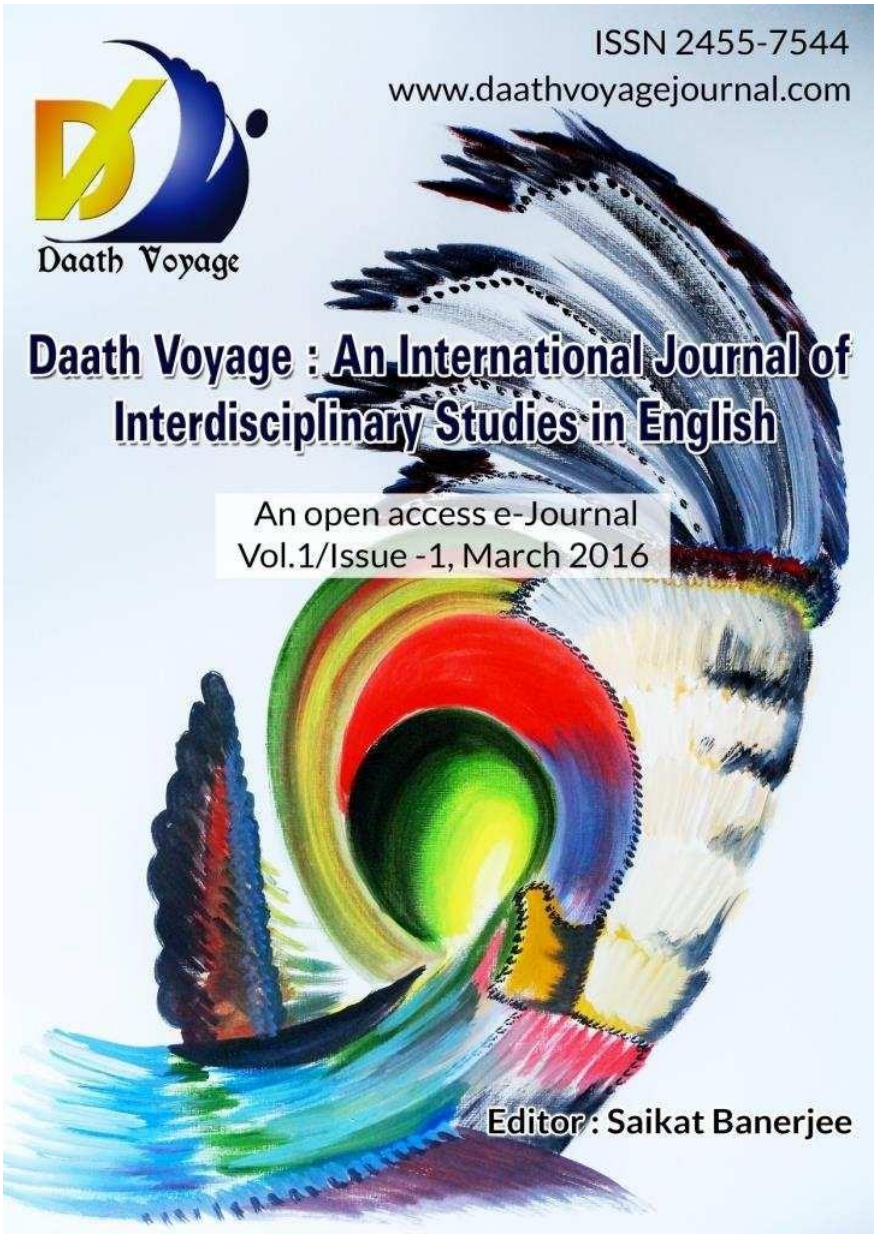

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Archetypal Motherhood in Lillian Hellman's Hubbard Saga

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Abstract: Lillian Hellman's saga of the Hubbard family, comprising the two plays *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest,* is an innovative exploration of the role of motherhood, specifically the manner in which women assert their individuality and resist patriarchal society, while at the same time redefining for themselves the mother-child relationship. The central characters, Regina Hubbard and her mother, Lavinia Hubbard, provide a dramatic enactment of the contemporary feminist idea that motherhood and mothering are two entirely different phenomena – the former being socially determined and the latter a manifestation of an individual's own will. The theme of mothering versus motherhood is also underscored by comparing and contrasting the two characters with their counterparts from Greek mythology, Medea and Persephone.

Keywords: Lillian Hellman, Gender Roles, Motherhood, Greek Mythology.

The American playwright Lillian Hellman created several of the most memorable female characters in twentieth-century American drama, and her plays

The Little Foxes and *Another Part of the Forest* are particularly noteworthy for exploring the links between gender roles and hierarchical order. Originally intended to be a trilogy, the Hubbard saga concerns a family of avaricious Southerners who are as willing to cheat each other as their neighbours. The main female characters in the saga are Regina Hubbard, a sexually active daughter in her late teens in *Another Part of the Forest* and a shrewd business woman in *The Little Foxes*, and her mother, Lavinia Hubbard, a religious fanatic who appears only in *Another Part of the Fores*t. Sources reveal that Hellman intended to center the unfinished final play of the trilogy on Regina's daughter Alexandra as a disappointed and angry "spinsterish social worker" (Bryer 56). The purpose of this paper is to argue that an important dimension of the Hellman saga is its depiction of motherhood as a complicated and nuanced theme. Not only is Hellman's portrayal a nontraditional and unconventional exploration of the social role of the mother, but it is even less a statement on the biological role of child-bearing. Instead, the plays depict a quest for female subjectivity that is dismissive and at times even contemptuous of conservative patriarchal expectations of women in relation to their offspring.

This paper further attempts to trace the maternal lineage among the three female Hubbard generations by utilizing archetypal criticism and the feminist psychoanalytical approach. As will become apparent, Hellman establishes a sharp contrast between the shrewd and aggressive Regina and her religiously obsessed mother Lavinia. The goal is to comprehend Hellman's appropriation and modification of the archetypal mother images and how female identity construction is achieved by mother/daughter dyads.

I. Motherhood and the Mother-Daughter Bond

Feminist historians agree that motherhood is far more than merely a natural

or a biological function. Rather, motherhood is fundamentally a cultural practice that continuously evolves because of changing economic and societal factors. The feminist author and critic Adrienne Rich has provided an analytical tool for a robust analysis of the meaning and experience of motherhood, drawing a clear distinction between the social institution and the actual experience. Rich maintains that the institution of motherhood is distinct from "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children," and further that it is implicated in guaranteeing that "women shall remain under male control" (Rich 13). Distinguishing the two theoretical concepts, scholars following Rich have intentionally used the term "motherhood" to refer to the institution of child-rearing that is male-defined, controlled, and deeply oppressive to women, while reserving the term "mothering" to refer to experiences that are female-defined, centered, and potentially empowering to women (O'Reilly and Abbey 3).

By tracing the historical record of motherhood from Neolithic goddess cultures to the early agricultural period, and then to the post-industrialized era, we witness a declining process from "mothering" to "motherhood," from the maternal empowerment to restriction and domestication. Despite a perfunctory praise of motherly love, Greek legend often reveals a distinct fear that mothers might prove to be unloving or even worse, with the terrifying Medea as the archetype of the Bad Mother. At the same time, Greek myth tends to celebrate a patriarchal triumph of splitting the mother-daughter bond, with the story of Demeter and Persephone as the exemplar. In more recent times, patriarchal motherhood has given rise to the contemporary ideological construction of "intensive mothering" (Hayes 5), and the "masking of motherhood." By the latter, Susan Mauchart explains that the very concept of motherhood creates an idealized and unrealistic expectation that leads to guilt and anxiety (Mauchart 10). As one may infer, the patriarchal concern for

how women take on their social roles as mothers -- and especially how aggressively they go about asserting their individual responsibilities and expectations -- has a long and complicated history that only in recent times has been addressed by feminist theorists.

In fact, this history has been particularly comfortable with simple bipolar oppositions, and in many instances continues to be so. For example, the dichotomies of the Angel/Madonna/Good Mother and the Whore/Magdalene/Bad Mother are age-old, and the idealized figure of the Good Mother, selfless, sacrificial and domestic, casts a long shadow on many actual mothers' lives. Another standard term for the ideal mother is "the angel in the house," which is taken from Coventry Patmore's 200-page nineteenth-century poem of the same name. The poem is practically unreadable today, but the phrase "angel in the house" continues to be immediately obvious as a description of the woman who gladly sacrifices herself for her family. Thus, the choice in traditional literature and popular culture until fairly recent times has involved two alternatives for the mother: either she is a good one who stays in her place, or else she is a bad one who causes some sort of trouble.

The problems with bipolar oppositions have been addressed amply by modern critical theory, and it is probably not necessary here to review the literature. But one problematic issue is that the traditional literary depictions of motherhood based on patriarchal truisms have little or no resemblance to the real lives of mothers. Whether or not a particular mother is indeed an "angel in the house" may be the grist for countless novels and movies to this day, but the question actually hinges on whether the woman who happens to occupy a house with her offspring is defining for herself and her significant others a "mothering" that is for the benefit of all involved. Therefore, as Rich insists, the patriarchal institution of

motherhood must be destroyed, and a creative rethinking of the mothering role, a greater attention to the maternal experience, and a subversion of the traditional notion of a mother as an instinctual being, must replace it. The "unmasking of motherhood," Rich believes, is the greater challenge to the feminist imagination than all the other "women's issues put together," and first requires "an archaeology of maternity," an excavation of the truths of motherhood disguised and distorted beneath the mask (Rich 239). In Rich's view, the key tool for achieving the constructive redefinition of maternity is maternal and matrilineal narratives unmasking and empowering maternal roles and subjectivities.

The study on the formation of maternal subjectivity by women confined in patriarchal domestic lives occupies a crucial position in the field of feminist psychoanalysis. Nancy Chodorow proposes her object relations theory on gender-shaped personalities and psychodynamics within the family structure, which connects the process of personality formation directly to the division of labor in the modern family. Chodorow's psychoanalytic account of male and female individual psyches starts with the question that why women learn to mother and men, generally speaking, do not. Since modern family has an asymmetrical division of labor where women engage in activities that can be described by the verb "mother," while men do not, Chodorow proposes that children identify with their same-sex parent so that boys and girls individuate differently. Because of the mother's assigned role as full-time nurturer, boys, with the father separated from care-giving, form personalities that are emotionally detached, independent, less oriented toward other people, and girls develop personalities based on attachment and an orientation toward others. Therefore, with men and women unconsciously carrying their patterns of attachment and separation into adulthood, gendered personalities, "masculinity" and "femininity" are thus created. The "differing

psychic outcomes in women and men" lead to gender differentiating views of selves, that, although all selves are relational in some sense, the institution of female parenting creates women with relational selves in some additional sense (Chodorow 206). Chodorow's illustration of infant development and the relational model of the self, which present the gender-power systems based upon the organization of this division of labor in heterosexual partnerships, when extended to the realm of ethics, explains the gender-differentiating moral reasoning of women and men. Combining "institutionalized features of family structure and the social relations of reproduction reproduce themselves" with "the roles defined by sex-gender system have created widespread discomfort and resistance" (Chodorow 209, 219).

In order to implement and solidify the sex-gender system, mother-daughter connections have suffered the patriarchal marginalization and estrangement. As Rich comments, "the cathexis between mother and daughter -- essential, distorted, misused, is the great unwritten story" (Rich 235). A revival of feminist studies on the mother-daughter relationship has emerged over the last decade of the twentieth century, with conscious feminist linkage of female empowerment to the mother-daughter connection. Instead of the stereotypical patriarchal mother images, the "ugliness" of maternity has become the starting point for many writers to embark upon the criticism of patriarchal motherhood and the self-examination of womanhood.

Lillian Hellman is an important writer in light of feminist goals because she, more than any other dramatist, avidly explores the theme of motherhood. In her literary creations, Hellman unmasks the patriarchal mother myth by depicting a maternal world in which "problematic" mothers become the mainstream of the creation of maternal images, while the fragmented "good" mothers are merely

complements to the former. Neither Lavinia in *Another Part of the Forest*, nor her daughter Regina in *The Little Foxes*, can be regarded as a certifiable "good mother" in a patriarchal sense, considering their betrayal against institutionalized motherhood. But as the following analysis will demonstrate, the two women are by no means cut from the same cloth. Lavinia, who is a character in *Another Part of the Forest* but deceased by the fictional time of *The Little Foxes*, is preoccupied with her religious advocacy of the very African-Americans whom her family members have exploited for gain, thereby having little time for a more "conventional" career as a mother. Regina keeps herself so busy in trying to stay a step ahead of her unprincipled elder brothers that she, like her mother, doesn't seem to have much time available for her daughter, Alexandra. Therefore, neither of the mothers depicted in the two plays conforms to the stereotyped image of the "angel in the house." However, each is unconventional in her own unique way, thereby defining motherhood for herself rather than allowing society to impose its own definition.

II. Lavinia: A Reluctant Medea

Hellman's principal female characters from *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest* bear interesting resemblances to characters from Greek mythology. The comparison and contrast between Lavinia and Media, on the one hand, and Regina and Persephone, on the other, underscores our argument that Hellman wishes to define motherhood in a manner that takes full consideration of the long literary history of the theme. Thus, we do not intend to suggest that Lavinia is a modernization of the Medea legend, or Regina of Persephone, but rather to argue that age-old portrayals of motherhood provide interesting suggestions of how imaginative literature may bring the role of mother into sharper focus.

Euripides wrote *Medea* around 400 B.C. as a story of intense love turned to such intense hate that Medea kills her own child to get back at her husband for betraying her. The appalling infanticide committed by Medea as a negative mother archetype is so freeze-framed and interiorized in Western culture that other heinous acts she has committed are often overlooked. Not only does Medea assist in the assassination of her own brother, Apsyrtus, but she also betrays her father and her country. Therefore, one might just as easily argue that Medea is a thoroughly bad individual in numerous ways rather than merely a stereotypically bad mother. But more than 2,000 years of literary tradition immortalizes her primarily as the latter.

In a comparison of *Medea* and *Another Part of the Forest*, one may draw relevant analogies between Medea's younger brother and the sacrificed young Confederate soldiers, as well as between Medea's uncontrolled passion for Jason and Lavinia's instinctual protection of her husband Marcus. Both Medea and Lavinia become obediently submissive to the will of their husbands, while Jason and Marcus share certain qualities of cool rationality in their demeanor. Lavinia's hatred towards Marcus, on its face, is never comparable to that of Medea towards Jason, whose betrayal brings Medea fatal insult and injury. However, under scrutiny, one may perceive similarities. And while it may seem that the topic is getting away from motherhood, the point is that a woman's relationship with her children is always colored by the larger dynamics of her relationship with her husband.

In terms of the specific dynamics in both plays, there is no doubt that both Jason and Marcus Hubbard are scoundrels. One may argue, in fact, that Jason is so abusive in his marital relations that he drives Medea to commit murder, while she in turn is unable to respond to Jason's abuse in an acceptable manner because of

her low status as a woman. Fred Pine refers to Medea as an example of a particular form of hatred found in women whose "internal experience is a compound of a sense of injury—a sense that builds to imagine public humiliation and a sense of righteousness" (Pine 109). Medea is a "narcissistically scarred, embittered dependent woman…[who]…attempts to sever father-child contact as a means of revenging the injury inflicted on her by the loss of a self-object, her hero-husband" (Jacobs 312). When Medea in her role as a mother wishes to punish her husband by turning his children against him, she is also attacking the children. In her unconscious, both the children and the husband represent the same thing, the ones that did or might betray, and destructiveness is wished on both of them.

Lavinia's sense of humiliation and hatred results from her unaccomplished self-orientation of being a "white angel" in an impoverished African-American section of town, and her stasis in this role over many years eventually mutates into anxiety and hysteria. Lavinia's self-righteousness and arrogance is in comparative juxtaposition in the play with that of John Bagtry, another character who misapprehends the times and circumstances with blind perseverance. The aristocratic Bagtry, a former Confederate officer who thinks of the war as the happiest time of his life and who has never gotten over his side's having lost, intends throughout the play to abandon his lover Regina in order to become a mercenary soldier in Brazil. Although everyone in town knows that Bagtry and Regina are sleeping together except for her father (according to her elder brother Ben), there seems to be little passion in Bagtry other than a desire to find another fulfilling war to fight. Because of the sixteen-year age gap between Bagtry and Regina, and the climactic dispute between Marcus and Bagtry, many critics believe that Regina's desire to marry John Bagtry is due to her discovery "in Bagtry a younger version of her father" (Dick 76).

The concept of the father-figure and its relationship to motherhood is further developed in the play by the brief but suggestive acquaintanceship between Lavinia and Bagtry, who display a mutual resonance and understanding, most obviously in the early scene in which Lavinia interrupts a meeting between Bagtry and his lover Regina. Discovering that the two share the same birthday, and further, that the day is also Lavinia's anniversary, Bagtry and Lavinia demonstrate that they are both impractical and ineffectual dreamers. For her part, Lavinia wishes for nothing more than serving as the savior of the African-American children, and as it becomes apparent toward the end of the play, for remaining near Ben, her first-born son. Bagtry, for his part, wishes for nothing more than a good war in which he may help fight in order for the institution of slavery to be maintained, disagreeing heartily when Marcus tells him that he is on the wrong side of history. Significantly, we never find out what happened to either individual, although both have presumably died in the twenty years that lapse between the time of the two plays.

The hysterical allophasis of Lavinia and the loving patience and sympathy of Coralee promote the stark contrast and irony between the weak and the strong, the redeemed and the redeemer. Lavinia, with her inborn sense of superiority as a white angel bringing the Gospel to the African-Americans she considers uncivilized, seems an ignorant and arrogant child in the loving hands of Coralee. In fact, Coralee reveals in passing that the African-American children would probably be intimidated by a white teacher, which also underscores the fact that Lavinia is deceiving herself. In the imagination of a white Southern belle such as Lavinia, the blacks in the aftermath of the Civil War must have been in urgent need of white charity and culturing. While this may have been true of people only recently emerging from an abusive slave system, the damage that her own son

Oscar causes to the African-American community as a Klansman greatly overwhelms any good she can do with a few reading lessons and Bible-verse recitations.

Lavinia, preferring companionship with the black servants in the kitchen over her own family, is ironically actualized as the redeemed rather than the redeemer. In other words, her actions may seem altruistic, but she undertakes them entirely for her own benefit. Moreover, Lavinia's self-acknowledged vanity, her wish for a mahogany pew displaying her name in brass lettering, and her fantasized popularity with the people whom she believes she is saving, all contradict established Christian standards.

On the other hand, Lavinia may lack the toughness of Medea, but her journey of revenge is nevertheless just as potentially fatal. Like Medea, Lavinia is willing to use her own children to get back at her enemy, although in her case by conspiring with her eldest son to disenfranchise his father rather than by depriving the father of his offspring. Thus, Lavinia is every bit the equal in her strong narcissism and infuriated humiliation, which allows her to plan her payback with an all-consuming vengeance. Medea's memory of her betrayed family and country is analogous to Lavinia's memory of her betrayed townspeople, though the memory trauma suffered by Medea gains more sympathy from the chorus than that of Lavinia from a reserved black servant. Furthermore, both Lavinia and Medea have suffered from their husbands' broken pledges, Lavinia's Marcus having reneged on his promise to finance Lavinia's school for African-Americans. Again, this may all sound remote to the concept of motherhood, but the point is that familial relations involve far more than the mother-child interaction, and in fact, the latter may be a function of the former.

Lavinia's religious fervor often takes the form of quoting Biblical verses, but

the Bible she always carries has another function that is particularly fateful in the play. When Marcus ejects Ben from the family after the failure of a fraudulent loan scheme, Lavinia reveals the "secret" that has been carefully recorded in her Bible. The townspeople have always suspected Marcus of complicity in a massacre of 27 Confederate soldiers, and at the time he was almost lynched as a collaborator. Despite the fact that he was indeed innocent of the charges, he apparently managed to bribe a Confederate officer to provide him with an alibi. Lavinia and Coralee have withheld their proof for 15 years, but carefully recorded their evidence as a sworn affidavit in Lavinia's Bible at the time, presumably to be used at a future date if the need arose. Therefore, Lavinia's Bible has a dual purpose of serve as a repository for lofty sentiments that provide moral instruction, but also as a place to maintain legal documents that can be used for extortion.

However, when it comes to interpreting motherhood, Lavinia is somewhat more conventional in her application of Biblical verse. For example, she blames herself for the adversity that Ben is facing by saying that "You're my first-born, so it must be my fault some way" (Hellman 384)**.** Throughout the Bible we read of the importance of the first-born son, both in terms of primogeniture and in terms of devotion and emotional attachment. In fact, the Bible refers to a mother's first-born as one who "opens the womb" (*King James Bible*, Exodus 13.2). According to Lavinia's pious reading of the Bible, Ben problems are actually the sacrifice he is forced to pay in recompense for the sins of his parents. When Ben asks Lavinia if she likes him, Lavinia answers after a second, "Well. You've grown away from—I loved you, Benjamin" (Hellman 367). According to Lavinia, at the moment of the first-born's growing away from the mother's womb, his obligation of redemption has pushed him further away from his mother, and this explains reasonably Lavinia's passionate aspiration to be reunited with Ben by constantly

asking Ben to take her away.

Lavinia's destruction of Marcus by helping Ben is analogous to Medea's destruction of Jason, although the children are transformed into enemies rather than eliminated entirely. But in both cases, the "Medea complex" is a vehicle for depriving the father of his children, and thus his treasured patriarchal claim to power. This deprivation involves not only to Marcus's absolute right of controlling the family fortune, but also his dominion of the women in the family. Lavinia achieves her full victory not only by turning Marcus and Ben into enemies, but finally by inducing Regina to look toward Ben for her material comfort. She is free, of course, to continue doting on her father as she has always done, but she will gain nothing materially in return. Thus, Marcus's retribution is no less severe than Jason's; both have lost their children and both face a bleak and miserable future.

As important as the Medea analogy is to the play, other interesting coincidences with Greek mythology are also apparent. And for these it is necessary to review briefly the psychoanalytical contribution of Jung to feminism through his formulation of the "Electra Complex," which arises from the archetypal mother-daughter tragedy of Electra and Clytemnestra in Greek mythology. Based on the story of a daughter's revenge on her mother for the murder of her father, the Electra Complex as the archetypal mother-daughter relation "constitutes in the daughter's justification of the patriarchal institution suppressing her mother, her sister, and eventually herself" and her daughter (Schultermandl 45). Regina, by assimilating to the dominant patriarchal culture, often also adopts the prevalent weak-bullying attitude and uses it against her mother in order to distinguish herself from a culture of nostalgia and sentimentality. In this respect, Regina's search for individuality correlates with her rejection of her matrilineal heritage. The mother-daughter relation between Lavinia and Regina, the only two females in the

family, is quite ambiguous in *Another Part of the Forest*, with no intense conflict or warm communication between them. The only emotion that seems to exist between them is the silent resentment and mistrust that has arisen from Lavinia's narcissism and Regina's unresolved and complicated emotional attachment to her father. Regina's subconscious seduction of Marcus results from her admiration of the male autonomy and dominance that Marcus represents, as well as her ulterior motive of exploiting the incestuous relationship. At the same time, Lavinia is projecting upon Regina all of the control and desire for power that is stifled by social norms and by Lavinia's self-loathing. On the other hand, in Lavinia's eye, Regina is a symbol of the mother's own failed attempt to achieve autonomy, which explains Lavinia's rejection of Regina's repeated proposal of leaving together and her resorting to Ben, her first-born son. This rejection by the mother creates yet another lack within Regina that can be filled only by doubt and isolation.

The concept of primitive envy in the mother-daughter relation, proposed by object relations theorist Melanie Klein, contributes another perspective on the interpretation of Lavinia's exclusion of Regina from her revenge and freedom. Klein leaves us with a terrifying and irresolvable pathological model of the mother-daughter envy, including "the mother's envy of her daughter's potential and freedom, and her feeling of rejection as her daughter appropriately moves away from her", and "the daughter's inhibiting herself or to guilt about surpassing her mother" (Donovan 139). Lavinia's envy of Regina's manipulation over Marcus and her feeling of rejection as Regina actively caters to Marcus' incestuous desire, contribute to the alienation between the mother and the daughter. The fractured relationship leaves Regina to battle social forces alone as she attempts to resolve the break she has with her own experience.

However, while the Electra mother-daughter tragedy typically contains no

subtext of sympathy, a brief moment of caring and understanding nonetheless occurs between Lavinia and Regina. At one point, for example, Lavinia looks at her daughter's face for a moment and exclaims, "Regina, when you don't frown you look like my Grandmama…the one who taught me to read and write…a lady to know how to read and write, up in the piney woods" (Hellman 341). In this way, Lavinia reveals that she indeed feels sympathy and regret for her daughter's situation, despite the fact that Regina has become a competitor for Marcus. Lavinia's insight into Regina's anxiety, into her frowning melancholy disguised in flattering laughter among the men in the house, is a mother's loving understanding of the daughter. Lavinia's maternal sentiments are not openly responded to by Regina, but reciprocated by Regina's consistent wish to leave the family with Lavinia. Thus, it is short-sighted to frame their relationship as nothing more than a modern re-enactment of the Electra Complex. Indeed their interactions suggest the Electra myth, but their emotions do not stop at winner-take-all rivalry, as was the case with Electra. Besides, Hellman's depiction of mutual understanding between Lavinia and John Bagtry, also implies a will to forge a more meaningful mother-daughter relationship by way of a positive friendship with the prospective son-in-law. On the other hand, the tragedy of the play is in part realized when this tenuous mother-daughter emotional tie is rudely broken by the imposed violent patriarchal ideology. Lavinia's choice of alliance with her son rather than her daughter indicates the patriarchal maternal dilemma.

III. Regina: A Decisive Demeter

The mythical story of Demeter and Persephone is generally regarded as the archetype of motherly love toward the daughter, with emphasis being placed on Demeter's grief over losing Persephone. In most versions of the myth, the transformation of Persephone from a young maiden to Queen of the Underworld is

a matter of the girl's abduction against her own will. The victimization of Persephone, in her journey into the Underworld and her eating of the pomegranate seeds, therefore dominates most versions of the myth, while Persephone's curiosity and active investigation of the darker but mysterious world distinct from the protection of her mother has been generally neglected if not ignored, which in effect means that the sexual undercurrent is typically downplayed.

A unique perspective has been proposed by Molly Donovan, who regards the Persephone myth as being more a tragedy of motherhood than of female adolescence. "In this highly charged story of Demeter and Persephone that the Greeks portrayed the strength of the mother-daughter bond and their difficult task of separating and individuating while remaining connected" (Donovan 138). Persephone's experiences of sexuality, implied in her taste of the pomegranate seeds, and her separation from Demeter, forced by patriarchal seduction and despotic power, are, in the expression of most myth narratives, signs of the daughter's submission (Spitz 414). But Persephone's curiosity and inability to resist temptation suggest the activeness and initiation of her investigation into the new world, a sign of her rejection to and differentiation from Demeter. The final compromise of forced separateness and interrupted connection between the mother and the daughter is a loss for the former and a gain for the latter.

Donovan suggests "a reverberating cycle of envy and rejection in the troubled mother-daughter relationship, in which differentiation is taken as rejection and differentness leads to envy and to attempts to sabotage the growth of the other and reestablish the merger" (Donovan 139). Demeter, the goddess of fertility, fecundity and regeneration, raped and impregnated by Poseidon as well as by Zeus, is the mother archetype representing maternal instinct finding fulfillment through pregnancy and motherhood. A mate as well as a sibling to Zeus, Demeter seeks a

man for maternal security rather than intellectual or sexual companionship. Therefore, it is Demeter who has been victimized as an over-committing and self-pitying mother, whose deep depression and suppressed anger due to her disappointments and losses may lead to a sense of betrayal and growing bitterness when the daughter, her only possession, is taken away from her. A "Demeter mother" may thus withdraw her approval from her child when the child begins exhibiting more autonomy than the mother feels comfortable with. Her desire to feel needed is wounded by the loss of her emerging adult children into their own marriages. "In fact, the psychology of the Demeter cult has all the features of a matriarchal order of society, where the man is an indispensable but on the whole disturbing factor" (Jung and Kerenyi 245).

In *The Little Foxes*, the ambivalence about the relationship of Regina and Alexandra is quite evident because the relationship unveils an especially antagonistic mother-daughter pairing. Clever, assertive, and calculating, Regina on the surface appears to represent the archetypal "evil mother," "an aggressive harridan who seeks to manipulate her sensitive, ailing husband and her idealistic adolescent daughter, Alexandra" (Skirl 74). However, Hellman's portrait of Regina is much more complex than would appear on the surface; Hellman's Regina is a victim as well as a victimizer.

In the adaptation of the screenplay of *The Little Foxes*, Hellman "scaled the Hubbards down to the size of the rectangular screen," and created Regina as "a perennial type—a woman who must face the fact that she is aging" (Dick 63). The vulnerability of Regina is emphasized in the screenplay with addition of some screenplay scenes when Regina compares an oval photo of herself as a young woman with her reflection in a mirror, and when, before Horace returns, she makes herself up carefully, studying her face as if it were a map. Such additional

moving scenes scale "the characters who were bigger than life on the stage" down to more realistic human beings (Dick 63). The vulnerability of the strong Regina, added in the screen version, highlights the psychological victimization of Regina and invites a more sympathetic response from the audience.

Regina's unsustainable emotional tie with Alexandra is to a great extent due to her split with Lavinia at an early age -- in Adrienne Rich's words, "patriarchal matrophobia," or the fear by the daughter of becoming one's mother because of the daughter's sense of resentment toward the powerlessness, compromise, and in-authenticity they see in their mothers (Rich 239) Rich holds that patriarchal matrophobia has taken its modern form by having silenced the mother-daughter relationship in culture and literature since early times. With Lear (a father-daughter split), Hamlet (mother and son), and Oedipus (son and mother) as the great embodiments of the human tragedy, but with no presently enduring recognition of mother-daughter passion and rapport, Rich acknowledges that the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy. The institution of patriarchal motherhood, in essence, encourages this daughter split from the mother, which is rampant in contemporary cultures (Rich 239).

Regina's resistance toward being mothered is constantly implied, bearing strong resemblance with Demeter's defiance of sexuality. In the original Greek myth, Demeter is twice raped – once by Zeus, her own brother, which led to the birth of Persephone, and a second time by Poseidon, another brother. The incestuous allusion of Regina's relationship with Marcus and the tacit consent of her brothers, also reverberates with Demeter's incestuous sexual experiences. Regina's adolescence is entrapped in complicated family dynamics, with her father Marcus desiring to have her to himself, and her clear-eyed brother Ben exploiting the emotional bond between father and daughter to carry out his own schemes for

advancement.

Regina's marriage to Horace in *The Little Foxes*, one of Ben's interest-driven schemes, and the consequent engendering of Alexandra, seems to her a rape within the divine institution of marriage. Sometime after giving birth, Regina deceived Horace with a false medical report of her physical unsuitability for sex, thus exempting herself from further sexual relations with her husband. Regina's compromised marriage and her defense of territory by rejecting male intrusions, is also reminiscent of Demeter, the goddess of grain as well as of marriage, whose realm stands in opposition to those of two goddesses Artemis and Aphrodite. While Artemis represents the disposition and comportment of the virgin and Aphrodite that of the prostitute, Demeter's realm is of licensed sexuality and controlled abstinence, producing "cultural" rather than "natural" offspring. The complete rejection of sex represented by Artemis, as well as the exclusive exultation in sex by Aphrodite, are both "culturally sterile" because "the first produces no children, and the second produced illegitimate, fatherless children" (Csapo 267-8). Sexuality, for both Demeter and Regina, is a forced obligation they have to endure and ceaselessly defy.

Regina's vulnerability is further depicted in her struggle against the male disinheritance of her right to freedom and independence. The intended disinheritance of Regina by her husband Horace echoes with the realized disinheritance by her father in *Another Part of the Forest*, who was forced to leave his fortune to her brother Ben. Regina's scheme to obtain financial autonomy to live her life as she wishes, has been constantly defeated by her inborn vulnerability as a woman, so that she is willing to "abandon any moral scruples she might have in order to triumph over men—her father, her brothers, and her husband—who have sought to curb her power" (Skirl 73-4). In their adulthood, Ben repeatedly

prompts his Regina to assume a conventional social role as a woman, thereby invoking the patriarchal tradition of utilizing a woman if she is attractive, soft, and appealing. Regina, however, does not conform well to this stereotypical image, instead asserting herself aggressively throughout the play. In fact, she is "determined to be heard, to write her own story, to shape a narrative for herself beyond the boundaries set by her husband, brothers, and the patriarchal society in which she lives" (Barlow 167). Regina's determination not to be silenced is parallel to Demeter's persistent search for Persephone and her threats to Zeus of exterminating humanity. What resembles the leitmotif of the helpless compromise of Demeter's under patriarchal pressures is Regina's ultimate failure to rescue her daughter from the dominance of Horace. By rejecting her mother's wishes, Alexandra finalizes her separation from her mother, thereby shifting the balance of power from mother to daughter.

Unlike the mother-daughter alienation separating Regina from Lavinia, the mother-daughter bond between Regina and Alexandra is more paradoxical, reinforced by the resemblances they share. The mutual mirroring of the mother and the daughter is intended for presenting the indelible potential understanding between Regina and Alexandra. Regina's decisiveness is in sharp contrast with Lavinia's irresolution; Regina's affectionate concern for Alexandra is juxtaposed with Lavinia's maternal indifference and abandoning of Regina. Regina, a daughter unsatisfied in her relationship with her mother, performs courageously her maternal responsibility, even though she has long understood the complexity of a mother-daughter relationship. Ultimately she emerges as a courageous mother who is not only life-giving, but also empowering and humanizing for her daughter. But the manner in which she does so cannot be shoe-horned into a simple judgment of whether she is a "good mother" or a "bad mother." The relationship

between Regina and Alexandra is every bit as resistant to easy bipolar oppositions as the relationship between Regina and Lavinia.

Even the males in the play seem to grudgingly agree that such is so. Ben, for example, reveals toward the end of *The Little Foxes* that Alexandra is "turning out to be a right interesting girl" (Hellman 238). The film version of the play gives Alexandra even more independence, replacing the narrated incident of Alexandra's overnight stay in Mobile with Horace with actual scenes, which enlarge the girl's role and strengthens her character. Alexandra of the film is noted by the hotel clerk as being exactly like her mother, thus possessing a certain domineering quality that is becoming increasingly more obvious as she approaches adulthood. In the original play, however, Regina is characterized as a domineering mother figure whose energy is fascinating though potentially destructive to her daughter's well-being. Instead of keeping the daughter innocent and dependent by dutifully bring the ailing Horace back from the Baltimore hospital, Regina succeeds only in providing Alexandra with a chance of growing up and taking responsibility for herself. Regina rejects Addie's babying protection of Alexandra and believes that the chance to accomplish such a duty alone would have delighted a girl of Alexandra's age. A mother's urge for a daughter's independence, in Regina's case, seems to be part of her scheme to subdue her husband. However, it is more than that for Regina, who insists she has always had Alexandra's best interests at heart. "You're young, you shall have all the things I wanted. I'll make the world for you the way I wanted it to be for me," Regina tells Alexandra (Hellman 246). When rejected by Alexandra, Regina attempts one final time to express her ambivalence by repeating her decision that "I won't make you stay" (Hellman 247).

Regina's strong personality forms the antagonistic keynote in the mother-daughter relationship, and does so by contrasting Regina's detachment and

determination with the passivity of the doting and nurturing Addie, and with the absence of the insightful but doomed father Horace. Ungrateful and unsympathetic to her mother's confession, Alexandra resolutely breaks with her mother at the end of the play, presumably in the company of Addie in a clearly subordinate role. In the screenplay, however, Alexandra's departure with Addie is replaced by Alexandra's running away with her boyfriend David, an added character for the film who does not exist in the play. This change seems to grant the mother-daughter relationship more resemblance to the Demeter-Persephone separation. In her mother-daughter relations, Regina tries to reunite with her mother and her daughter, but suffers repeated rejection. Alexandra's angry rejection of Regina can be read as **"**the daughter's envy and resentment of mother's power, her attachment to and dependency on mother, and her need to define herself" (Donovan 139). Hellman's plan for Alexandra, though not actualized in a third play, is an angry spinsterhood, which conveys Alexandra's as well as Hellman's indecisive perspective on mother-daughter relations and motherhood.

Conclusion

What Hellman brings to the "bad" mothers in her plays is the "new momism" ideology that encompasses the nuances of unmasked motherhood. Hellman's writing can be viewed as "maternal writing" or "maternal performativity" that "entails a publicizing of maternal experience, and subverts the traditional notion of mother as an instinctual, purely corporeal being" (Jeremiah 231) In contrast to the "touching but silly" Birdie in *The Little Foxes* (Stern 116) who is literally silenced by her husband, and who has clearly given up hope of escaping from the tyranny of her husband and son, both Lavinia and Regina take decisive action to bring about change in their circumstances. Furthermore, Lavinia and Regina may seem

to take their actions with little or no regard to their offspring, but closer analysis demonstrates that their children, respectively, will materially profit from these changes in the future. Hellman creates a heroine Lavinia who boldly claims, "I've wanted to go away-- I'm off on my appointed path" (Hellman 392), but one should also consider that she involves Ben in her machinations, and does so with regard to his future welfare. Lavinia's desire to topple the old patriarch rather than patriarchy itself, by helping Ben to replace Marcus, is advanced by Regina's struggle to achieve structural change of the male-dominated society by seizing the absolute power of the family. Regina's resolution and Lavinia's compromise are both based on a belief that women and men are equal, and a stress on the importance of individual autonomy protected by guaranteed right, economic justice and equality of opportunity.

Alexandra, a guaranteed inheritress, enjoys a more promising prospect and more potential grasp of her own fate than either Lavinia or Regina. Hellman's suggestion of Alexandra's future profession as a social worker (apparently the plan for the unfinished third installment of the Hubbard saga) is interesting in that she will be freed not only from the family business, but also from more mundane domestic service as a housewife. Further, she will be able to achieve social usefulness, but not by way of the religious eccentricity of her grandmother, but rather on her own terms. The arrangement of Alexandra's spinsterhood expresses Hellman's ambivalence to marriage as a hindering institution against personal development; but an angry lady image of Alexandra may be the real portrayal of Hellman herself. Hellman's plan to assign Alexandra a social worker profession and an angry spinsterhood in her adult life seem to indicate Hellman's unoptimistic confusion of the feminist prospect, and Hellman's final renouncement of this final play of the trilogy suggests very likely her hesitation of prediction or

conclusion.

Still, one can hardly argue that Hellman eventually succumbed to a conservative and patriarchal approach to the theme of motherhood. The fact that she outlined an unpublished play with a frustrated woman who abjured the role of motherhood by no means indicates that she acceded to the old "angel in the house" philosophy. Further, the play remained unpublished, so it is risky to impart specific conclusions as to how Alexandra might have viewed her decision to forgo the role of motherhood. Nonetheless, it is clear that she, like her mother and grandmother, is capable of forging her own pathway; after all, the choice not to produce offspring is in itself an attitude toward motherhood.

In sum, the relationship between mother and daughter, "the great unwritten story," of "two biologically alike bodies," has witnessed dramatic reversal in literary and critical fields since Rich's first systematic study of the fact that "all human life on the planet is born of woman" (Rich 11). The powerful linkage between the mother and the daughter can only be achieved through their concordant quests for strength, pride, and courage. What daughters need is a mother "who can believe in herself, who is a fighter, and who continues to struggle to create livable space around her," and who "is demonstrating to her daughter that these possibilities exist" (Rich 247). Hellman's identification of the strength is accomplished in the encounter with the Evil Mother a source of renewal, as Karen Elias-Button explains in "The Muse as Medusa": "We are turning toward the Terrible Mother to claim her as our own, as a metaphor for sources of our own creative powers" (Elias-Button 204-5).

Or, as one may interpret from reading the story of Regina, the ultimate truth of the matter may be that a woman's sharp business finaglings are not necessarily a reflection of her status as a good or a bad mother. Nor is Lavinia's unrealistic and

hopelessly utopian religious schemes to reform the world necessarily a marker of her parental devotion. Men may be depicted in the roles of business sharper or social reformer with no reflection on their domestic sense of responsibility, so a useful way of understanding how Hellman's plays work is to set aside the old stereotypes of motherhood.

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Hybridity and Choice: Anguished World of Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984)

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Abstract: History has placed a certain section of humanity in a uniquely disadvantageous position that they have recently been recognized as forming a world in itself called the "Fourth World". Richard Fleck includes "those diverse, colonized peoples who now find themselves as marginalized minorities on lands that was once solely theirs'…." under this category. Around 566 tribes of Native America form a considerable part of this world that are struggling for their voice to be heard across the globe by various means and including literary writings. A significant voice of second wave of Native American Renaissance, Louise Erdrich articulates the relationship between self and the community, social and psychological changes caused by the colonial invasion etc. She also dwells upon the issues of bicultural ambivalence as the indigenous people are forced to negotiate the pull between the opposite paradigms of Native American and the mainstream White American Culture. This paper undertakes to analyse Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984) as her statement on the need for the Native Americans to address the dilemma related to the cultural dualism faced by them. She also explores the religious and economic dynamics of the conflict that she urges the natives to address once for all.

Key words: Fourth World, Hybridity, In-betweenness, Native Americans, Assimilation, Culture, Euro-Americans.

Native Americans referred to as American Indian, or red Indians are the aborigines of America whose residence there predates modern history. They constitute diversified tribes and ethnic groups such as Navajo, Cherokee, Kiowa, Chippewa, Apache, Black feet etc. There are about 566 Native American tribes legally recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the United States. Native Americans, with interchangeable characteristics, form a main tribe or nation. For them, writes Kenneth Lincoln, "tribe means family, clan, community, ceremonial exchanges with nature, and an animated regard for all creation as sensible and powerful" (Lincoln 8). Wiget has quoted Spencer in his book *The Beginnings of Written Literature* as:

> Archeologists have long argued that Native Americans from Asia in successive waves over several millennia, crossing a lush flowered plain hundreds of miles wide that now lies inundated by 160 feet of water released by melting glaciers. The first people came earlier that 30000 BC travelling in the dusty trails of animals they hunted, unaware of the historical consequences of their daily routines. (Wiget 69)

Since the end of 15th century, the migration of Europeans to America led to centuries of conflict and adjustment between the old and the new societies. Native Americans who lived historically as hunter-gatherers preserved their histories by oral traditions and artwork. The Whites arrived there with a 'civilizing mission' which Rudyard Kipling describes as 'White Man's burden'. The

years between 1790 and 1920 witnessed massive transformation or assimilation which whites practiced on Red Indian. The land of the natives was seized both by force and through treaties and pacts that forced them to live in Reservation under repressive bureaucracy of the Americans, where they were not allowed to carry out the traditional modes of economic, social and religious activities. Reservation is that area of land which is managed by Native American tribes and comes under the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs. Many battles ensued between the Natives and the successive governments of America like Sand Creek Massacre (1864), the Battle of One Hundred Slain (1866) and Wounded Knee Creek Massacre (1869), to name only a few. The introduction of Indian Boarding Schools in Reservations proved to be a strong ideological tool of the federal government that helped in quick cultural and religious assimilation, something David Adams calls as "education for extinction". The native children, in these schools, were subjected to European way of life by forceful speaking of English, study standard subjects, attend Church and leave tribal traditions behind. Besides these things, natives were also confronted with the issues of unemployment, improper education, poverty, alcoholism etc. The literature of Native Americans is constituted of a compendium of oral and written works that convey the history, philosophy and culture. Their ancestors surpassed the skills of reading and writing with the art of storytelling. The Native American literature produced in the 18th and 19th century is regarded as transitional literature between the oral phase which prospered before the arrival of Europeans and during 1960's when started the native American renaissance. James H. Cox says that "the beginning of a period of historical revisionism attempts to document the history of the invasion

and colonization of the North American perspective inspired a great deal of public interest in a native cultures within Native American communities themselves" (54).

Louise Erdrich is a major voice of second wave Renaissance writers and a mixed-blood between a German American father and an Ojibwe mother, Erdrich presently lives in Minnesota, USA. Being a part of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, identity remains a central concern with her. Therefore, she engages with the continuing legacy of challenging and revising the dominant definitions of race, culture, language and class in the process of making her voice heard. The important works of Louse Erdrich include *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beat Queen* (1986), *The Bingo Palace* (1994), *The Plague of Doves* (2009) etc.

The narrative of *Love Medicine* comprises many reciprocally connected stories set on a Chippewa Reservation in North Dakota in United States of America. It reveals a space of contestation between two diverse cultural, social and religious edifices, one Native American and the other White American. The characters reside on the edge of two cultural, social and religious domains continuously negotiating the desire to adopt to Euro- American other based on progress, individual happiness and Christianity and a native pull towards communal harmony, shamanism, and mythical past and indigenous ritualistic life. Majority of the characters in the novel are mixed breeds, i.e., cross between one of the many Native American tribes and the Euro-American. Herself, a daughter of German American father and Ojibwe mother, her fiction dramatizes the dilemma and attempts to figure out the "in-between space". Since Louise Erdrich belongs to the fourth world, the study and analysis of identity and other cultural issues attain

slightly different dimensions. The Fourth World includes the various indigenous cultures around the globe that have not been known sufficiently across it. The people of the Fourth World are still dominated by other cultures and feel a requirement to be heard. The term Fourth World, as Richard Fleck writes in her book, *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*:

> refers to those diverse, colonized peoples who now find themselves as marginalized minorities on lands that were once solely theirs; Native Peoples of North, Central and South America, the aborigines of Australia, Maoris of New Zealand, the Samis of Northern Scandinavia, and comparable groups around the World. Politically, the terms is useful in distinguishing the indigenous minorities from the larger "Third World" entities, and, thus underscore the uniqueness of their historical experiences and their contemporary plight. The Aboriginal experiences have indeed been significantly different from those experiences described as 'Third World'. (57)

The story time of the narrative extends between the years 1934 and 1984 and the information about the lives of various characters is interspersed in various chapters that form a coherent whole. A close analysis of the narrative reveals a space of contestation between two diverse cultural, social and religious edifices that had come into contact virtually from the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. The main character, Marie Kashpaw/Lazarre, in *Love Medicine* reflects a life that demonstrates the ensuing frustration, confusion and a tug of war that takes place both at psychological and social level. Marie is a mixed-blood having a white father

and an Indian mother. For the sake of convenience, Marie's life can be divided into three phases, viz: her stay in a Convent, her marriage to Nectar Kashpaw, a native and her life as a mother. Since childhood, Marie has been struggling to establish her cultural roots as she is neither accepted on the reservation for having a white father nor among the whites for being a mixed-blood. She joins a convent called Sacred Heart Convent to become a nun. The Sacred Heart Convent symbolizes, in the words of Frantz Fanon, "the foreigner's church" that" does not call the Natives to God's ways but to the way of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor". (Fanon 32) Marie becomes obsessed with the idea of becoming the best Catholic among the other inmates of the Convent. We find Marie in the role of a colonized subject where "by acceding to the wildest fantasies (in the popular sense) of the colonizer. The stereotyped other reveals something of the 'fantasy' (as desire, defense) of that position of mastery" (Bhabha 117). Ostensibly negating it, she remains strongly aware of her native lineage while remaining euphoric about her prospects in the convent; she says

> No reservation girl had ever prayed so hard. There was no use in trying to ignore me any longer. I was going up there on the hill with the black robe women. They were not any lighter than me. I was going up there to pray as good as they could. Because I don't have much Indian blood. And they never thought they'd have a girl from reservation as a saint they'd have to kneel to. But they'd have me. (*Love Medicine* 40)

Marie yearns to attain Catholic sainthood because she associates power, respect, and

significance with it. She is aware of the social status, admiration and awe which Catholics attach with saints. Marie's choice of going to the Convent and that of becoming a saint does not have spiritual luring, rather it is an obsession with her becoming somebody more respectable and impressive. In the course of her dealing with Convent and the Church, she can neither perceive the catholic dogmas and interiorize them nor develop her reliance on the Christian God. Figuratively speaking, she desperately attempts to cover her Shamanic body with the white gown, thereby, limiting her adoption of an imposed religion to an exigency rather than internal quest. Moreover, mere joining a Convent ensured social standing, respect, sense of superiority and acceptability. Louise Erdrich exposes the hypocrisy embedded in the civilizing mission of the whites in the treatment meted out to Marie in the hands of Sister Leopolda in the Convent. Brutal thrashing, heavy manual labour, underfeeding become regular feature. Like Marie, Sister Leopolda is also a mixed-blood who reflects a bicultural or transitional identity, something in between her Native Americanness and Euro-Americanness. Sister Leopolda's Christian credentials can be doubted from the fact that she refuses to mime the cross across her body to exorcise Marie from the 'Satan" or 'Dark one'. Like Marie, she fails to demarcate the clear-cut dividing line between Christianity and Native American beliefs and hence faces identity crisis. An identity is framed by cultural, social and religious practices one follows but the same identity gets distorted when they conflict with each other. Leopolda urges Marie to choose between two possibilities, one native and the other Christian: "You have two Choices. One, you can marry a no-good Indian, bear his brats, die like a dog. Or two, you can give yourself to God" (*Love*

Medicine 45). Leopolda's snubbing statement to Marie endorses the fact that she has accepted the stereotypical image of the Indians as enforced by the whites. In this context, Frantz Fanon can be quoted to have said that "internalization of dominant standards usually leads "people" to rejection of their heritage and identity" (Fanon 146)

Both Marie and Leopolda unconsciously associate themselves with the "Dark one", a very deep rooted and culturally alive entity of Native American. It is the image of "Windigo" something Leopolda calls Satan. Marie remarks: "The Leopolda kept track of him and knew his habits, minds he burrowed in, deep spaces where he hid. She knew as much about him as my grandma, who called him by other names and was not afraid (*Love Medicine* 42). The coalition of religious emblems depicts the mixed emotions inherent in the people who have been coerced to admit the validity of the belief of the colonizer's and on a more intimate level, shows Marie's hope to embrace a powerful identity. The 'Dark One' or the 'Devil' is also emblematic of power and Marie takes pride in being associated with it as it makes her feel the 'chosen one'. She holds conservation with it before she goes to sleep after the old Chippewa tradition i.e., conversing with spirits but Leopolda considers these incidents with Marie's possession by the Satan. Marie says, "Before sleep sometimes he came and whispered conversation in the old language of the bush. I listened. He told me things he never told anyone but Indians. I was to both worlds of his knowledge (*Love Medicine* 43). Leopolda's thrashing of Marie inadvertently leaves a mark of cross on her hand. On regaining consciousness Marie finds herself surrounded by all the nuns virtually looking at her with religious awe and veneration. The status of sainthood

the Marie attains as a result of Leopolda's brutality leaves Leopolda in shock and a sense of defeat. She never wanted it to happen as it lowered her spiritual status in front of other nuns. Leopolda, being a clever woman, immediately turns the defeat to her gain. Marie finds that, "Leopolda had saved herself with her quick brain. She had witnessed a miracle. She had hid her fork and told this to the others. And, of course, they believed her because they never knew how Satan came and went or where he took refuge" (*Love Medicine* 55). Marie's victory over Leopolda proves short-lived as she finds herself imprisoned in the convent for rest of her life. Leopolda, after the Christian 'ethic of Veneration of Saints", succumbs to a Marie's feet and seals her fate with the church.

Realizing this, Marie takes a leap out of convent and undertakes the journey back into the native world. She marries Nectar Kashpaw a native, revered in his tribe. Her decision to marry Nectar is not based on love but is driven by the desire to an authentic social standing. Her new identity as Marie Kashpaw comes not through her but through Kashpaw as female power is no longer viable in Native American culture with the advent of patriarchal society of the colonizer. Marie undertakes to play a major role in the family and claims to be the driving force behind Nectar's elevation to chairmanship of the tribe during chairmanship; Nectar interacts with government of the whites and decides to join Hollywood. It is during his stay in New York that Nectar faces the cruelest disrespect in the hands of Euro-Americans. Finding himself standing nude in front of a female nude painter, Nectar develops an immeasurable hatred and repulsion for the whites. A strong realization dawns upon him that Euro-Americans have always been

insensitive towards Indians in all possible sense of the word. He feels insensitively objectified as a fanciful object to be painted than being treated as a human being. Both Marie and Nectar, like other Native Americans, suffer from "Survivor's Syndrome" and lead a life that is replete with cracks, both mental and social. After losing two of the early Nectar also dumps Marie in favour of his earlier love Lulu. Marie and Nectar decide to adopt homeless children living on the reservation in addition to producing their biological ones. Tanrisal stresses on mother-child relationship and says that "in a Native American way of life, traditions are equated with the mother; however, since many children have been destroyed the Native Americans have often become motherless children" (2). It is in the status of a mother that Marie finds a final sense of empowerment and a stable identity because in Native American culture, the womanhood is looked upon with reverence and awe. Identity, says Stuart Hall, is

> A narrative which tells ourselves about ourselves, it is stories which change with … circumstances. And identity shifts with the way in which we think and hear them and experience them/. Far from only coming from still small points of truth inside us, identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and come to step into the place of recognitions which others give us. Without the other, there is no self, there is no self recognition. (Hall 8)

Within Native American traditions, in addition to bearing and rearing children mothers also help them to inherit culture, beliefs and traditions through stories. Louis Owens, in this context writes, "the loss of the past means a loss of the self, a loss of order and meaning in the present moment,

and an inability to contemplate the future that is part of that moment. Storytelling serves to prevent that loss" (Owens 59). By obsessively acquiring motherhood, Marie also tries to make up the loss of her own mother who died during her childhood.

The character of Lulu can be placed in stark contrast to that of Marie to highlight Marie's identity crisis. Lulu has absolutely no interest in Euro-American religion, culture and ideas of social relationships. Unlike Marie, Lulu absorbs strength and a sense of belongingness from nature and Native communal life. She has eight children from three men, the fatherhood of those is not necessary to be known, thereby, rejecting the western concept of matrimony based on individualism. Frantz Fanon believes that Euro-centricism of colonizers has created societies of individuals "where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, where only wealth is individual thought" (Fanon 36). Lulu expresses a strong awareness that Natives have been completely dominated by Whites and have been considered as a "population of degenerate types, on the basis of racial origin" (Bhabha 101). She stands opposite to a form of "governmentality that, in marking out a 'subject nation', appropriates directs and dominates its various spheres of activity" (Bhabha 101). Lulu's rootedness in the native culture makes her a stable, happy and strong woman whereas Marie's oscillating mind makes her life replete with frustrations, failures and disappointments. Another stark contrast between Lulu and Marie lies in their respective sexual behavior. If Marie chooses Nectar as a husband, it is not for instinctual satisfaction or procreation, but to use him to climb the social ladder. On the contrary, Lulu's sexual encounters are purely motivated by instinct of procreation with a purpose of increasing the number of the

members of her tribe.

Eli Kashpaw, Nectar's brother, also emerges as a foil to him. Unlike Nectar, who cherishes reading *Moby Dick*, Eli is more comfortable in narrating Native American stories and folklores to the children of the tribe. In the words of Albertine, "Nectar came home from boarding school knowing whites reading and writing while Eli knew the woods. Now, these many years later, hard to tell why or how, my great-uncle Eli is still sharp, while grandpa's mind has left us, gone wary and wild" (*Love Medicine* 17).

The explication of the title throws sufficient light on the thematic as well as structural significance of the novel. If refers to an indigenous medicine, if someone is made to consume, can win his or her love even after death. The making of titular love medicine involves special techniques, and divine favours that are particularly hereditary characteristics with the tribe of Pillager. Marie requests Lipsha Pillager to prepare the medicine for her in order to win back Nectar Kashpaw who had left Marie to live with Lulu. Unable to find one of the important ingredients used in making love medicine which is a goose heart, Lipsha decides to use turkey's heart in its stead. Moreover, lacking confidence in his own hereditary powers, Lipsha requests the priest of the Church to endow the medicine with divine powers in order to make it effective. To Marie's dismay, Nectar Kashpaw chokes and dies on consuming it. The failure of the medicine in bringing Nectar back to Marie Lipshaw's divided allegiance to either culture, one Native American and the other Euro-American. Erdrich's characters in *Love Medicine* who are rooted in the Native Cultural heritage have been portrayed as stable, strong and happy and those

who are divided in their choices are fragmented, schizophrenic and frustrated. To conclude, it can be said that the colonizing policies of the Euro-Americans have caused an irreparable damage to the cultural heritage, social relations as well as the tranquil lives of the Natives who have inherited the vast lands of America since the time immemorial. The long association of Native Americans and Euro-Americans has produced generations of mixed-blood population that oscillates between two cultural heritages.

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Signifying the Self: Major Women Characters in Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit*

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Abstract: 'Self' (noun) is described as 'the set of someone's characteristics, such as personality and ability, which are not physical and make that person different from other people' in Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary. Every human being possesses a 'self' which in relation to the other entities that he lives with authenticates his own existence. Women face this struggle more as they have to struggle double in order to assert themselves, first as an individual and second as an individual beyond the labelled gender. Shashi Deshpande uses familial ties and relationships as a tool to portray the intricate struggle of women in the development and assertion of self.

Keywords: Self, Women characters, gender, Shashi Deshpande, *In the Country of Deceit.*

Shashi Deshpande's novel *In the Country of Deceit* is a "Dense network of ties… a strong web made up of the fragile threads of memories and relationships" (Deshpande, 181). The novel opens up in a small town of Karnataka named, Rajnaur. Devayani, a twenty-six year old unmarried woman, lives in this town in her newly built house. She, along with her sister Savi, makes this dream house, after demolishing their paternal house, which significantly symbolizes the

demolition of the patriarchal values. Devayani starts this journey from 'ground zero' that signifies to 'a fresh start and a clean state' (Deshpande, 1). As declared by the author herself, "All my books are about relationships. But particularly this one is about love between an adult man and an adult woman" (IANS, 2009). The novel claims to be a love story but unsurprisingly the elements of the protagonist's struggle not only delineates the struggle of an Indian woman between the traditional and modernity but also reflects upon her attempts to redefine her 'self' in the Indian society that is predominantly directed by male members of the society. All Deshpande's protagonist rights from Saru (The Dark Holds no Terrors, 1980) to Madhu (Small Remedies, 2000) are born and brought up facing dilemma of right or wrong. Their social conditioning does not allow them to stand up for themselves and their educated mind does not conform to the imposed patriarchal values. Thus, all of them if put together reflect the transitional phase that women faced from 1980s to twenty first century, the era where the contemporary changes are very explicitly visible on their lives expressed through both, their internal and external struggle.

Her protagonist Manjari in her novel *Moving On (2004)*, portrayed as a middle aged widow seems to raise clarion call for a change in pattern of the lives of women of twenty first century. Though the change is not very significant on the surface but if looked closely the author seems to uproot the firmly established patriarchal rhizomes through her narration of the real independent modern woman who refuses the 'dual control' over her life. Similarly, Devayani, the protagonist of her novel *'In the Country of deceit'* asserts her individuality, questions the patriarchal stronghold and refuses to play merely a puppet in the hands of the societal values. Deshpande, as usual takes her readers with her story on a joyride

that not only contradicts the prescribed meaning of happiness for women in the patriarchal society but also comes up with a new definition of happiness, which is to relate oneself with emancipation:

> […] through this country of deceit, Shashi Deshpande takes the readers on a rollercoaster ride, intrepidly questioning what we have been taught and coming up with a new, hedonistic definition of a happiness that consumes them and allures them, all at once. (Garg, 2009)

Deshpande's novels are about relationships but this novel distinctly deals with the theme of deep and passionate love. Devayani falls passionately in love with the Superintendent Police, Ashok Chinnapa, who is already married and also, is a father of a ten years old girl. In spite of being well aware of the consequences of this relationship, which Ashok starts saying that *"I can promise you nothing. Nothing."* (Deshpande, 91), she takes this relationship to the next level and ends in a state of guilt and total loss. Though, she completely understands the social stigma attached to a girl who lives alone without any male presence in her house in Indian society, she, still, asserts herself by not giving in to the social pressure. She also knows that she can never force Ashok to marry her neither she wants him to leave his family and come to her but she could not stop her yearnings for him and eventually lands up in the country of deceit, while deceiving her self. There are some very important aspects of the novel which author has deftly applied to answer the questions that reader faces while reading. Through the interludes of Sindhu's, Kshama's, Savi's and Sree's and Ashok's letter running parallel with the narrative, Deshpande not only satiates the inquisitiveness of the reader about

Devayani's parents' relationship but also an extensive understanding of Devayani's inner self through her reflection to these letters.

Sindhu is the second very important character of the novel. She is Devayani's paternal aunt and is very well connected to Devi's psyche. She plays a significant role in shaping the character of Devi in its genuine shades. Sindhu is both modern and unconventional in her way of thinking. Devayani's feels herself admiring her progressive outlook as 'she has never cared for the conventions' (Deshpande, 226). She supports the woman who wants to striptease as her 'before dying wish', she argues her daughter about the peculiarities of the foreign land and amuses herself while sharing those words of wisdom with Devi and she cuts edge when she dares to 'drink some wine and come home a little high' (Deshpande, 43) in her daughter's house. She not only supports Devi but also guides her throughout the ups and down of her life. She keeps looking for suitable proposals for Devayani as she believes that Devi is her responsibility now after her parents' death and she has to get her married. Though Sindhu is a middle age woman, who has married for the second time and also has her grand-children in her family but she rarely represents any trait of the classic stereotypical woman, who is reluctant to change with time. She, on the contrary, represents the modern woman of twenty first century who mocks at the patriarchal stronghold that persuades a girl for marriage by camouflaging itself in the word 'social security'. She writes to Devi the probability of her not marrying is that she is independent and has a beautiful house in her possession to live in. she says, "If you had to stay in your old house, you'd have snapped up any chance to get out. (That's an interesting thought—a house as a substitute for a husband. And a new theory—discomfort as an incentive to marriage) […]" (Deshpande, 40). Sindhu, who lost her breast as she suffered

from breast cancer, is delineated by the author as the spirit of the novel. She is a vivacious and lively woman, who holds the capability of inculcating a charm for life in any dull human being. She herself is not very successful in her own relationships with her children; still she encourages Devi, whom she calls 'Putta' out of affection, to get married to a suitable man. She makes her aware in her letters about the dominating urge of fulfilling one's physical needs in the later part of life, which becomes very important at one point of time in life. She emphasizes on the social pressure which a woman faces in order to satiate her physical yearnings:

> The body is important so are the demands of the body. With my first husband, I got the trailer and I knew there was a more interesting story to come, I wanted to know that story, I did not want to be deprived of it. […] you are still young, your natural desires will be with you for many more years. Our country does not allow women to fulfill these desires without marriage. (Deshpande, 42-43)

The other peripheral characters also play puppet in the hands of conditioned patriarchal mindset. They reflect the subtle forms of women subjugation that are prevalent in the psycho-socio culture and rob a woman off her identity. Iqbal, who is Devayani's lawyer when tells her about his wife, Nasreen, she feels sorry for her as she, in spite of being equally qualified, could do nothing but rear children and take care of the household chores. Iqbal states the simple reason for Nasreen's not pursuing work:

> She had done her law, he said. She had hoped she would be able to work with him. But Aftab was born within a year. Then her sister died and Munira came to us. Yes, Munira is her sister's daughter. After that there was Samir. And there are my parents, my mother has been paralyzed for some years… But someone has to do the things, someone has to look after the children, my parents'. (Deshpande, 85)

Deshpande very skillfully draws the comparison between her protagonist and her peripheral characters that represent the typical Indian woman, who sacrifices herself on the altar of marriage crushing all her hopes and aspirations, which she has a right to accomplish. She neither questions nor condemns the patriarchal bias designs that often force women to follow their dictations while paying no heed to their individual dreams. On the contrary Devayani, who is constantly forced by her well-wishers to marry, feels tethered to the patriarchal code of conduct in applying her freedom to choose her life partner. But she claims her right over her life by taking the decision of not marrying a person of someone else's choice. She steps into the relationship with Ashok at her will. Though not willing yet moving out of this futureless relationship also reflects her choice.

On meeting Ashok Devi realizes her senses being overtaken by the same urge, to fulfill which she lands 'in the country of deceit' and encounter her new self. Deshpande portrays the intricate relationships in a magnificent way. The feeling of love is always touched by the author with such gravity that the reader admires and feels swayed by the emotional description given in the graphic details. Deshpande

narrates about the theme of relationship used by her in her novels:

> Relationships are not something one decides on. They happen naturally, especially adult relationships, and one must know what the consequences are and take responsibility for it. It is very difficult to judge if adult love is good or bad. Human beings always crave for love, even in death a dying man wants to hold someone's hands. (IANS)

Devi, for the fact of being unmarried, faces a lot of problem in the society, in which the existence of a woman completes only after getting married. Everyone around her gives her a look of sympathy and tries to suggest a suitable boy for her. Her sister Savi's mother-in-law suggests a suitable match for Devi. This approach of the author mocks the realities of the Indian patriarchal culture, which gives preference to marriage up to such an extent that the individuality of a woman is reduced to a nonentity. Savi tells Devi:

> Do you know, Devi, each time she says your name, she has to say Bichhari? She keeps suggesting 'boys' for you. The last 'boy' she suggested was more than forty. He was a widower with two children. I said, he's too old. And she said, but poor Devi is nearly thirty. And I said no, she's only twenty-six… (Deshpande, 182)

All these social pressures turn into mental pressures to Devayani. She simultaneously falls in friendship with a film actress Rani, who starts pursuing her

with her own objective. She wants her to write a story for her movie, which she wants to make in order to accomplish her lover's dream. On the other hand, the interludes of her father's tragic life, also popup every now and then in the novel which successfully relate the psyche of Devi, who as a girl desperately looks for an antipathy of her father as her life partner. She was the first member of the family to know this secret about her father's committing a suicide as she saw her father's wrist watch and his rings kept in his drawer safely on his leaving home for the last time. "An accident, they call it. But when I saw that he had left his ring and watch in his table drawer before he went out, I knew it was not an accident" (Deshpande, 61). The author using the story of her parents highlights the irony of the patriarchal society that does not condemn the cowardice of a man who ruined his as well as his family members' life in gambling. His wife still tried to camouflage his husband's deeds just because he married her in spite of the knowledge of the fact of her suffering from epilepsy, which was considered a disgrace in those days. Devi thinks about the helplessness of her mother who, in spite of being aware of this fact of his committing suicide, supports his heroism:

> A suicide. A failure. But my mother never said these words. On the rare occasions when she spoke of his problems, she called him 'unfortunate, unlucky'. He was a hero, her knight in shining armour, her Lochivnar, her Galabad, her Prithviraj Chauhan. He had saved her from the dreadful life she lived at home, he gave her children, a home and a life of her own— and the freedom to live it the way she wanted. (Deshpande, 61-62)

But Devi does not support the idea of idealizing her father at all. She very

objectively criticizes her father's being irresponsible towards his family while simultaneously she understands his weakness that forced him to commit suicide. The word 'Cliffhanger' comes to her mind—"yes, he was a cliffhanger, hanging on to life by the tips of his finger" (Deshpande, 61). She bears the burden of her father's committing suicide deep inside her heart.

Several other property related problems and run in the background of the story that evolves the character of Devi as more confident and independent person. Some influential people, using unfair means, have taken the possession of the land which was gifted to Devi's mother by her father. She gets deep in to the matter and investigates the facts related to the piece of land. She, in spite of being well aware of the consequences and risks of proceeding with the case, resolves to fight against them in order to claim her right on the land. On Iqbal's warning her regarding the probability of putting herself in danger by proceeding with the case to claim the land as legal heirs, she gives her resolved confirmation to proceed:

> It is not going to be easy, remember that. They have been trying to bring pressure on me too— yes, I haven't told you about it, but ever since the news has got round that we're trying to claim the land as your grandfather's legal heirs, I've had all kinds of messages. They're scared the forgery can be proved, you see. Now, they're trying to get at you. It's the same old cunning divide and rule policy. Well, is it still *yes, we go on?* 'Yes.' (Deshpande, 206)

Devi, like Manjari (*MO*) does not give in easily to the pressures of the property sharks. She stands up confidently to claim her right on the property to

which she is a legal heiress. The woman, who stands so firm in front of the social pressures, becomes too vulnerable and gives into her physical and mental yearning for love, when she encounters Ashok. Devi's holds herself back initially and then releases herself with the powerful gush of her emotional flow. In spite of suffering from the guilt of being in this relationship that has no future at all, Devi, does not make attempts to stop herself. She, on the contrary, unleashes her inhibitions and enjoys the short moments of intimacy with Ashok. But she also thinks about the futility of this relationship after their brief encounters which results in a sense of guilt, "he had his life, his work, his wife, his daughter. All that I had was guilt" (Deshpande, 152). Her guilt conscious mind puts forth her relationship with clarity in front of her, "Relationship? What relationship? Mistress? The other woman? The kept woman?" (Deshpande, 142). But she deliberately diverts her mind from the reality and sets herself free in the beauty of the word love, she relates her story to those she read in books, "I pushed the word away; I thought instead of love, words I had never heard spoken, words I had only read in books, words which has now become real" (Deshpande, 142). And even after facing immense struggle she feels that it is not possible for her to come out of this relationship, which she wanted do desperately in her life, "But how can I give up what I want most in the world, how can I give up the only thing I want in life? (Deshapnde, 226). At last, she feels herself unable to keep the fact of her relationship with Ashok away from Savi and she accepts in front of her that in spite of knowing the fact that they will never marry she plunged in to this relationship keeping everything at stake for the passion that he made her feel for the first time in her life. Savi's strong negation also could not shake her resolution to carry on with the relationship. She warns Devi on the basis of her preconceived

notions of adultery about the consequences which she was sure Devi is going to face in this liaison. She condemns the physicality of her relationship with Ashok and says in frustration:

> He'll sleep with you and dump you. He's using you, he needs your body, that's all he wants.' I tried to speak but she wouldn't let me. 'I know these policemen, they get their subordinates to get them women, oh yes, I've heard the things they do, they just want a woman, some woman, they're cheap, disgusting, didn't you hear about the policeman who got his girlfriend killed…" (Deshpande, 184)

On Savi's pursuing her for marriage, she shows her sharp negation to marry someone on the false grounds. She says that she is not going to get marry to someone by telling him that she is a virgin, she questions Savi, "And will you tell him I'm a virgin? Will you say I'm pure and chaste and untouched? That I'm not second hand goods?" (Deshpande, 185). Devayani represents the modern women who rejects the years old conventional of getting married under any circumstances. She does not feel ashamed for the fact of her involvement with Ashok. She rather tries to convince people around her that her love for him is pure and she has stepped into it knowing all the consequences.

Shree, Savi's husband and Savi herself strongly condemn her decision of getting along with Ashok. They criticize her outlook of being with Ashok in this way in spite of knowing the fact of his being a married man. Savi says that he is simply using her whereas Shree tries to pursue her emotionally and writes a letter

to her. On his suggesting, "I have to think of you as 'our kid'. I'm with you, I am not against you, but I have to think of your happiness. Give this up, it's wrong, he's the wrong man for you" (Deshpande, 199). Devi questions Shree:

> Wrong? Why is it wrong? Why is it that you can have your beloved and I can't have mine? You knew when you chose Savi that your mother didn't want her, but you went ahead and married Savi, though you knew it would hurt your mother. You knew, as well as I do, that there are no boundaries for love, that you cannot draw a line and say, 'I will not go beyond this line.' It makes nonsense of what love is, of what it means. (Deshpande, 199)

She answers the questions of Shree and Savi who could only see physicality in her relationship with Ashok. Devi accepts her physical intimacy with Ashok because she believes it is inevitable to confine a relationship within the restrictions. Beyond this mundane reality of human relationship also lies the fact of her experiencing the miraculous relationship with Ashok, which she has not been able to find elsewhere in her entire life:

> Savi and you know nothing of our relationship. You think only of the sex; but there is so much more. We talk, we laugh, I can say things to him I've never said to anyone, he listens to me the way no one has listened to me before, making each word of mine a precious jewel. I don't know how many couples get this, but for me—I never expected this; this complete sharing of everything. It's like a

miracle. (Deshpande, 200)

She is not unaware of the facts of the realities that would never bring Ashok and her together. But she has a firm belief that they would make a happy couple than the most of the other married couples. Devi refuses to follow the advice that Shree give her. She claims her autonomy and rejects the domination of the patriarchal values that dictate her right and wrong about her life. Though Devi herself does not continue with her relationship knowing the fact of the future of their relationship but she takes this decision on her own. Like Manjari (*MO*), she also refuses dual control over her life and decides that her journey with Ashok has come to an end. She becomes independent by giving her consent to Iqbal, who will be representing their property case in the court. Though she synchronizes her life with the bare facts of realities while following the advice of Sindhu, who suggests her to get on with her life but she also knows that:

> […] some things never change, I know that some pictures will remain intact in my memory. Pictures of Ashok's face looking at me, loving, wanting, enjoying me, Ashok kneeling before me, his face humble, supplicating, Ashok on the beach, holding out his arms to me, Ashok folding me in his arms. These images are etched on my mind, they will stay with me forever. And what about the feel of his skin against mine, of his hand against my back, the touch of his lips, his fingers, the words he murmured when he loved me, the sound of his voice, heavy with his love? Should I forget these things?[…] and why, yes, *why* must I forget that I too had a

> moment, a very brief moment, when I raised my arms and my fingertips brushed the sky? (Deshpande, 259)

Devi is well aware of the importance of marriage in Indian society that validates any form of relationship. And she could not keep herself away from a strong desire of Ashok's leaving his family and coming to her forever. She is quite sure that the probable compatibility that she dreams to share with Ashok will result in a perfect relationship. But she also knows that it is not possible in this life. She accepts her thirst for Ashok while answering to herself the questions that Shree has put in front of her:

> What do want, you ask me. Marriage? No, I will not speak of it. I know it will never happen; though u must admit that I have secret hopes that her will come to me one day and say, 'I am free, we can be together.' A futile dream. I know that. And I also know that we could be happier than most married couple, that we could have the kind of marriage very few couples can even dream of. I hunger for him, I thirst for him. How easily you asked me to give him up. Have you any idea what he means to me? It's like asking me to give up life, to give up breath. When she was bad, Amma used to chant a verse, *'pranah pranam dadati'.* What is life without breath? What is my life, my future without Ashok, what do you mean without Ashok? Even the thought of living without him makes me feel dying? (Deshpande, 201)

The passion in the relationship and the dominating influence of the emotions is vividly portrayed by the author in this novel. Though Deshpande's novels are a portrayal of marital relationships but in her later novels, *Moving On* and *In the Country of Deceit* the protagonists confidently treads on the paths that are barred to them as per the societal conventions. Manjari's (*MO*) making love with her tenant refusing to marry her childhood friend Raja signifies her effort to satiate her physical yearnings as well as a deliberate effort to execute her absolute control over her life. But Devayani's exploration of fulfillment in this relationship is also an attempt to assert her individuality. Both the protagonists relieve themselves from the conventional roles and represent the new women. Though men-women relationship is explored by the author in her previous works but the struggles and the effort to maintain compatibility remains the same. Deshpande in an interview with Chanchala K. Naik rejects the idea of endorsement of middle-class conservatism by portraying men-women relationship in marriage in her novels:

> You will never find in my novels the idea of marriage as sacred that has to be upheld at all times, at all costs. No way. I mean that I would be wronging my novels completely. I would never agree with that interpretation. If somebody comes up with that point of view, I will be able to prove that wrong. It is not an endorsement of marriage. On the contrary, I find marriage a very difficult institution and I think all people, whether men or women, find it so. (Naik, 230)

Devi suffers from 'paranoia of guilt' (Deshpande, 161) because the physicality

of her relationship with Ashok stands as a bare truth in front of her and she confronts herself standing in the category which is generally referred to as 'the other women' in society. When she goes to meet Rani's mother-in-law, she starts relating herself to the words of the old woman who she thinks does not spare a chance to hurt her. She thinks:

> A terrible woman. She seemed to know everything about me; she knew exactly what questions, what facts would make me uncomfortable. Beginning with my unmarried state, she went backwards to my father's failures, to our money problems, to my mother's epilepsy, and finally, to my grandparents and their terrible marriage. She bluntly called my grandmother a mad woman. And added, surprising me, 'But it was not her fault, it was your grandfather's. He drove her to it, going to that woman of his every single day.'[…] 'The other women'… Does she too hate me this way, the woman I saw once, the woman neither Ashok nor I have ever speak of? (Deshpande, 162)

Devi's feeling stifled with guilt for the physicality of relationships convinces her to end it finally. Though the ease with which she shared her feelings with Ashok she has not experienced with anyone in her life yet she understands that it is physical love and gratification through sexual love is what she craves for. She counts on her experiences with Ashok out of which she also feels her sexual intimacy stands equally important to her as much as Ashok:

> Nobody, but nobody has the words for what sex with your beloved is like. It's the same with music. You have to hear it, you can't

> describe it. "You want sex," Savi [her sister] had said, crudely, savagely, deliberately trying to shock me. Perhaps. But there was much more. Only this man could give me such ecstasy, only he could give me such joy with his lovemaking. Ananda, Sindhu had called it. Yes, more than joy. Bliss. And he could give it to me with a touch, with a word. It was this man, not the sex. This man's love, not the sex. And yet, the sex too. (Deshpande, 193)

She knows that it will be very difficult to continue without him but to continue with this burden in her heart seems her even more difficult. It becomes difficult for her to synchronize between her trying to forget and yearning to remember things that have been both—a miracle, a disaster (Deshpande, 257). She defies the patriarchal constraints by refusing to categorize her relationship as wrong and to forget the things associated with that. She rather wants to cherish the moments of togetherness with Ashok for the rest of her life. The constant evolution can be clearly witnessed in the protagonists of Deshpande by the character of Devi who does not rely on the inevitability of the male presence for her survival. She rather uses the right of the freedom of her choice and prefers to live alone than 'in the country of deceit'.

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The Multiple Jeopardy of Dalit Women in Limbale's *The Outcaste*

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Sharan Kumar Limbale's (b. 1956) *The Outcaste* (2005), originally published as *Akkarmashi* in Marathi, deftly weaves a tale of deprivation, troubled childhood, social exclusion and the trauma of being an illegitimate child. At the heart of Limbale's autobiography is the inexorable pain of heartless treatment meted out to him for being both an untouchable and a bastard. It is the story of his grandparents Santamai and Dada (Not biological), his mother, Santamai and his eight sisters who often slept hungry. The writer takes a dig on the advocates of casteism who rendered the lives of Dalits miserable. Limbale underscores the predicament of Dalit women through the narrative of his own mother who suffered sexual exploitation throughout her life. Being the son of a Mahar woman and an upper caste man, Limbale exposes the hypocrisy of the caste males who wrecked the lives of hapless Dalit women. The

autobiography is a critique of the socio-sexual subjugation and the male lechery that Dalit women became victims of amidst rigid caste structures.

Poverty and the resultant deprivation drained Limable's family. He recalls one incident of a school picnic where the upper caste girls, while offering their food to the narrator, would never touch him. He shows the feeling of self-internalization of humility when he says that "I was ashamed of my food and felt guilty eating it" (3). The narrator had never tasted food like this given to him by caste girls. As he narrates this to his mother Masamai, she longs for this 'leftover food' and calls it nectar. He reveals how he used shorts, which looked "more rags than shorts" till he completed his seventh form. He did not have clothes as his mother would sew/ 'patch' these rags which would sometimes expose his bottom.

Limbale recalls his concern for his mother who would refrain from attending wedding ceremonies and other festive occasions. Since his mother would never attend such feasts, Limbale would sneak some food to his mother to placate her wriggling hungry stomach. On one such occasion, he is caught by an upper-caste man, Girmallya who abuses him as 'the son of a bitch'. After this incident he would not sneak anything and would even hesitate to eat at such gatherings which would descend his mother's wrath on him: "Do you want me to feed you with dust- there is nothing else in this house…Go and find out if anyone would like to

buy me in the market?" (9) Compromising his self-respect, he would thus unwillingly attend a feast.

The deprivation and poverty of the family is further described through Santamai, his grandmother who would collect cow dung and make cakes from them, to be sold for seeing them through. He recollects one incident where she separates the *jowar* grains from dung, grinds them into flour and gulps. It is pathetic where poverty forces them to eat such stinky flour. Her overwork and exposure to heat in fields had made her skin "wizened and dry". Limbale records his bitter experience of heaving such *bhakris* made of grain separated from dung: "It stank of dung. As I chewed it, I felt I was actually eating dung. It was difficult for me to swallow it "(11). He also recollects a situation where he and his Dada collect flour from a ground where a woman had dropped a tin of flour and how his grandmother had embraced him in happiness as it meant a postponement of hunger for a few days.

He describes the poverty of the family that while his sisters slept hungry, his Dada would combat hunger by smoking *bidies*; mother would take only water. "At the sight of my sisters who had gone to sleep hungry, I lost my appetite and could not sleep" (21). He well understands the values associated with stealing but pilfering for hunger does not devalue a poor child. He recalls an incident when his sister Vani was hit with a *chappal* by a vendor for stealing a banana. Her wriggling and writhing like a worm filled him with indignation; "We knew we shouldn't steal but then how could we feed ourselves? Who steals out of habit? The

poor steal for the sake of hunger" (21). Limbale records show at the end of the fair Vani would eat the banana skins which would really make him cry.

Limable portrays his grandmother Santamai as a strong woman who would work from dusk to dawn to support the family. Every morning Santamai would sweep the village streets while on Wednesdays she would sweep the entire market place. Later when Masamai would quarrel with Limable, Santamai came to live at bus stand with Dada and Limable and started living in a make-shift shanty. Santamai would sweep the bus stand every morning and the shopkeeper would give her tea which she would share with Limbale. Sometimes, he would distribute newspapers. Now even guests would visit them at this make-shift hut and he recalls a situation when they didn't have money to make tea bringing to the fore their penury-stricken existence.

Limbale reveals how his mother started liquor business in her house on the sly to survive and to feed her family. It was out of dire poverty that she took to this otherwise abhorred occupation. So the customers would come to their house and would spit and vomit there and then only. What Limbale loathes the most about it is that they would flirt with his mother and would hold his "mother's hands while she served them drinks" (29). There was also the constant fear of police raids which would cause them to throw their liquor and borrowed money to restart the business. He scoffs at drinking habits: "Everyone in the house

drank, including me. Liquor was like tea to us" (31). Sometimes his Dada and Suntamai would quarrel endlessly when drunk and he would even accuse her of adultery.

The writer attacks male dominance over women in this memoir. He recalls an incident when on one evening, his Dada saw Imam talking to Santamai who was washing clothes. Since they were alone, it leads/ propels Dada to doubt her character. Whenever drunk, he would humiliate Santamai in a flurry of abuses for adultery. Limbale shows how even in his old age, Dada would consider Santamai his property, doubting her loyalty with him, though he was not his legal wife: "Dada's teeth had fallen out, his hair had gone white, his face was a mesh of wrinkles; and yet whenever Dada got a chance he humiliated Santamai" (34). Santamai, deeply wounded by such tirade of abuse, would feel herself like "an uprooted tree" (34). Seema Sharma and Kanta Sharma in their work *Encyclopaedia of Indian Women Series: Dalit and Backward Women* (2006): *"*Dalit family life is male oriented. The biggest hurdle is man. A woman is always restricted even from stepping out of the house by a husband or a brother or a father" (Sharma & Sharma 225).

Limbale is critical of so called caste Hindus who would sleep with Mahar women, would take liquor from them but would not accept water from them. His mother Masamai's marriage to Ithal Kamble, a very poor man, was broken due to the mischievousness of Hanmant Limbale, a village Patil. He had employed Kamble but his condition was worse than that of a bonded labourer. Limbale shows that this "rich man was out to ruin a poor man's

family which was happy in its own way" (34). The caste council forced the divorce of Kamble and Masamai.

Limbale portrays Masamai as a strong and bold character. After divorce she makes her living by carrying wood to the town to sell. Being uprooted, Limbale equates her condition to Sita who was lost in the forest of Dandakaryana, seeking a shelter after exiled for fourteen years. Lashing hard at social norms, he attacks libertine males who can become husbands many times but a woman cannot become a wife. While after the divorce Kamble remarried, Masamai never again could get "the status of a wife" (36). Limbale frowns at such binaries of marrying and remarrying: "A man can eat paan and spit as many times as he likes, but the same is not possible for a woman. It is considered wrong if a woman does that. Once her chastity is lost, it can never be restored" (36). Second, when approached by Dadunya to sing in folk plays, Masamai refuses as "she was determined to live on her own" (36). However, she accepts Hanmanta's offer and lives with home openly. It was as an act of revenge that she lives with the same man who had caused her divorce because she needed to survive as Hanmanta was economically sound. The study of an NGO, Navsarjan Trust and the Feminist Dalit Organization reveals: "Dalit women have no option but to earn livelihood for themselves and their family. Without access to land and economic resources, they are dependent on land lords, contractors and economically powerful men, whereby becoming vulnerable to exploitation and violence" (2).

However, Limbale dwells on the most abiding concern of the play, that is, his identity. It was from this illicit relationship that he was born and since Hanmant Limbale did not want Masamai to conceive, he did not accept him as his son. He compares the state of his mother to Kunti and that of himself to Karna, Kunti's son. The birth of Karna before Kunti's marriage to Pandu in the *Mahabharata* was unacceptable to the morality of the world. Similarly, Limbale's birth shook the morality of the Patil community. Born out of unacceptable ethics, Limbale, like Karna, had to battle against vicissitudes throughout his life. Criticized for his low-birth, Karna was not allowed by Draupadi to take part in *swyamvara* as he was a *suta-putra*, the son of a charioteer, a low-caste. He had to further conceal his identity to learn archery as Parshuram would only train Brahmins. Limbale even attacks his mother for having entered in this illegitimate intercourse. His pain surfaces in the following dialogue when he sets himself against legitimate children whose birth is celebrated while his was deplored/ considered inauspicious: "Did anyone distribute sweets to celebrate my birth . . . Did anyone celebrate my naming ceremony? Which family would claim me its descendant? Whose son am I, really?" (37). It is very painful to have a split identity or no identity at all. His mother's journey from Kamble to Limbale lands him in a fluid state where even his name brings along disgrace to him and his mother who is humiliated and considered a whore while Hanmant Limbale goes scot free. He deplores that his mother should not have said 'yes to the rape' which caused his birth. Limbale feels that he was "growing like Karna in *Mahabharata*" (37). Since Hanmanta does not acknowledge him as his 'offspring' and

quarrels were brewing between Limbale and Masamai, she left him and came to stay with her mother, Santamai.

Limbale feels that for a woman who is of low birth and poor, even the beauty becomes a bane. It was Masamai's beauty which made the village men hanker after her. Her divorce from her husband was in fact caused due to her beauty as Hanmant Limbale affected her divorce only to sleep with her: "She was divorced by her husband, after which Hanmant enjoyed her and then deserted her (38). It is for this reason that she turned exasperated and he "never received her whole hearted love". Limble brings to light the sexual abuse of Mahar women: "The Patils in every village have made whores of the wives of Dalit farm labourers. A poor Dalit girl on attaining puberty has invariably been a victim of their lust" (38). Dalit women's offering of their bodies is inextricably linked with survival. To please Patils sexually means feeding the starving family. Irudayam and Jayshree substantiate:

> A complementarity exists between social status, economic exploitation, and sexual exploitation, in that dominant caste men view Dalit men as accessible for forced or coerced sexual acts due to their ascribed social inferiority and powerlessness related to their caste, relative independence of movement, and economic dependence primarily on dominant castes for their livelihood" (Aloysius 205)

A great social stigma also accompanies this as even the legitimate children of Mahar women are thought to be the offspring of Patils. It does stigmatize Dalit male husbands also as their masculinity gets threatened or made a mockery of. It is this nexus of religion, high caste and money or the fact of being socially/ economically marginalized that brings misery and suffering to not only Dalit women but Dalit men as well. To strike hard against caste Hindus, Limbale unabashedly/candidly exposes the names of vultures that pecked at her mother's body. He underscores the trauma stating that he had so many siblings borne to the same mother but "different fathers" (38).

Children born from Masamai's sexual association with Hanmant Limbale and Yashwantrao Sidramappa Patil were treated as or like half-castes in their own communities: "Because they are registered as Hindu linguists in the official records, they are accepted neither by the Mahar community nor by the Lingayat community" (38). Limable and his sisters had to live in a semi-Maharwada as they were not welcomed in both the Mahar and Lingayat communities. His father and forefathers were Lingayats while his mother's parents and grandparents were Mahars. So he was both at the same time, a Lingayat and a Mahar since his birth he was raised by his grandfather (grandfather only because he lived with his grandmother, Santamai) Mahmood Dastagir, Jamadar, a Muslim; by this logic then he was a Muslim too. Limbale gives vent to the pain of being a half-caste of a mixed breed or an untouchable in the following outburst: "How can I be high caste when my mother is untouchable? If I am untouchable, what about my father who is high caste? I am like

Jarasandh. Half of me belongs to the village, whereas as the other half is excommunicated. Who am I? To whom is my umbilical cord connected? (38-39). As Jarasandh's identity was between the two halves, similarly Limbale's identity was divided in two parts. This baffled state would not have been resolved in a living state. As Jarasandh was killed by cleaving his thighs and throwing them far away from each other, Limbale's double identity could not have been resolved as he had to live with this tormented sense of identity.

Limbale questions the shallow morality and integrity of those who visited his mother but would not accept the children born out of wedlock. Here Kaka, another visitor to his mother, was thought of as his father by Limbale as he would often come to their house and behave politely. Limbale's mother, however, would tell the kids that Kaka had a mansion and wife and children in village which always baffled Limbale. However when Limbale spots Kaka's mansion, Kaka slams the door: "The moment he noticed me he shut the door. I returned home with a sad face" (46). He questions the eerie behaviour of Kaka who behaved like a father only at Limbale's mother's house. He was using Masamai only for sexual gratification but never wanted his name to be appertained to Limbale. On the other hand, Kaka's mother Taramai, would behave with Limbale like an untouchable: "She would pour water into my hands without touching me while I drank, kneeling" (46). While Taramai's son was having sex with Limbale's mother, she (Taramai) was feeling polluted by touching Limbale. What an irony it was!

Keeping Mahar women as whores was a fashion with the Patils. So when Masamai takes Limbale and Nagi to Kaka's mansion, his wife Kashibai kept staring at them though she also made tea for them. Limbale says that his sister and mother would have looked equally graceful had they good clothes. He questions the 'immoral link' that this mansion had with their hut and the issue that despite born to a Patil, they could not identify with this mansion. One more gripping concern remains to question is the women's silence over their husbands' open promiscuity. Kashibai, Kaka's wife remains tongue-tied over her husband's lechery and rather welcomes Masamai only to please her husband but to hurt her self-pride. Masamai gets so excited that to meet Kaka, she applies animal fats to her hair due to lack of oil and instead of attracting Patil, attracts a swarm of bees hovering over her head. Moreover, despite having a wife at home, Kaka was lured to Jami, another keep which abated Masamai's worry. The writer rues that these women from both the high and lower castes lacked solidarity and could not protest against such infidelity of their husbands.

Limbale also brings to light the self-imposed complacency of Indian women who cling to their husbands despite being treated in a humiliating manner. It is what Santamai doer after her husband dies. Unable to conceive, she was deserted by her husband when his second wife became pregnant. Still the news of her husband's death sends her in shock. When she returns with her husband's second wife's son, Basumama, she asks Dada to be away. When apprehended on one occasion by Basumama, she conceals Dada's identity as of a porter and stranger despite the fact that he was the one who provided bread and butter to

them. Indian women's concern for their husbands can again be seen when Masamai's divorced husband is carried over to her home. The man was not only responsible for taking her two sons away but also for discarding/divorcing/deserting her. Now he had become severely ill and emaciated and was brought to her home to atone for the wrongs. His wife, forgetting everything, vows "to save her husband" (68) by bathing, massaging and nursing him properly, though he dies after a few days. She prays for her husband and serves him with devotion. Limbale attacks such blind worship of their husbands by Indian women who despite being ill treated still deem it a blessing to serve them. Baby Kamble in her autobiography *The Prisons* We Broke (2008) also reveals how she did not defy her husband though she suffered immensely from her marriage. She reveals how once she went to attend a meeting with her husband and when young men stared at her, her husband beat her violently: "My husband immediately suspected me and hit me so hard that my nose started bleeding profusely . . . the same evening we returned and he was so angry that kept hitting me in the train . . . All my life I had to face this violence" (155).

Masamai was 'mortgaging' her body to different Patils just to survive. Hanmant Limbale was responsible for "wrecking Masamai's married life" (58). He presents his mother's vulnerable position:

> What sort of life had she been living mortgaging herself to one owner after another and being used as a commodity? Her lot has been nothing but the tyranny of sex. (58)

When his mother tells him to tell the teacher that she is Palit's whore, Limbale feels excited as for him it meant 'wife'. But he later realizes how offensive this word was: "But what a venomous word it is it implies an impure foul vagina. Who would willingly enter the gigantic gate of that vagina?" (60) He later recalls one event when Kaka brought Hamanta to his house and how persuaded Masamai to sleep with him. It makes her drive both of them out of her house, abusing.

Limble also discusses the issue of child marriage through the marriage of his sisters Nagi and Vani. Nagi was married off to Kumar, who had already been deserted by two wives. He was old enough to be the father of Nagi who "had not even reached puberty" (73). Desai and Andrist write about the reason why some in-laws prefer young brides: "Age at marriage may also be related to women's autonomy through different channel: because younger brides are more likely to be docile, in areas where parents-in-law seek to limit women's power in the household, they may have a preference for younger brides" (Desai & Andrist 669-70). He had been fired from his job of laborer at the nursing Girji mill. His mother Shantatya would gather junk and sell it for living, while creditors would harry Shantatya for the money Kumar had borrowed. His sister Nagi left Kumar just after a few days and returned back to

live with her mother. In the second instance, his sister Vani was married off to Jumma, the son of Rangoo who was well-off in Bombay. When Rangoo dies, Jumma is brought to live there by Masamai's neighbor Ratnamai who was Jumma's paternal grandmother. Interestingly the boy was only eleven-twelve years' old and Vani's marriage is affected with him only for the reason that he had to inherit his mother's property. However, fed-up with village life, Jumma also leaves for Bombay, deserting his young bride. Both the sisters, thus, become husbandless in their teenage.

Since farmers would allow Mahar near their fields; if cattle would go astray, these careeners would treat women like slaves and force them for sex in the fields. The report of the NGO, Navsarjan provides testimony: **"**Being born into a low caste, Dalit women are often perceived as women of 'low character' and hence available for use by the dominant caste males. This control over their body and sexuality is further sanctioned by traditional and religious practices and explains the impunity enjoyed by oppressors" (2).

His friend Mallya's grandmother, Sonu Janabai, was a neighbour and she planned to affect her niece's marriage to Limbale. When he went to see his would be/ prospective wife, Janabai had detected by then that Limbale was an illegitimate child and exploded: "We haven't yet lost our self-respect. Our family is of pure blood so we also expect the same of a bridegroom" (88). Her words "pierce his heart". The stigma of a bastard drains his self-respect and dignity; even in terms of his marriage it was acting as an inevitable hurdle. The still other prospect of his marriage with Mallya's sister makes Limbale happy as he was his

friend since childhood days. However, to his dismay, even Mallya's parents turn down the proposal because he "was not of pure blood" (92). Limbale's mother would ask her customers for a perfect match, that is, Limble was to be married off to none other but only to a girl who was offspring of a concubine and a Palit. It nibbles his psyche endlessly as he narrates the pain of being a bastard: "A bastard must always be matched by another bastard. No one will marry their daughters to a bastard like me" (92).

Internalization of prejudice, pain, suffering remains the main cause for the underprivileged state of women. When Limbale is denied to take his wife along, Masamai advises: "Don't treat her like a wife. Let her rot" (100). This advice must be seen here as inextricably related to her own treatment as a woman and as a sexual object. Her advice to her son to exercise control over his wife and to treat her like a woman stems from this conditioning. Apathy of a woman towards a woman has its roots in cultural conditioning of women by patriarchy and here the Palits of the village.

His sister Pami and Indira's marriage to real brothers of a Muslim mother and a Lingayat mother also results in disappointment as only after two days, both the sisters are forced to break their marriages because the "in-laws had come to know that Masamai was a Mahar" (109). Their tale of disappointments was, thus, invariably stringed to their caste which not only led to break up of relationships but myriad forms of overt and covert subjugation. Moreover, Nadu had married another girl despite being married to Nagi.

Apart from it, the writer also makes stray references to violence within Dalit families. There is one scene of Devki, a spinster whose job it was to abort unwanted children. When she once found that she herself had become pregnant, "She buried the baby under the garbage" (67). It shows the vulnerability of women who became the unwed mothers of the issues of high/exploitative class men. Violence against Dalit women comes to light through Kondamai, a beautiful woman and her husband Kerubaap, of black complexion. He had not only deceived her into marriage but would also beat her as her cries could be heard every night indicative of bruises appear "on her fair back" (48).

The Outcaste, thus, attempts to bring to the fore the subservient position of Dalit women within and outside Dalit communities. The writer drives home the point that being subjected to multiple oppression, Dalit women become nobody. *The Outcaste* represents a Dalit woman Masamai's desire to be free of her sexual roles and thereby become a subject with autonomy, selfhood and self-expression and not an objected of sex and play. Limbale, thus, imparts voice to the voiceless and speaks animatedly against the repression of the Dalits in general and women in particular through the story of his mother, sisters, and grandmother.

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Encountering Postcoloniality: An Exploration of Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child*

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Abstract: The article is a study of the ways in which Ngugi wa Thiong'o deals with the colonial condition in Kenya during the Emergency in his first published novel *Weep Not, Child*. As it is shown in the article, Ngugi represents a desperate attempt made by the postcolonial *athomi* to discover "alternate" (feminine) spaces of resistance to repression. This quest comes after the desolate realisation of the *athomi* that the "main" (masculine) spaces of resistance are curbed or obliterated by colonialism. Exploring Ngugi's work with reference to other contemporary discourses concerning Gikuyu women and land tenure, the study locates both regressive and progressive potentials in *Weep Not, Child*.

Keywords: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, postcolonial, *Weep Not, Child*.

I

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Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1938—) first published novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964) concerns itself with the last decade of the colonial period in Kenya when there was the state of Emergency (1952-1959). It must be noted at the outset that, by the term "postcoloniality," I imply the complex situations and discourses which were spawned and affected by the colonial onslaught on Kenya. The Emergency was a colonial disciplinary measure to curb what was ambiguously known as "Mau Mau." Mau Mau was primarily a native peasant uprising of the mid twentieth century (Green 70). The name of the insurgency is a misnomer (Rothermund 186). Yet, the British and their native associates projected it as a binary to "modernity" and "progress" of which they considered themselves the custodians — the "burdened white men" in Kipling's words, and the "black men wearing white masks" in Fanon's; while, after independence, the "nationalist" leaders of Kenya — Jomo Kenyatta and his party Kenya Africa Nation Union (KANU) — undermined it "by universalizing its claims and desires," and by eliding the split between the pro-Mau Mau "rebels" and the anti-Mau Mau "loyalists" (Gikandi 29). These petit bourgeois leaders became the architects of nation-state-building in Kenya or emerged as, to use Basil Davidson's words, the "burdened black men."

II

In *Weep Not, Child,* according to Simon Gikandi, Mau Mau is depicted as neither heroic nor patriotic (27). It appears to be a matter of concern for the English settlers (Mr. Howlands), the Gikuyu loyalists (Jacobo) and the rest of the native population—the *athomi* (Njoroge) as well as the *Agikuyu* (Ngotho). As Bruce J. Berman notes, the "developing petty bourgeoisie [amongst the Gikuyu] was commonly referred to as the *athomi* (literally, the 'readers')" (197). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *athomi* were somewhat alienated from the rest of the *ethnie* — or *Agikuyu* — because the former embraced English education and missionary Christianity for their manifold material benefits (Spear 14). However, later some of the *athomi* tried to dissociate themselves from the colonial education as they were disenchanted with the same. Ngugi wa Thiong'o had been an *athomi* who was disillusioned with the colonial education (Gikandi 22).

Like Waiyaki of Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965), the protagonist Njoroge assumes himself to be the messiah of the oppressed Gikuyu, who, one day, would emancipate his people by dint of his "learning":

> Only education could make something out of this wreckage. He became more faithful to his studies. He would one day use all his learning to fight the white man, for he would continue the work that his father had started. When these moments caught him, he actually saw himself as a possible saviour of the whole God's country. Just let him get learning. Let that time come....
> (Thiong'o, *Weep Not* 93)

Obscurity lies, however, in the possibility of saving the nation with the power of education. Like Waiyaki of the initial stage, Njoroge has no plan or strategy to combat colonialism. Naively, he considers the school as a microcosm of an ideal, postcolonial, multi-ethnic Kenya dominated by "white men" who "never talked of colour;" never "talked down to Africans:"

> [T]hey could work closely, joke, and laugh with their black colleagues who came from different tribes. Njoroge at times wished the whole country was like this. This seemed a little paradise, a paradise where children from all walks of life and of different religious faiths could work together without any consciousness. Many people believed the harmony in the school came because the headmaster was a strange man who was severe with everyone, black and white alike. (129)

As Amoko argues, "The school seems to present a model of unity for the nation in the fullness of time" (Amoko 58). The benign white men of the missionary school nurture the

coveted peaceful coexistence of different communities in the Kenyan nation-state. The headmaster, who is "automatically against all black politicians who in any way made people to be discontented with the white man's rule and civilizing mission," assumes the role of the just, white ruler being "severe with everyone, black and white alike" (Thiong'o, *Weep Not* 129-130). However, this ideal microcosmic postcolonial nationality is marked by irony: in Siriana Njoroge does not interact with children of any marginalised ethnic groups; instead he interacts with those fellow students who belong to the privileged, "the members of the small colonial and postcolonial bourgeoisie in training" (Amoko 60).

This "paradise" of Njoroge is lost forever very soon in the wake of Jacobo's murder by his brother, Boro, and of the subsequent arrest of his father, Ngotho (who tries to save Boro by self-incrimination). Njoroge is taken to the homeguard post, infamously known as the House of Pain, and tortured by the colonial administrators. He becomes the victim of the political backlash, a colonial-administrative retaliation to the violence of the Mau Mau movement. Missionary education as well as Christian faith in God's justice — "adulterated" with Gikuyu myths of origin and prophecy — is naively conceptualised as a key to emancipation, peace and national integration by Njoroge (Gikandi 92-93). Ultimately, his dream is shattered; he is disillusioned, and his utopian ideals are exposed by his sororal companion Mwihaki (Nicholls 27). According to Gikandi, the novel dramatises twofold disillusionment (91-95). First, Njoroge realises that the colonial education which he seeks is also a means of alienation from his people. Second, the coveted education seems futile in the wake of the colonial-state atrocities of the Emergency. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of

Kenya, the "Black Moses" of the novel, is said to be arrested and convicted; Boro, a Mau Mau guerrilla, kills Jacobo and Mr. Howlands; Ngotho and Njoroge are tortured to the extent that the former dies. All these lead Njoroge to a near-suicidal despair. Here Njoroge is different from Waiyaki primarily because the former resorts to escapism. Moreover, Njoroge cannot come to terms with Mwihaki's nationalism of abstinence. His defeatism is evident at last: "…Njoroge did not speak to Njeri but felt only guilt, the guilt of a man who had avoided his responsibility for which he had prepared himself since childhood" (154). His failure to take responsibilities, to wait as Mwikaki has urged him to do, to be the messiah, might be symptomatic of the early Ngugi's failure to come to terms with the discourses of ethnicity and nationalism in the wake of colonialism. At that time Ngugi was a troubled *athomi* straddling native tradition and colonial modernity in time of the Emergency. He was yet to develop his ideals of Marxism, the ideological frameworks that constitute his later works like *Petals of Blood* (1976) and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1977).

As James Ogude points out, "the strand of inward-looking ethnicity that we find in *The River Between*, chiefly represented in the *Kiama*, is almost deleted in *Weep Not, Child*" (21). Here the dilemma of the Gikuyu protagonist is not about the selection between the Christian and the Gikuyu. Instead, Njoroge finds himself and his family tormented by the factionalism between the two opposing parties: on the one hand, there are the colonial settlers and their native loyalists; on the other, there remains the Mau Mau. The Gikuyu squatters or *ahoi* are caught between them. Noticeably, the Mau Mau phenomenon evoked dread and suspicion in Ngugi when he wrote the novel (Gikandi 27, Alam 149). The emphasis is on the

reign of terror that prevailed during the Emergency; as Mwihaki notes, "Every day there have been some new arrests and some houses burnt down by Mau Mau. Yesterday I found some people being beaten and they were crying, oh so horribly, begging for mercy. I don't know what's happening. Fear in the air. Not a fear of death — it's a fear of living" (*Weep Not* 127). Statements such as "I like KAU [or Kenya African Union] and fear Mau Mau," the ambiguous letter of threat to the school children "signed with Kimathi's name," "mission of revenge" being the sole objective of the Mau Mau guerrilla Boro, and so on are indicative of the fact that, for Ngugi, Mau Mau did not gain the native support that it was supposed to have (82, 94, 116). Ngugi's later works, especially *Petals of Blood* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* however, register his attempt to amend the popular image of the rebellion.

Any amorous contact between Njoroge and Mwihaki during their physical proximity is noticeably prevented in several occasions (*Weep Not* 62, 96,108-109, 121). They meet as brother and sister. Brandon Nicholls considers this fraternal-sororal relationship between Njoroge and Mwihaki as symbolic of the former's "emasculated complicity with the colonizing powers" gained through his "subscription to Christian discourse and to Western-style education" (Nicholls 26). Besides, as Nicholls argues, any chance of romantic involvement could endanger the class distinction between them: Njoroge's father Ngotho is a Gikuyu squatter who tills the land of the colonial settler Mr. Howlands, while Mwihaki is a daughter of Jacobo, a landed Gikuyu having "bourgeois acquisitiveness" (25). Refuting Ogude's argument that the prospective romance between Njoroge and Mwihaki is symbolic of the germination of the postcolonial Kenyan nation-state, Amoko argues that through the

relationship of Njoroge and Mwihaki the narrative tries to ridicule the possibility of any romantic involvement which poses to transcend the present historicity (Ogude 111; Amoko 65). Towards the end, a similar proximity is visible, which is followed by Mwihaki's caveat that since she and Njoroge have a duty to the people of Kenya, they cannot leave their country in the present moment of crisis:

> He *held her left hand* in his. She *did not resist him* and neither did she resist the tears that now flowed freely down her face. …she wanted him to go on *holding her by the hand* and lead the way.
>
> …"Mwihaki, dear, I *love* you. Save me if you want. Without you I am lost."
>
> She wanted to sink in his *arms* and feel a *man's strength* around her weak *body*.
>
> …"You must save me, please Njoroge. I love you."
>
> She covered her face with both hands and wept freely, *her breast heaving*.
>
> Njoroge felt *sweet pleasure* and *excitedly* smoothed her dark hair.
>
> 'Yes, we go to Uganda and live—'
>
> 'No, no.' She struggled again. (*Weep Not* 150; emphasis mine)

Clearly, the passage evokes the erotic. For the sake of communal and individual duties, duties towards the people of Kenya and to her mother respectively, Mwihaki disapproves not only of Njoroge's escape plan but also of the possibility of their physical relationship; interestingly, she asks him to "wait for a new day" (151). The implication is that "love" has to wait in the time of "war." Love is escapism for both Mwihaki and Njoroge.

Therefore, Ogude's argument that the "romance" captured in the relationship between Njoroge and Mwihaki figures as "the ideal nationhood" seems weak as Mwihaki considers stability of the nation as a precondition for the development of her "romance" with Njoroge (111). This nationalist awareness of Mwihaki causes their separation leading to Njoroge's suicide. His suicide attempt implies his failure in "political/ military and sexual conquest" (Nicholls 28). Probably, Mwihaki's disapproval of her union with Njoroge is based on this emasculation of the latter. Delaying of the union gives Njoroge time to come to terms with his emasculation. He needs to understand, for instance, the intensity of the disempowerment that he suffers from.

As Nicholls discusses, the novel seems to end with Njoroge's final return to his mothers, Nyokabi and Njeri, which is, apparently, suggestive of his return to the life of "communal responsibility" represented by the two women, a feminine domain contrary to the masculine, "courageous" yet "insubstantial" sphere represented by Boro, Kamau and Ngotho (29). This return to the mother's zone is envisaged by Mwihaki as well: the desire of Njoroge to escape the turmoil of emergency with Mwihaki is countered by the latter's sense of commitment to the nation, the mother:

> Kenya is no place for us. Is it not childish to remain in a hole when you can take yourself out?" [, said Njoroge.]
>
> "But we can't. We can't!" she [Mwihaki] cried hopelessly….
>
> "…we have a duty. Our duty to other people is our biggest responsibility as grown men and women." [, said Mwihaki.]

> "Duty! Duty!" he cried bitterly.
>
> "Yes, I have a duty, for instance, to my *mother*. Please, dear Njoroge, we cannot leave *her* at this time when – No! Njoroge. Let's wait for a new day. (151; emphasis mine)

Thus Mwihaki insists the need for return to the mother figure, and that is what Njoroge seems to do towards the end. However, as Nicholls continues, the construction of this feminine domain is problematic because the characters of Nyokabi and Njeri are "informed by religious/ mythic productions of woman as nurturer and homemaker" (30). In other words, they are (mis)placed outside history. In the first paragraph of the novel it can be said that Nyokabi "is equated with a past which has been superseded by colonization;" and in the last part when Njoroge returns to her, she is equated with "a future that has not yet been realized" (29). Moreover, as Njeri's "name means 'the devoted,'" she is also entrenched into the ahistorical realm of traditional feminine roles (30). Therefore, for Nicholls, Njoroge's retreat to the feminine domain is regressive as the feminine zone is marked by a patriarchal projection of woman. Though Nicholls considers Ngugi's representation of Nyokabi and Njeri as reactionary, he mentions several critics who argue that Nyokabi and Njeri are empowered in subtle ways as Njoroge's final return to his mothers denotes their ultimate triumph over the male-dominated anticolonial nationalism (30). In support of Nicholls' argument it can be said that Ngugi's portrayal of women as ahistorical entities in *Weep Not, Child* seems akin to Jomo Kenyatta's projection of woman in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), a notable book on anthropology bolstering the dominant Gikuyu cultural nationalism. This text

is particularly relevant in this context because at that time Ngugi had faith in the most eminent Kenyan nationalist leader — who is referred to as the "Black Moses" and whose detention and trial as a pro-Mau Mau nationalist leader is mentioned a number of times in the novel (49, 56, and 65).

III

In *Facing Mount Kenya* — an anticolonial anthropological study of the Gikuyu which has been regarded as an ethnographical representation of the colonised "Other for itself" — Jomo Kenyatta deems women to be "essentially the home makers, as without them there is no home in the Gikuyu sense of social life" (Celarent 723; Kenyatta 180). Primarily, Kenyatta aims at projecting the precolonial Gikuyu as a "civilised," responsible, stable community which did not need the European "civilising mission." However, in so doing, he relegates the Gikuyu woman to the margins of the dominant Gikuyu cultural nationalism. For instance, what is worth mention is Kenyatta's depiction of circumcision. As Barbara Celarent argues in her review of *Facing Mount Kenya*, in the discussion on the issue of circumcision of the 1930s there is "no detailed analysis of male circumcision" (726). Kenyatta depicts clitoridectomy, the operational part of female circumcision, in detail under the sections "How the Girl is Operated on" and "Healing the Wound," but sporadic references to male circumcision surface in the same chapter (diplomatically titled "Initiation of Boys and Girls") only when he describes the ceremonies associated with circumcision (Kenyatta 130-154). Apparently, Kenyatta aims at defending the custom against the systematic onslaught of the missionaries and colonial administration. Yet, as Celarent points out, Kenyatta's analysis of

(female) circumcision has several shortcomings: first, he does not render the Gikuyu women the autonomy of choice regarding circumcision; second, he ignores the fact that the missionaries based their opposition on the basis of this question of women's autonomy over their bodies; third, he does not mention that the two-month long initiation ceremony removed "a crucial group of women and adolescents from the labor force 'required' by the new European settlers. (Male circumcision rituals also disrupted the labor supply, and these facts were central in promoting colonial action to discourage these rituals.);" and fourth, Kenyatta misses out in highlighting that the clitoridectomy debate did not involve any woman as a potent participant as it was a discursive tug-of-war on female body/sexuality between the colonial and Gikuyu patriarchies—discussed in the previous subsection on *The River Between* (Celarent 725-726). Moreover, in the conclusion to the chapter, Kenyatta argues, "The African is in the best position properly to discuss and disclose the psychological background of tribal customs, such as *irua*, etc., and he should be given the opportunity to acquire the scientific training which will enable him to do so" (154). The "African [/Gikuyu] male, one might note," is given by Kenyatta the ultimate prerogative to decide the fate of the Gikuyu female regarding the clitoridectomy controversy (Celarent 725). In doing so, the latter is relegated to the margins of the dominant Gikuyu cultural nationalism. "Women are often the ones who are given the social role of intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs [and so on,]" (Yuval-Davis 25). Women's "appropriate" sexual behaviour became therefore a hallmark of the dominant Gikuyu/African cultural-nationalist civility for Kenyatta; and this necessitates, in turn, a selective dehistoricisation of Gikuyu

women. In *Facing Mount Kenya*, thus, women are marginalised by the Gikuyu nationalist patriarchy, and a similar entrenchment is visible in *Weep Not, Child* (which Nicholls talks about). Both Njeri and Nyokabi are made to represent a past invalidated by colonialism and a future which is uncertain (Nicholls 29-30).

Nevertheless, the end of *Weep Not, Child* remains an enigma. Troubled by the sense of failure to live up to the expectations, Njoroge is reproached by his inner voice, seemingly, his guilty conscience:

> And loudly he said, "Why didn't I do it [suicide]?"
>
> The voice said: *Because you are a coward.*
>
> "Yes," he whispered to himself. "I am a coward."
>
> And he ran home and opened the door for his two mothers. (*Weep Not* 154)

Probably, Njoroge comes to terms with his cowardice by understanding the futility of the so-called masculine resistance put up by Ngotho, Boro and Kamau. First he feels guilty because he thinks that by attempting suicide he has failed Ngotho whose last instruction was to "look after the women" (153). The same sense of guilt is visible in Ngotho after (briefly) surviving the torture at the detention camp (133-134). He seems to feel an excruciating powerlessness at his death bed, probably, not only for his crippled (castrated) physical state, but also for his anxiety regarding the household (139-141). The narration, in the mode of free indirect discourse, is marked by the emasculated Ngotho's plight: "What was a *man's* life if he could be reduced to this?" (140; emphasis mine). Curiously, he urges Boro and then Njoroge to stay

home to protect it. His concern seems to be that of the disempowered patriarch who was once at the centre of the household, but now is desperate to pass the authority to his heir (45, 57, 140-141). This probably indicates Ngotho's emasculation which takes place at two levels. First, as Mr Howland informs/ threatens Njoroge during the latter's torture at the detention camp, Ngotho is castrated:

> He held Njoroge's private parts with a pair of pincers and started to press tentatively.
>
> "You'll be castrated like your father."
>
> Njoroge screamed. (133)

What is also notable is that Howland mentions Ngotho's castration while assaulting Njoroge sexually and threatening to castrate him; an assault which appears to have a correspondence with his "emasculated complicity with the colonizing powers" (mentioned previously quoting from Nicholls 29). Second, Ngotho fails to regain, and moreover, loses contact with the ancestral land forever, and at the end he leaves *his* women unprotected: "And yet he felt the loss of the land even more keenly than Boro, for to him it was a spiritual loss. When a *man* was severed from the land of his ancestors where would he sacrifice to the Creator?" (84; emphasis mine). Severing of Ngotho from the land can be interpreted as his emasculation because land was regarded as a signifier of Gikuyu manhood. A landed Gikuyu could afford to become a patriarch sustaining his family. According to the precolonial Gikuyu land tenure the ownership of land was patrifocal. Be it *gethaka* (individual) system or *mbari* (family or clan) system of ownership, ultimate arbiter was the patriarch of the household (Kilson Jr.

106-108). Like many other social systems, the Gikuyu was patriarchal and patrilineal. Polygyny was common among the Gikuyus. To sustain a polygynous family or *mbari*, the Gikuyu male had to own a considerable section of land in the region. In this agrarian, pastoral social system, land was the ultimate key to socio-cultural prosperity. Following Kenyatta, Ngugi acknowledges the land as a "material symbol that holds the family and tribe together" (Thiong'o, *Homecoming* 11). Land was regarded as a means of self-mastery implying a moral and social recognition amongst the Gikuyu (Branch 294-295). This was ingrained in the psyche of the Gikuyu squatters during the colonial period even though they did not have lands of their own. In *Weep Not, Child*, the narrator's remark emphasises the precolonial ideological primacy of land for the Gikuyu: "If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich (22). Moreover, Mr Howlands' assertion during his fatal confrontation with Boro is indicative of the fact that the struggle between the Gikuyu squatters and the colonial settlers — between Ngotho and Howlands respectively — over land was not only social but also psychosexual: "'This is my land.' Howlands said this as a man would say, 'This is my woman'" (145; sic). This male psychosexual association between land and woman is pertinent to an understanding of Ngotho's plight. Significantly, the manner in which Ngotho "touches the soil" is considered as "almost fondling" by Howlands (33). There is a curious parallel drawn in the text between Ngotho and Howlands at the level of their preoccupations with land:

> They went from place to place, a white man and a black man, Now and then they would stop here and there, examine a luxuriant green tea plant, or pull out a weed. Both men admired this *shamba*. For Ngotho felt responsible for whatever happened to this land. He owed it to the dead, the living and the unborn of his line, to keep guard over this *shamba*. Mr Howlands always felt a certain amount of victory whenever he walked through it all. He alone was responsible for taming this unoccupied wildness. (35)

Here, the psyches of the colonised and the coloniser appear to be similar. Both feel like owning the land. Wounded and landless, the former Gikuyu patriarch then probably feels emasculated as he is unable to protect his women and severed from the land.

A similar sense of emasculation troubles Njoroge as well when he ponders over his escapism. Towards the end of the narrative, perhaps he realises that it is time to discover an alternate arrangement of power, at least at the homestead. Hence his return to Nyokabi and Njeri. This return appears significant all the more when it is contextualised with a concurrent understanding of the nineteenth-century Gikuyu practice of widow inheritance:

> If a man died without close male patrilineal kin and made a deathbed will to this effect, a widow might herself inherit a share of the herd. This, it should be noted, creates an option for autonomy in a society which practises widow inheritance. A widow of childbearing age who had inherited livestock might take a lover or lovers and have children who carryon her dead husband's

> name. If she were past childbearing age, such a widow might marry a young woman in a woman-woman marriage…. The young woman was encouraged to take a married man as her lover because a married man would be eligible to participate in certain rituals for the children of the union. The female husband, however, was the legal father and participated on other ritual occasions. The names given [to] the children and the kin terms used by them indicate, as Leakey carefully concludes, that the female husband was not marrying for her deceased husband, but establishing a line for her future sons(s). Leakey observes that woman-woman marriage "was not rare" …. (Clark 364)

The quoted passage is a testimony to the fissures in the nineteenth-century Gikuyu patriarchy that enabled women to enjoy autonomy. What is also worth mention is the fact that in Kenyatta's account of the Gikuyu land tenure and property rights, such references to women's autonomy do not surface. As Berman points out, "Kenyatta's several references to women in Kikuyu society depicted them as a source of potential disorder and conflict, unless kept under patriarchal control" (335). Indeed, Ngotho has sons and does not bequeath a fortune to be distributed; nor does he make any will at his deathbed. Nevertheless, he urges Njoroge, the only son having a chance of surviving the reign of terror, to "look to" his mother (*Weep Not* 141). These last words are only partially construed by Njoroge when, in the course of the free indirect narration, he repents at the end for attempting to leave his mothers: "He was only conscious that he had failed her and the last word of his father, when he had told him to *look after* the women" (153; emphasis mine). Ngotho asks Njoroge not only to look after his

mothers, but also to "look to" them, that is to say, rely on them and/or turn his expectations towards them. At the end of his life, probably Ngotho desperately comes to the realisation of the potential for leadership in his wives. On the verge of his demise, Ngotho bequeaths his wives the charge of the resistance to the dominance of the Howlands asking Njoroge to look up to his mothers.

IV

In conclusion, it might then be said that thus Njoroge's eventual return to his mothers might not appear regressive. It may seem to be a desperate attempt by the postcolonial *athomi* to discover alternate (feminine) spaces of resistance to repression in the wake of the bleak realisation that the main (masculine) spaces of resistance are curbed or obliterated. Exploring Ngugi's work and other contemporary discourses concerning Gikuyu women and land tenure, the study locates both regressive and progressive potentials in *Weep Not, Child*. Unlike his later novels, especially *Petals of Blood* (1977) and the Gikuyu novels (1980-2006), this work falls short of developing any strong idiom of resistance to colonialism, for which Ngugi is widely known. However, the ways in which *Weep Not, Child* engages with the complexities of postcoloniality in Kenya appear to be a testimony to his endeavour in negotiating the vicissitudes of the colonial period in Kenya.

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Envisaging Emancipation through Routes of Desire: A Comparative Study of the Female Protagonists in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' and Ismat Chughtai's 'The Quilt'

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Abstract: Desire has, for ages, been a potent force within literature and yet, very rarely have attempts been made to understand and theorize desire for its own sake. Most literary representations of desire tend to subsume it either within discourses of heterosexual romance or of transgressive sexuality, both of which constitute at their core an inquiry into the culture-gender-power structure that inheres in all human relationships. However, desire, rather than being sexualized or made a pawn in the politics of gender, culture, class, race and so on, demands recognition as a universal category of human experience and craves an identity as such in its own right. Being thoroughly elusive to definition and indisputably open-ended, desire has forever constituted a challenge to the traditional structures of the world that seek to close its meaning in circuits of signification. This paper makes an attempt to study the emancipatory and revolutionary potential of desire as

manifested in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' and Ismat Chughtai's 'The Quilt' and explores how the deprived female protagonists in these two stories chart their journey from marginality and powerlessness to agency and subjectification through highly dissident routes of desire.

Keywords: Desire, Culture, Sexuality, Marginalization, Emancipation.

> If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors. Despite what some revolutionaries think about this, desire is revolutionary in its essence…and no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised. (Deleuze and Guattari 118)

Desire as a fundamental and inalienable category of human feeling and experience has always exerted a complex, compulsive, and powerful influence over our world. Our cultural texts from architecture to sculpture, from painting to music and from books to cinema and advertisement, bear the indelible inscriptions of desire. In the realm of literature particularly,

the reign of desire has been long and resolute. From the timeless classical works of Sappho and Ovid to present-day postcolonial narratives such as Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Jazz*, desire continues to animate, imbue and inspire literature towards a search for new horizons, realities, and meanings in human life and relationships. Despite the fact that there is no thematic novelty in writing about desire, the urge to document and re-interpret desire remains obsessive in every generation and culture, a fact that perhaps owes itself to desire's essentially complex nature. Catherine Belsey makes a very pertinent observation in this regard when she writes:

> Writing about desire. It's not as if it hadn't been done before - by poets, dramatists, novelists, sexologists, moralists, psychoanalysts, sociobiologists. But something seems to remain unsaid. And it is this above all that motivates yet more writing. Desire eludes final definition, with the result that its character, its nature, its meaning, become itself an object of desire for the writer. (Belsey)

It is in such impossibility of knowing desire completely and of encapsulating it in words that the persistent quest for its articulation can be located. It is this open-endedness of the nature of desire and its defiance to be closed firmly within

circuits of signification that make desire both - alluring and dangerous, leading to the paradox that while on the one hand, discourses of desire proliferate in society, desire itself is sought to be marginalized, to be kept hidden, concealed or camouflaged in social practice. The reasons for such paradoxical practice, however, are not far to seek. Firstly, desire, in most characterizations of it, manifests and registers itself as an elemental, subconscious force utterly free of the dictates of morality or reason. Secondly, since it resists signification, it also in its immense variety, vitality and amplitude, resists the idea of authority and legitimacy with the result that each manifestation of desire is as authentic and legitimate as the other. Both these characteristics work together to load desire with dissident potential and contrive to demand its suppression in the name of social health and harmony. It is no wonder, therefore, that in traditional and orthodox discourses of religion, morality and everyday practical life, desire is viewed as an obstruction, as a temporary hijacking of the higher faculties of man by what is superficial, temporary, insignificant and gross. Even Jean-Paul Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness* (1966), though conceptualizing desire as a transcendental relationship with the Other, cannot help defining it in terms of "trouble":

> In fact everyone will agree that desire is not only longing, a clear and translucent longing which directs itself through our body

> towards a certain object. Desire is defined as trouble. The notion of "trouble" can help us better to determine the nature of desire. We contrast troubled water with transparent water, a troubled look with a clear look. Troubled water remains water; it preserves the fluidity and the essential characteristics of water; but its translucency is "troubled" by an inapprehensible presence which makes one with it, which is everywhere and nowhere, and which is given as a clogging of the water by itself. (Sartre 387)

Desire is trouble because desire, in its essence, predicates itself on the imagining of a new and different relationship between the self and the world via an Other. Every act of desire insofar as it envisages change, constitutes an imaginative act of resistance against the quotidian nature of the world and its ossified structures. As Belsey insists, "desire imagines a utopian world, envisaging a transformation and transfiguration of the quotidian which throws into relief the drabness we too easily take for granted…. Desire, even when it's profoundly conventional, is at the same time the location of a resistance to convention. It demonstrates that people want something more." (Belsey)

However, though desire constitutes a potent vehicle for the revelation of new knowledge about ourselves and the society we inhabit, desire itself as a

category of knowledge, remains enigmatically elusive and its theorization, over the ages, has witnessed dramatic shifts. Kristyn Gorton, calling attention to these changing conceptions of desire, writes:

> Desire has been understood as both an emotion and an affect, as a drive, and as the essence of human subjectivity (Spinoza). Psychoanalytic interpretations position desire as lack (Freud and Lacan); Deleuze and Guattari challenge this conception and figure desire as production; feminist theory addresses the gendered nature of desire (Irigaray, Braidotti and Grosz); and in contemporary criticism desire is linked with materialism and alienation. (Gorton 8)

Desire indeed, beginning with its early theoretical underpinnings in philosophy and psychoanalysis and continuing to its present alliance with capitalism and consumerism, remains a challenging field of thought in much of critical theorizing. Where, for instance, is desire engendered – in the human consciousness or without? Where does it locate itself – in the mind or in the body? What propels desire – the emotions or the senses? Who determines the object of desire – the object, desire itself or the desiring subject? Again, if desire is indeed the invasive force in the consciousness that it is frequently stated to be, does the desiring

subject at all have any agency? Over and above all, does desire ultimately crave some pre-defined fulfillment or is its identity based on holding fulfillment forever in abeyance? Questions such as these are responsible for rendering desire both as a persistently problematic concept in cultural theory and an immensely fertile one.

It is, however, important at this stage to urge that desire should neither be confused with romance, nor sexuality – the two common discourses under which the discourse of desire usually tends to be subsumed. Though both romance and sexual relationships involve complicated working-outs of the emotion of desire, desire unlike the institutions of romance and sexuality is a process that presupposes no end or closure and can neither establish a definite point of entry nor of departure. As Sartre points out, "coitus which ordinarily terminates desire is not its essential goal". If anything, it constitutes only "the affirmation of the flesh by the flesh." (Sartre 396) In Freudian psychoanalysis, desire is understood as a kind of disagreeable tension, a kind of 'charge' which must be 'discharged' for the sake of regaining temporary balance. This 'discharge' is experienced as pleasure but only for a few moments in the form of orgasm or ecstasy, and it must give way eventually to a new desire or 'charge'. Romance and sexuality establish themselves on the discharged pleasure of desire but in being patriarchal constructs, they rigorously attempt to regulate the natural forces of desire via the legislations

of culture, thereby implicating desire within the politics of gender and power, legitimacy and illegitimacy, heteronormativity and transgression. Desire, however, as Belsey writes, constitutes:

> the location of resistances to the norms, proprieties and taxonomies of the cultural order. […] desire in all its forms, including heterosexual desire, commonly repudiates legality; at the level of the unconscious its imperatives are absolute; and in consequence it readily overflows, in a whole range of ways, the institutions designed to contain it. Desire thus demonstrates the inability of the symbolic order to fulfill its own ordering project, and reveals the difficulty with which societies control the energies desire liberates. (Belsey)

Through the two short stories taken up here for analysis, this paper seeks to explore these dissident, powerful and immensely creative energies liberated by desire. The two stories in question are Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' from her debut Pulitzer-winning collection *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and Ismat Chughtai's 'The Quilt' ('Lihaf') published in the Urdu literary journal *Adab-i-Latif* in 1942. Both these stories, I urge, by charting their female protagonists' respective journeys from isolation, marginalization and

powerlessness to agency and subjectification, attempt to narrativize the revolutionary and emancipatory potential of desire. Despite the fact that both the stories overtly deal with socially unacceptable sexual relationships – one illegitimate and the other transgressive, I feel more than adequately justified in labeling these stories as narratives of desire because in each case, the specific physical operation of the principle of desire is artistically shielded in the narrative from both the narrator and the reader's eye with the result that what actually goes on under Begum Jan's legendary lihaaf or in the small storage room on the roof inhabited by Bibi Haldar remain not only unknown till the end but are also rendered clearly inconsequential in view of the radical relocation accomplished in the socio-cultural positioning of the protagonists. The actual physical practice of sex is thus resolutely relegated to the background with the female protagonists' desire assuming the central force in the narratives – its development traced through the fine details of plot, its suggestiveness artistically teased out through language, and its potency affirmed through the surprising transformation that is witnessed in the characters of the protagonists.

Lahiri's Bibi Haldar and Chughtai's Begum Jan are two women whose desires - social, sexual and cultural – suffer severe marginalization within the enclosed patriarchal spaces of their homes. While in the case of twenty-nine year

old Bibi Haldar, isolation and social marginalization are enforced by a dysfunctional, motherless upbringing and an unidentifiable congenital disease that manifests itself to all appearances as hysteria and utterly ruins her chances of marriage, Begum Jan's personal miseries and social seclusion stem from the very fact of marriage, in her case, to a Nawab who evinces as much interest in her as in a piece of furniture, leaving her to cope in loneliness with a perpetual and mysteriously incurable itch under her skin. Both Bibi's illness and Begum Jan's itch are assiduously referred for treatment to countless doctors, hakims and indigenous healers who, despite their studied observations and elaborate prescriptions, fail to diagnose the real nature of the problems. The resolution of the two narratives, however, hinges upon the metaphorical resolution of these baffling maladies via routes of desire, a resolution veritably accomplished through an interaction of the desires of the protagonist, the narrator and the reader.

It is significant, at this point, to turn attention towards the specific narrative voices that Lahiri and Chughtai carefully employ to put forward their stories. While the plot of 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' unfolds itself through the collective voice of the female community in Bibi's neighbourhood - consisting of busy wives and mothers plying their cares in a workaday world (a narrative technique inspired by Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily),* Chughtai's 'The Quilt'

narrates itself through a female adult who re-visits her experience in the story from the point of view of her nine-year old self. In each case the narrators, via their apprehension of the protagonists' desires and their self-conscious use of language, perform the vital role of upholding the principle of desire that operates in the world of these stories. For instance, it is the community women in Lahiri's story rather than Bibi's immediate family who are the first to arrive at the realization that "Bibi wanted a man" (160). It is they who encourage her in her matrimonial hopes and urge her to discard her 'otherness' through increased social interaction and altered modes of dress and speech, help her to replenish her wardrobe, to get acquainted with the current fashion and to make small talk with men whom she might come across her way. When after one of Bibi's usual fits, the local doctor in exasperation makes the ultimate pronouncement that a marriage would cure her, it is these women who being medically confronted with Bibi's desires, begin for the first time to register her considerable qualifications for fulfilling them:

> Apparently some activity was what the poor girl needed all along. For the first time we imagined the contours below her housecoat, and attempted to appraise the pleasures she could offer a man. For the first time we noted the clarity of her complexion, the length and languor of her eyelashes, the undeniably elegant armature of her

> hands. "They say it's the only hope. A case of overexcitement. They say" – and here we paused, blushing – "relations will calm her blood. (Lahiri 162)

It is through this communal grapevine of domestic female voices that the news of both Bibi's desires and her high eligibility to deserve fulfillment spreads through the local community. It is these women who compel her cousin and his wife to advertise in the papers in order to find her a matrimonial match and when they fail to respond favourably, the women make an attempt to avenge Bibi's neglect by buying their requirements elsewhere, thereby running the cousin out of his cosmetics business. These women again, are the ones to discover Bibi's mysterious pregnancy, help her during her confinement and assist in the delivery of her child and when the time comes, it is through them that Bibi acquires her access to financial independence and a secure niche in the mainstream life of her neighbourhood. It is worth noting that though curious to know about the father of Bibi's child, the narrative voice in the story withholds all moral judgement on Bibi's actions. Gossips are sometimes carried on in private concerning the probable father of Bibi's son but by laying stress ultimately on the miraculously transformative nature of Bibi's childbirth and motherhood, the narrative unambiguously affirms the potency of desire.

The narrator in Chughtai's 'Lihaf' is, unlike the intimate communal narrative voice of Lahiri's story, an outsider to the actual world of Begum Jan. Entrusted for a week by her mother to the care of Begum Jan with whom the mother happens to share an informal sisterly bond, the chief reason for the narrator's presence in this household is offered by the fact that there are no children here for her to quarrel with. Enamoured of the now forty-year old Begum as many young girls often are of mother-like figures, the narrative, through the eyes of the nine-year old narrator, presents a deconstructive reading of Begum Jan's life that helps to suggestively uncover the forces of desire that are liberated and suppressed in the Begum's world. The story begins with the adult narrator confessing a sense of terror at witnessing the shadow of a quilt cast on the wall and this confession makes way for the disclosure of an experience that has marked her consciousness for ever – the tale of the Begum's *lihaaf*. The story centers upon the unclarified relationship between Begum Jan and her maid Rabbu and the complex circumstances that perpetrate their companionship. The narrative furnishes us with clear details of the protagonist's loveless marriage to a Nawab well-famed for his piety – a reputation that hardly takes into account his mysterious hobby of lodging and entertaining on his wealthy premises, handsome young male students whose expenses he is only too happy to bear. By contrasting

Begum Jan's early deprivation as a neglected newly-wed bride pining in vain for her husband's attention with her later self-sufficiency as relaxed and confident mistress of the household, the narrative points to the transformation that the pursuit of fertile routes of desire is capable of bringing about.

The young narrator, since the very beginning of her visit to the Begum's household, seems to register a clear impression of the Begum's immense physical attractiveness, her glowing beauty and well-cultivated grace. All the same, she is piqued by the constant kneading, itching, rubbing and pressing of the various parts of her body that the Begum constantly assigns Rabbu to do. At night, she is bewildered by the sounds that come from underneath the quilt on the bed that Begum Jan shares with Rabbu and is frightened by the gigantic and continuously shifting elephant-like shadows that the *lihaf* throws upon the wall. However, her real knowledge of the Begum's desires is acquired only when Rabbu leaves for a day to visit her son and the narrator is surprised to find the imperturbable Begum distraught and almost beside herself with a strange anxiety at Rabbu's absence. Attempting to fill in Rabbu's gap, she offers to stroke the Begum's back in order to pacify her strange itch and make her feel better, but the Begum, she realizes, urges towards some strange fulfillment which the narrator is incapable of offering. The climax in the story is accomplished one night when the quilt's shadow develops

more unreasonably fantastic shapes and the narrator, unable to withhold her curiosity musters enough courage to switch on the light. Her sudden action causes the quilt to subside immediately but the gap created in the process enables the narrator to witness something that continues to haunt her experience and becomes in its essential unnameabilty, a rites-of-passage that enables her own transition from innocence to maturity.

It is significant to note that the essential nature of the desire experienced by the protagonists in both the stories is the same. Both demand, according to the culturally-scripted conventions of womanhood and the opportunities available to women in their time, a normal, simple and uncomplicated marital life. However, their desires, in both cases remain tragically unfulfilled. While for the hysterical and characteristically unfeminine Bibi Haldar the prospect of marriage is itself rendered an impossibility, for the newly-wed young Begum hopes of marital bliss are permanently foiled by her husband's own perverted desires. In accordance with the cultural injunctions of patriarchy then which confer desirability not on the natural woman but on an artificially cultivated set of stereotypically feminine gestures and practices and further, allow the male unquestionable prerogatives within the marital bond, both protagonists are doomed to colourless lives of deprivation and unfulfillment. However, by allowing these women to follow their

own inner compulsions of love and to find emancipation and empowerment in the pathways of desire, both the narratives enable their protagonists to resist objectification and take charge of themselves as agentive subjects.

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The Study of Narrative 'Mood' in Garcia Marquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975)

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Abstract: Point of view has been a rigorous issue in the study and analysis of literature since the times of Plato and Aristotle. The phrase 'point of view' was mostly used keeping in view Jamesian meaning of it as discussed in his prefaces later compiled as *The Art of the Novel* (1934). During these days, 'point of view' studies have broadened taking impetus from the structuralist narratological redefining of its paradigms. Genette's book *Narrative Discourse*: *An Essay in the Method* is considered as the culmination of structuralist narrative theory. In this book he redefines 'point of view' and terms it as focalization. He studies it under the heading of 'perspective' and further comments that traditional studies on the subject were confusing as they did not differentiate between 'who speaks?' and 'who sees?'. Gabriel Garcia Marquez disrupts almost all the notions associated

with the 'point of view'. His novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* has been studied unraveling its problematics of 'point of view' which facilitates a far better understanding of its text as one of the fundamental objective of narratology. The novel is pure thought form – nonverbal, unreported and unheard. Its text is a jigsaw of inconspicuous shifts throwing into doubt the point of view, questioning and demanding it to be redefined.

Key Words: Point of view, Focalization, Perspective, Narratology, Structuralism.

In the study of literature, 'point of view' deals with the position from which a narrative is told. In the western literary world, the narratological studies have their roots in works of Plato and Aristotle. But it is only after the advent of structuralism that narratology has gained precedence and has emerged as an independent object of inquiry. Plato's definition of 'diegesis' (Herman 19) has in it the reference to voice i.e., the voice of the author and that of the character. This indirectly refers to whether the narrator is inside or outside the story which has its bearings on the point of view of the story. The concept of 'voice' is also one of the fundamental features studied in

structuralist narratology. During the days of New Criticism the critical field remained centered on the terms like 'free indirect style', 'interior monologue', 'camera eye' narrative or 'stream of consciousness' narrative and the study of point of view remained untouched. Later on Henry James, for the first time, formally talked about 'Point of view' making it a major concern for the writers of fiction and literary theory in 20th century. Henry James wrote about it in a series of prefaces to his novels which were later compiled as *The Art of the Novel* (1934). According to Susana Onega in the essay "Narrative theory before 1950" studies that James distinguished between voice and point of view. James states that the novelist must not tell rather show the story to the readers. Prioritizing the 'third person narrative', as it depicted experiential and psychological reality of a character, he highlighted its being 'intrusive' and more 'dramatic'. He was against the narrator stepping in the story to make his comments compromising the transparence of the story. Showing through the third person narration is psychologically immediate which he calls narration through 'centers of consciousness', 'vessels of sensibility' or 'reflectors', and which Genette studies as 'focalization'. On the footsteps of Henry James, Percy Lubbock has also elaborated on it in *The Craft of Fiction* (1921) calling point of view

the "relation in which the narrator stands to the story" (251). During 1970s, point of view retained central position in literary theory taking its fire from Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961).

During the hey days of structuralism Genette in his, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in the Method,* introduced the concept of 'focalization' which was traditionally called 'point of view'. He studied it under the heading of 'Mood' *(161)* which is modeled on its two aspects 'distance' and 'perspective'. Genette made a clear distinction between the position of the narrator (the point from which the story is told) and the position from which events of the narrative can be viewed i.e., differentiated between 'focalization' and 'narration' (189). Focalization studied 'who is the character, whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?' and narration analyzed 'the other question, 'who is the narrator?" (186). Genette further simplified that the eyes through which we see the narrative is perspective which, he said, is the research area of 'mood'. On the other hand 'who speaks?' is voice (186). It studies how narrator is implicated in the narrative. Genette, therefore, introduced the term 'focalization' for the analyses of narrative perspective. Therefore, a single text may contain several points of view or kinds of focalization at different moments in the narrative.

In presenting a narrative to readers, an author may use one or more of the three points of view: first, second, and third person. Genette is credited for introducing the major difference between narration and focalization. In this regard, Genette has also maintained that it is only in the first person narrative related through present-tense interior monologue where the distinction between narration and focalization disappears (194). On the basis of the above definition of perspective he has identified three types of narrative. The three types are 'non-focalized narrative', 'internal focalization', 'zero focalization'. 'Non-focalized' narrative or narrative with 'zero focalization' (189) is usually found in classical narratives where the omniscient narrator, who knows more than any other character, is employed (ibid). Secondly, in 'internal focalization', the vision of the narrator is equal to that of the character who speaks (ibid). The narrator tells only what the character knows. Genette has further categorized 'internal focalization' as 'fixed', 'variable' or 'multiple' (189, 190). The narrative where everything is narrated through the eyes of a single character is said to have 'fixed internal focalization' (189). If the character through which action is narrated or in other words if the focal character changes through the course of the novel, then it is 'variable internal focalization' (ibid). In such focalization different perspectives are employed

for different situations and events. Genette further introduces the concept of 'restriction', a key word used to make the reader realize focalization. With respect to restriction Genette calls 'internal variable focalization' "omniscience with partial restrictions of field" (194). Moreover 'restriction' is the key term used to make the reader realize focalization, and to distinguish 'variable focalization' and 'non-focalization' (192). Further, 'focalization' is also defined as a restriction imposed on the information provided by a narrator about his characters. The narratives with 'multiple internal focalization' narrate the same event several times through the eyes of different characters (190). Lastly, the third type of focalization is 'external focalization' (ibid) where the narrator does not know much about the characters. His knowledge remains limited (189) and follows the actions of the characters but does not know their thoughts and feelings (ibid). The diminishing degree of reader's access to the psychology of the characters defines Genette's above three fold typology of focalization. *T*he apprehension of any narrative depends on its 'mood' having two modalities i.e., 'distance' and 'perspective'. The exact precision of the readers 'view' of a story depends on the distance between the story and the reader, whereas the breadth of the reader's view depends on reader's position with respect to

whatever partial obstruction is more or less blocking the view (162). The 'narrative representation' or 'narrative information' may have 'more or fewer details' represented in more or less direct way and can thus adopting a greater or lesser distance from what it tells (ibid). The narratives usually regulate information 'according to the capacities of knowledge of one or another participant in the story (a character or group of characters), with the narrative adopting or seeming to adopt one or another perspective – participant's "vision" or "point of view" (ibid).

Story

The novel tells the story of an unnamed General, a bastard. He is born with a huge, deformed feet and an enlarged testicle which whistled a tune of pain to him every moment of his impossibly long life. He is also gifted with oracular insight and can see through traitorous cohorts well in time and act accordingly. He is an eternal dictator who can predict future, read the minds, and direct the course of planets. He is anywhere between 107 and 232 years old, sires 5,000 children. His influence is so indelible that his cows are born with his hereditary presidential brand. He always wins all the lotteries by wrong means. To cover up which he imprisons 2,000 children, isolates them and finally drowns them at sea behaving as if they never existed. He is kept in power by gringos (Americans) who demand

undue favours from him. He dies at the impossible age of somewhere between 107 and 232 years. His death has already been predicted and known to him.

MOOD: Perspective

The narrative of *TAP* is dense and rich in information and there are no declarative verbs and quotation marks in the narration of the story which raise the mimetic effect of the narrative to its extreme. A closer look into the narrative 'mood' of the novel reveals that there is also no narrator and the task of telling of the story i.e., the task of narrating is taken up by the 'immediate speech' itself. In other words it is a narrative which is neither told by nor addressed to anyone. It is merely thought and imagined. The novel is told through a series of 'mental hodgepodge' (Genette 180) making it through study of popular as well as individual memory in its entirety.

The 'mood' of the novel is 'immediate speech'. It was traditionally called 'streams of consciousness' or interior monologue. Mainly, the novel represents the consciousness of the main narrator i.e., the General. He is the omniscient narrator, the author of a country. Other consciousnesses are secondary, derivative, or non-existent. "Devoted to the messianic pleasure of thinking for us . . . he was the only one who knew the true dimensions of our fate," Garcia Marquez writes (qtd. in Krauze). And "in the end, we could no longer imagine what we would be without

him." "He alone was the nation" (qtd. in Krauze) and also the novel. In the use of 'immediate speech' the narration and focalization become one. Memory takes on the task of telling and focalizing itself. But seemingly, the novel begins with external focalization as follows:

Over the weekend the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens on the balcony windows and the flapping of their wings stirred up the stagnant time inside, and at dawn on Monday the city awoke out of its lethargy of centuries with the warm, soft breeze of a great man dead and rotting grandeur (*TAP* 7)

But subsequently, focalization changes and becomes internal in the next sentence as the narrator along with others discovers a rotting corpse of the General. He becomes narrator-discoverer by saying: "Only then did we dare go in without attacking the crumbling walls of reinforced stone" (*TAP* 7). After, the description of General's surroundings the narrative shifts to represent the story of the General's past through shifting focalization and perspectives of several different characters including the general himself. The first description of the General's body, an image that recurs throughout the novel is as follows:

...and there we saw him, in his denim uniform without insignia, boots, the gold spur on his left heel, older than all old men and animals on land or sea, and he was

stretched out on the floor, face down, his right arm bent under his head as a pillow, as he had slept night after night every night of his ever so long life of a solitary despot. (*TAP*, 7)

According to Harold Bloom this opening of the focus "may be identified as the 'aperture' in the narrative – an opening of the original situation into a broader story" an original situation being the death scene itself (Bloom 151). The remaining sections follow the similar line of telling with slight variations as there are thirty one sentences in the first section, twenty four in the second, nineteen in the third, eighteen in the fourth, fifteen in the fifth, and just one sentence in the sixth section. The progressively decreasing number of sentences and therefore pauses between them signify an increasing level of less of freedom and more of suffocation and suppression of the people under the dictatorship. The death of his double, Patricio Aragones, offers him an opportunity to see himself alive and dead at the same time. Public remains in dilemma about the authenticity of his death. The general consciousness is an embodiment of complete fear psychosis that whether the dictator is dead or not. Even after seeing his dead body they could not confirm his death as they had not ever seen him and truth, because there is always hidden truth behind every truth as it was believed that he had died for the second time. He was also believed to be immortal, supernatural, and older than all the

animals on land and see. Therefore, the external focalization is followed by internal focalization which is in turn followed by wide range of ever shifting perspective and voices as the narratives opens up panoramically. The first person plural 'we' perspective is observed that it is merely a construct reflecting the consecutive dictatorial regimes of Colombia. Moreover, it is popular memory that the text of the novel presents. At the same time, general mood of the novel that is 'immediate speech', is the reflection of the General's desires, wishes, whims and fancies. The study of the consciousness renders explicit the voices and the perspectives of the multitude: that of the General, his subjects, soldiers, slaves, his lovers, prostitutes friends etc. The image of the General occupies the centre stage, the core of the narrative – the image as he had imagined to be in the eyes of the public.

It seems that his supposed death has perpetuated numerous perspectives and voices which again refer to the self of the General, the dictator. Therefore, all the perspectives and voices refer back to the General and he sees his own self reflected in the consciousness and psyche of the public. He is, therefore, everywhere, in every mind, in nervy voice etc. He also decides who are his enemies and friends and rewards them accordingly. His authority is beyond questioning and doubt. He could trace out his rivals and enemies from huge public

gatherings and would execute them as well. He had supernatural powers which could cure those who are diseased, crippled and could correct the wrongs done by God. The following extract also shows his Godly powers:

…power was still not the shoreless bog of the fullness of his autumn but a feverish torrent that we saw gush out of its spring before our very eyes so that all he had to do was point at trees for them to bear fruit and at animals for them to grow and at men for them to prosper … (*TAP* 87)

As this passage suggests in both its style and content, according to the "exterior" and distanced view, that the General is a God-like figure.

Once the first section has opened beyond the generalized view, an omniscient narrator communicates the General's God-like understanding of his capacity to decide "destiny". When he justifies the assassination of officials who betray him, he does so with a God-like expression of being their creator.

The General's consciousness gives identity to the consciousness to all those who are there in his nation. The 'collective consciousness' seems determined by him as it does not contain anything beyond the consciousness of the patriarch. The two are reflective of each other, though 'we consciousness' creates space for independent voices and perspectives in symbolic manner. The novel is compendium of several monologues ranging from that of the public represented

through the use of pronouns 'we', 'he', 'she', 'I', 'me' , 'mine' 'myself', 'they', 'sir' etc. which at time refers to the one and all of them.

Occasionally, the mood of the narrative also shifts to third person omniscient narration i.e., 'free indirect style' which is another form of interior monologue. Here also focalization and narration become consciousness centric which takes on the task of the two simultaneously. The 'we narrator' does not get an inside view of General's mind as partly it stands for how the dictator was viewed outside of himself and his family. In his own view and in the view of his mother he is a normal human being, subject to the same problem of daily existence, he is weak, crippled, victim of his power and image. But on the other hand, he is omnipresent, omnipotent, corrector of the wrongs of God, enjoys supernatural powers, changes and decides the fate of the nation and its people.

Garcia Marquez has made the novel a puzzle of pronouns, consistently changing narrative points of view in mid-sentence. For instance: "… he saw more infamy and more ingratitude than had ever been seen and wept over by my eyes since the day I was born, mother. . " (*TAP* 33). The 'he', the 'my', and the 'I' all refer to the inside of the general's mind and often times the general himself. He creates characters and makes them talk about himself, in a sense, he speaks to himself. The narration is largely within the General's mind, but Garcia Marquez

also enters other minds with brief intensity, often speaks in the collective voice of all people in the blasted nation; and so, through relentless immersion of the reader in these exquisitely detailed perspectives, he illuminates the monster internally and externally and delivers him whole.

According to the author, the novel is "poem on the solitude of power" (Stone) and a flowing tract on the life of an eternal dictator. The temporality which the people live in as well as their perspectives are designed and imposed by the General:

he gave the order take that door away from here and put it over there for me, they took it away, put it back again for me, they put it back, the clock in the tower should not strike twelve at twelve o'clock but two times so that life would seem longer, the order was carried out, without an instant of hesitation, without a pause, except for the mortal hour of siesta time when he would take refuge in the shade of the concubines, he would choose one by assault, without undressing her or getting undressed himself, without closing the door, and all through the house one could hear his heartless panting of an urgent spouse (*TAP* 14).

… one who had put the hurricane dragon to flight, someone took him by the arm to lead him out into the balcony because now more than ever the people needed his words of comfort, and before he could get away he heard the unanimous clamor

which got into his innards like the wind of an evil sea, long live the stud, because ever since the first days of his regime he understood the unprotected state of being seen by a whole city at the same time, his words turned to stone, he understood in a flash of mortal lucidity that he did not have the courage or would he ever have it to appear at full length before the charm of the crowd, so on the main square we only caught sight of the usual ephemeral image, the glimpse of which an ungraspable old man dressed in denim who imparted a silent blessing from the presidential balcony and immediately disappeared… (*TAP* 98)

The story is basically about the General and the narrative exists inside his mind without being articulated or told. It is perceived that, in the context of interior monologue, there is no one who speaks rather the reader confronts the one/ones who perceives/perceive. The speech becomes an object of his perception thought and imagination. Right from the beginning of the novel till it's very end we have the narrative in the form of what is traditionally called 'interior monologue' and which Genette prefers to call immediate speech because "...the main point ...is not that the speech should be internal, but that it should be emancipated right away ("from the first lines") from all narrative patronage, that it should from the word go take the front of the stage" (Genette, 174). Genette further clarifies "it is sufficient,

whatever the monologue's extent may be, for it to happen on its own, without the intermediary of a narrating instance which is reduced to silence and whose function the monologue takes on" (174). The speech, the characters and the events become thoughts. It is thoughts rather than speeches that are taken up by characters as thought and imagined by the general.

Since the 'mood' of the novel is 'immediate speech' and the presence of several narrators indicates that there is no narrator or everybody is a narrator. It is as it does not matter whether there are narrators or not and if there are they are accessory to the narrative itself. Within the monologue there are clear shifts in point of view.

The dictator is described as "being all alone", "deaf as a mirror", a dubious lover, and a fleeting presence for "the people". The texture of the novel allows the reader to see two strands of the repressive tapestry woven by the dictatorship: one is ruthless violence exercised against the opposition, replete with shifts in motives for striking hastily at enemies; the other is the thread that carves the dictator's image for "the people" to behold.

Therefore, at a level, the narrative becomes a faithful representation of popular memory and psyche. There are certain tricks that shape the dictator for the

outside world. For instance, suspicion of repeated doublings conceal his own identity, his speeches, composed of clichés, save him from the travails of originality in language, his love – sickness for a female character who spurns him with her final disappearance grants him a sense of humanity, in so far as she represents the beauty of the poor and the kind of invulnerability often associated with demagogy.

And the narrative point-of-view remains in constant flux, the style which is appropriate to the chaos and decay of the General's mind and of his world. Just as people do not think in perfect sentences and paragraphs but in trains of thought that conclude and springboard into related trains of thought so, too, do the sentences of the novel flow. They resemble a flow of consciousness.

The Autumn of the Patriarch is a psychological portrait. Or, more accurately, it is a psychological expose. It is the expose of a fascist dictator. At first the general is loved by his people who believe he has the power of healing. Lepers sleep beneath rosebushes outside the palace hoping to be cured by his touch. Crowds spontaneously cheer as he passes. This spontaneity soon is being prearranged, however, by state officials who wish the General to believe the people still revere him despite his increasing brutality. He becomes a psychological

specimen, X-rayed and viewed from all sides. On the whole, it is a dispassionate view. He is not seen as an evil or a good man. He is just seen.

According to Genette, in 'immediate speech' the distinction between the narration and focalization disappears. Therefore, what remains is pure monologue narrating and focalizing itself exactly in the manner of simultaneous narration. 'We consciousness' also stands for the conscious that is colonized, brutalized and dehumanized since times immemorial. The consciousness has been a timeless witness to the recurrent dictatorships particularly in Colombia and generally in Latin America.

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Born Loser

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When I was thrust into this big bad world, my mother bid me good bye. I was happy floating in the watery security of mother's womb, but then the manic doctor kept screaming at mother: 'Push Isha, push. Push hard, yes. Come on.'

Mother would breathe in deep and try again, but the doctor kept shaking her head impatiently as she thought mother was not doing enough. So she kept up her yelling at her, 'Isha no, don't relax. Push harder. Yes I say harder... harder.'

One of the nurses standing by her side muttered to her colleague, 'The bastard is mother-fixated.'

'I think the doctor should wrap tongs around his neck and lug him out.'

I shuddered with fear. I was mortally afraid of the cold, steely touch as I remembered how in my past incarnation, I had been snuffed out with a shining, shapely dagger. Four goons were eve-teasing a girl and I, in a fit of chivalry, had intervened. I succeeded in saving the girl, but paid with my life. Shifting their focus, they started bashing me. I flailed my arms mindlessly, but they thought it was a fight back and one of them whipped out a Rampuri. While he was turning

the blade inside my stomach to ensure my speedy end, the girl quietly slipped away.

Mercifully, the doctor did not hear the nurse's whispered suggestion and I was spared the forceps.

But bullied and shouted at non-stop by the doctor, mother had gone beyond her physical resources. In one final, hardest push she discarded me into the ocean of florescent light and left for her peaceful abode.

Father was waiting outside the OT. The doctor, accompanied by one of the OT nurses carrying me, came out and clucked, 'Sorry, Mr. Gondal, we could not save the mother.'

'What?'

Father was aghast and forgot to blink. Given an option, father would have any time chosen his wife and I wouldn't have minded either, as I was in any case reluctant to leave my refuge – especially when the world I would step into was going to be Delhi where my past experiences had not been exactly joyful.

Having spoken her line like a bad stage actor with no emotion, the doctor breezed away to attend to her business -- to yell at another woman in labour pains.

When I was about ten years old, one day I told father, 'The doctor bullied mother into exerting too much in the OT (Operation Theatre) and killed her. You know she was weak and anaemic. Mother couldn't stand it. You should have been there in

the OT.'

Father looked at me as if I was a ghost, but said nothing. This was the last intimate conversation I had with father. Hereafter, he discharged all fatherly responsibilities, but remained distant from me.

To cut back to my story, after showing my cranium to father who was still in a state of shock, the nurse primly click-clacked away from him. After about fifteen steps towards the Nursery, she dropped me. It could be because of her over-starched, stiff skirt which made her gait mincing, or it could be intentional, going by the hostility she had displayed at the time of my birth – she was the one who talked about the tongs. She furtively looked around, picked me up and finding herself safe resumed her brisk walk. Fortunately, I was swathed in layers of flannel and suffered no serious damage except that my neck got tilted a wee bit to the right for life because of a minor dislocation in the shoulder. It could have been easily fixed then, but the nurse had maintained an unholy silence.

Years later, several consultations with and treatments by renowned orthopaedists – one of them a controversial Padma Shri who had reportedly pulled strings for the honour – proved futile, though in the process father's wallet looked anorexic like a model.

Years rolled by. I had a lonely childhood, as the small imperfection in my neck rendered me useless for my playmates, who inevitably excluded me when a game

was set up. I did not blame them; in cricket I could not connect the bat with the ball, in football I tended to run askew, at a tangent from the goalpost – like a car out of alignment. So, I found my pleasure in devouring books and in studies. Expectedly, I acquired a vast fund of knowledge and also my exam-grades zoomed. I turned into a stereotypical geek.

In time I went to college and my excellence in studies continued, but it was here that the devastating episode happened and locked me up in my own shell, until twenty years later when I felt the sunshine again. I became the CEO of a renowned Tax Consultant company, with tentacles dug deep and wide in the Sales and Income Tax offices. A lady doctor – a Gynaecologist – who had serious tax problems because of huge unaccounted money – fell for my mental luminosity.

To revert to the episode, I heard a mellifluous voice at my back. 'Excuse me, can you spare a few minutes for me?'

She was not one of those beauties who came to college with straightened hair floating in the breeze, ready to walk the ramp, but she had a full and symmetrical figure, an ebullient lilt in her body movements and an entrancing smile. She had been the protagonist of my several dreams.

I kept a bland face. 'Yes, what's it and how long will it take?' I could guess she had a problem in Stats – but for me almost everyone in Commerce Honours had problems in this paper.

She dished out a smile which played havoc on me, but I kept a dour exterior, nonetheless. 'Not more than ten minutes.'

"Okay."

'Let us go to a vacant tutorial room,' she suggested.

'Actually, Stats has been a pain in the neck,' she moaned, as we settled down on a desk beside each other.

I did not respond.

'The teacher is a dud.'

I still kept quiet, though she was right. The guy would mug up the answer to one question, write it out on the blackboard and leave the class with the admonition, 'Now try out the rest of the questions at home along the lines I have suggested.'

She opened the book at a particular page and said, 'This is a Probability question. It is really tricky.'

I looked at it and gave her the answer without using pen and paper.

'*Wow*! You are a wizard, man!' She looked truly floored.

The next day she again walked up to me in a free period. 'Ashim what about a Pepsi?'

'Umm, actually....'

'O.K. some other time then,' Phalak said and walked away. I spanked myself mentally. 'Idiot!' But thanks to the Stats teacher, after a fortnight, she again came

to me.

'Stats problem?' I asked.

'Yes,' she said coyly.

Without any further ado, we went into a tutorial room. This time I solved three sums for her and we consumed almost the whole of the free period – twenty minutes doing the sums and thirty chatting.

'What about my tuition fee?'

'What's it?'

I looked at her mutely and her face turned a tomato.

'A Pepsi... at least'

She giggled and in the canteen we gulped our cold drink, as the next class was about to start, though I would have liked it to be like the television ad: two straws in one bottle and each smiling into the other's eyes and slowly sucking in the liquid through the straws.

We met every now and then for a Pepsi or a snack in the canteen. She had begun to straddle my thoughts most of the time. Now when we met, I generously sprinkled our conversation with romantic innuendoes. Sometimes, she feigned ignorance – I knew she was not that innocent -- and at others just smiled. I so much wished to be with her at Barista in CP (Connaught Place) for a cup of coffee, talking trivia or better still in a theatre watching a movie, holding her hand.

One day she looked upset and came to me. 'I think I'm going to fail in Stats.'

'Why?'

'I can't solve more than half the sums in the Stats book,' she groaned and added, 'But do you think it would be asking for too much?'

'What?'

'You give me half an hour twice a week regularly. I know you've to do your own studies, too?'

This was a providential gift. 'No, no. I can manage. We'll meet as many times as you want.'

'*Ouww*, you are a peach,' she cooed and lightly touched my cheek right in the corridor.

#

Wednesdays and Fridays were fun and work days. We met in one of the vacant tutorial rooms. I solved two to three sums for her and we narrated jokes to each other, and laughed a lot. What surprised me was that some of her jokes were non-vegetarian, the likes of which are told among males. Sometimes, while convulsing with laughter, she would fall all over me, making my mind loopy. She was enjoying my companionship as much as I was hers. We had fallen for each other, it was clear. Still, I decided to feel the ground and cautiously advance one step at a time.

To begin with, I started touching her on the pretext of patting her when she solved a sum under my guidance. And then over the next couple of meetings I sat very close to her, several parts of our bodies touching, most importantly our thighs. She never moved away. On the contrary, I felt a slight pressure from her, sometimes. Yes, we were in it together. The erotic warmth and feminine softness caused sexual upheaval in me.

One day I decided to kiss her hand and declare my feelings for her. I explained some of the trickiest general concepts in Stats and she was full of happy chatter. As I was about to execute my plan, my courage gave way. I just held her hand in mine and we went on making fun of the eccentricities of some of our quirky teachers. She did not withdraw her hand and that was also a sure sign.

I abruptly realised, the book was about to finish. So, I decided to fast track my script and fulfil my long cherished desire to embrace her and plant a fulsome kiss on her cherry lips. I waited with baited breath for our meeting next Friday.

I sat in a tutorial room and sent her an SMS, 'Waitin 4 ages!' Pat came the reply 'Sorry, wid u shortly.' True to her word, in five minutes the door opened and my heartbeat went berserk. I stood up with alacrity, looked at her amorously and was about to enfold her, when a handsome hunk followed her into the room.

'You know him, Aashim? He is Phintu, I mean it is his pet name. He is in the other section. He also has some problems in Stats. Would you mind if he sat with me?'

'Oh, no. Not at all,' I gushed visibly. We shook hands and the hunk settled in a chair in front of us, his legs spread apart, his smirk and crotch on display. I explained two sums to which the hunk paid no attention as he was busy punching SMSs.

I came home and planning myself in front of the full sized mirror in mother's dressing table, examined myself from head to toe: a mole- like mouth, pallid cheeks, a thin line for lips and the hallmark tilt.

The room resounded with a tearful laughter.