discernible only by those who know the country.” (Lyall n.p.)

Edward Farley Oaten points out another reason for the unpopularity of Anglo-Indian novels. He argues that in depicting native life, the Anglo-Indian novelists have described either too much or too little. Theirs was a course running between “the Scylla of didactic dullness and the Charybdis of unintelligibility”. (Oaten 142) Most Anglo-Indian novelists fell a victim to either of the two. Their works suffered as a result.

To contemporary readers, Anglo-Indian novels are likely to appear onerous. Often such novels ran into multi-volumes, severely trying the reader’s patience. Leaving aside the works of luminaries like Kipling, Forster, and John Masters, the prose in which these novels are written are generally stifled and antiquated. The racism expressed in most of these novels also makes them unsavoury. Common readers cannot be blamed for feeling revulsion towards the Anglo-Indian novels.

To a student of Literature and History, however, the study of Anglo-Indian novels becomes interesting for its own sake. This is because such novels provide us with a wealth of information regarding the colonial period. Often they highlight the politics and praxis of colonial rule. Greenberger points out three reasons for studying the Anglo-Indian novels. He states that these novels formed a major source of information on India to the reading public of Britain. In this way they created a body of knowledge in India. Secondly, many of the writers gave a broad picture of how the people in general were thinking at a given time. To a student of history such information is very valuable. Thirdly, these novels influenced the way Englishmen saw India. Greenberger shows how the image of

India created by Anglo-Indian authors influenced race relations both in India and in England. (Greenberger 1-2)

The Anglo-Indian novels also document how the Indians responded to the colonial rule. According to Nancy L. Paxton, Anglo-Indian novels are more open to “heteroglossia” than the metropolitan novels of the same period. (Paxton 27) Heteroglossia (raznorecie) is a concept taken from the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin shows that the novel as a genre is dialogic in nature. That is, a novel contains “a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized”. (Bakhtin 262) These voices represent different ideological positions which may be contradictory to the author’s professed ideological position. This property of the Novel enables us to be attentive to the voices of the Indians in the Anglo-Indian novels. This does not mean that Anglo-Indian novelists are sympathetic to these voices. On the contrary, they often try to marginalize and repress them. However, as students of Literature it is our job to hear and redeem these voices of the past.

Anglo-Indian Novels thus provide us with an interesting field of study and research. Though individual authors like Kipling and Forster have received fair share of attention from critics, the older writers like Hockley and Taylor remain neglected till date. As students of English Literature it is our job to rescue these authors from the limbo of oblivion and to assign them their proper place within the canon of English Literature.

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Reflections on Jayanta Mahapatra

Zinia Mitra, Nakshalbari College, Darjeeling, India

I consider myself opportune indeed to have been able to work on a poet living and active, opportune enough to have been able to correspond with him personally. What drew me to do my thesis on his poetry was the research gap and more importantly, his poetry. After I began corresponding with him, inquiring this and that, some from the point of view of a research scholar and some more from unadorned human curiosity, I found him a custodian of a wonderful mind, sound and modest.

After a few correspondences and conversations the poet planned to visit Darjeeling which never quite worked out. Instead I had the opportunity to visit his house in Tinkonia Bagicha, Cuttack. I was invited at a translation workshop in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Mahapatra lives in Cuttack, which is 26 kilometers away from Bhubaneswar. Now who would miss such a chance? I called up to inform him that I was in Bhubaneswar, and he invited me over. His invitation was warm and spontaneous. Just as to visit Konark is to be strongly reminded of Samba (Kalkut), to visit Khoyai is to be strongly reminded of Ramkinjkar Baij, to visit Orissa is to breathe in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra –so rooted is his poetry in that land.

*A man does not mean anything.
But the place.
Sitting on the riverbank throwing pebbles
Into the muddy current
A man becomes the place.
(Somewhere , My Man)*

His house at Tinkonia Bagicha stood like an unedited volume of poetry shaded by tall old trees. The poet lives there alone warm and happy, in a world of his own, surrounded by books, papers, letters, pieces of unfinished writings and with a mind that extends beyond the four rooms and also beyond the land we call Orissa.

Jayanta Mahapatra can be called one of the founders of the modernist tradition in Indian poetry in English. The other names that come up when we discuss him in this light are those of Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy. Manu Dash calls Mahapatra one of India's finest living practitioners of poetry in English, (*Wings Over the Mahanadi*). When we read the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra along with other Indian English poets of his generation, we find that these poets whittle a similar response to their background. They all strongly share a sense of rootedness. The linguistic and religious identity that they share and reflect is seen today as the aftermath of a protracted decolonization that had inspired India after its independence.

To live here...
 antlered in sickness and disease ,
 in the past of uncomprehended totems,
 and the split blood of ancestors.
 One would wear like an amulet. (Shadow Space)

Yet Mahapatra's poetry has a distinct fiber of its own. Although his poetic persona is the centre of every poem he writes, he does not meddle with the incidents or the scenes he describes. He maintains the deportment of a distanced estranged spectator with a tranquil voice of his own that gives his poetry a voice distinct from those of his contemporaries.

The conversation at his house took an interesting turn. Mahapatra was pursued by a desperate urge to express himself, as he wrote in *Father's Hours*,
Somewhere ,the urge to talk about oneself
Consumes the entire lifetime.

His desperation made him eventually take up poetry writing. He took up his pen when he was forty, a time when most of the poets reach the crest of their career . But he reaped amazing results. Amazing not only because of the extensive list of awards he won beginning with *International Who's Who in Poetry*, London, 1970 (second prize), the prestigious Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award (Chicago) 1975, to Raed Leaf Poetry Lifetime Achievement Award for Poetry, 2013, Hyderabad, Padma Shree award in 2009, not only because of the extensive list of the invitations to poetry reading that he received both within the country and abroad, but also, or, more so, because a lecturer in physics ended up as a doctorate in literature (honoris causa).

Mahapatra was a school going child during the second world war. Air base had been set up just beyond his town and the daily newspaper brought in news of war. Like many others during the war the poet's family survived on meager rations. During the period there was poverty evident all around. Poverty stricken men whined, suffered from epileptic fits. There were blind boys and girls, cripples and beggars. The poet habitually escaped the harsh world into a world of his imagination, a world of dreams and readings. But that did not make him insentient of his surroundings. They all persisted in his mind to recur later as imperative images in his poetry. Childhood also occupies an important place in Mahapatra's poetry. Many of his poems are a looking back at that unforgettable past, that meek and shy Jayanta that he has left behind.

there is a past which moves over
the magic slopes and hamlets of the mind,
whose breath measures the purpose of our lives.

To study a poet's or writer's life, a researcher conventionally divides her/his life into three or more phases, the beginning, the middle and the end or divides the oeuvre by some major incidents that affect his/her life, and , that, as critics would claim, have palpable influence on his/her writing. Though admittedly, it makes little sense, many poets seem to comfortably walk away with it. In case of Jayanta Mahapatra we can perceive his entire oeuvre separated by a thin line into two distinct stages : the Experimental Stage ,when the

poet was seemingly experimenting with the medium of his expression, and the later Experiential Stage when he emerged as a poet sure of himself. His Experiential stage, stylistically and thematically, grows palpably out of his Experimental Stage.

The first two volumes of Mahapatra, *Close the Sky Ten by Ten* (Dialogue Publishers, Calcutta) and *Svyamvara and Other Poems* (Writer's Workshop, Calcutta) both published in 1971, are slim volumes that show the poet's preoccupation with the form of poetry. Jayanta Mahapatra's name does not appear in the anthology edited by V.K. Gokak that was first published in 1970 (Mahapatra's first volumes in 1971) and has its thirteenth printing in 2004, though it included poems of Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, A.K.Ramanujan, P.Lal. I am not certain if editors would pick or have picked any poems from these two volumes to represent Mahapatra. It is with *A Father's Hours* (Delhi: United Writers, 1976) and *A Rain of Rites* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press 1976) that the poet begins his flight. In the volumes that follow, he reveals himself as an imagist, sometimes a surrealist, a realist occasionally bordering on the confessional mode, a social thinker, and even a feminist, if we look deeply at the images of women that his poetry gives us. An item in the newspaper disturbs him and he takes his pen and cries his heart out. However, as I have said before, he maintains the stance of a detached observer throughout. Mahapatra is also considerably influenced by the 'open field poetry' of Robert Bly and James Wright. Many of his poems characteristically begin with an observation of the natural world and rapidly give way to obscure personal associations of guilt, failure, childhood memories, hope or desire that find expression and fulfillment in a private world of his own. It is because of such poems that stir something deep inside us, his minute realistic observations, his particular detachment, that his poems haul us so strongly and even after we are done with reading Mahapatra we are not quite done with him.

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Medical and Physical Terrorism in Dina Mehta's Play *Getting Away with Murder*

Bidhan Mondal

The socio-political situation in India in the 1960s and 70s shook up sensitive writers and during this period Indian English drama has received fresh impetus from young women playwrights like Manjula Padmanavan, Polie Sengupta and Dina Mehta. Women's theatre has emerged as a distinct dramatic force which stages the various issues of contemporary Indian society. Their plays include themes of relationships like motherhood, intricate baffling relationship of men and women, incest and adultery. Their plays focus on various types of violence as physical, emotional, psychological, and the exploitation of women at home and in profession. Their plays of resistance present the themes of, voicing against foeticide, infanticide, rape, inequality, poverty illiteracy and gender discrimination and Dina Mehta's play *Getting Away with Murder* belongs to this category.

This play follows three friends through their personal sufferings in their private hells. Sonali, happily married to a businessman Anil Bhatnagar, is in her third month of pregnancy. But strangely, she decides not to tell her husband about that good news until she has met Dr. Razia and found out its sex. She requests her friend Mallika or Mala to persuade the doctor to do amniocentesis and tell her its sex. Though the rallying cry freedom for every woman is heard in every nook and corner, women themselves stoically accept their marginalisation and Sonali belongs to this type of women. In a world where the oppression of women is naturalised, public spheres have become a platform to reveal the underlying ideology. Sonali is aware that it is a testy that it banned for sex determination and is allowed only to detect abnormalities in the foetus, but she knows if Malu persuades Dr. Raziya, could show some medical pretext and do the test:

Mala:Okay Sonali suppose Raziya; does the test under whatever.

Sonali: If it's a girl I'll abort it.

Mala: My God you too....I thought only ignorant women had this prejudice.... But to someone like you can it matter if the first is a boy or a girl?

Sonali: To me it's simply a family planning measure.... Anil would cheerfully welcome a row of daughters...but his mother would be mortified, if I presented Anil with a girl as his first born.

Mala: Would it also mortify you?

Sonali: Well my mother always said that a woman's failure to bear a son is just retribution for her misdeeds in her past life. (Mehta, 62)

Thus by exposing the grim reality of cruel foeticide in the beginning of the play, Mehta proves that the roots of all female foeticide be it in Kashmir or Kanyakumari—lie in gender bias, the notion that sons are better than daughters. The demographic imbalance between men and women however continues to exist and has further deteriorated.

Something that is very disturbing is the sex ratio, which is considered as an important indicator of the distortion of the biological trend and natural balance in terms of number of females per thousand males. In recent times, female foeticide has gained alarming proportion in many districts in India. During a discussion in Legislative Assembly on rising cases of female foeticide Nayeem Akhter, chief spokesperson Peoples Democratic Party maintained that around 42,000 girls are being killed in wombs every year. According to Akhter from last 10 years the female ratio has declined and the highest of this is seen in Jammu and Kashmir and he describes it as “medical terrorism” (Rising Kashmir, 2013). But on the contrary to Sonali, who believe in her right to choose the sex of her child, according to Mala female foeticide is most offensive and terrifying like that of a “black comedy” as she observes that: Sex determination tests don’t guarantee you the birth of a son. All they do is instigate multiple murders...Mothers award death sentence to their unborn daughters in the name of liberation. They play God! (Mehta, 63).

This inhuman and sadistic pleasure in getting rid of a female foetus is not a sudden step; it is a result of a deep psychological parental personal experience which led to her psychosis. Sonali behaves in an abnormal way, her headaches, talking to herself, her agitated nature, and her details of childhood, pointed that something torturing her. She hates herself being a woman as she thinks: “to be born a girl is only to subject to violence and servitude” (Mehta, 59). Mala is worried about her as she speaks of some “worst thing”, and when Mala investigates about it, Sonali replies:

I don’t know. I feel it gathering shape, a half remembered word here, a gesture there, all coming together....only it never does and I am baffled out left with a splitting headache. (Mehta, 65)

When Mala tells Gopal, Sonali’s brother that his sister wants to abort her child if the foetus is a girl, Gopal answers surprisingly: “Go easy on Sonali...my sister’s taken terrible wallops—and I was no help at all” (Mehta, 83). Finally when Anil insists Gopal to share the secret, Gopal reveals their sad, shameful past which had left its mark permanently on Sonali, damaged her psychologically, losing her faith always in the grip of fear, living in nightmares:

Gopal: I think there is no less brutal way of saying that my sister was sexually abused from the time she was 8 years old....uncle Naturam....So you can imagine...night after night...coming to her bed, the pious swine...He threatened her to silence....the screams she swallowed must be still tearing her up inside... And I did nothing to help her, nothing ...hiding my face in the bedcovers...I was in the same room and did nothing. (Mehta, 87-88)

After this long grief-stricken, remorseful speech of Gopal, Sonali shares them about their conspiracy to kill their drunken uncle and how they became successful in killing the brute. She also tells them about their strange fate: “and it was this man whose portrait was garlanded by mother everyday, Gopal and myself were urged to remember his kindness and pray for him” (Mehta, 88). The rape is generally committed by a stranger in dark lanes of deserted fields or houses at the point of gun. But contrary to it the

perpetrators are often people who are familiar or even close to the victims as in case of Sonali, who is raped repeatedly by her maternal uncle, Narotam.

In this play Mallika Malu runs an agency for foodstuffs and her worthless partner is Mr Pankaj Pingley. He cannot accept women like that of Malu, as leading business managers. He doesn't even hesitate to make advance to the typist Thelma, who finds no way there but to resign. She shares Malu of Pingley's indecent behaviour:

Thelma: How can I tell you... He he makes vulgar talks, and wicked gestures...This morning he called me to dictate the memo...he squeezed me here... He always tells me his wife is old enough...asking me to accompany him to...hotels outside city.

Malu: How long has this been going on?

Thelma: Since February...

Malu: How many times?

Thelma: Thrice, I,m sorry... (Mehta, 89-90)

Therefore, not only in home but also in the work place, women are not safe. Commoditisation of female body is, thus, rampant in both the public and private spheres of a woman's life. Traditionally women have been associated with the body; whereas men have been associated with mind. Judith Butler comments regarding this in *Gender Trouble*:

The association of the body with the female works along magical relations of reciprocity whereby the female sex becomes paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom. (Butler, 16)

As a result of this commoditisation of body thus consciousness of their own body is either denied to the women and alienates them from their own body. Thus it appears that it is impossible for patriarchal society to accept women along with their sexuality as a natural adjunct to their being. It cannot be accepted as something which is normal, and need not therefore be tampered with it. Ironically, such an attitude only reveals an unnatural response on the men's part that is unable to be at ease with the situation. Similarly, in Polie Sengupta's play *Mangalam*, the woman Mangalam's body has all along been treated as a commodity by the molester for gratification, by her father as an object of preservation and by her husband as an object for venting out his frustration. Therefore Luce Irigaray comments: "Women are not supposed to exercise choice in these dealings but are rather expected to act as mute and compliant spectators to this business" (Irigaray, 22). The greatest misconception about rape is that people believes rape to be consensual of women; which is not actually. One cannot generalise on how women react to being raped as reaction, depends on her circumstances, her background, her family. Actually fear of molestation and death can make a woman submit. Women writers can deal with rape victims more sympathetically, for they know that the notion that women enjoy being raped is only a male myth. Dina Mehta says, "The women dramatists can see more clearly into the female psyche than the male" (Mukherjee, 62), and this is reflected in her plays.

Rape victims are invariably psychologically and physically traumatized. The effect can be devastating and can last long, which can change a woman totally. Even a gay, self-confident woman could be shattered and become emotionally unstable, would cry, shout, become hysterical as in case of Sonali. In such cases things can be improved with time and progress in a positive way only with understanding family especially a brother like Gopal, who is not only sensitive to his sister but also involves himself in the upliftment of women by fighting against the practice of women being burnt under the allegation that they are witches. He even undertakes the care of Minzari's little daughter when she is beaten to death in Barisola village. Again for the improvement of the traumatized condition of the rape victims they need a trustworthy husband like Anil, who supports Sonali, throughout the play. He consoles her that it does not matter whether she gives birth to a girl or not, and forbids her not to abort the child. He also remains indifferent even after hearing about the grim past of his wife, does not leave her. Apart from this, friendship with other women and share each other's suffering can improve the condition of the rape victims. Women writers show that friendship between women should be characterized by openness, trust, intellectual stimulation and stability, which women frequently find difficult to achieve in the relationships with men. In Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder*, the three friends Mallika, Raziya and Sonali, offer each other support and comfort. These requirements being available to Sonali, she recovers at the end from her trauma. Sonali is shown bearing a child at the end and now she is not worried about finding the sex of her child. However, having had some earlier upheavals she is still in panic no doubt: "I still have my moments of panic. Still look sometimes for the disgust in Anil's eyes—after all—he got landed with damaged goods" (Mehta, 91).

Thus, in the end of the play, Mehta strikes a note of optimism, men need not be indifferent observers, they can simply help a woman in getting over her trauma just as Anil and Gopal does. Sonali is empowered at the end, because she has been purged out of her psychosis, her self-realisation lends her gravity. She had written a letter to Anil, proclaims that she would spend her entire life in taking care of her ailing sister-in-law and she also wants her mother-in-law to come back to her from her 'forced pilgrimage'. Malu also put an end to the whole conspiracy of Mr. Pingley to blackmail Thelma and thereby having an affair leading to rape and with her strong determination she successfully manages to help Sonali to overcome the trauma of child abuse. Raziya too, is able to confess, "The enemy is within, don't you see!" (Mehta, 78), meaning thereby, that women in India will have to break the shackles that tradition binds them in, to confront their real selves. Hence, Sonali too, confidently claims, "Nothing can change overnight, I guess, but we can be goddesses if we want it enough" (Mehta, 92). Similarly, in Dina Mehta's another play *Brides are not for Burning*, Malini gets retribution at the end for the dowry death of her sister and sets off alone on the path she thinks right: "...one road still beckons. I will educate myself all I can. There is no future that can be denied me" (*Brides are not for Burning*, 94). Therefore, in order to be empowered and protected against male-oppression, women must use their "body" as a weapon to fight against that very sexual exploitation and "the culturally constructed body then", in the words of Butler, "be liberated...to an open future of cultural possibilities" (Butler, 93). Daniel Moase in an

essay entitled “Indian Women and Protest: An Historical Overview and Modern Day Evaluation”, points out that using sexuality and violence, “the women of India have often fought...they eschew renunciation, and propagate an assertion that involves an acceptance of body, shunning the shame associated with it, and demanding the respect it deserves” (Mehrotra, 145).

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Home Ground-Foreign Territory: Study of Non-belongingness in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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The sense of nostalgia and non-belongingness is unavoidable in the life of those people who are separated from their birthplace. The nostalgic craving for home is a feeling that hovers over an individual's life. This often leads individuals to build an imaginary picture of joyful past that makes them unable to relate to the present condition in which they find themselves. This imaginary picture of past home becomes a powerful motivation that drives and controls the action and feelings of an individual and his/her relationship to others. The depiction of the unnamed narrator in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and the portrayal of Thamma's character in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* bear this sense of dislocation and non-belongingness that is inevitable to them because of their situation. Margaret Atwood in her novels like *Surfacing*, *Bodily Harm*, or *Survival* captures the general outlook of life through the collective consciousness of the individual. The portrayal of the unnamed narrator in '*Surfacing*', who has spent her childhood in northern Quebec like the author herself; brings the sense of alienation and failure to recognize the place, where she has spent her childhood, when she returns to the place after nine years. Similarly Amitav Ghosh's famous novel *The Shadow Lines* presents the same sense of alienation and displacement of individual through Thamma's character. Ghosh's characterization of Thamma as a historical witness who had gone through the experience of leaving her home in Dhaka and making a new home in Calcutta during independence, gives Ghosh a scope to bring out this essential human feeling of dislocation and non-belongingness. This paper intends to explore this inability of individual memory to cope up with the present reality, which leads the individual to 'romantic exile', for one can never return to the place in memory. Though the background and circumstances of the two women (Thamma and the narrator) are different, they witnessed the parallel experiences which come to surface by a perusal of their journey to the home-ground.

At the beginning of Atwood's *Surfacing*, the unnamed narrator-protagonist is back to the place where she had lived with her family in her childhood. She is shocked to find what Americans have done to the idyllic tourist spot of northern Quebec, after the Second World War. Her feeling of shock is same with Thamma's shock when she finds her birthplace utterly changed, during her journey to her home to bring her uncle to India with them. The narrator in *The Shadow Lines* describes Thamma's horror:

"My grandmother thrown into a sudden panic began to protest. This couldn't be it, she cried It can't be our lane for where is Kana-babu's sweet shop? That shop over there is selling hammers and hard wares, where's the sweet shop gone?" (206)

Dhaka was for Thamma –“the city that had surrounded their old home” not the real Dhaka which is the capital of Bangladesh after the Partition. Thamma is represented as carrying the greatest burden of historical dislocation. She is born in Dhaka and separated from her birthplace by a history of bloodshed and lines on a map. Returning to Dhaka years after, she was completely unprepared for

“the bare glass-and-linoleum airport, so like the one she has just left.” (193)

Her inability to relate and recognize her birthplace is emphasized in her repeated question –“but where is Dhaka? I can’t see Dhaka”. This question of Thamma has a similar reflection of the protagonist feeling in *Surfacing*, who regrets for not bringing a map with her, in her journey to Quebec with David, Anna and Joe. She feels,

“Now we are on my home ground foreign territory, my throat constricts as it learned to do when I discovered people could say words that would go into my ears meaning nothing.” (9)

She longs for the nostalgic feeling but fails to get it, even she fails to recognize the place as in her own words-

“Now I’m in the village walking through it waiting for the nostalgic to hit for the cluster of the non-descriptive buildings to be irradiated with inner light like plug-in-crêche as it has been so often in memory but nothing happen.” (17)

In her visit to the ice-crème parlor or in Paul’s house where she often used to go as a child, surfaces this same sense of non-relativity that gives birth within her a kind of anger. She is annoyed with the feeling that she lacks the power to bring everything back in previous condition and this leads her to feel that she never belongs to the place,

“Nothing is the same; I don’t know the way anymore, I slide my tongue around the ice-crème, trying to concentrate on it. They put seaweed in it now but I’m starting to shake. Why is the road different he shouldn’t have allowed them to do it. I want to turn around and go back to the city and never find out what happened to him. I’ll start crying that would be horrible none of them would know what to do neither would I.” (10)

A desire to retreat takes place within her and she feels like crying.

Although the feeling of Thamma is not so poignant and painful but her condition is more pathetic. The grandmother’s non-belongingness is a product of her circumstances. She is perplexed at the history that had led “her place of birth to be so messily at odds with her nationality”, that has made her a foreigner in her home-town Dhaka, when she visits it again. Her alienation is the inevitable result of her diasporic existence. Throughout the visit Thamma searches for pre-partition Dhaka of her childhood and youth, is projected as a nostalgic return to home. Despite her naturalization as an Indian citizen her strong loyalties and affiliations to the city that surfaces during this return permits Ghosh to investigate the conflicting claims of roots and belongings, nation and boundaries in the Indian mind. As Anjali Gera has pointed out in her essay ‘Des Kothay? Amitav Ghosh Tells Old Wives Tales’, Ghosh has explored

the disjuncture of multiple constructions of nations in the Indian imaginary. Ghosh has waved an alternative history through such individual experiences and family chronicles that diverts the master narrative of pre-conceived history of imperialism and nationalism. Thamma's experience points to the inherent irony of the situation where she realizes that the legacy of her birthplace is not separable from her sense of herself as a citizen of India. Her realization mocks the limits of our political consciousness and imagination. The image of the house that she has in her memory is never the same with the concrete existence of the house. Therefore, Thamma's experience seems one of dissatisfaction and disbelieving that made her feel something uncanny, like the unnamed narrator of *Surfacing*.

This alienation in Thamma's experience is the contradiction between her local and national identities. Thamma's experience mirrors the experience of massive immigrants during and after partition. "Thamma bears the brunt of displacement as her old place-ness comes into conflict with the new sense of place"—as Subir Kaul has pointed out in his essay '*Separation Anxiety*'. The irony of her alienation in her homeland comes home to her only when Tridib teases her –

“but you are a foreigner now. You're as foreign here as May.” (195)

That leads her to realize –

“Yes I am really a foreigner here—as foreign as May in India or Tagore in Argentina”. (195)

and increases her alienation. “But whatever you may say, this isn't Dhaka”. Like the feeling of the narrator of *Surfacing* in the motel when she finds the women who –“with brassiere-shaped breasts and a light auburn moustache, her hair is in rollers covered by a pink net and she has on slacks and sleeveless jersey top” was selling hamburger. The appearance of the women and her American accent lead the narrator to realize the utter destruction of previous conservativeness where

“shorts were against the law, and many of them (women) lived all their lives beside the lake without learning to swim because they were ashamed to put on bathing suits.” (27)

The Americans accent of the women increases her sense of uneasiness and non-relativity and leads her to feel: “But this isn't where I lived”.

The narrator in *Surfacing* who is more complex in nature than Thamma, is introspective and contemplative about her feeling that leads her to examine her feeling of non-belongingness –

“The feeling I expect before but failed to have comes now, homesickness for a place where I never lived.” (39)

She is aware about her feeling of cut-of-from surrounding that makes her an essential recluse; she is alienated from her friends. Unlike her, Thamma is perplexed by situation and she fails to conceive the burnt in which she was inwardly burning. She didn't perceive

it like the narrator in '*Surfacing*', but that doesn't lessen her sense of alienation in a place that once was her own. Both for them home are only imaginative community not a geographical place. We can find a similar reflection of this in *Salman Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands"*, where Rushdie raises the fundamental question –“Does India Exists”? Their 'home' only remains in memory. As the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* has pointed out-

“because people like grandmother who has no home but in memory learns to be very skilled in the art of recollection.” (194)

The only way left to them is recollection.

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Teaching Language through Literature: Some Probabilities

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Literature, as many commentators would argue, is dissemination of culture through the study of literary texts. One may argue that literature holds a mirror to the society. However, all these grand old principles of literature seem to be redundant in the English literature classroom where we teach. Paradoxical though it may seem; the primary problem of this failure is the students' lack of linguistic abilities. It is due to their lack of linguistic competence, interpreting the texts on their own becomes a massive task for them. Most of the students, especially those coming from the vernacular medium schools, find it difficult to analyse the given text on their own. Most of them, as we understand, are taught English using the Grammar-Translation method¹; and hence; their growth as a language student is stunted at secondary and higher secondary level. While talking of language we are, of course, aware of all the four principles of acquiring the second language- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In this paper, we are going to examine the root of this problem itself; and while doing so, we are hoping to suggest some palpable ways through which a literature classroom can be turned into an effective medium of teaching language as well.

Teaching in a semi-rural college situated in West Bengal, we realise, from our day-to-day experience, that the scenario of an English classroom is not very promising. Students barely speak in English and request teachers to analyse the text in Bengali, if possible. Though they are apparently good in grammar, they lack the ability to write on their own, let alone their ability to communicate verbally. Being students of vernacular medium schools, they have a very scanty vocabulary as English does not come instinctively to them. Moreover, they have this strange idea that they would be able to improve their linguistic abilities while pursuing the course in English literature. In such a negative situation it is very easy to wash your hands off as a teacher blaming the students' inability to be the cause of their failure. As teachers, the responsibility falls upon us to call for a change. If students and teachers work in corroboration, a better and prosperous classroom can surely be achieved. Let us talk about some of the things that can be done to make the situation more positive with some measures. However, in order to do so students must put in some extra yard, beyond their normal study hours, to hone their linguistic skills.

From the very beginning of the academic session/ semester students of English literature must be made aware of the challenges that might come their way. Most students of Vernacular medium schools do not get the chance of reading the texts of the

same pedigree that they suddenly do when they come to an English Honours classroom. Moreover, they come to read English Honours with a very faulty perception of the subject. They believe that learning English will surely provide them with good jobs. It is not surprising that they harbour such sentiments, especially if we keep in mind the socio-economic conditionⁱⁱ they come from. It is obvious that they do not understand the nuances of reading English literature. Though, as teachers, sometimes it is very difficult to find out time to help students learn language, especially due to the dearth of time. However, it would be a good starting point for students if the classroom is decentred and the students are asked to participate in the discussion sharing their ideas and beliefs about the text. Though the students will surely make mistakes, they should never be discouraged. Errors, as today's behavioural psychologist reveal, are considered as steps of learning. If the teacher is the sole speaker and the students sit quietly listening to the interpretation of such grand texts they are bound to feel over awed. In order to realise their dream of speaking in English; so that they can survive in this globally savvy world where having skills of verbal communication is absolutely pre-eminent, students often enrol themselves in 'spoken' English courses; ignorant of the fact that reading literature can often be the best medium of learning language. Along with embarking upon a literary analysis of the texts; the teacher should also play the role of an initiator by identifying the stimulus for the students. It is obvious that a student of 1st year, reading *Paradise Lost*, would struggle with the meaning of several words and the grand style of Miltonic verse. However difficult the poem might seem, students, for the start, must be motivated to read the text on their own. If they fail to make out the meaning, they must take help from Dictionary or Thesaurus. That will inevitably enhance their stock of words and create a better aesthetic of language. They have to cling on to the text as long as they can; and as they start enhancing their skill in language, they will surely find reading literary masterpieces easier. In fact, this method can be used not only by the students of English Honours but also by students of all courses. Those who cannot access literary texts can take recourse to reading newspapers, magazines and journals by using this same method.

We are also of the opinion that it is important to decolonise the minds of the students as well. They must be made to feel that though learning English is important; it can never be the sole requisite of surviving in this world. If such an attitude prevails, the fear of not being able to master the language would automatically start gripping them. To start enjoying the reading of literature, students can start reading texts written by non-native speakers of English. It is very difficult to fully grasp a literary text without having an idea of the culture from where it emerged. If the students start reading texts which use Kolkata or Delhi as its locale; they will feel a stronger association with them. This will, hopefully, serve two purposes: first, it will surely enhance the vocabulary of the target language; second, it will give confidence to them to read on their own. If they can develop the skill, and learn the politicsⁱⁱⁱ of close reading they will inevitably start to expand the horizon of their imaginative thinking. With such an expansion in knowledge system, canonical texts, will no more pose a threat.

However, to make the situation more dynamic, we may fall back upon some popular methods that are used in training the students of business communication. This

would undoubtedly require effort and commitment from the teachers as well as students; as we have to make sure that the time taken for completing the Literature syllabus is not affected because of such. The primary way of teaching literature is to read the text as a cultural product. It is a traditional approach used in undergraduate and postgraduate literary courses of any university. Through this method the background of the text is read in great detail. Though this model is tried and tested when it comes to the interpretation of literary texts; it often does not serve the need of the students of the third world, especially those who are suffering from the lack of linguistic competence. As mentioned earlier, students often come to pursue literary courses with the expectation of honing their language skills. In order to satisfy their need we must take recourse to make their association with the distinctive features of literary language. (Some universities teach Phonetics and Linguistics at the Undergraduate level itself, which is, needless to say, a good beginning for the students trying to improve their Language skills). In this respect, a literary text must be perceived as linguistic product rather than a cultural product. Students should always be in look out for new words and expressions so that they can improve their stock of words. That, for the start, will give them confidence in using language more productively. However, creating a decent stock of words does not mean that a student will suddenly be able to communicate better. That will only come along with the language being used in a real-life context more effusively. Boggled down by the enormity of the syllabus students often feel inhibited to speak out loud in English as they start to mug up notes to pass the examination failing to understand that this would neither improve their their language skill nor will it develop the imaginative faculty. Hence, along with creating a solid base of vocabulary students must be encouraged to read a literary text with more care so that they can understand the unique nuances of English language. Students must learn that the essence of any stylised utterance lies in ‘defamiliarization’^{iv} of language. All such practices will undoubtedly contribute in forming a better aesthetics of language.

At this juncture, one might feel that we are taking a formalist^v stance to teaching literature. However, that would be an erroneous judgement of our real endeavour. We are, in fact, of the opinion that the cultural model of teaching and reading literature must be synthesised with the linguistic model. If we solely stress upon the cultural model of interpreting, those students, who come from the weaker background, would find it immensely difficult in deciphering a literary text. We are of the opinion that learning language properly is merely the base for reading literary text; standing on which they should try to use language more judiciously in real life circumstances. Hence, along with getting to know about the socio-cultural importance of a literary text, the students must also spend some time in harness reading about various literary devices that contribute to its ‘literariness’^{vi} as it will probably be a good exercise in harnessing their linguistic as well as rhetorical sensibility, the predominant factor of using language more efficiently.

But learning about the advanced use of language through literary texts (and newspapers) would only provide the students with a kind of a Grammatical Competence which is the first step of achieving Linguistic Competence. According to Yasukata Yano:

“Chomsky (1965) made a distinction between ‘grammatical competence’ and ‘performance.’ The former is the linguistic knowledge of the idealized native speaker, an innate biological function of the mind that allows individuals to generate the infinite set of grammatical sentences that constitutes their language, and the latter is the actual use of language in concrete situations. (75)

Keeping in mind this view, we might argue that isolated readings of literary texts in order to find out linguistic devices will not provide students with an inkling of how to become sociologically competent in pulling off a verbal communication. To speak more simply, students must learn to use language in proper context. So a holistic Linguistic Competence can only be achieved if the students use the target language in real life situation. However, that might be asking too much from the students whom we teach. In the culture where they grow up, finding out a perfect situation where they would be able to test their competence would be impossible. This is when the role of the teacher becomes immensely important. The teacher, while teaching literature, should be mindful of creating an atmosphere that can corroborate the learners’ competence and ask for better performance. In sociological theories of language, achieving Communicative Competence is intricately linked with the learners’ use of the language (performance). What we often find out that some students have the competence (skill) but due to their lack of confidence they lack the ability of performance.

How will students achieve this sociological competence? They might form small groups among themselves. Together in the group they can first try to improve their grammatical competence. Then, they can start communicating amongst each other. The basic problem for native learners of English is that their fear of opening up. In front of their pals they can undoubtedly throw off their inhibition. Students should also be confident enough in underpinning each others’ flaws. As they practice more and more, they will inevitably become better in using language in real-life situation and this will surely take them far in gaining the much needed confidence. Then the students must start conversing with the more linguistically competent people, i.e., their teachers. Some intra-departmental seminars and workshops can also be organised to give them a realistic set-up for using language. Along with using such methods, the students must also spend a lot of their time in watching (and listening to) programmes in English, such as movies and news shows, so that they become more aware of the sociological use of language. Modern Hermeneutics treats everything as text; and, we believe, students should be treating movies and such programmes as text- the knowledge gained from which must be used efficiently in real-life situation.

Though it is very difficult to pinpoint a particular model of language learning, we have suggested some methods based on our experience. However, all these methods can only be fruitful if students start working beyond their stipulated hours of study in order to enhance their skills as a language user. Moreover, learning a language merely for the sake of achievement will make the task much harder for the students. We hope that the above mentioned methods will create a sense of passion amongst the students, which would, inadvertently, be the best means of mastering the language.

Notes:

ⁱ Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is perhaps the oldest model of teaching language. It is a classical model used in the teaching of Greek and Latin. In this method greater emphasis is given on reading and writing. Verbal communication is almost never taken into consideration. Mother tongue is often used inside the classroom to explain key ideas. Grammar is taught in inductive manner and then translating sentences from native to target language is aimed. In the wake of the Direct Method, Communicative Method and Audio-Lingual Method, GTM has lost its popularity; however, teachers continue to use it in the countries of South-Asia as an effective model of teaching language, especially for first generation learners.

ⁱⁱ Most of the students, coming from inferior economic background, do not cherish dreams of making it big; a simple Government job will do their job.

ⁱⁱⁱ The word has been used here keeping in mind Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author." Once the author is 'dead' the reader can interpret the text in innumerable ways corroborating their individual perception.

^{iv} Defamiliarization refers to the ways through the literary language is made different from ordinary speech. The term was coined by Victor Shlovsky in the year 1917. What he tried to suggest that poetic language is different from the language of ordinary life. By suggesting this possibility of difference the Russian formalists tried to formulate a scientific approach towards the study of literature

^v The Formalists tried to read literature as science by emphasising upon the use of language.

^{vi} Literariness refers to the formal properties of poetic language such as rhetorical device, rhyme, pattern and so on.

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The Importance of Recitation in Studying English Literature

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The verb form of 'recitation' is 'recite' and this originated from the combination of the Latin prefix 're', meaning 'again' and 'citare', meaning 'to summon'. Therefore, summoning again from memory is recitation. A recitation, in general sense, is an act of reciting from memory or a formal reading of verse or other writings before an audience. Recitation means re-creation of poems. It is an oral device to tell some verbal text in a new mood or in a new way. The art of recitation had long been a precious art before the arrival of the print culture when poetry was mainly oral and performative in nature.

Now-a-days, it is a popular art form in Bengal. The reciters recite poems or prose on stage with some modern instruments. Recitation got a new dimension by the performance of sonorous drama artists especially in "All India Radio". They generated a new window of performing art. In this procession Birendra Krishna Bhadra is a pioneer.

Recitation is an important and effective mode of English learning:

Recitation is one of the important and effective modes of learning a language and appreciating a piece of literature. Sometimes, students are asked to strengthen and enlarge basic knowledge and develop the basic abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, in the actual teaching process, reciting, this ancient and effective mode has often been overlooked easily. It is the basic means of training language ability.

Recitation is helpful for students to practice natural language and raise social ability:

The famous educator Wei Shusheng says: "The sense of language has also been strengthened by reciting more". In the process of English learning, the language material that students use are fairly rich but students see them approximately, hear them roughly and read them slightly. Poetry leaves no deep impression on students. Therefore, in speaking, they have to speak correctly, in writing they have to write very fluently and express smoothly which increase students' self-confidence and actual social abilities and improve their English level greatly.

Recitation is a cultural nutrition and a cultural basis:

In England and even in entire Europe, in a class of language teaching, reciting is greatly welcomed. Pupils are asked to recite *The Bible* at the beginning of their study by teachers. Of course, they are not required to understand, only to recite. Thus, while gradually students draw cultural nutrition from the studying a language, at the same time they also experience the culture and customs of their country and gain different cultural influences.

Recitation is helpful for students to raise their abilities of solving actual problems and creativity:

Memory is the foundation and store-house of thinking and imagining. If students' minds are empty of thoughts, they will not be able to express themselves in English. Suppose, a student is asked 'What can we do to protect the water on our planet?' and about 'the importance of water' which is concerned with language utilization and language recognition in articles. If the student knows much of the text, s/he can utilize the language materials skilfully and through imagination, they can imagine boldly how to protect water-resource with the recognized language. So, they can speak out their own opinions freely to prove their creativity and practical abilities. Otherwise, they will become unable to give the right answer.

Recitation is a rhythmical process to grow the power of pitch-volume in students:

Recitation has its own rhythm, music, sounds and beats. Rhymes are important for language development, cognitive development, social and emotional development. The rhythmical structure of the stanzas creates a familiar content for unfamiliar words. Moreover, reading rhymes aloud or repeating rhymes helps the students to practice pitch, voice inflection and volume.

Breath coordination, tongue and mouth movements are made easier by the musical structure of the rhyme. It helps the students to understand when they need to breath and for how long.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify and use the individual sounds or phonemes in spoken words. Through rhymes, students can understand that these are words which are similar in sound but with a different meaning. They learn what a pattern is and become capable of recognizing patterns.

Recitation helps to grow the sense of metre in students:

The musicological papers on recitation of poetry address the relationship between the linguistic and musical rhythms. For example, we can read Thomas Gray's poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in this way:

The cur/few tolls/ the knell/ of part/ing day,
The low/ing herd/ wind slow/ly o'er/ the lea,
The plough/man home/ward plods/ his wear/y way,
And leaves/ the world/ to dark/ness and/ to me.

Thus, rhyme and subject together are used to identify the form in poetry. Often, deviations from the expected form are more important to the poet's artistry than a poem's regularity. Besides, a good reciter should know about the metrical nuances during reciting the text.

Recitation helps to draw a lively picture into the minds of the students:

Recitation can allow students to paint sketches of their lives, using metaphor, imagery and symbolic language, to describe painful experiences or parts of themselves. For example, when we recite William Wordsworth's celebrated poems like "The Solitary Reaper", or "Lines Written A Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", *Lucy Poems* etc, we can see the beautiful, calm, natural imagery, the vivid picture of a girl. Again, when we

read loudly Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems like- "Christabel" or "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", we can clearly visualise a medieval setting and also realize the mystery and supernatural elements. Besides, when we recite William Blake's poem "London", we hear the woeful cry of the chimney-sweepers, the distress and dismal condition of the common people.

Teachers' role in recitation for students' overall development:

Teachers' recitation may pass the ideological affiliation of a text more clearly so as to strengthen teaching effects greatly. At the same time, teachers' recitation may enhance students' interest and promote them to recite actively, enthusiastically and also to participate in various recitation contests. "Poetry Out Loud" (POL) is a national recitation contest for high school students. The competition is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. It began in 2005 and continues to build on the resurgence of poetry as an art form. POL encourages students to study and memorize poems. Participants also develop confidence and improve their public speaking skills.

In fine, although there are various advanced teaching means in modern times, recitation is also worth advocating vigorously. So, in the process of reciting we should combine the feelings, attitude and cultural consciousness with the ability of learning language and the knowledge utilization which can help students in their overall development.

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“English! Six armed god”: Politics and Prospect of the English Language in India

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Abstract:

The paper attempts to explore the historical processes of the development of the English language in a non-native country like India where it is mostly used as a secondary language of communication. It also assesses the role of English both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Attesting to the popular demands and the growing importance of the English language in the diverse fields of contemporary India, the paper also tends towards examining the socio-political issues that are largely responsible for its predominance as a modern lingua-franca surpassing other indigenous vernacular languages. The paper also critically investigates the dichotomy of introducing English language through the means of literature as a colonial tool of ‘Cultural Imperialism’ in India, and on the other hand, the post-colonial response to it through the appropriation and abrogation of English. Finally, it also highlights the current trends in the modern usage of English, particularly those in a postdigital, social-media dominated society where the entire world becomes a global village in terms of communication.

[Keywords: English language, English literature, colonialism, post-colonialism, hegemony, lingua-franca, vernacular, Cultural Imperialism]

The homogenous or the monolithic idea of the English language or by extension of English literature as a peculiar property of the British people has now become a mythical history, owing to the emergence of a number of ‘englishes’ instead of the one standard Anglo-Saxon version of ‘Queen’s English’. Today for a variety of reasons the word ‘English’ with a capital ‘E’ at its beginning has become less frequent and superseded by a number of ‘englishes’ with a small ‘e’ at their beginning. The emergence of a multiplicity of the ‘englishes’ like American English, Australian English, Canadian English, New Zealand English, Caribbean English, African English as well as Indian English fundamentally takes place as a result of the Colonial encounter of the British people with the natives in diverse conquered lands and their imposition of English upon the native tongue. So, the initiation of English language and literature in India, quite logically, occurs as an upshot of the British Colonial Power.

In the prefatory chapter of his monumental book on post-colonial studies *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester University Press), John McLeod illustrates the fundamental difference between ‘Imperialism’ and ‘Colonialism’ as put forward by Peter Childs and Patrick Williams in their seminal book on Post-Colonial studies *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*:

“Imperialism’ is an ideological concept which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another.

Colonialism’ however is only one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location.”

So, while the practice of British ‘imperialism’ is generally regarded to be associated with a wider mercantile process, ‘colonialism’, on the other hand tends to be a major means of its effective manifestation where a dominant community makes a ‘settlement’ in a new country they are to rule. The practice of colonization had never been an easy subservient process of mutual negotiation because of the constant repudiation and rebellion of the natives against the domination. Colonialism, as an institutional practice is fraught with a number of societal issues which John McLeod in his book *Beginning Postcolonialism* markedly presents as:

“The Process of ‘forming a community’ in the new land necessarily meant ‘un-forming’ or ‘re-forming’ the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellion.”

The shifting dynamics of the power in the hands of British East India Company in the aftermath of the Battle of Plassey in 1757 after defeating the Bengali Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah resulted in the military control of the native Indians and their supposed coercion. The political manoeuvring of the Colonial power to rule over the natives through the means of armed forces is conglomerated with the ideological control of their minds through the imposition of the dominant class’s language and literature through missionary works. In his seminal essay “Ideology and Ideological Apparatus”, the influential Marxist Critic Louis Althusser traces the principle roots of Colonialism and theorizes two means or ways through which the Colonial Power controls the Colonized natives, namely: RSA (Repressive State Apparatus) and ISA (Ideological State Apparatus). While former one is imposed for the physical control of the natives through the means of police, armed forces etc, the later one with its far-reaching impact is generally implemented for the ideological control of people through the means religious and academic institutions like schools, colleges, churches, media, political systems etc. In his systematic study of the imposition of English language in the African Anglo-phone empire, the Kenyan writer NGugi Wa Thiongo takes up similar kind of propositions when he claims in his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that:

“Bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of spiritual subjugation.”

Ngugi here critically investigates the colonial power-politics of imposing English as a means of colonial domination and essentially emphasizes upon the fact that a writer should never discard his own mother tongue and adopt a foreign language to express his own familiar surrounding environment through vernacular communication or writing. Consequently, after writing many of his ground-breaking books including *Decolonizing the Mind* in the English language, he permanently abandons it never to write in this language again. In the present time, Ngugi writes in his indigenous

‘Gikuyu’ language, though his books are immensely translated into English by translators.

There is a multiplicity of responses from the heterogeneous body of writers, academicians, critics and scholars as to appreciation of English in Anglo-phone Countries. Not each and everyone are antagonistic towards the English language like Ngugi. While Ngugi repudiates the English language, the majority of writers from Anglo-phone Empire like Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, Caribbean Writer V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming from Barbados, Salman Rushdie from India, Pakistani diaspora writer Hanif Kureishi to name a few from a plethora of other writers adopt this language as a ‘colonial gift’ and makes its effective use after its appropriation and abrogation. In a famous speech entitled “The African Writer and the English Language’ delivered by Chinua Achebe in 1964, Achebe emphasizes that:

“Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else’s? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have given the language and I intend to use it.”

While the initiation of the English Language in the Indian subcontinent was an offshoot of the Colonial imposition of the language, intended for the facilitation and effective execution of their administrative purposes i.e. for the smooth interaction with the colonized people, however, the teaching of English literature as an academic discipline serves a different purpose altogether. The systematic study of the English literature began in England for the first time in Kings College, London (Later to become London University) in 1828, then in Oxford University in 1894, and then in Cambridge University in 1911, but in India it was introduced much earlier in the mid 18th century through the Enlightenment project of the Christian Missionaries. Considering themselves to be a ‘white superior race’ and ‘God’s elect people’ to rule over the whole world, the White Anglo-Saxon Christian British colonizers believed that it was their Christian duty to ‘civilize’ the so-called ‘uncivilized’, ‘barbaric’, ‘irrational’ colonized natives by enlightening them through Christian English education. The study of English literature in India, as Gauri Viswanathan claims in her influential book *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* serves ‘colonial interests’ as ‘the evangelists tried to promote Christian morality indirectly through the teaching of literature’. Again, in her book *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration* (Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures in English), Priyamvada Gopal further elaborates some of Viswanathan’s arguments:

“The English Parliament wished to see a Europeanized improvement in the morals and manners of natives, partly to suit its administrative needs, but it was nervous about interfering in their religious beliefs through missionary activity. The teaching of English literature, she argues, was seen as a way to disseminate English values without coming into direct conflict with their religious beliefs.”

Thus, from the British colonial standpoint, the study of English literature becomes synonymous with the moral uplifting of the native Indians which also serves as an effective tool of cultural imperialism and colonial hegemony (or domination), to use Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci’s term. A child born and brought up in a familiar Indian household, with his interaction and exposure to the familiar Indian social and

cultural milieu, feels alienated to the description of English setting expressed in literature and consequently nurtures a sense of acrimony or disgust towards his own familiar environment and begins romanticizing, idolizing, and idealizing the bookish foreign descriptions from which his sense of anomaly and inferiority eventually follow.

Though myriad contentions prevail as to the exact function of the English language and literature in the Anglo-phone Empire like India, one unanimous idea triggered by the learned scholars go uncontested that the modern education in India generally begins with the initiation of English language and literature. Let us quickly proceed to have a brief overview of the historical processes of the evolvement of English language and literature in the Indian subcontinent particularly focusing on the Anglo-Oriental controversy.

When the British East India Company invaded India and made a settlement there, one important thing that they did among other things was to modify the traditional education system in India where Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian which had been given priority for so long. Replacing this traditional education by introducing English in their place was the only way to do modernize India, but they were afraid and anxious in doing so immediately after occupying the Indian territory. A royal Charter Act was issued from the British parliament regarding Indian Education in 1813:

“Not less than one lakh rupees should be imparted for the promotion of education in India.”

But the problem is that it did not specify the scope of its implementation i.e. it did not clarify whether it should be imparted for the promotion of the higher studies of the elite class or for providing elementary education to the common masses. Again, another controversy arises whether Indian languages and literature like Sanskrit, Persian and native should be propagated or whether Western education should be provided with this sum of money. And lastly, another dilemma was that what should be the medium of instruction of education, whether it should be imparted through the medium of indigenous Indian languages or whether English should be the medium of instruction. These contentions, nonetheless, caused the emergence of two diverse groups among the British architects of Indian education: on the one hand, Orientalists like William Jones propagated for the promotion of Indian Education to the common masses through the medium of vernacular languages, and on the other hand Anglicists like Thomas Babington Macaulay who after attacking almost everything that is Indian, voiced for promoting Western education through the medium of English. Though towards its inception Orientalists were given the power to engineer Indian education, but soon after observing the failed attempt of Orientalists towards promoting Western education, this task was handed down to Anglicists, with Thomas Babington Macaulay as its chief proponent.

There is no doubt that today Thomas Babington Macaulay is generally regarded as the chief architect of Modern education in India who propagated extensively for promoting English education. In reality, he was antagonistic to everything that is Indian and mercilessly attacked everything that is Indian including Indian philosophy, Indian history, astronomy, literature, religion and all eastern ideas. The notion of the ‘Orient’ as a ‘strange’, ‘exotic’ ‘timeless’ continent, popularized and romanticized in fictionalized discourses, was advocated immensely by Macaulay, a practice vehemently

criticized by Edward W. Said in his monumental book of post-colonialism *Orientalism* (1978). Some of Macaulay’s infamous statements as stated in his infamous *Minutes on Indian Education* (1835) are:

“A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”

Explicating the motive behind the introduction of the English language and literature in India, Macaulay proclaims formation of a ‘middle class intelligentsia’ who would act as ‘comprador bourgeois’ i.e. a class of people who would act as an agent for foreign invaders and interlink between the colonizer and the natives, as asserted in one of his most infamous and oft-quoted statement in *Minutes on Indian Education* (1835):

“We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and millions whom we govern, a class of people Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”

Whatever causes propelled the introduction of English in India, the outcome is more or less a congenial and favorable reception in contemporary India. Today for a variety of reasons, English is considered as one of the Indian languages, not a language of the colonizers imposed upon Indians, but as an adopted language by the Indians. As the Indian post-colonial writer and critic Aijaz Ahmad claims that:

“English is now for better or for worse, one of the Indian Languages.”

In the aftermath of the World War-II, when most of the South-Asian and African colonized nations were getting their independence from the colonial powers in the mid 20th century, predominantly from a decaying feeble British Colonial power, the prevalent lauding maxims like “The sun never sets in the British Empire” is generally used in past tense, intending to express its lost former glory. Lands once-colonized including India began to question “not only the heritage of the Enlightenment but also the very foundations of Western civilization”, (M.A.R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*). Using the colonizer’s language taught to them, the newly independent nations like India began to question from a postcolonial perspective the ideological propensity of the British Empire, their violent and ruthless means of oppression, their looting and plundering of lands and resources, the very Enlightenment philosophy of the Christian missionaries to ‘civilize’ the so-called ‘barbaric’ natives and their means of ‘Cultural Imperialism’, and challenges in a ‘contrapuntal’ way (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*), the oriental discourses and cryptic historiography of the Britishers of representing the Orient in a mystic, effeminate, dogmatized, and culturally degraded way. This practice of writing back to the ‘canon’ or to the ‘centre’ i.e. to the once dominant colonizers through a language taught by them is distinctively theorized in a greater detail in one of the seminal books on post-colonialism *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by the Australian trio Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin.

Keeping aside the complicated and debatable issue of determining the exact definition of language, let us proceed to have an overview of its function. Language, at its best, serves two main purposes, it is a means of communication and on the other hand it is a carrier of culture. There is no human society which can be independent of language, not only because it is a vehicle of communication, but also it represents

one's cultural values and ethos to the world-scale phenomena. The prevalence of English in India as a secondary language serves both these twin purposes, though in a different context. The predominance of English as a communicative language in the post-independent India is filled with socio-political upheavals. In the post-independence era, many of the Indian languages were consistently colliding with one another for their supremacy to become one 'national' language for the common understanding and interaction of all people from the diverse regions of India. But in a multi-lingual country like India, the pan-Indian languages like Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, Malayalam, Kannad, Bengali were not supportive of choosing one unanimous 'lingua-franca' (i.e. a language used as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different, OED) among indigenous languages. As a result, a foreign language like English was chosen as a modern 'lingua-franca' to serve this purpose of internal communication. Besides, after becoming a 'global' language used by a number of native and non-native speakers from myriad countries in the world-scale phenomena, the English language adopted in India, also served as a vehicle of international communication also.

In India the language as a communicating device achieves a great status, often associated with one's cultural sophistication. The moment one starts speaking "Hello, how are you?" instead of telling it in Hindi "Tu Kaisa hai" or in Bengali "Tui kemon achis?" s/he is being revered distinctively from the multitudes of non-English speakers. In contemporary India, it is now generally preferred in the employment fields also as a key means of job opportunity. Concerning its emerging importance in India, Priyamvada Gopal in the introduction of her book *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration* (Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures in English) quotes famous Indian writer Vikram Seth's ironic salutation to English in his poem "Diwali":

English! Six armed god,
Key to a job, to power,
Snobbery, the good life.
This separateness, this fear

Subsequently, apart from communication, the next function of language is the transmission of culture. In the postmodern media-dominated society where the entire world becomes a single operational unit in terms of connectivity which media theoretician Marshal McLuhan terms "global village", the humanities and social science departments, and more recently those disciplines of digital humanities tend towards understanding the multifarious cultures on a global scale under the umbrella term of "Social or Culture Studies". As M.A.R. Habib points out in his book *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*:

"It has become more important than ever that we understand the various voices crying from afar in other languages; and it is just as urgent that we understand the bewildering multitude of voices in our own culture."

Thus it becomes as necessary of listening to the miscellaneous voices of people from all over the world like that of Black Americans, Jewish Americans, LGBT communities, religious and gender minorities, feminists, exiled Palestinians, as well as of diverse 'Subaltern' groups like 'Dalits' in India, Aborigines of Australia to name a few, as

necessary of representing one’s indigenous folk culture and art-forms on a global scale. This proliferation of multicultural and intercultural understanding of society can only be done through the means of a globally connected common language which English performed significantly in the 20th century and will do so in the present century.

Moreover, in countries with a history of Colonialism like India, it additionally accomplishes another task of making the identity of a ‘nation’. Colonial discourses conventionally represent colonized nations in derogatory and pejorative means from a biased, prejudiced, authoritative and idiosyncratic viewpoint which largely serves the colonial purpose, but once the countries achieved their independence from the colonial yoke, they started writing their own history in order to make the identity of a ‘nation’, often counter-arguing the colonial discourses, in a language taught by them. This point is highlighted nowhere so explicitly as in Shakespeare’s *Tempest* where the half-monster Caliban retorts to the usurping Prospero:

“You taught me language, my profit on’t I know how to curse.”

After the postcolonial reading of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* becomes popular as a result of the publication of the Caribbean writer George Lamming’s *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960) where he critically explores the Prospero-Caliban relationship from a postcolonial point of view, this speech of Caliban has become the catchphrase of postcolonial writers from India and abroad who attack in their writing the colonizers by adopting a language taught by them.

As mentioned earlier, though English as a foreign language has been imposed in the colonized countries by the colonial power, nevertheless, it retained its indigenous forms in these settled territories. The postcolonial theorist-trio Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin asserted that the writers from the once-colonized countries ‘refashioned’ the language in order to have it acclimatized to their own social-political and cultural needs, therefore paving the way for the creation of new ‘englishes’ instead of one dominant Queen’s English. In India this kind of creative violence with the language can be discerned from literature, to advertisement, to communicative languages, as well as in social-media messaging etc. One of its forms like ‘Hinglish’ which is a portmanteau word, hybridizing ‘Hindi’ and ‘English’ is widely popular in conversations, literature, to advertisements. One such example is the use of the word “Youngistan” (Young+Hindustan) in the television advertisement of Pepsi coldrink “Yeh hai Youngistan meri jaan” (This is Youngistan, my loved ones). Again, Salman Rushdie’s experimental use of “Chutnified English” in his novels bears the Indianized flavour of English usage or V.S. Naipaul or Upamanyu Chatterjee’s use of Indianized English expressions like “Give it to me na” etc. Now this usage of the word ‘na’ is intrinsically related to the peculiar Indian way of expression.

To conclude it can be said in postdigital world, the prospect of English language is immense in India as well as in the global arena. Finally, it is also very important to note that in this age of mutual dependency where the Indians have been immensely benefitted with this language, there are some influential poets in the English literature too who have borrowed from the Indian languages to enrich the English literature. By mentioning such an example from the *Upanishads*, which T.S. Eliot quoted to conclude his famous poem “The Waste Land” (1922), this paper can also be summed up:

*Datta. Dayadham. Damyata.
Shanti shanti shanti.*

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Poetry

The Woman, on Friday Evening

Atul Singh

The woman I saw Friday evening,
Carrying a basket on her head
Each tired step grew slow and sluggish
A day had once more passed
With last night's dream of a meal, just bread
And the children waiting, with the similar crime
Of dreaming the relish,
With thirsty throats and the hunger grossed.
It was quarter to seven
The sun was red, just sinking down.
More red were her hands
The face I saw, even more
And eyes too with a better score,
I dared not see them again.
The truth, the myth and the secrets of the town,
Altogether, in the eyes those, stand.
She was redder than liberty herself,
Just, in the moral strokes of the world,
To keep and bind her in a chain!
Yes! they dared me with cruel gestures,
"The human significance is very inhuman
You live with them or you be dead
And to do all the same, be a new man.
An ageless truth like the sun, the river and the cascade."
The eyes then turned, after all was made
And I saw the woman, well, that Friday evening
Carrying a basket over her head.

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The Devil's Way

Wissem Kheroufi

My well -beloved he was to seem,
 Both the spry escort and wise lodestar
 Falling in the pit of the devil's wicked scheme
 Why hadst thou not won the spar?
 Only to break his heart and mark a scar over a scar,
 He thought himself reigning over hers and went along
 Deeply sounder, he bragged, our love is like a Cedar
 That is immensely great and gloriously strong
 By infatuation my precious was blinded
 And all I could do was conjecture that fate
 That by the devil his Juliette was guided
 Yet tricking himself, he titled her "dear mate"
 She played the game and since that date,
 Darkened his world and shattered her own
 Only for mercy she could supplicate
 But a moral she remained, that chills to the bone
 Too late for rescue, his loving soul he sold
 In exchange of that of dignity and illusive pride
 All hell broke loose for his rage was starkly bold,
 Sweeping along that of the once was his future bride
 Values became flaws; hence, by Hades' rules he had to abide...
 So when her mellow chopped-off parts were damply reeking,
 Those which he amusingly, sickeningly arranged side by side,
 At dawn, blood from his head was abundantly leaking.
 That's for those, who, the angels they disdain
 And with their filth, the purity they fight
 Ye see, both had utterly no gain
 And thus my lone candle lost its light.

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To a Bird in Mid-May

Sara Mehader

O wingless bird!
 Thou canst not fly, nor sing in thy wakeless sleep
 Thy wings perished by long disuse
 And all the birds perch on a tree by the dale
 Elatedly they tweet and flit in seasonless ecstasy,
 And I watch thee in a sullen silence
 Of breezeless mornings, and tears unshed.
 O noiseless bird! Thou canst not sing anymore,
 Yet thy song sings itself in my retentive memory
 To thy melody I dance oblivious to all Pain,
 And I go insane for it becomes my empty heart.
 Like a lightless star in the sunless blue sky,
 Thou canst not shine, nor canst thou be anymore
 Thy nest, thy songs, thy beams, thy whisperings,
 And all the memories sit heavy on the soul
 All suffused with a patch of light, and clouds
 Enshrouded in the mystery of the blue yonder.
 They all come upon me, in a moment they haunt me
 And I long for thee, for thy tweet
 I long for thy nonchalant yet reasonable lunacy.
 O little bird of mid-May!
 Hast thou even seen halcyon days?
 Thou canst not hear the birds nor would thou be heard
 Thou canst not bear this windless sphere,
 Nor can the birds endure thy complete lightness.
 O precious bird of mid-May!
 Thou hast gone, in the beyond thou dwell
 And here I stay in the shadows of thy absence,
 I wonder, I wander, I ponder, I whimper with pain
 But thou hast gone, in the beyond thou dwell
 Farewell little bird, farewell precious bird.

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Mary and He

Jayati Das

Wollstonecraft breathed out imperfect Os in her footnotes
As I pushed out Images of you forcefully conceived.
My pen kissing my paper, and you there formlessly
Tracing lipstick, smoke, cats and Milton (with a difference).
Perhaps on another day I would have wept and pretended not to care
But today the kisses came like poor rhymes and I had to laugh and make you listen.
I hope you heard the trampling of the roses too as Lord Henry epigrammatised
And imagined at least the Corridors of graphic novels that I walked in purple stockings.

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Tonight I wrote you a long letter.

Joyee Das

Tonight I wrote you a long letter.
But it wasn't the same you that I had stopped myself from writing to.
It sounded like a diary entry. 'The Story of my Life' or some such cliché.
In it I wrote of my sister. I write a lot about my twin.
The ceiling fan whirred on lazily while I recalled a joke she had heard someone crack,
revolving around it.
Did I just come up with one myself? I wonder.
Real tomato juice. Fancy that!
The lemon from back home stares back at me, knowing its turn will come (but wait...it
doesn't have eyes!)
Tonight I finished writing you a long letter, my love. No. Not the mushy kind.
Just one that makes me imagine what a stamp tastes like.
With love from me to you.

Love Song to my Stranger

Joyee Das

Stoop for a kiss that I will never give
But low enough for me to touch your ears.
Let them be cold as the grave through which a hand will emerge
To scoop popcorn while watching a movie (preferably sad).
Croon in a deep voice of things labelled utter trash
Smile gleefully when we talk of murder,
But abhor it in 'real' life.
Text sweet nothings to me late into the night
But not too mushy please
For then I'll pretend not to care.
Don't utter that dreadful four-letter word
It isn't true, you know
Let's just enjoy the present moment
And wait for a thing to happen that we know never will.

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Rain Rain

Abhishek Roy

Twinkle on the grass
A frog jumps out of the dull cold pot-hole.
All day it rains,
Yet the frog is not thirsty,
A hungry snake stares at it,
But it is in no mood to chase it down.
Silently it crawls beneath a big stone.
A boy is watching all these things,
But he has no need to watch,
Rain and rain he murmurs.
Tickling in the watch yet the time does not pass,
He only passes time.
What happened to the frog
He does not know.
What happens to him
He does not want to know.
Rain and rain again and again.
His vision fades,
Yet he lives for what he forgets.

Abhishek Roy did M.A.(English) from the Vidyasagar University.

Two Poems by Erica Warren

Poem: Persona/Narrative

THE RACE

I'm sprinting.
 Time passes—
 I don't know
 because I'm sprinting.
 I am winning.
 Breath even,
 steady pace.
 I can keep
 this up for days.
 Sweat drips
 down tensed legs.
 Crinkled brows
 and swinging arms.
 I'm not tired. Don't
 stop me now.
 But someone reaches out—
 grabs me. "You ARE
 tired." They sit
 me down on green
 benches that smell of
 syrup and dog treats.
 Just then the whistle blows.
 Back to the race!
 Oh no! My pace
 is broken. I cannot
 make my legs move.
 Now I'm limping, dragging.
 Time does not pass—
 I know
 because the race is over.
 White finish lines
 are overshadowed
 by dark, heavy eyelids.
 I have lost.

Poem: Sestina

THE BATTLE

The clouds rain lightly on Bonnie.
 Bonnie, angry, stops the rain.
 But I am angry this time
 because I like the rain that lightly
 pecks Bonnie's angry
 cheeks before the rain stops.
 The night before the rain, stops
 are made to reach Bonnie
 and I find that she is angry
 with me. Now the rain
 pours down, not as lightly
 as the hazy drizzle of last time.
 I arrive to find that time
 has stopped with all the stops
 that Bonnie has made. Lightly
 I take the device from Bonnie—
 the thing that controls the rain.
 Once again she is angry.
 But now it is my turn to be angry
 at Bonnie. Because this time
 she has found a way to stop the rain
 from falling, and the stops
 she made I cannot undo. Bonnie!
 I only wish it to rain lightly.
 She takes the gadget back—not lightly—
 and smashes its gears. Angry
 tears gush from my eyes. Bonnie
 has won for the thirty-fifth time.
 But who can live when stops
 are placed on time and rain?
 But Bonnie cannot stop the rain
 forever. I pick up the pieces and lightly
 mend the broken watch, and all the stops
 are removed. Bonnie is angry
 and we stop being friends. Time
 unstops. I have won, Bonnie!
 There stands Bonnie in the rain
 as the time passes slowly, lightly.
 I walk away, not angry, and nothing stops.

Alone

Sanjib Mandal

See, on the far bank of a river
Lonely a lass standing there.
She is full of love in heart
Ready to go for a ride together.

O Love! O Love! O Love!
Are you so dear above;
That's why you can't miss
The shine of a sparkling dove.

How beautiful you are!
Nothing can be compared.
Suddenly, the river whispers into my ear
Go on as you can end there.

Alone! Alone! She is alone
Love hurrying near everyone.

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The Golden Line

Sanchita Das

Feeling bored to the daily routine,
One evening I went to the Golden Line.
Coming from Jharkhand
It flows sweetly through the forests on the sand.
The sun was setting in the West
The scene was nothing but the gloomiest.
I waited sometime as I was not pleased.
Gradually by the time, the night was seized.

O, what a beautiful sight,
The moon in the sky that night.
Suddenly, I found the river glowing
As if there was silver shining.
So the very name seemed not correct,
As it looks different in moonlight direct.
If it would be the Silver Line,
Would not give it more shine?
I came back home with a heart
Full of ecstasy for the moon's art.

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Short Stories

Bitter Hope

Leah Burt, John Brown University in Arkansas, USA

Summary

Bitter Hope explores the choices of a young woman's life as she deals with deception and its ramifications. Her life is turned upside down and as she confronts her experiences, choosing to be consumed with bitterness and anger, reaping consequences she doesn't seem able to accept. Yet, there is still hope as she turns her life into an encouragement for others.

Sitting up, she breathed in the sweet air of the summer morning. She rose out of bed and routine took control of her movements, as she prepared for the day ahead.

Her motions displayed a confidence and satisfaction in the work before her.

People moved about at ease and smiles passed between neighbor and family as each dwelt in harmony; a harmony beautiful in its innocence.

The day rose and with it peace. She smiled through her work and delighted in the rays of life-giving sun. Her attention turned to a tree just beyond her home. She had before no need to venture beyond. All her needs were met. All her desires cared for and her talents requested among the people. Yet, there lived inside her a curiosity which grew beyond the confines of the village. It had urged her to explore and experience potentially dangerous things before; the scars on her body and the memory of the following punishments told of each instance. This curiosity, in the right context, was a blessing. In others, it was perhaps her greatest struggle. She knew of other places and people beyond their village. She was not forbidden to leave yet neither was she encouraged. She wanted to see the world, yet lacked the needed bravery.

As she gazed, a dark figure seemed to emerge from the bark. It stood silent and solitary, all at once frightening and compelling. Its eyes gleamed and flashed with a confidence foreign to her. Slowly it beckoned with a wiry hand, eerily inviting her to an unknown beyond the outskirts of the village, beyond the light.

Her mind whirled with a mixture of dread and burning desire to be close to this dark stranger.

Her feet began to move, step by ever larger step, until she was boldly walking across the field into the edges of the darkness. Perhaps this figure would lend her the courage, guide her, in the world beyond the village.

The figure, laced with shadowy tendrils and flashing images continued to draw her closer. As each step brought her nearer, so the sky began to dim and the birds to quiet. The

figure calmly twisted its mouth into a mockery of a smile. Images began to flash into her mind as it stretched its emaciated arm towards her; glimpses of what could be if she turned her back on the joy of village life to join it in the recesses of the dark forest. Her feet stopped just inches away. The smile continued.

Shadows swirled around her: beckoning, urging and filled with promises of adventure, prestige, and desire. The future that lay before her dripped with secrets to be explored and captured. In turn, her lips curled upwards and her eyes flashed. She stretched her hand forward to grasp that of the hooded figure. Their fingers met and the decision made.

The dark figure breathed a foul breath and as it passed over her, her heart was pierced, forever altering its course. It relinquished its touch from her fingertips and its dark, it's now empty eyes betrayed its hollowness as it retreated into the shadows of the forest, leaving in its wake memories of the broken dreams and corrupted futures of those who had gone before.

Her eyes widened. Panic struck and she called out with no response. She had been betrayed. The hope for a future filled with adventure and perhaps even fame vanished as she sat alone. The fear did not end with her dashed hopes, rather, it began with the images seen from the figure; the dreams and desires of countless others whose lives were torn apart as they committed terrible things in their search for what lay beyond the goodness of their homes. The images seared into her mind. No longer was the outside a kind and beautiful fantasy. Rather her hopes and dreams had been stolen. This was the great despair, the pointlessness of hope and the loss of an innocent curiosity.

She fell to her knees and grasped her chest as a piercing pain racked her body. As it subsided, she slowly raised her head. Her eyes no longer held the confidence of one embarking on an adventure, but of one whose heart had been twisted by treachery. The die had been cast and the seed sown.

She rose to her feet and, with shoulders thrust back and head held high, walked towards the village. The dark forest was forbidden, and those who ventured there surely disciplined. It was necessary to act normal, innocent of whatever crime others considered her actions. So manipulation entered her heart, and deceit earned a foothold. Their admittance posed a dual threat for both the present and far in the future, like ripples from a stone cast into the waters of time.

Night neared, and with it the darkness of peace and community as the village gathered around the fires of their hearths, sharing their stories and lives together. For her, this common occurrence held a vibrant irregularity as she harbored a festering secret which isolated her.

Her sleep was fraught with visions of the hooded figure, mockingly inviting her nearer and nearer. The shadows flew from him and swirled around her in flashing waves, their edges sharp and their winds biting cold. No words came from his lifeless lips, just pain.

She awoke in a sweat, and shivered at the memory. She angrily brushed the tears from her eyes, thrusting the blankets away from her legs, determined to forget the experiences of the past day and continue her life in the harmony she once felt.

Yet, her heart held fast to the anger with which she woke. She slammed the door as she left the house. Freezing as she beheld the village life surrounding her, fear stabbed in to her as she imagined each face, so full of acceptance, darken with hate at what she had done. Guilt sunk deep into her chest and she clenched her teeth as her eyes welled with tears. Futile in its ineffectiveness, the tears seemed a balm to her hurting and she wiped them with a calmer hand, turning to face the day.

Working alongside her friends, she kept quiet, unlike her normal energetic self. They in turn refrained from commenting yet a mutual recognition of unasked and unanswered questions left the air charged. They glanced at her with concern and whispered amongst each other, unaware that their shared desire to help was interpreted as malicious gossip.

She narrowed her eyes in anger. How dare they judge her? As she stood to gather supplies, a neighbor's dog, drenched from an enthusiastic adventure in the lake, shook its coat inches away. The sudden water shocked and startled her. Without hesitation, she lashed out, both in tongue and body, and the dog, tail tucked, ran from the kick it had received.

A terrible silence surrounded her as faces turned and eyes widened at such a shocking display of violence. They seemed frozen in their thoughts as she stood breathing heavily, fearful of what lay ahead and knowing that there was no hope for a renewal of the life she had known. A hand gently touched her shoulder, and she quickly spun inches away from the face of the village master. He spoke gently soothing words, and led her away from the town center.

He had encountered such rash and unexpected actions before in his own life and he felt pity for this young woman whom he was responsible for. Together they walked far from prying eyes and as they did, he encouraged her in the ways of the village, living with the cares of others in mind and pursuing peace. She knew he truly desired to help, yet could not move beyond what had happened to her.

Whilst conversing with the village master, she was struck by an idea. What if she was not in the wrong? She had been tricked. She had been betrayed. She had been wronged. What she was experiencing, this form of isolation was the sole responsibility of he who had betrayed her. This brought a superficial form of peace, one which carried with it bitterness and hate at its root, waiting for the moment to bloom into a consuming drive which directs the heart and mind of those who welcome it. Its embers fanned into flame by these questions and, along with it, deceit grew into a burning necessity. She forced a smile on her face and nodded pleasantly, affirming the village master all the while anger began to simmer beneath.

As the days turned to weeks and the seasons changed, life continued within the village; the community, the harmony, and the joy they found in each other flourished for all but one. She lived a dual life, working and participating in silence as she raged within.

It began slowly, the outward manifestations of her inner battles. Her face, once marked by its smile full of hope was now marred by a continual snarl, unwilling to relinquish the hurt of her past. Her voice was filled with sharpness and her words bit with a scalding ache. Her work was done with little pride or expertise. To a knowing eye, her actions expressed a deep rooted malcontent and a potentially dangerous suppression of emotions.

The village master kept a close eye on her, yet he knew not how to confront nor correct her accelerating downward spiral into a darkness from which few escape.

Small grievances surrounded her, in a way acting as both a shelter and a cage. As desired, she remained isolated within the crowd of the village, and cut all ties and connections with those she had previously, and occasionally still, thought of as friends.

She began to feel trapped. She felt as if all were against her. She longed to be free. Her anger became less controlled and more outwardly apparent. She saw grievances hidden in the actions and words of those around her. She felt as if she were a walking volcano, primed to erupt without warning. Yet still, this was not who she desired to be.

One morning, the sun shining brilliantly with birds in the air and the water of the river nearby crystal clear, it began. She woke, just as that fateful day upon which her life changed forever. A child, as all children do, cried in the home nearby, echoing and grating against her now self-consumed ears. Her brow creased in irritation, for more reasons than one. It was the anniversary of her abuse, of her betrayal, of her torment. Of all days, this caused the most hurt. Heightened by the cries of the child, the significance of the day, and the labor looming ahead of her, her patience was threadbare and her tongue barbed.

She emerged from her home and began her work. The laughter of the children, the smiles of the women, and the comradery of the men were nearly physical blows as she considered all she had lost. The day continued in this fashion until that fateful moment, when a boy ran past her in a hurry to be home in time for his evening meal. The basket full of her day's work fell as it connected with the boy's elbow. Lightning flashed in her eyes. The boy, fearful of the consequences of having upset such a woman, hastily gathered the scattered contents of the basket and, head hanging held it out to her. She snatched it from him and threw it again on the floor. Her words thrashed, condemned, and wounded the boy. Tears sprang into his eyes and as the words continued, and flowed down his cheeks. She commanded him to stop. Finding him unable, her hand flew through the air and lashed across his cheek.

Time seemed to stand still. The boy, hand on his face, barely breathed. She, eyes trained on her own hand, breathed not at all. Never before had she physically hit a single person, let alone a child. She was instantly filled with a paralyzing shame. The boy turned and ran. She sunk to the floor.

Members of the village council came to find her. She had not moved and willingly went with them to the hearing of which she already knew the outcome. The sentence: exile, complete isolation in all manners of the word to the dark forest.

The village master anguished, longing to give her an opportunity to change. However, the laws were set to protect the village, particularly the children. Had it been an adult, the sentence would have been less severe. As they handed her a small travel bundle and began to escort her from the premises, he stopped them and asked her if, long ago, she had met the shadow figure in the woods. She nodded with a blank face. His eyes filled with tears of pity and pain. He told her, choking on the words, that they would have never punished her for what had happened. Rather they would have held her with open arms and comforted her with the love of a family. However, this they could not forgive. She nodded with understanding and meekly followed as she was led to her future.

Days later, sitting beside the embers of a fire, she shivered and considered her life: the pain, the consequences, and now the prolonged agony of punishment. No one was to blame but herself. A single tear coursed down her cheek. She wiped it away with the back of her hand and with it, the memory of the young boy flashed across her mind. She tightly shut her eyes and shook her head. There was no use, she was plagued by the memory. The shame of what she had done masked even the bitterness she felt towards life.

A stream gurgled nearby, its beauty and peace seemed to comfort her in a way that little had done for much too long. She considered how time flows as a river and as creatures in its waters, so memories are its essence. Each sparked by a single decision, a single commitment, a single action, however conscious or natural. Her breathe caught in her throat. She had done this. Even before the boy, all her pain, all her hatred, all her anger, was cast upon the wrong person. She had chosen, in that moment to seek things beyond her understanding for contentment. She had sought a world that she had created in her mind's eye, and discovered a very real one in response. Her reaction, she understood with a terrible ache in her heart, was no one's fault but her own. The shadowy figure who lured her and then betrayed her, whose actions she had as much control over as a bird did the winds. What she did control was her reaction, her response, which, if she was truly honest with herself, was selfish and unnecessary. She had had a community of people who cared deeply for all, including her.

As this realization struck her broken heart, brittle and battered from years of emotional abuse, the tears coursed freely. As they had once, they soothed her aching heart and cleansed her broken spirit. All those years, wasted in bitterness, left her as she accepted her fate and her punishment. She no longer hated the world nor those who had sent her alone to the forest. Rather, she resolved to change.

As the young boy walked towards the trees, he felt excitement as well as fear. The figure waved its thin and wiry arm, calling him further from the light of the village and deeper into the darkness. It enticed him with tales of fame and glory and adventure. He quickened his pace.

Suddenly, a second figure appeared just feet away from the hooded one. She covered her face with a long strand of fabric, and her eyes sparkled underneath. She shook her head. He stopped abruptly. He turned to the shadow figure and caught a glimpse of possibilities beyond his imagination. He took another few steps forward. The woman again caught his eye, and with it, he could imagine the possibilities within the life he already lead. There

was hope, there was joy, there was love. The shadow promised chance, she promised hope. Her presence agitated the shadowy figure and with his movements, memories fell from his cloak; memories of past people and broken dreams, including that of the woman before him. His eyes widened as he understood her warnings. She nodded to him and disappeared into the trees. The shadowy figure held out a hand in triumph, yet the boy, with now confident step, turned and walked towards his future.

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The Burden of Blood

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The sultry weather of outside has perfectly made an alliance with the dark damp room of L 102, as if to declare a war against the perseverance of the students to gulp a lecture voraciously. But in that half dark room the dazzling beauty of the teacher who is delivering the lecture on Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is serving as the beacon of light. The flashing smile peeping through the red thin lips is also serving as a whiff of cool air and giving much more relief to the class than the whirling rattling sound of the decrepit fan. Senjuti, the great admirer of madam, has become ultimately successful to find out a resemblance between madam and Belinda and now she is relishing every tidbits of the lecture thoroughly. The problems created by the muggy weather, mosquito biting and suffocated ambience of the room are next to nothing before the ineffable happiness which Senjuti is now sucking like a thirsty person from the ever spurting flow of the lecture. Though being half-engrossed in the class Senjuti's flitting eyes are searching the corridor only to see whether Sumo is coming or not – 'No punctuality. No discipline'. The bridge of patience has just broken and she starts to grumble 'Coming late becomes her habit nowadays. Riding the scooty like a spaceship. What she thinks about herself. Sunita Williams? Surely she'll come just before the ending of the class. How irresponsible!'

Every time Sumo misses classes and Senjuti has to make her understand the text with an air of unwilling willingness. Today Sumo's entering into the classroom happens not like typhoon rather it bears the semblance of a heavy air. Madam startles after seeing her leg. Senjuti hasn't yet paid a glance on her leg, bending her head she is continuing her sermons of grumbling - 'No one comes so late in the class!' Seeing the torn parts of the jeans on the left leg she again becomes irritated – 'Oh No! Has the ghost of Salman Khan created a spell on her!' When the glance quickly passes over the right leg the old symptoms have started to play their tricks on Senjuti – the tearing pain in the veins and reeling of the head have made the entire classroom revolving before her eyes.

The read flesh of the right knee is gaping from the torn part of the jeans and the faded jeans as if is deliberately trying to make itself colourful by soaking the streaming blood.

From the very fingertips to the elbow the entire hand of Senjuti is trembling like an amputated limb. She loves Sumo a lot. Friends are family for her. They had spent their entire twelve years in the same school and after that they had taken admission in the same college. Sumo was the sports champion. Not a single girl in the school treated her like a girl. Friends fondly used to call her Sumo. The very name itself is the opposite definition of her stature. Sporting a mischievous smile on the lips Sumo tells madam 'Ma'am the scooty has just skidded off in front of the college gate' - interrupting her in the midst of her sentence madam anxiously tells some students to take her to the nearest chemist. Senjuti, Purabi, Anima take her to the nearby chemist. On the way Sumo behaves in a manner as if nothing has happened. In this brief period the complexion of

Senjuti has so much altered that her friends have started to make fun of her by saying that she needs a treatment most than Sumo.

The chemist has started to wash the wounded part and sent a boy on an errand to fetch some required medicine from another shop. Purabi and Anima have again started to tease Senjuti -‘How very weak-minded you-are! Seeing blood has almost brought tears into your eyes. A real namby-pamby of the class!’ They cannot imagine what is going on in the mind of Senjuti at that very moment. The wriggling worms like thoughts of blood, the very tingling lump in her throat have dragged her very existence down on the verge of the cliff of inexpressible crisis and ever-gaping pit of despair – two mugs full of blood – Senjuti becomes terribly afraid to enter into the room. Ma is taking out the mugs of blood to empty it into the basin. The entire bed-sheet is covered with the patches of blood and the mattress is as if soaking the blood to give the bed-sheet relief from the burden of blood. Ma has wiped out every stain of blood on the floor but her weary body seems incapable to remove the bed-sheet by handling Baba’s skeletal body in a deft way. The air of the room has become heavy with the smell of blood and medicine which are applied on the carbuncles of Baba’s throat and clean shaven head. The head is studded with several sores and the stream of blood has been spurting out continually from the carbuncle on the throat. The big smirking sore is as if mocking other small sores on the head and also jeering at the attempt of human endeavours to retain a life which itself cannot bear the pain of living.

Senjuti sits down beside Baba and touches those smooth parts of the head with her small hands where the sores have not made their unacceptable invasion. Baba has turned dumb nearly six months but the very eyes of him speak to her everyday. Why today Baba’s eyes are so full of tears? Baba is the real-life hero of Senjuti. Heroes can fight against every possible impossibility. But is he not capable now to fight anymore? Will he give in? How can it be possible? Then Senjuti’s hero will be defeated. May be in real life it is not always necessary to win a battle, the defeat can bring sometimes the sense of relief.

Senjuti is now in class seven. Baba’s wretched condition throughout the last year has forced Baba’s little fairy to desert her never-never land. To the world outside she is an eleven years old obedient sweet girl. But nobody cares to know what kind of tumultuous thoughts she has to suppress under the veneer of a calm bearing. She is striving hard day and night only to attain good marks in the ensuing exam because she knows very well it’s the only method by which she can bring a faint line of smile on the cloudy face of her mother.

The sight of blood gushing forth from Baba’s severed tongue haunts her in sleep. Nobody cares a fig to know what she thinks and feels. The sight of mugs full of blood, medicine, cotton, the bottles of saline and pouch of blood, injection, ointments have throttled the inner child of Senjuti by and by. The ever-nibbling anxiety and stifled pangs of losing one’s most loved one has isolated her amidst a crowd of friends. She is bearing every day and night the burden of blood without anyone’s knowledge.

Sometimes she wonders who is younger she or her Ma. She consoles her each and every time by saying -“God will stand by us and everything will be alright.” Circumstances and

Time are such good teachers Senjuti doesn't know yet. Without her knowledge they have taught her to beguile her mother by covering entire body at night only to hide tears from her and also in the morning to pretend to memorize the lessons by reading aloud when the real endeavours has been working out to push the tears back down the stinging throat. She has learnt all these tricks like an expert.

Today Senjuti is trying to make Baba gulp some fruit juice. When she looks into the eyes of her father an inexpressible fear thrash her entire entity-both sideways of the eyes are streaming with waters and today she can feel her Baba's ardent desire not to live any more is also dribbling with those drops. The juice is coming out from the mouth. He doesn't want to take anything which will help his crippled body to live on this earth for some days more. Doesn't he want to get well for her also? Is she becoming selfish? Can't she see the racking pain through which her Baba is going on for so many days? Can he read her painstricken mind as she can read his eyes? Her favourite room which was earlier adorned with toys and cartoon stickers has now almost turned into a room of a nursing home with hanging saline bottle and pouch of blood. Is Baba aware of the fact that she is battling with her tears and thoughts everyday in the attic and is trying to prepare her lessons properly for the ensuing exam? Is he thinking himself a burden on Ma and her? Is that the reason of her hero to abandon the desire to live? From this day onwards whenever Senjuti prays before God she becomes incapable of saying 'God, please save my Baba' rather a despondent cry to give him permanent release from this horrendous pain comes out from the depths of her heart by tearing each and every tendon of her muscles.

Monday, 2nd June. The entire house is swarming with people and their pompous cry has made a weltering condition of anguish, pain and rage in the mind of Senjuti. She can't bear this hypocritical process of showing emotions so violently and outrageously. Ma is lying on the cold motionless body of Baba almost in a state of stupor. "The 'body' should be removed from here"- the supervising tone of the elder son-in-law of the house comes out of the hysteric sounds like a piercing arrow. Before recovering from the first attack another unexpected attack comes immediately - "Remove her from the dead body and tell her not to make such a 'fuss'." The words smart Senjuti like a hard slap on her cheek. The entire busy world has no time to bear the 'fuss' of a newly turned widow. All relatives are taken to the native village for the cremation and funeral ceremony. On the way Senjuti's uncle gets down from the car only to go to the office of his recently dead brother and to fetch his salary to perform the funeral pompously. Don't forget the date 2nd June, Monday.

Senjuti is not shedding a single tear, as if all the tears have dried up. The cousins of her discussing zealously and critically about the weird nature of hers - 'what kind of a daughter she is God Knows!' Throwing the sweet words against her parched soul they begin to cry more loudly only to show their precious grief. They don't know that Senjuti doesn't want to shed a single tear on the first day of her lachrymose journey of life. Whenever teacher asks any question to Manju in the class, she stares at her blankly. Today Senjuti acts like that nincompoop of their class. It seems her entire mind turns into an empty pot, as if, if someone strikes her head, it will emit a hollow sound. She cannot

feel or think anything. Everything has turned almost blank before her eyes and the innermost recesses of her heart.

Without caring anybody's foul remarks on the next day the eleven years old girl leaves her mother among a herd of hypocrites and comes with her maternal uncle in the town only to take preparation for the ensuing exam properly. She knows very well that her Baba will not be happy to see her garnering sympathy from others by shedding tears rather he will be happy to see her studying.

'What a milksop you are!' the crackling sound of Purabi gives a severe blow to Senjuti's cold weakness of the mind and body. Raising her head she sees Sumo's dressing's been properly done. Her friends have again started to razz her. The blood's been oozing from her knee and you seem to be faint. Ha! Really ridiculous'. Looking on the blood-stained bandage of Sumana's leg Senjuti starts to ponder – 'Am I really very weak-minded? Have I not been bearing the burden of the sights of blood for so many years in my dreams?' She can feel very well the flow of blood in her veins has been slowing down but the stream of blood has been running faster in the veins of her brain. The stifled memories want to come out from the dark inner crevices of her brain.

The setting ruddy sun seems to be weak like Senjuti's bearing. The two mugs full of blood -blood-stained bandage – torn cotton -torn parts of a jeans – the thoughts are running and thronging violently in her mind. She can see the dizzy figures of her friends in front of her. The entire head of Senjuti is reeling to and fro and the yellow weak thoughts turn fuzzy like the blurred afternoon itself.

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Run, Run Away

Mekhala Chattopadhyay, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Ruma startled out of bed. The heart-wrenching music of the drums was blowing still, though a little bit fainter than before. Ruma got out of bed, heading towards the pitcher at the farthest corner of the room. She drank a full glass of it.

“What was it?” she asked herself. The vision in her dream-what was that?

Ruma was absolutely clueless.

She tried to stand up, but a strange numbness was overpowering her muscles. Somehow, she gathered strength and reached the end of the bed.

In two days' time, Ruma would be married off. The lights were still switched on in the adjacent room. All were engaged in the preparations of the 'auspicious occasion'. Her aunt Seema and her mother had been toiling day in and day out for the last couple of days, in order to make the occasion a huge success. Gathering the flowers, the garlands; arranging seats for guests, making provisions for eatables, mopping the floors with cow-dung, drawing out beautiful little white designs on the floors-the duo were really on a mission!

Ruma sat down with a thud. It was a cold winter night but the perspiration rate was at its peak. She mopped her forehead.

The darkness of the night was surrounding her from all sides, to engulf her to the last morsel, the last bit.

“What does she want from me?” Why is she always coming to my dreams?” questioned Ruma. She was in an utterly confused state-a maze was there in front of her, directions weren't provided, the destination was never to be reached!

Ruma and her family have been staying in Charmadi for years. Ruma has known it as her birthplace. She has observed the world through the glasses that Charmadi has worn for years. It was everything for her. Her mother, Leela, though always told her that they are not natives of the place. They have migrated from a different place in the second year of her marriage. Ruma's father was a farmer in the fields of the village zamindar- Ratanlal. He had no land of his own. Ratanlal was a cruel landlord, making everybody work to his maximum possible capacity, but paying extremely less. Ruma has two elder sisters, who were already married.

For Ruma, Charmadi was her paradise. She has lived in the place for nineteen long years now. She has often played round those lush green paddy fields, the barren land at the end of the village area, has made swings in the tamarind and mango trees at rear side of her house. She remembers to have often quarrelled with her friends for it.

“Get down, it is my swing. I have made it,” has often been her command to her friend Rita. Many a times, she remembers to have beaten her up for this crime of hers.

Ruma was nineteen now. Her friend Rita has been married off the previous summer.

Ruma was lost in her thoughts. She was unable to decipher what the face wanted to say. She knew her, it seemed. She did not have the least idea about her intentions, her purpose.

“Is it a dream at all? Am I awake or asleep?” Ruma had no answer.

The face was disturbing her all the time. Ruma decided to shake it off. She got up and proceeded to the adjacent room.

Her aunt and her mother were chatting away gaily. The room was a small one. At one end, the flower garlands were scattered throughout, the other corner occupied by the earthen utensils. Some steel ones has been borrowed from their neighbour- Shyama di, her mother called her so. Ruma never liked her. She was too prudent, she thought. She always kept on boasting; it was unbearable!

Ruma entered the room.

“May I help?” she asked Seema.

“No dear, you have no work here. Just go and sleep,” Seema replied, without looking at her. She was busy selecting the flowers from the whole lot.

Now, that was totally unexpected. Ruma has yearned for sleep many times, while toiling hard with her mother, helping her in the household chores. Nobody had instructed her to sleep, then. And now, when she doesn't need it, she is forced into it!

Ruma smiled. She took up a marigold in her palms and left.

She came and sat down in her room.

She sat there looking at the flower that she was having in her hands. It was of a bright yellow hue, it was beautiful.

Once again, the face peeped at her through the veil of her incoherent thoughts. She was unable to reach up to Ruma, the same was with Ruma as well. She wanted to speak out to her, to understand her problems but was unable to fathom the distance. It was exhausting her. The same process continued, with no declaration of results. Both were there, and both were not.

It was long, long back.

Ruma was three or four-she couldn't recollect. Her mother was going to have a baby for the fourth time.

Ruma was too small to understand about the process, then. She smiled at how she thought that someone had cut out her stomach and inserted the child inside, like the injections the doctors usually give. Ruma thought it too cruel of the person, whoever he was.

“Doesn't he know that the child won't be able to breathe inside? Wicked man!” she had told herself, others never paid any heed to what she said.

Ruma's mother had already borne three daughters. Everybody was now in an anxious anticipation for a son to be saviour of the family. Ruma's father was the most anxious one. He was desperate for it. He needed a son to look after him, his work, his everything. The girls were already becoming an unbearable burden for him, they were not the ones who could look after him during his needs. They were absolutely of no use, no worth!

Her mother was anxious, too.

Fate has always had the final word, the last say.

This time again, for the fourth time in a row, she gave birth to a girl child. Ruma observed her mother- there was no elated feeling visible in her features. She sat there, like a sculpture carved out of stone.

Ruma was, but, extremely excited. She took up the child in her arms; the feeling was overwhelming.

She took her sister to a sojourn through the fields, showed her the river at a distance; she made her listen to the murmuring sound of the waves; she made her hear the parrot's cries up in the mango trees.

"When you grow up to be like me, I will take you to this swing. You know, I have made it. Till you grow up, I would have already told Baba to bring in new ropes for this. Then, both of us will swing together. I will not let Rita swing on it, then. She is so stupid. She doesn't get down after getting on it once," told Ruma, to the newly born. She jumped off in ecstasy, a wild exuberance was overpowering her. She boasted away about how she had made the swing under a lot of difficulties- father had declared a 'no' in the beginning, to her proposal. Eventually, but, she emerged triumphant, she defeated her father!

That day, when she returned back home, she was in one of her most cheerful moods. Pleasure was flashing out from her face, in all dimensions.

Everybody in her home were in a gloomy mood. An air of gravity and seriousness prevailed. Nobody spoke, nobody came running up to her to take the baby in their hands. The silence was really awkward; it seemed that even her rushing heartbeats were audible!

"Baba, look at her. She is waving at you. Take her, take her," she called out to him.

Her father backed away, telling her to take the child away from his sight. Ruma wasn't expecting this, she was shocked at such a behaviour exhibited by her father. She looked at her mother. She was having a dark, sullen, gloomy expression. She did not protest.

Ruma looked down. She left with the baby in her hands.

Now, she knows what had happened that day and why. Now she knows about 'their' plight.

After the day, for a couple of days, the condition at her home became like that of a courtroom. There were serious discussions all the time, in which she had no permission for entry and intervention. She was eager to participate in those discussions, but could

not. Her father was the judge, the lawyer, the convict, as well as the defendant. Her mother was the silent audience, she had no say in it.

On the third day, the discussion took a new turn, the gravity was raised by a level of infinity. Her father was agitated. Her mother kept mum. She nodded at last, reluctantly, in approval. The face showed a profound pain, which remained untouched, not understood, not attended to.

In the evening, her mother had dressed Ruma's sister up in Ruma's beautiful little white dress which she had worn during her childhood years. She put the black soot on her forehead. She looked like that doll, with a broken arm.

"Where are you going? Are you taking her too? I will go too. Please, Maa, take me with you," she pleaded.

After the long argument, Ruma succeeded in her attempt to convince her mother. She agreed with a nod.

It was dark. About seven in the evening. Ruma's father took her sister in his hands.

Ruma was glad to see her father accepting her sister at last. She was relieved.

Just then, her father took a black piece of cloth and covered her face. Ruma was at a loss for words.

"Maa, tell Baba not to do it, she won't be able to breathe inside it. Why does he need to cover her face like that?" questioned Ruma. She looked at her mother. She had a gloomy expression pervading her face. Ruma thought that she saw a tiny drop of tear fall down her dark, brown cheeks. It was all dark. She wasn't sure whether it did.

They left.

"She would catch cold, Maa. Where are we going?" enquired she. Her mother did not answer. She decided to keep mum. She just signalled her to keep quiet. Ruma couldn't understand a single bit of it. Everything was so baffling, everybody was so distanced. Her mother did not answer, her father was unapproachable. She was tired of their silence.

They reached the bank of the river. Ruma could not decipher any meaning in it. She thought it stupid of her father to come up to the river, in such a cold weather' just to take in the cold breeze!

He went up further. He took the child and in the flash of a second, threw it into the river.

"Baba, Baba..." Ruma shrieked.

She went up to her father, running.

"Why did you throw her? She doesn't even know how to swim. Please, Baba bring her back. She will die otherwise," Ruma had pleaded.

Her father didn't reply. He walked off. Her mother said nothing at all. She was defeated in the battle, the entire women folk had lost.

Ruma remembers to have gone to the same place the next day in search of her sister. She was nowhere to be found. She was lost forever. The same river had frightened her ever since. That river, whose soothing murmur provided her solace, whose rippling waves' enchanting sound she made her sister listen to just after she was born- it was now a source of intense fear for her. She had lost her sister in that!

She had not noticed when the marigold had fallen from her hands. It was now, there lying on the ground.

The sun's rays were already pouring in through the window. It was morning. One day later, she would leave her parents' house forever. Tears filled up her eyes. She tried to hide them but all her efforts were in vain.

That day was a very hectic one. All the guests had arrived. Ruma's sisters were there along with their children who were scurrying forth in all directions, with utmost enthusiasm. There was a great hustle and bustle all around. Drums were beating at their full rhythm, shattering Ruma's heart to pieces, with every single beat.

She would leave the place forever, the next day. The strong bond which had been there between herself and Charmadi, a nineteen year long relationship would be terminated.

After the busy schedule of the day, everybody was exhausted. All were on their way to their beds. The next would be another 'phenomenon', one very important occasion was to be held!

Ruma went as well.

She was completely exhausted. She dozed off as soon as she laid down.

"Don't marry, Ruma.

If you bear girls, your husband would do the same as Baba did to me. Please, Ruma. You promised to take care of me but you couldn't. Will you be able to attempt to initiate a struggle, a fight for your children?

No Ruma. You won't, nobody would let you do so. They will kill them

Run, run away Ruma."

Ruma got up with a start. It was her tiny little sister, who died long ago. Ruma fell into a deep contemplation. Everything she said was correct.

Ruma remembered her mother's reluctant approval to her father's arguments. The single drop of tear in the darkness, falling down her cheeks -all became the fragments of the painting that some tragic artist has made on an exclusively large canvas. They constituted an entire picture. Ruma could see it. It was a pathetic sight!

Ruma needed to take the biggest decision of her life. Time was ticking away at its own pace.

She looked around the room. Everybody was in his deepest of sleeps, no one stirred. She got up.

She scrambled through the clothes and took in two dresses, the doll whose one arm was broken, and a pair of old slippers. She tied them all up in a bundle. There were some coins in the earthen piggy-bank, she took it to the rear end of the room and broke it open, causing the least amount of noise. Taking all her belongings, she carefully opened the door.

She reached the verandah, closing the door behind her. Her father was sleeping at one corner. The moon was at its best, shining out bright. Ruma cautiously tip-toed to the fence, crossing the garden. Her father coughed. Ruma stood absolutely still. She felt her heart pounding faster; a chill was running down her spine; she was completely out of her senses. When she finally came back to her senses, she turned back to look at her father. He was there, sleeping soundly as before. He did not stir. Ruma heaved a sigh of relief.

Getting on the other side of the fence, she looked back again at her home. Everything was so peaceful, so tranquil, so serene.

“But tomorrow, everything would change-everything,” Ruma anticipated. She was leaving her parents’ place forever, indeed.

Ruma started running-in search of herself, her own life, her own identity.

“RUN, RUN AWAY RUMA” rang in her ears incessantly. She was running away. The paths were unknown, the distances were yet to be fathomed. She was on the journey with no guiding star to lead her into the right or wrong paths, she was her own teacher now. She had escaped from all the chains of her life, nobody would be able to enslave her. She had tasted her freedom with the most welcoming appetite.

Leaving her own world far behind, crossing all the boundaries, she had escaped.

She kept on running, running and running away...

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As I Stood by him on the road

Rupam Sindhu Kalita

We were still looking for the woman when the streetlights came on. I turned and faced Bashir's drooping eyes. "The old woman sleeps as early as nine o' clock. And she doesn't open her door after that even if you get a bulldozer," he warned.

Bashir lived in the lane next to the one where we were standing now. The colony was a maze of narrow, intertwining lanes that overflowed with black waters from the gutter giving it the appearance of a permanent flood-affected district. There were barber shops at every turning and intersection. The ground floors of most of the tenements doubled up as shops. Housewives with drowsy eyes sat behind the counters most of the day, knitting and shooting an occasional glance at passersby, eyeing them suspiciously. In one of those tenements, Bashir confirmed, a woman who sold spices hired out girls for money.

We saw the sun set behind the maidan. Our day-long endeavour had left us exhausted. Now the din of evening shattered the calm in the streets. Pedestrians and hand-carts jostled for space at the edge of the road. On the pavement a mass of immobile young men gathered, cups of tea in their hands, talking excitedly among themselves. They were mostly students from the neighborhood who worked part time in the day to supplement the family income. Bashir knew some of them. But he said that we should be cautious before approaching anyone. We found shelter from the crowd in a push-cart that had been abandoned on the side of the road. Bashir lit a cigarette. He looked tense and eyed the crowd surreptitiously. He had not spoken for some time now. It was his daily habit to hang around in these crowded streets. He hardly ventured out of the colony. The familiarity of the colony was reassuring for him. There lived his family, all his friends and the girls whom he pestered every morning on their way to school. He had lived there all his life. The world outside was only an extension of his neighborhood. But the business we had that day estranged him from his friends and everybody else in the colony.

At noon Bashir and I had walked up to a shabbily-dressed boy in a shop selling hardware. Bashir took him aside and asked for directions. The urchin immediately pointed to the opposite side of the road and muttered something in Bashir's ears. Bashir turned his animated eyes towards me, hesitated for a moment and then asked me to follow him. We crossed the empty road and entered a dark passage between two buildings. On reaching the spot we found a young woman with a baby in her arms. An old lady was dabbing the baby's limbs with a piece of oilcloth. A scrawny dog was curled up under the string-bed. A clothesline dripped with cheap *kurtas* and discoloured vests. I felt chastened by this picture of happy domesticity.

We walked ahead and reached an alley broad enough to accommodate only two people at the same time. It opened up into a small ill-kept ground. Bashir gestured to a boy who was trying to balance a football on his head and asked him in a low voice for directions.

The boy hooted, "They are found everywhere in the colony." I noticed the irritation growing in Bashir's face. The boy however named a tailor and directed us to his shop.

Bashir led the way. A high wall ran parallel to our left. It ran straight for a few hundred yards and then took a sharp left turn. We paused. Bashir asked me to wait outside and entered a house. He emerged with a young man roughly of his age who gave me a distrustful look and said, "Sajid the tailor runs a dishonest trade every evening." We started walking faster. We left the high wall behind and reached a small *chowk*. A shop selling meat dominated the locality. The tailor we were looking for appeared to have closed his shop for the lunch hour. Three slightly built men with rough features sat on the steps. One was dressed in imitation military fatigues. He had a sullen face and gave us a fierce look when we stopped. Another got up and sauntered towards a circle of men playing cards. He had a pierced forehead and his cheap waist belt was studded with fake silver jewels. A few steps away, a man with a mutilated leg was begging for alms. There was a mid-day hush over the place. Everything was still. There were no signs of Sajid and his trade.

We were tired from our futile wanderings. A hot sun added to our discomfort. We decided to walk back to the bazaar. Bashir got some curry from his house which we ate with tea in the abandoned bus-shed off the main road. Then he took me to some of his friends' hangout digs. I chatted with them and shared their cigarettes over cups of tea. I felt encumbered by my inability to speak the local dialect. But Bashir and his friends were kind. They enquired about my place only once or twice. When the name of my neighborhood sounded alien, none of them cared to ask which part of the city it was situated in. They were a closely-knit community who rarely interacted with the world outside. Among them were the scholars, drunkards and mystics of the locality. One of them, Bashir proudly told me, had topped the high school board exams from his school last year. Another fellow was the treasurer of the local *Ulema*. They were full of spirit. They spoke of the adventures they had every day in the colony. Some bragged about their capacity to drink whisky without falling flat. Then they talked at length about the neighborhood. Its inaccessibility during the rainy season. Its labyrinth of lanes and by-lanes. Busty old hags. Men who came home drunk every night and abused their wives. Horny young men who quarreled with their parents and sisters and frequented ill-famed houses.

Then one of them spoke about the illegal trade in the area. His eyes shrank when he said he knew girls who took money from customers. He mumbled something about households which sold ganja. Then he put an arm across Bashir's shoulders in a knowing way and boasted about the close bond which affected everyone in the colony. It was dark when we came out of a basement room in one of the buildings. Bashir's friends had left except one who accompanied us outside. He spoke with ease about girls who could be hired for a few hundred rupees.

We decided to walk among the dark alleys again. Bashir was less spirited now. I could discern in his eyes a feeling of being let down. He was being forced to the point of urgency. I understood his predicament. He felt let down by his friends. The familiarity of

the colony had vanished like an apparition. He tried to conceal his feelings from me. He handed me a cup of tea and tried to sound convincing. But inside he seethed with silent anger at his friends. At the familiarity that surrounded him.

We resumed our search.

I saw a teenage girl descending the stairs of a two-storey building whose ground floor was occupied by a grocer. The girl had a pretty face. Her tousled hair was tied behind tightly with a red ribbon. Her skin was scraggly and a layer of fine hair covered her arms. I noticed long white lines on her hands where she had scratched with her nails. I surmised her age to be around eighteen. She climbed down and turned towards the opposite direction from where I was standing. I perceived from her gait that she was aware of my gaze. She carried in her hands a jute bag folded untidily. Then she was lost among the tea-drinking mass.

I could hear one of them whispering, "There she goes. The ill-famed woman."

The next moment I felt someone's hand on my back. It was Bashir's.

I knew that he too had been staring at the girl.

"I am afraid we are getting late," I said.

Beads of sweat were visible on Bashir's upper lip. I had seldom seen him so unhappy. He was a reliable friend and I knew his moods. His influence among his friends was well-known. And I was sure about his connections in the colony. It was clear throughout the day, since morning when I called at his house. He had not allowed me to pay for the endless cups of tea we had drunk. I noticed that he had an account with many of the tea-stalls. He kept a record of his daily expense and paid the money in bulk. I knew from experience that this was something that the shopkeepers allowed only the influential people in the locality to do. And sometimes these influential people came to the stalls after two or three months, gave a pat on the back of the shop-keeper and paid them less than their due amount. The shop-keeper did not object. None did. They were happy to obtain and sustain the patronage of important people in the locality. Even now I did not doubt Bashir's standing in the colony. His presence made me comfortable in a neighborhood notorious for its night brawls, drunken fights and whores.

I had had enough of the day and was keen to return home. Bashir had gone silent. He was restlessly anticipating something. And he wanted me to be a part of his muffled enthusiasm. As if it was his responsibility to show me the whore house. He looked round, walked back and forth and exchanged greetings. The bulbs dangling from the porch of shops illuminated faces with an insipid yellow. People moved lazily. There was a rhythm in the manner in which their faces emerged in the light and disappeared the next moment. The owner of a small confectionery shop put down his shutters, clicked the locks, looked around and started his motorcycle parked outside. His eyes met mine as he rode away. I had an uneasy feeling that he already knew I was a stranger and unused to the place.

Then a metallic noise spread through the thinning crowd. Shutters were being downed. A series of short serrated sounds, a long rumbling and the clicking of iron clippers at the base. Silence. A bulb going on at the ceiling of the porch. The light illuminating the soiled ceiling. Then the shopkeeper's final glance at the locks before he turned towards the road.

The tea-drinkers were tapering away. A few of them reluctantly walked back to the tea-stall for another cup. The departing tea-drinkers and the shopkeepers left behind a colony stripped down to the basics. The slant of the electric poles was more visible now and so were the potholes on the pavement. Rickshaw-pullers arrived, exhausted and looking for a cheap dinner. They parked their rickshaws in a row next to the pavement and traded remarks with each other, cracked jokes and laughed.

Bashir returned to where I was standing. He knew that I wanted to return home.

At that moment a cab stopped near a street light and dropped a young woman dressed in a shirt and formal trousers. She stepped down and headed inside the colony without straying her eyes. Two boys standing nearby passed lewd comments.

Bashir had gone silent. He was trying to call someone from his cell phone. The line did not connect and he cursed. Then he turned to me and said, "This son of a bitch is not yet back. Dunno where the hell he has gone. He could have made things easier for us." I knew that Bashir wouldn't hold me back any longer. He was burdened by the feeling that our search had not yielded anything. And he was further anguished that his friends had all been wrong. Yet in a corner of his mind he believed them. He believed that we had not looked at the right places. He trusted the contiguous familiarity around him. However as I stood near him, unable to decide whether to immediately move or loiter around for some time, I was oppressed by another thought.

Rupam Sindhu Kalita, St.Stephen's College, Delhi.

Artworks by Soumitra Mandal

By Soumitra Mandal

Soumitra Mandal studied English at Bhattar College, Dantan (2007-2009) and did M.A in English from the Vidyasagar University in 2011. At present, he teaches at Subhas Chandra Bose B. Ed College, Hendia, Purba Medinipur. He is deeply interested in visual arts and he won several awards in many competitions.

Competitions	Events	Place
<i>10th Inter Collegiate Cultural Competition, 2008, held at Vidyasagar University</i>	Cartooning On the spot Painting Poster Making	1 st 1 st 1 st
<i>East Zone Youth Festival 2008-2009, organized by Ranchi University and Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi</i>	Cartooning	1 st
<i>National Youth Festival 2008-2009, organized by V.U. and Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi</i>	Cartooning	1 st
<i>11th Inter Collegiate Cultural Competition 2009, held at Vidyasagar University</i>	On the Spot Painting Poster Making Cartooning	2 nd 1 st 1 st
<i>25th East Zone Inter University Youth Festival 2009-10, organized by Manipur University and A.I.U. New Delhi</i>	Installation	2 nd
<i>National Youth Festival 2009-2010, organized by Maharshi Dayanand University, Rhotak and A.I.U. New Delhi.</i>	Installation	2 nd
<i>13th Inter Collegiate Cultural Competition 2011, held at Vidyasagar University</i>	Poster Making On the Spot-Painting Cartooning	1 st 3 rd 2 nd
<i>East Zone Inter University Youth Festival 2011-12, organized by Tezpur University and A.I.U. New Delhi.</i>	Cartooning Poster Making	1 st 1 st
<i>National Youth Festival 2011-2012, organized by R.T.M. Nagpur University and A.I.U. New Delhi.</i>	Poster Making	3 rd



Picture 1 *Mist and Morning*



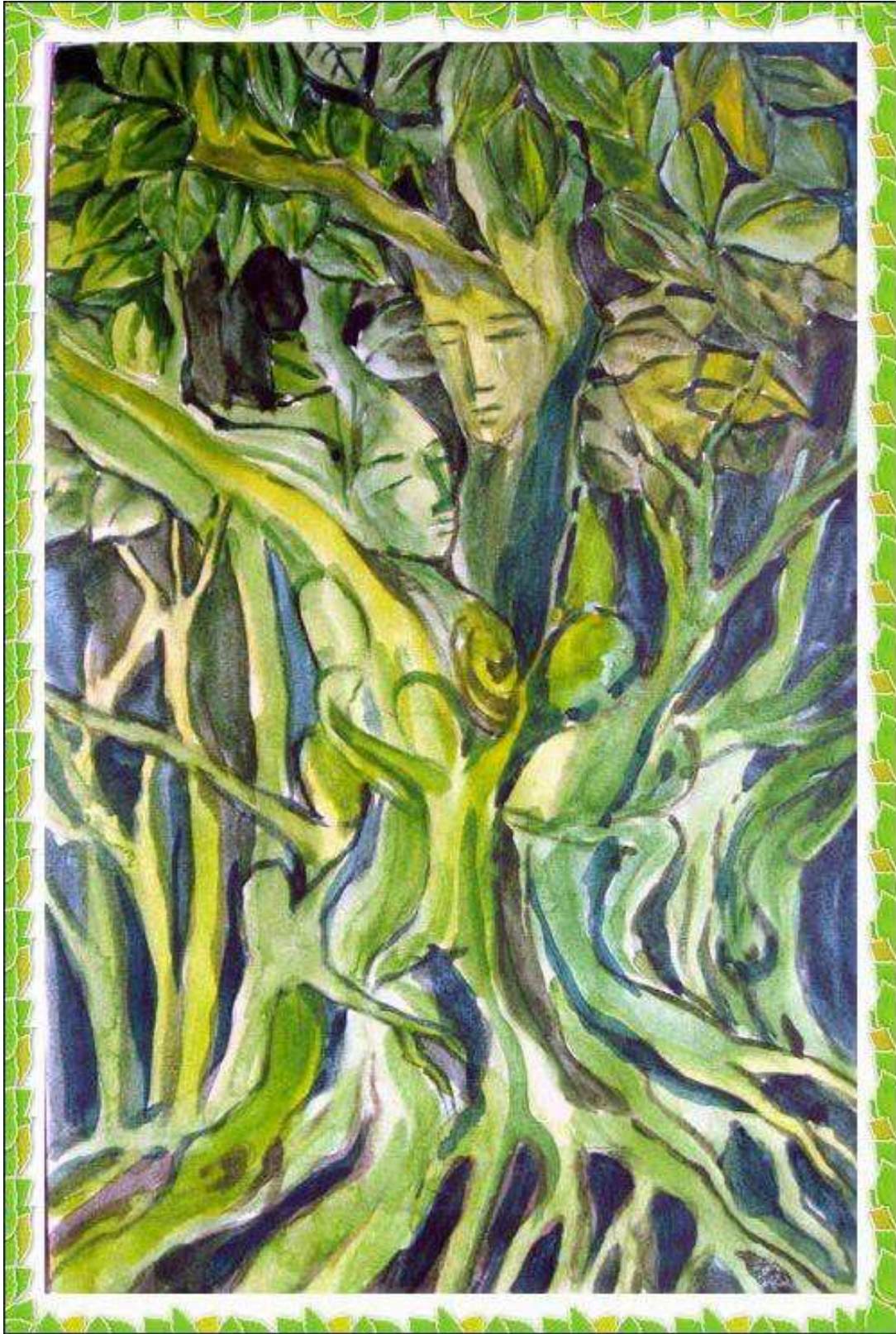
Picture 2 . *Returning*



Picture 3. *A Moment*



Picture 4. *Autumnal*



Picture 5. *Green Dream*



Picture 6. *Harmony 1*



Picture 7. *Harmony 2*

Digital Documentation

Fragments of Culture: Some Artefacts from Dandabhukti

By Some Students of the Dept. of English, Bhatler College

About the Place

The sample survey was conducted at two places of Dantan, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal. This place is considered to have got its name from the capital of an ancient kingdom, Dandabhukti, which last for about 600 years from 6th to the 12 century AD. Naturally precious cultural artefacts of the past are scattered over a large area.

About the Documentation

The documentation was taken up as part of Certificate Course in Digital Humanities run by the Department of English, Bhatler College, Dantan. Through this sample survey students are initiated into the act of documenting and preserving their cultural heritage.

Artefacts at a place named Satdeulia (now known as Ektarpur)





Identification	Bhairava
Dimension	43 x 41 x 24 centimeters
Material	Slate
Period of production	unknown
Location of installation	Unknown
Cultural importance	It indicates prevalence of Shaivism in this region in the early medieval period and this might have absorbed the Buddhist sects in the 12 th century or so.

Unidentified Deity



Identification	Unknown
Dimension	
Material	Slate
Period of production	unknown
Location of installation	Unknown
Cultural importance	This shows that once Satdeulia was an important place and perhaps there was a workshop for making huge statues of stone, or a temple complex where some artisans worked.

Artefact/s from Uttarraibarah

Statue of a Shaivacharya and his followers



Identification

Unknown

Dimensions

Statue 1: From head to the waist: 151 centimeters; length of chest: 117 centimeters

Statue 2: height: 54.5 centimeters: Length: 26.5 centimeters.

Material

Slate

Period of production

unknown

Location of installation

Unknown

Cultural Importance

This statue proves the prevalence of Shaivism in this region. The statue indirectly points to the existence of a *matha* built by the Shaivites.



Students who participated in the documentation.