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Sledging: The *Art-iculation* of Aggression

Amal Sebastian

As cricket evolves into a global sport, it has become increasingly associated with national identity. In the post-imperial age, it is inevitable that race and ethnicity would become building blocks in any cultural redevelopment of the newly independent states. Imperialism has been justified on the grounds of civilizing underdeveloped cultures, which meant an acceptance of the crudest versions of Social Darwinism and the classification of groups of people according to colour of skin. The term social Darwinism, which came into fashion after 1940 (Hodgson 428-63), has been used mainly to decry doctrines that justify some form of individual, social, or racial superiority through evolutionary principles with which Darwin's theory is identified, such as the struggle for existence and natural selection. Early international cricketing contests featured England, Australia, the United States, Canada and later South Africa. Despite genuine enthusiasm among local populations, the West Indies and India were only granted Test status once it proved beneficial to white authorities. The South African national cricket team's suspension from the game in connection with the Basil D'Oliveira issue, who left the country for England due to his banishment from the South African game as a "coloured" man, is also a picture of the white domination in cricket. According to Philani Nongogo, "the story of South Africa in the late 1980s and post-1992 is crucial. Even now, critics, especially old SACOS members point to the continued dominance of white in sports" (89).

Since many nations including the whites and the blacks, the first-world and the third-world nations started playing cricket, sledging has also become a part and parcel of the game. And thus the racial prejudices and conceptions too formed the content of aggressive expression called "sledging". Most sledging seems not harmful but some terms are deemed racist. Therefore, some forms of sledging are not acceptable while others are. Then, let the ICC publish the rule book of sledging describing what sledging is racist and what is not, with illustrated examples, a dictionary etc. "Sledging for Dummies" or "Sledging - a User's Manual" are two possible titles for the tome. For instance - it is apparently right for Glenn McGrath to ask a West Indies batsman what a certain part of Brian Lara's anatomy feels like because it is a non-racial macho Aussie thing to say – basically gutter level personal abuse is right in the gentleman's game, but not anything to do with race.

Cricket used to be considered a gentleman's game. But some controversies show that there are some things that need analyzing. In this chapter five major sledging incidents that have generated racial sentiments and have destroyed the spirit of the game are analyzed.

The first and the foremost in this list is the 'monkey-gate' scandal that included Australia's Andrew Symonds and India's Harbhajan Singh. The New Year's Test in Sydney on January 2 to 6, 2008 has become something of a cricketing tradition. Eight years ago, though the tradition turned decidedly sour, sparking off one of cricket's biggest controversies, almost on par with Bodyline. Matches involving Australia and India have had a heightened element of rancor ever since Sourav Ganguly famously made Steve Waugh wait for the toss. But when India played Australia in Sydney on the traditional New Year's Test it exploded. It all began with some questionable umpiring decisions, and then blew up into a racial comment by Harbhajan Singh against Andrew Symonds, an Australian tribe, which negatively affected the relations between the two countries. Harbhajan said, 'he gave back to the Australians', including Lehman and legendary fast bowler Glenn McGrath, with whom he had frequent spats. On the infamous spat with Andrew Symonds, Harbhajan said: "I didn't say monkey. It was their allegation. He did not listen at all. Anyway, he did not know Hindi and I don't know English" (<http://www.indiatvnews.com>).



(Figure 1: monkey-gate controversy between Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds in the new year test from January 2 to 6, 2008.) (<http://cdn.newsapi.com.au>.) 18-02-2017

This infamous episode in the history of cricket has added the intensity of racial flavours in international cricket. Symonds claimed that Harbhajan called him a 'big monkey'; television footage of the exchange shows the Australian holding two fingers up to Harbhajan, indicating that this was the second time he had been abused. Symonds was upset, and rightly so. In the

hearing that followed, Symonds, Hayden and Michael Clarke all said they heard Harbhajan Singh calling Andrew Symonds a monkey, but the umpires did not.

Nothing was picked up through the stump microphones, and Harbhajan claimed he had actually used the expression “teri ma kichut”, a Hindi curse that translates as “motherf—”. Both Harbhajan and Tendulkar claimed that, this had been misheard by Symonds and the Australians. There was a huge amount of heat in the situation by the time ICC referee Mike Procter handed Harbhajan Singh a three-match suspension for racial abuse.

Along with the on-field sledging, there are instances that cricketers being racially abused by the spectators in the gallery. Such incidents clearly indicate that cricket has got its dimensions beyond the fence and has got much to do with the different races across the world. The best example is that of South African spinner Imran Tahir became victim of racially insensitive remarks in Canberra, Australia. Imran Tahir, a Pakistan-born leggie, who is a Muslim, did well to restrain his anger after being goaded about stroking his beard by a small group of fans at Manuka Oval while fielding on the third-man boundary. Moments later, he heard another fan from the same group yell out: “Why don’t you go stroke your pet camel?” An irate Tahir turned and glared at the direction of the fan but did not file an official complaint with the umpires.



Figure 2: verbal abuse by fans on Imran Tahir (<http://www.espnricinfo.com>). 18-02-2017

Except, the fans and the cricketers many commentators and journalists have released racially insensitive comments. Back in 2013, when The Daily Show’s then reporter John Oliver came to Australia he remarked it was a “comfortably racist” place. No one seemed to

disagree with his assessment. It seems Indians are comfortable with their casual racism. So much so that some of the biggest names in our media are happy to prove the point. This time it was Karl Stefanovic who is a cricket journalist, when speaking to some Indian cricket fans on Channel 9's 'The Today' Show asked, "Who's going to be manning 7-Elevens today?" We could, of course, choose to laugh off Karl's comments. After all he's known for his on-air gaffes, and this was just another example of one of his misjudged comments. Earlier on in the show for example Karl called Kiwi cricket fans the "dole bludger army" – leaving many New Zealanders unamused. (<http://www.news.com.au>)

However, laughing off this comment is not going to change a thing. By laughing off the comment this sort of casual racism will prevail in the field of cricket. Here, not only the acceptance of the "othering" of people from different cultures and different races occur, but also it is taken for granted when celebrities openly verbalize such a view on our mainstream media.

Such comments which arouse hatred should not be tolerated. The damage that racism causes to community relations and mental health is well known. Beyond Blue's recent anti-discrimination ad campaign did much to highlight the negative impact of casual racism. No one needs to be told that racism of any kind – be it casual or not - is wrong. Even the most prejudiced must know deep down that it is wrong. It is quite likely that Karl Stefanovic is regretting what he must have said in haste – not that he is going to admit he made a mistake.



Figure 3: Karl Stefanovic making racial comments on television (<http://cdn.newsapi.com.au>). 18-02-2017

As far as he and other cricket fans are concerned his comment was just a bit of harmless sledging. Sledging is much a part of cricket as bowling and batting itself. But at what point

does sledging fall into racism? At the end of the day, there are still some who are going to claim Karl's comments were not racist - cannot we all just have a laugh? But if the laugh is at the expense of a minority group, and was intended to remind Indian Australians that their place is behind the till of a shop, then no, it's not something that justifies a laugh - a cheap laugh at that. And yes, it was most definitely racist.

It was the Australians who had more affection towards sledging. Sledging is the mind game through which you win over your opponents. Australians have mastered this trick and used it quite often when game was slipping away from their hands. Some of their players thrived on sledging like Merv Hughes and Steve Waugh. It did get ugly most of the times but the truth is that they enjoy playing and sledging equally on the field. For them, cricket is not the same without a bit of sledging. The one man who was always there with many sledging occasions especially when he under-performed. It was Glenn McGrath and his name was written with many infamous banterers.

One such verbal abuse that had racial connotations was with Ramnaresh Sarwan, a West Indian. It was not meant to unfold that way. McGrath had not played the first two Tests of the series at Bourda and Queen's Park Oval, both of which Australia had won comfortably in the absence of Shane Warne (who was serving a ban) and McGrath himself. He had arrived only at the request of the plea of his wife Jane, who was suffering from secondary cancer. "I just wanted life to carry on as normal," Jane had told her husband. While Chanderpaul and Sarwan was batting at their best, the Australians became uneasy and when McGrath came in to ball Sarwan played the ball to square-leg and ran for a single. When he ran past McGrath the bowler, to the surprise of many, asked: "What does Brian Lara's c*ck taste like?" But he did ask Sarwan the question; and Sarwan had responded: "I don't know. Ask your wife." (<http://www.cricketcountry.com>).



Figure 4: verbal spat between Sarwan and McGrath (<http://i2.mirror.co.uk>). 18-02-2017

Daniel Lane later wrote in *Line and Strength: the Complete Story*:

Under normal circumstances, McGrath would have accepted that he had asked for it. But with Jane at home sick, all he heard was an insult — and he saw red. While a little voice pleaded for him to ignore it, something just wouldn't allow him to let the slur go unchallenged" (<http://www.cricketcountry.com>).

McGrath exploded. Far away, somewhere near the fence, Jason Gillespie saw it unfold: "Oh geeze, Sarwan's cracked open a hornet's nest here," was his reaction McGrath's fingers were pointed at Sarwan, and the words that came out of his mouth were not exactly the kind you'd associate with the legend: "If you f**king mention my wife again, I'll f**king rip your f**king throat out."

David Shepherd intervened at this point. Meanwhile, both Hayden and Langer had moved up to McGrath to in support of their teammate. Langer later said: "I didn't hear the first part of the exchange. All I heard was for Glenn to ask his wife something, and that annoyed me, especially after what Glenn and Jane had been through. I blew up; I told him he was out of line — out of order — to bring Jane into it. There is a gentleman's agreement about sledging — you don't make it personal." While Waugh sent both his opening batsman to their respective positions, a bemused Sarwan was left confused, completely unaware of what had happened. He had no idea of Jane's condition. "Sarwan had no idea of Jane's problem and was quite apologetic about it," Langer later said. (<http://www.cricketcountry.com>)

McGrath, too, had realized that Sarwan's response was out of impulse. Once the Test was over they had a long conversation over rum and Coke. "We all knew he wasn't referring to Jane's illness" (<http://www.cricketcountry.com>), Gillespie later admitted. The match went on, as usual.

McGrath later confessed: "It (the memory of the incident) wouldn't go away. The difference in our sizes looked terrible. I spoke to Sarwan and he was really good about it. He told me he wasn't aware Jane was sick and he offered an apology, but I told him it was me who needed to say sorry." This was one that can be called as a sexist sledge.

The verbal abuses between Sarwan and McGrath can be termed as a sexist, rather than a racial sledge. In this incident nothing that is connected to the 'race' is mentioned. On the other hand, a kind of sexual remark is used by both the players and sexism overpowers racism here.

Besides Australia, West Indies too had many racial sledging on their accounts. The cricketers had to take the racism from within and without. The team grimly determined to beat England in 1976 after Tony Greig said he would make them grovel. It had come just after the tour of Australia, where they had been surprised by the hostility of the verbal abuse. The “friendly rivalry” that was revealed in shouts of “You f**k off, you black bastard!” left the team stunned, wrote Richards. In *defence of pace*, he said, “I can and will accuse them of wanting to see this particular race of people, from the West Indies, being put down”(http://phone.espncricinfo.com). When India visited the Caribbean in 1962, the tension between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese was heightened by the political situation at the time. Frank Birbalsingh observed them at Bourda and noted how they managed it at cricket. “One ploy, when faced with Afro-Guyanese gloating over West Indian dominance, was the Indo-Guyanese riposte: “Man, is wha’ yuh talking? When yuh all can sen’ a team from Africa, den yuh can talk.” But it was good-natured enough banter (http://phone.espncricinfo.com). When South Africa toured in 2001, Ntini had already so warmed the hearts of West Indians that spectators pleaded with him as he attacked the West Indies’ batting. “Ntini, don’t forget you’re one ah we,” an Indian man had called out, begging him to showmercy at Queen’s Park Oval.

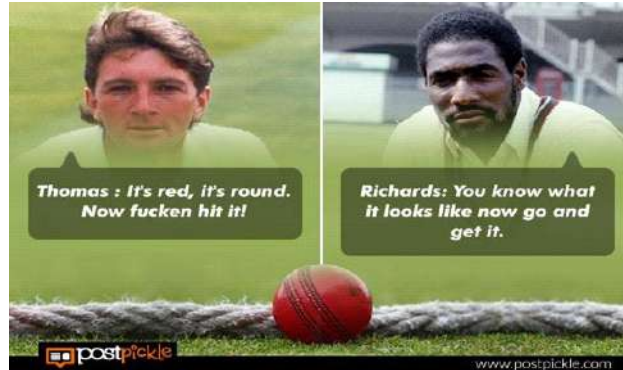


Figure 5: controversy between Thomas and Richards (https://storage.googleapis.com). 18-02-2017

These examples throws light on the racism involved in the expression of aggression called sledging. However In September 2006, the International Cricket Council Chief Executives Committee (CEC) agreed to adopt and implement an amended Anti-Racism Code signaling a new attack on racist behaviour. The amendments are designed to allow ICC members to impose a range of punishments on spectators found guilty of racist abuse, ranging

from ejection from the venue to life bans. While venues could be stripped of international status if management and ICC member countries fail to uphold the code. ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed said: “Cricket is a sport which reflects the world’s diversity with a range of races and religions all involved. That diversity is something the game can be proud of and our anti-racism code is something that emphasizes the commitment of all our members in maintaining and enhancing it” (<http://www.playthegame.org>). The ICC also agreed to a series of anti-racism initiatives including: commissioning an eminent qualified lawyer to draft legislation dealing with racist behaviour at matches; text or telephone hotlines to be installed at venues where fans can report offensive behaviour; appointing players as anti-racism ambassadors and holding ‘diversity days’ where fans are encouraged to embrace the range of religions and cultures among cricketing nations.

The list continues with incidents such as Australian batsmen Darren Lehmann audibly uttering ‘black c. . .’ after his dismissal by Sri Lanka in a limited overs match in Queensland in 2003, racist outburst on international television by former Australian Test batsman Dean Jones in August 2006, Jones was sacked from his job as a television commentator after referring to South African Muslim batsman Hashim Amla as a “terrorist”. Amla is a devout Muslim who wears a beard for religious reasons and has successfully negotiated with the South African team’s main sponsors, SA Breweries, not to wear the Castle Lager logo on his playing and practice gear. All these reinforce the racial overtones in the art called ‘sledging’.

Though all the sporting events are aimed at world peace and security and mutual harmony, cricket has often been victim to the challenge called ‘sledging’. Alan Brogan, a Gaelic footballer reckons: “its part and parcel of it and I think it should be a case of what happens on the field, stays on the field” (<http://www.herald.ie>). There are many incidents of sledging that has crossed the limits and entered the level of having racist and sexist inner tones in it. All the sledging incidents illustrated in this project, are signboards to the racial and sexual connotations that occur in the on field and off field sledging controversies. And thus, it is clear that like the “real” world, sports also face the racial and sexual discriminations and harassments, since sports is a replica of the society.

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Subverting Signs and Sustaining Sensibilities in Popular Advertisements

Ans Maria Xavier

Creative without strategy is called 'art'. Creative with strategy is called advertising.

Jef I. Richards

Advertisement is a semiotic system, where gender is only one among its signifiers. The gender biases of advertisements are always a subject of controversy. Economic globalisation has led to increase the scope of global market through strategic exploitation of the cultural sentiments of the society where the products are sold out. Though, globalisation appears to be an apparatus which helps to subvert the existing norms and values, in the empirical level of observation it is clear that, it always maintained the existing status-quo in the society. This paper gives a detailed account of the sexual politics involved in the texts of advertisements by analysing five selected ads.

There are sundry scholarly dissertations which study the aesthetic and political dimensions of gender portrayal in Indian advertisements. Among them, Mallika Das muses over the accepted and rejected image of womanhood. Mallika Das in her “Gender Role Portrayals in Indian Television Ads” observes that, “television ads present idealized (rather than typical) images of appropriate behaviours and roles for men and women, making television advertising an important factor in developing notions of what appropriate behaviours and roles are for each sex” (*Sex Roles* 208). The role of advertisement in creating, shaping, reinforcing, spreading and maintaining the gender stereotype is inevitable. Most of the advertisements in Indian screen portray woman in conventional status and roles. For instance, take the advertisement of Oriflame, a Sweden-based cosmetics company and consider the way through which it portrays the life of an Indian woman.

The advertisement was telecast in the context of women’s day celebration. This advertisement appears to be more appealing to the traditional Indian family members as it is an exhortation to the “new gen housewives” to how to become an ideal Indian woman. An Indian woman must be good-looking, home-loving, nurturing, attend the needs of her husband and children, and the most important part is that, she must be an expert in feminine jobs such as cooking and sewing. She should be an absolute emotional (not intellectual) companion to her husband. She should adjust herself, as her husband is busy with his own hectic, sophisticated world. She must fit in every role and relationship as a woman –wife, mother, daughter, sister,

and daughter-in-law. She must be perfect and ideal in all sense. Then only the generous patriarchal world will give her the label of superwoman, for being a natural being with “supernatural” ability to deal with house chores. The cliché figure is considered as the ideal woman. The ad sheds light on the hollowness of Indian marriages, hypocrisy of Indian in-laws, who wants their bride with efficient, but never allows her to cross the limit.

Exhibit I: The Oriflame Ad depicts conventional woman in the superwoman cliché.



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

The changing time has always welcomed the changing sensibility of the concept of gender and considered these types of gender presentations as flawed representation of gender equations. The direct representation of old outdated gender ideas and images cannot win the hearts of customers anymore. The new sophisticated norms were indigestible to the old generation of Indians. At this juncture of confusion and chaos, in order to please both groups, the multinational giants began to market their products using advertisements, which have both feminist and misogynist shades. It is the duty of the viewer to identify whether the tone of feminist or misogynist is more clearly echoed in it. The advertisements which appear to respect women, but actually it not only disrespect them, but also devalue and degrade them. They may be observed as misogynist face of veiled with feminist principles. Advertisements juxtapose two opposite, contradictory and paradoxical ideas altogether.

In the words of Mallika Das:

In India in particular, there has been a growing trend towards portraying women as liberated yet traditional, as persons who still bear the responsibility of nurturing and

caring for others – in other words, there is an indigenously developed sense of modernity with corresponding notions of the ‘New Indian Women’. (209)

Though the patriarchy has bestowed women liberty, women should never forget the fact that, they are primarily and essentially a wife, a good house-keeper, who is subordinate to women. For example, take the Airtel ad, which present woman in authorial leadership position, giving orders to men subordinates. The female character in the advertisement is the representative of the urban, educated, middle-class woman who is professionally accomplished. It is revealed that her husband is one among her subordinates. The ad sticks on to the notion that an Indian woman would attain success only when she maintains both office and house simultaneously. The ad symbolizes the Indian popular culture, where the modern feminism comes into contact with traditional values. The woman protagonist acts as an idealistic role model before the public.

Exhibit II: The Airtel Ad portrays the dual role of modern Indian working woman.



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

In their research article, “Annihilating or perpetuating the gender stereotype?” Bharadwaj and Mehta marks in their findings that, though the advertisements appear revolutionary in explicit sense, they re-present the same stereotypical gender images, as it emphasis the role and need of culinary skills of principal female character. In the advertisement, one can sense that the woman protagonist itself is emphasising her role as a wife rather than as a head of a corporate company. Her voice as his boss has lost before her responsibilities as his wife. She may be the boss at the office, but at home man will be the real boss. A wife must always walk a few steps behind her husband. It re-echoes the conservative social structures, which believe in the inferior position of a woman to a man. Through the portrayal of ideal woman in the

advertisement of Airtel mobile network, the company has successfully camouflaged the ideals of male-chauvinism.

The visualization of such attitudes can be seen in the advertisement broadcast by “Bharat Matrimony network”. Though the advertisement seems to be gender-based, it presents an egalitarian vision of social organization. It portrays the clash between men of two different perspectives. The advertisement can be depicted as a duel between tradition and modernity. The father figure in the ad questions the need of her daughter-in-law to work, as his son is employed. The father figure in the advertisement ridicules his daughter-in-law’s demand to work instead of keeping herself as a housewife. It is also important to note the role of the silent and supporting role played by the mother figure. Being a woman, the mother-in-law figure in the advertisement is not ready to voice against the humiliation. Such women who stand by the patriarchal norms are the preachers of conservatism.

The advertisement sheds light on the conventional concept of “dependence syndrome” (Nahal 30) ascribed to female folk. The ad emphasizes on the misconception that, the most important duty in the life of a woman is to take care of her husband. She is deprived of the right to live her life according to her wishes. But it must be noticed that, man has the first and final authority in a woman’s life. The individual autonomy is lacking in the patriarchal social system and political structures. The character Sudha in the advertisement of “Bharat Matrimony” needs to wait for the permission of her husband to locate herself as a working woman. A woman becomes the victim to social and patriarchal norms. As Kate Millet elucidates in her *Sexual Politics* as, “Patriarchy, reformed or unreformed, is patriarchy still: its worst abuses purged or foresworn, it might actually be more stable and secure than before” (85).

Exhibit III: The Hamam Ad #GoSafeOutside campaign.



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

The advertisement of “Hamam Ayurvedic” soap presents the similar stereotypical leanings. The advertisement in Tamil begins with a news headline regarding the abuses and violence that women have to go through in contemporary Indian society. It muses on the tension that an ordinary Indian motherhood goes through, considering the safety and security of her daughter. The advertisement gives importance to the need of self-defence in the life of a girl through its #GoSafeOutside campaign. As being considered as weak and inferior, the society has put forward a number of taboos regarding the freedom enjoyed by women. The objectification of women as mere body and reducing them to physical objects to quench the male lust, has given women over-emphasis on their beauty. Everything in a girl’s life is to please a male, even the concept of her chastity. The ad not only depicts the self-defence of skin against disease-causing germs, but the fight of modern feminist against the gender prejudices of the patriarchy. The advertisement goes back to the old and worn-out myths and regarding the beauty of female skin. It is notable that how the contradicting ideas of delicacy and strength associated in the advertisement to the same person.

Chaman Nahal defines feminism as a mode of existence, where woman is cured from the malady of “dependence syndrome” (30). The true spirit of feminism is to live a life, free from the divine aura of femininity, over-exaggerated by patriarchy. The only place where women are revered is in their motherhood. Take the advertisement by “Anouk” titled “The Calling” in consideration, which is against the age-old myth of women’s masochism, the depiction of a woman who is not ready to give up.

The advertisement deals with problems faced by working women not all in India, but all over the world. The advertisement revolves around a pregnant working woman, Shaheen and her boss, Uma working in a corporate company. After a successful presentation, the two women are headed home in a car. Even though, both are travelling in the same car, they are sitting with a distance between them, it symbolically represents their polarity in their attitudes. The boss figure in the advertisement named Uma ridicules Shaheen’s pregnancy to a mere bump on her body. Pregnancy is not considered as a phase in motherhood, but a disability.

Exhibit IV: The Anouk Ad expressing beauty through boldness.



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

The advertisement tackles the issue of gender discrimination in the work place. The young lady architect loses her chance to be promoted, as she is pregnant. She questions this injustice and she expresses that she could manage her pregnancy and job together. The character named Shaheen in the advertisement is not ready to do any kind of compromise, and at the end of the ad it is shown that she is starting her own company. She is not represented as a careless mother, but a confident one, who has the boldness to face all hurdles on her way of life, just as the tagline of the product implies “boldness is beautiful”. The ad makes it clear that, woman is not just a child-bearing machine. The ad is noteworthy for its iconoclastic approach towards the contribution of female to injustice towards woman. The worst enemy of woman is a woman herself. It is not only men who make women to suffer the ordeals of gender polarity, but she herself. It discusses the role of women in inflicting torture on womenfolk. Women internalize the male voice of judgement and his voice resides in her own conscience. Women also play a role in such discrimination in social institutions. Women are more considerate to impose the patriarchal rules and values on their daughters. The advertisement examines the hypocrisy in the chauvinistic attitude of the orthodox society.

The same spirit echoes in the advertisement of “Avenger”. The advertisement manipulates the modern educated woman, which opens with the depiction of an active and vibrant young girl riding a bike through the highways. The ad of “Avenger” bike was broadcast in relation to the Independence Day celebrations of our nation. Empowerment not only means to earn a job and stand on your own legs, the real idea of freedom is to live the way you want. It also

ensures freedom from all kind of fear and insecurity including social, emotional and psychological. The ad questions the authority which impose a wide number taboos and restrictions in the life of a girl. Her friends, her dress, wherever she goes and whatever she does are not decided by her, but the society. Only the weak and inferior has the need to be cared, to be empowered. That's why it is said that, to name is to destroy. Woman in the ad is not an imitation of patriarchal simulacrum. She does not act like a man, but like a human. Living life of her choice does not make her characterless; but a self-reliant being. As Shubhi Tandon expresses in "Riding the Women's Freedom Wave", brings out the concerns of Garima Khandelwal, the executive creative director of Mullen Lintas, "It's the 70th year of independence, but are we, man and woman really free alike? The film shows a woman riding through the outskirts, how a man does today. The indifference the world has to her presence is meant to reflect as respect of her freedom, it's a utopian community" (<http://businessworld.in>).

Exhibit V: The Avenger Ad #RideYourFreedom



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

The advertisement presents the feminine struggle for expression, both physically and mentally in an engendered society. The perspective about womanhood is undergoing considerable changes. The advertisement questions the basic criteria that demarcate the behavioural boundaries of gender. The ad concludes with the words of Mahatma Gandhi, the champion of Indian independence: "The day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved independence" ("Avenger"). The ad correlates

the freedom of motherland with the liberation of its women folk. However, the brand's tagline "Feel Like God", is not free from the gender prejudices of the male-dominated Indian society.

Another advertisement is presented by "Brook Bond Red Label". **The ad tries to undertake issue of de-stigmatising gender stereotypes such as the type of toys played with by boys and girls.** It takes us back to the nostalgic memories of the childhood. The ad depicts the little brother and sister playing house. The boy in the ad is one who truly respects girl and treats her as an equal counterpart, which makes him a boy whom girls like. The ad subverts the prejudice and partiality that the female kids experience in their life and emphasizes the need to destabilize the engendered social structure.

Exhibit VI: The Brook Bond Red Label #Unstereotype.



Source: <https://www.google.co.in>

The ad compels us to scrutinize on dark shades of gender which is visible even present in the games of our children. As Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* describes the ill fate of the girl child who is "made to fit precociously into the universe of serious affair; deprive of happy freedom, the carefree aspect of childhood" (312). Gender stereotypes are not innate. It is taught from the early years of formation in a child's life. A boy should not be akin to a girl. Engaging feminine duties such as cooking, sewing makes him effeminate. This advertisement is really a great step towards unstereotyping, destroying the citadel of gender, erasing the sacred borders of the cultural construction.

This analysis of the selected ads shows that the producers change their notions of social values in accordance with the targeted consumers. The one and only objective of the producer is to enhance the profit by widening the scope of market of their product. The marketing

industry is not creating new values, but subverting and adjusting existing values in an appealing way in order to attract their targeted customers. The power to manipulate is so strong in advertisements, as they suppress the thoughts of consumers.

The profit-aiming power has used the representational politics of gender to widen their canvas of market, to enhance the saleability of their products. Though, the ads questioned the authority of patriarchy, it has a major role in maintaining a status-quo in the case of gender in Indian society. However, these ads always camouflage the chauvinistic values which embedded and transmitted through the psyche of our male-dominated society even if they address the changing positions of the new Indian women.

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Capitalism Dominant: A Life Story from the *U. S. A.* Trilogy

Sanil T. Sunny

Capitalism is often considered to be an economic system in which private actors control and own properties in accordance with their interests with the motive to make profits. Private property self-interest, competition and limited role of government are some of the essential features of capitalism. In capitalism private individuals decide where to invest what to produce or at which price to sell. Capitalism caused dramatic expansion of individualisation and in such a system everything is determined by the market economy:

I define capitalism as a social order in which practically all aspects of social life are organized around capital accumulation and the extraction of surplus value from a variety of labor forms. Capital, as Marx pointed out, is value in motion generated through the exploitation of workers. The heart of capitalism lies in the relations of production, in essence, the organization of labor and ways in which value is produced. (Parisot 12)

But the goal of the present essay is not to develop a theoretical conception of capitalism or its features but to bring out how its messiness and the grey areas of its history are reproduced in *U. S. A.*, the immortal trilogy of John Dos Passos. The plot of the trilogy revolves around twelve fictional characters but the essay focuses on one of them – J. Ward Moorehouse, a typical product of American capitalism and its industrial success myth. Moorehouse is introduced in the first novel of the trilogy, *The 42nd Parallel*. Though he grows in a middle class family, his care for education lays the foundation for his power and success. On one hand, his middle class background gifts him the ability to adapt to any circumstances and on the other, his education earns him the capability of turning those circumstances to his benefit. His conventional interest on power and wealth is injected to his nerves by the adverse circumstances of his childhood and later it grows to his emotional disillusionment.

The emotional disillusion is clear from his first marital relationship. He marries Annabelle Strang, a wealthy woman who is four years older than him. The way he proposes Annabelle shows his coldness and capitalism barriers his love and desire from being passionate:

“Would you marry a feller like me without any money?” “I hadn’t thought of it, darling, but I might.” “You’re pretty wealthy, I guess, and I haven’t a cent, and I have to send home money to my folks. . . But I have prospects.” “What kind of prospects?” She

pulled his face down and ruffled his hair and kissed him. "I'll make good in this real estate game. I swear I will." (Dos Passos 188-189)

The influence of capitalism "does stifle" (McGowan 10) Moorehouse and "deprives" him of the "the pleasure" that he is "capable of experiencing" (10). The greed and selfishness of Moorehouse are exposed and he translates his "selfishness into a virtue" (240) and creates "a more prosperous and thus happier collective" (240). After the break up with Annabelle, Moorehouse marries Gertrude Strapple. Her mother gives her fifteen thousand dollars a year and using the fund, Moorehouse starts up a public relation agency. This is how "greedy individuals produce a wealthy and secure social order" (240).

In the early stage of his career, Moorehouse earns the job of a reporter which never satisfies him. He has no sympathy towards the muckers of the city but their problems arouse contempt in him. However, he develops good habits to build his career – rising from the bed early, hard work, self confidence and thriftiness. His career reaches a crucial juncture when he becomes an advertising expert for Bessemer steel products. He depends more on his intelligence to reach his goals and when his chance comes, he works with enthusiasm and single mindedness. He realises that he has opportunities that can be more profitable.

He has become the founder of an unprecedented industry called 'public relations' which is responsive to big corporations and can accumulate heaps of money. On the way to Chicago, he dictates to his secretary:

. . . American industry like a steamengine, like a highpower locomotive on a great express train charging through the night of old individualistic methods. . . What does a steamengine require? Cooperation, coordination of the inventor's brain, the promoter's brain that made the development of these highpower products possible . . . Coordination of capital, the storedup energy of the race in the form of credit intelligently directed . . . labor, the prosperous contented American working man to whom the unprecedented possibilities of capital collected in great corporations had given the full dinnerpail, cheap motor transport, insurance, short working hours. . . a measure of comfort and prosperity unequalled before or since in the tragic procession of recorded history or in the known regions of the habitable globe. (Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* 268-269)

He is turning out to be a shrewd public misinformers who is intolerant to any kind of betterment of the working class. On another day he addresses a gathering with a sentimental

tone on “Labor Troubles: A Way Out” (273). Here he deceitfully tries to convince the public that he is a labour reformer. But he is very vigilant in “avoiding the grave dangers of socialism and demagoguery” (273).

He takes an interposition in the struggle between the workers and the employers. He helps the bosses to sell capitalism to the public. His opportunism is evident when he advocates a programme to educate the public after the strike at Homestead in which many strikers were killed:

A strike came on at Homestead and there were strikers killed by the mine guards and certain writers from New York and Chicago who were sentimentalists began to take a good deal of space in the press with articles flaying the steel industry . . . Ward said that what was necessary was an entirely new line in the publicity industry. It was the business of the industry to educate the public by carefully planned publicity extending over a term of years” (Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* 256).

However, this new innovative idea eventually leads to the foundation of an information bureau for the entire Pittsburgh steel industry and his raise to the position of the chief of it.

He is unstoppable and in a short period succeeds to establish his own agency. He is confident to “make it the biggest in the country, especially with this new unexploited angle of the relations between capital and labor” (Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* 256).

The modern business corporation is an original creation of the American imagination. It was first fashioned to extend local markets; then, it became an indispensable means to create a national market. Both American industrialization and capitalism were crucially dependent upon the corporate form of organization. (Weinberg 5)

Moorehouse’s opportunism is exposed again when the news of the World War I is spread out. His evolved consciousness knows that it is the voice of another big business.

The significance of World War I, however, went far beyond profit margins and stable prices. The American capitalist class had tasted political power as never before. Sitting at the levers of the political economy of war, industrialists learned the potentials of the economic system when it was integrated into a governmental system. Big government and big business could thrive together. World War I was the first test case. (Weinberg 158)

Moorehouse misleads the public by giving wrong information. Perhaps here lies the most significant achievement of J. W. Moorehouse as a capitalist since he allied the concept of indirect growth. The war reveals the extent to which the public can be manipulated by professional public relations agencies. It is a mutual association of mainstream journalism with the state and corporate power. Moorehouse is a political agent who becomes the spokesman of the government, helps to propagate lies in America and delimits the choices of the individuals as well as the society.

In conclusion, Morehouse is both an opportunist and image-promoter and he has the support of massive organisations and the government. He exercises power blending with deception. He knows that one's dependency on another person is the best weapon to conquer him. He is symbol of how the ruling class, in an era of capitalism, can be a deadly enemy of working class people or even the entire world. Moorehouse's life story undoubtedly proves that the origin of capitalism and exploitation is the greed for money and quest for social status. His life displays that the dangerous evils of the society stem from wealth and power and the real victims of the system are the working class. It seems that Dos Passos sympathises upon the working class and sets his hatred against the capitalists.

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I, Me and Myself: Cultural Politics of Selfie

Jinoshi James

In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographers think I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his arts.

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

In postmodern condition, with the help of technology, an ordinary individual gets an opportunity to transform him/her into a performer, narrator or creator. Online spaces like vlogs or blogs facilitate this transformation from inactive self to a rather proactive self. In this regard, selfie is an artistic space that can turn everybody into a photographer, thereby, elevating him/her into a performative level. Baz Kershaw in his book, *The Politics of Performance in a Postmodern Age* asserts that “the mediatisation of developed societies disperses the theatrical by inserting performance into everyday life” (133). Selfies are the products of the fetishistic attitude of the individual to become an image or figure. “I” becomes a tool for explanation, but also the obsession with the subject-theme, centered on the concept of the mirror-stage introduced by Jacques Lacan.

The “Postmodern Turn”, as it was named, is marked by the analysis of the fragmentation and instability of the self, or to paraphrase; dynamic self, based on mutual processes of deconstructions and temporary reconstructions, contrary to the modern ideal of the stable and consistent self. Selfie can narrate the physical/emotional/cultural perceptions in an easy manner without a referent object or other. According to the theories of identity, time inevitably changes personal identity, so self-portraying that captures these changes on the physical level also re-constructs a personal identity, narrating changes, thus building a “narrative self”, a self that is told through time, but on which narration can follow-up even the disappearance of the self (and at that place, precisely, photography stands for; a memento). Exposing such portraits is there to question but also guarantee a person’s existence in time and space, as well as the person’s continuity on an external, public timeline.

Postmodernism has been always accused for its rejection of a social cohesion and its very personalized and self-centered perceptions. Photography has now become a personal narrative space rather social/community documentation. There is a fixation in the self, a craving

to be documented and portrayed in order to display the emotional and physical conditions. For that people depend enormously on selfies in public and private spaces. The front cameras have made the people more obsessed with the self. However, this obsession is not a Narcissistic self-erotic attitude as accused and attributed on the present generation by others. This self celebration can be a counter discursive practice to defend the exclusive practices of the dominant culture. Selfie enhances the morale of the individual to display his/her self over the other, thereby, fulfilling his desire to become a celebrity and a self-respected individual. However, these self-documentations are not only meant for a personal rejoicing but activating a social interactive space both in personal relations and political debate as well. Marshall McLuhan gave a more contemporary, media related version of the myth of Narcissus. Instead of transmission, his Narcissus has exiled via less tragic mediation:

The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he become the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. The nymph Echo used to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system. (41)



Fig. 1. “Russian Spiderman”, Kirill Oreshkin standing on dizzying heights (<https://www.independent.co.uk/europe>).

According to McLuhan, Narcissus is not aware of himself as a picture, as he does not recognize himself in his self-image. He does not distinguish reality from fiction, as he abstracts himself out of it. The tragedy of this love intensifies as he falls into the illusion that he actually is someone else. His perceptual dissociation from his own body, unaware of sliding towards the

water and touching its liquid reflection screen, as if approaching someone else, is a tragedy of pure alienation (46). Therefore, selfies are soliloquies meant to be heard and debated by others. The above selfie of the “Russian Spiderman” is an example of the self-projection from an intended space and time as well as of a craving to make unique expression of the self. Self-portrait is rather a picture, an object that can transfer, time-wise and space-wise, forwarding the image to the future, disconnecting it from the original medium of self-reflection in the water. Heidegger makes an interesting observation: “Soliloquy is the product and reflex of converse with others; social communication not an effect of soliloquy” (qtd. in Peters 18).

However, older artists did not respond to the call for artworks as demanded, by directly uploading images on social networks, rather they have asked a curator to choose one by him and upload the work selected from the administrator’s end, as in the classic curatorial selection for exhibition. Some authors were sending pictures rather passionately and obsessively, in a higher frequency and density, uploading multiple ones at once. Still, some new practices of framing, allowing editing and unusually high angles were introduced by younger generations. Younger generations also recorded with a direct gaze into the camera, while older authors avoided a direct self-picture, as if trying to establish some critical relationship to the concept of the self, from where a shift in audience theory became important in self-recording practices. Thus, only younger generations and media artists were sending selfies, meaning posed images recorded by hand, or selfie stick with inbuilt shutter release, and directly uploaded: while all others sent self-portraits in which they were either distancing from the camera through the use of the shutter timer, or being photographed by others in staged environments acting as if they were not posing.

Although being open to the unknown internet self-portrayers, the project had little success with them. Still, it has given a ground for analyzing if there is a boundary between selfies and of self-observing. The self-portrait, contrary to portrait of the self, is a direct reflection that is made by a person situated in a continuous media loop with only himself. While the portrait of the self is a conclusive image, displaying what someone thinks and feels of himself, the self-portrait merely depicts a visual layout of the person. The portrait of the self is thus an internal reflection, while the self-portrait is the result of an external mirroring. Such difference of “being made by” and “representing” defines the beginning and the ending actions of the self in the representational order. One of these processes is irrational, subjective and compulsive, while the other is rational, objective, and cognitive. One requires subjectivization, while the other

requires objectification. Drawing a line of division of such mediations in media itself – it can be generalized – painting is the medium of the portrait of self, while photography of the self-portrait. Even photography may be used to make a portrait of the self in a painterly way, being mastered. The second criterion for distinguishing the self-portrait from the portrait of the self, is in the immediacy of self-representation. While in self-depiction – because of a delay in classical photographic schema – it appears that even self-timed portraits are not the ideal self-portraits, as they produce a time-gap between recording and posing, as well as between shutting and developing the film, drawing a sharp line between two distinct ontological spaces; “hereness” of perception and “thereness” of the image. Sometimes distant gazing produces the great illusion of meeting someone, yet that person may never have been real, no matter how alive that view appears, as for example the Mona Lisa.



Fig. 2. Bill Nye, the Science Guy posted this selfie with Barack Obama and Neil deGrasse Tyson after attending the White House Student Film Festival (<https://twitter.com/neiltyson> > status).

Whereas, when the author depicts himself in a self-portrait, we are establishing a relationship to him. The author is not a neutral or subjective interpreter but he is – or he at least was – a living body that we are meeting with a time-delay. And, it was his intention that we meet in such a way. Selfies allow individuals to weave museum objects into their own identity. The above selfie is an appropriation of the celebrity status of Obama and others. Foster states that “taking a good selfie requires that both the creator/subject and the viewer look carefully at the artwork or artefact, granting a new perspective and a personal connection to a potentially lifeless object” (4). Also, museums as physical and cultural locations provide opportunities to both confirm existing identities and explore alternative selves; they are spaces of identity

enactment. Thus museum spaces as offering psychological affordances that facilitate the directing, shaping, and scaffolding and (re)producing of the psyche.

Selfie images can also be analyzed in the light of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. Lacan develops the concept of mirror stage while explaining the different phases of the growth of a child into adult subjectivity. During the mirror stage of a child's development, the child recognizes itself as a unity and distinguishable from the outside world. Drawing on Lacan, Catherine Belsey says, "[The] self is imaginary because imaged, and also because it is visible as a unit only in the mirror world, over there" (51). Belsey continues to argue that it is only with its entry into language that "the the child becomes a subject" (51). In language the child learns to recognize itself in a series of subject positions like "he", "she", "boy" or "girl" and so on. In this regard the selfie gives a self-constructed image that can help the individual to take a subject position of his own choice. The language chosen by him for this recognition is not provided by any external agent but it is a language of self-assertion.



Fig. 3. This image released by Ellen DeGeneres with the most renowned hollywood film actors. This is the second most retweeted tweet of all time (<http://twitter.com/theellenshow> > status).

The above selfie is an example of self-identification, a selection of a subject position of their own choice by the actors. Thus, selfie is an assertion of one's own subjectivity irrespective of his social environment. Subject usually is linguistically and discursively constructed and displaced across the range of knowledges in which the concrete individual participates. Selfie constructs an untarnished subjectivity even though it is only an image. Unlike other photographic

constructions, selfie makes a subjectivity which is pure and devoid of any ideological or dogmatic influence.

Crisia Miroiu observes:

The selfie seizes the whole cluster of possibilities that digitalization has to offer to individuals in terms of creating their new online identities and of presenting their selves continuously shaping and altering them. By the very convenience of repeating the same shot until obtaining the intended result and selecting and deleting the unwanted images the selfie bestows to the individual the capability of thoroughly choosing the portrayal of his self. (9)

Here the omissions and additions in this digital space is not an enforced process, but a choice of the self. She again observes that in the context of online interactions, the role of audience is assumed by other social media users. The virtual space prompts the users to amend their online conduct observing the online conduct. Selfie gives the individual a performative space as an everyday exercise. The individual becomes a performer or a star by involving in this digital/online performance alone or as a collectivity.



Fig. 4. Pope Francis posing for a selfie with young people at Vatican and this is the first ever “Papal Selfie” (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk> > worldnews).

The above photograph of some devotees posing for a selfie with Pope is an example of finding themselves in a performative space. The Pope is also making a display of his humility and unassuming nature by posing with the ordinary people. The self-photograph or selfie with others can turn on a person into a performer in a constellation of the public figures. The public figures when they pose for a selfie with an individual make themselves laymen who can easily

socialize in a digital domain. In addition, the selfies are not individualized custom but a public document too. The selfies can be considered as a proof for the presence of an individual in a particular time and space. As a photographic image selfies can provide all the valuable digital details regarding time, space and metrics of the snap. Hence, the selfie is a precious document in any kind of investigation, examination and even in jurisprudence. This testifies to the status of selfie as a social narrative. Thus, selfie is a little narrative formed in a private space and time, but as a photographic representation of the self, a physical activity, almost like an event of sport. Selfie is a sign of the fast growing technology, highly individualized creation, and at the same time a symbol of interactive capacity that can have global reach.

In addition, the selfies are not individualized custom but a public document too. The selfies can be considered as a proof for the presence of an individual in a particular time and space. In this globalized and interconnected world, the selfie has become the universal language of a culture increasingly obsessed with fragmenting and sharing the body via the photographic image. As a photographic image selfies can provide all the valuable digital details regarding time, space and metrics of the snap. This study also points to the possibilities of the selfies in other social security processes. Selfie does not reproduce the Narcissistic self-erotic obsession, but an interactive space which assures a physical presence.

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Ira Mukhoty's *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth and History*: The Emerging Trend Towards the Blending of Myth and History

Anjali A. R. & Karishma Suresh

India is domicile to an array of customs, cultures, and communities and is knitted through the bunch of tales each region is spiced with. Incalculable versions of mythology engage the Indian minds and contributes to the different ways of thought within a single nation. We draw our breath from a divergent society holding many mythologies like Islamic mythology, Hindu mythology, Christian mythology etc., converging towards the idea of a world we shape around us. In modern times, we reframe and recreate these myths designing novel stories that befits the current times. This tendency is not one of animal instincts but an urge that exists within the human world alone. Myths lay out a platform for the earthly intellectual souls to rely upon or to be emulated and no sciences can favour them in this matter. "Science is about measurement and experimentation and evidence. Myth is about faith. They are two very different worlds. Science is best when dealing with matter. Myth is best when dealing with mind, especially emotions and imagination." ("Devdutt Pattanaik explains how") Myths extend its branches to both Indian and the western spheres of life, but the branches are so rooted within the Indian context that it lives intertwined to the Indian people. "Western mythology makes us focus on objective and achievement. Indian mythology makes us wonder on cause and consequences. Western mythology values what you are by measuring what you have. Indian mythology values what you are despite what you have." ("Devdutt Pattanaik explains how") The Indian mythological characters stand inseparable from the context of Indian life. Most of the memories of the childhood of an Indian are filled with the imaginary characters that enters their mind through the bedtime narrated epic stories and the visually engaging, colourfully painted figures in Amar Chitra Katha. The way certain characters are portrayed and their immutable lots, instill an antsy mind within the readers raising questions against the way society works thereby inviting a space for another turn to the already defined stories. This thirst for twisting the stories in the way reader intends saw the birth of retellings in Indian mythology. Retellings gifted voices to the unheard figures whose voices that could have changed the entire plot and also brought to the front the hidden faces of the characters, painting upon them a different shade. This technique of retelling presented the artists, authors, directors, dramatists and critics boundless freedom to generate characters in myriad shapes with different faces, feelings and fates. Thus, there appeared different versions of both Ramayana and Mahabharata.

The recontextualized world in the post independent India also gifted the narrators with an urge for retellings. After this era, the tendency for reframing was such that we are gifted with many sides of a single character. In that case, when we consider a character Karna from the Indian mythology, more than ten versions came up which includes *Ini Njan Urangatte* by P K Balakrishnan, *Karna the Unsung Hero of the Mahabharata* by Umesh Kotru, *Karna on Trial* by Govinda Das, *Mrityunjaya* by Shivaji Savant, *Karna : The Great Warrior* by Ranjit Desai, *Suryaputra Kaunteya* by Indirabai M Rau, *Karna* by Prema Jayakumar etc. This is the general trend that we witnessed in the post-war period. Apart from this common urge for retelling of mythological characters by giving voices to the sidelined and furnishing the already celebrated ones with different hues, it also saw the birth of a new genre where the desire is towards the blurring of the mythological and historical lines. It is true with the various Indian cites where the real history gets moulded into mythical stories and vice versa as in Hampi and Madurai. The mentioned yearning to blend these two categories together in real life is not a recent one as there are instances of how earthly world interacts with the imaginary and hence, myths are just twisted and hyperbolic past. Indians lean towards the past to seek solutions to their problems, find answers to their queries or to locate various periods. This amiable fusion exists even today when they emulate the mythological characters to face their future. Taking a different stand, Devdutt Pattanaik draws a line between them defining their distinct roles – “Myths have nothing to do with ‘history’. History is timebound. Myth is timeless. History tells us how people lived in the past. Myth tells us how heroes and gods live all the time.” (“Devdutt Pattanaik explains how”) In literature of India, this mingling generally leads to the creation of a fictional narrative like that in Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* where the Mahabharata is refashioned to the context of the movement of Indian independence. Deriving inspiration from the *Heroes* by Stephen Fry- a collection of Greek mythological figures, Ira Mukhoty develops a new trend through *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth and History* (2017), where she brings in myth and history under the same roof. This paper seeks to trace her effort for the venture of this new narration. The book is a coming together of eight characters from both mythology and history of India - Draupadi, Radha, Ambapali, Raziya Sultan, Meerabai, Jahanara, Laxmibai and Hazrat Mahal. She says, “...the idea was not to discover unknown women, but to look at familiar ones and try and understand the reason that made them so recognisable and adored.” (Kannadasan) The study is done through the two characters from the book, one from the Indian mythical context- Draupadi

(Chapter 1: *Dharma Queen*) and the other from the Indian history- Rani Laxmibai (Chapter 7: *Rani Laxmibai-The Accidental Heroine*).

Draupadi, an undermined character of *Mahabharata* is now being the new interest for many writers to explore the powerful woman personae, who sternly voiced for the establishment of justice in the face of its denial. Draupadi, unlike her husbands, did not falter on the thoughts of what is dharma and also held a greater conviction of beliefs than the male clan surrounding her. Ira Mukhoty in this book addresses the fire born princess as the Dharma Queen who instigated the ever-destructive war to avenge everyone who wronged her.

Draupadi's voice remains absent from the very contentious decision taken by Kunti to share the newly wed among her sons. The Panchaala king and his son tries to alter the resolution to save their dear kin from a fate so obnoxious, but Draupadi realised later with a painful heart that she was to suffer injustice multiple folds at the hands of her in-laws in comparison with her welcome treat. She ensured that her voice remains heard and will echo as long as the epic stays. The humiliation by Dushassan dragging her by the hair in a single garment with the stains of menstrual blood in it and the silence of her famed warriors husbands along with the disillusioned state of the elders in the court who knew dharma, brought forth the rage in Draupadi that shook the entire kuru clan. The distress she faced was not outpoured in the form of begging or pleading as most women are portrayed at the time of difficulty but Draupadi through intelligence and courage provoked the all-male sabha with questions and unleashed her anger with no obstructions that she questioned Yudhishtira whether he had lost her first or himself in the game. Even if Yudhishtira had already become the slave of Duryodhana, she boldly asks what gave him the right to stake her. Her inquiries remained unanswered in the sabha as it was silently acknowledged that a slave's property wholly belongs to Duryodhana without any further questions. Instead of cutting herself a poor figure, Draupadi bared her thoughts openly without any filtration cursing the destruction of the entire Kauravas. Her wrath scared the Hastinapur king who offered her three wishes of which she demanded the freedom of her husbands and the lost wealth and kingdom.

Karna mocked the Pandavas for gaining freedom at the cost of a girl's words. Shakuni sensing the opportunity invited them for a second round of game to earn back their glory. Yudhishtira not wanting to deny the host's request as a matter of pride, accepts the game in which he loses all his material wealth and destines with twelve years of exile and a life incognito

in the thirteenth year. Draupadi despite being the wife of best five warriors face the crudest trial in their very presence experiencing the height of helplessness.

Draupadi goes unprotected and a mere prey for the male lust twice in the epic. Jarasandha, the king of Sindhu and Keechak, the army chief of Virata kingdom both chance upon the beautiful queen during the exile years and meet their fateful ending at the hands of Bhima. She was not an epitome of dutiful wife who followed her husbands to forest to share their plight but a lady of strategies who wished to poke her husbands' inability in protecting her at the most needed time, by wearing her hair untied and unkempt and also to maintain the solidarity among the brothers by being the uniting force.

Mukhoty mentions that Draupadi is placed in stark opposition to the central woman figure in Ramayana. Sita in Ramayana is an absolute pativrata who worships her husband and follow his words without further interrogation, while Draupadi raises doubts on husbands' deeds. She accuses Yudhishtira of his foul thoughts on dharma and is unwilling to accept his words as final. Draupadi is also seen as a counterfoil to Krishna's sister, Subhadra who possesses the qualities of a 'good' wife and woman, where she takes the role of a calm and sensitive lady. Mukhoty adds that it might be because of her goodness that the Pandavas lineage continued through her grandson, Parikshit. Draupadi instead witnesses the demise of her sons and also her brother though they escaped the Yamaraj from the battlefield.

Draupadi is constantly nagged by other female characters in the epic questioning her polyandrous marriage. Bhanumati, Duryodhana's wife wishes to know her secret of keeping five husbands happy and Satyabhama, Krishna's wife too is curious on this topic. Draupadi gives a curt reply to the former by stating that she had found her in-laws to be always greater in number referring to Satyawati and Kunti and to the latter she emphasises her role as a modest wife fulfilling the duties toward her husbands first and then hers. This may seem contradictory since Draupadi has always been an individual who asserted her identity foremost.

Draupadi wished to attain justice and in her journey achieving it, she lost her kith and kin with whom she could have enjoyed her victory in the full sense. Though successful, Draupadi feels lost and half-minded to enjoy her freedom. She acquired what she has been denied unlike Sita who had to retreat to the earth mother in spite of her pure devotion to Ram. Sita was abandoned in the forest without a second glance whereas Draupadi strived to seek justice and established the lost balance of righteousness through her sheer determination and

effort. Draupadi has yet to be understood by the public who revere the pativrata Sita and not the rebellious and the victorious Draupadi.

Rani Laxmibai, the most popular among the woman warriors of India, was immortalised in the mind of the readers through tales and songs that elevated the doings of the warrior queen. She accidentally became the saviour figure for the natives of Jhansi when their land was attacked by the foreign forces. Laxmibai was born as 'Manikarnika' to a brahmin family, whose father Moropant Tambe worked as an adviser to the brother of deposed Maratha Peshwa. The unusual upbringing among boys in the court of the exiled Peshwa instilled in her the confidence and courage which later aided her in facing the British troops with unflinching daresness. Manu, as she was alternatively addressed had the privilege in acquiring the knowledge of letters and was trained in cavalry art of horse-riding and sword-wielding. At fifteen, Manikarnika moved to the palace of Jhansi as the Queen to Gangadhar Rao and officially adopted the name of Laxmibai, which was later inscribed into the history of India and also a sung legend commemorating the fearless and valourous deeds representing the few female brave-hearts of the nation.

Ira Mukhoty portrays Laxmibai in a detailed fashion in her book chronicling the valiant queen's eventful life and those incidents that have made the person in question, an accidental heroine. She states that the queen was not eager to plunge herself into the war and fight for freedom but has long negotiated to avoid it. In her mid-twenties the responsibility of ruling has fallen upon her following the death of her husband when the kingdom was under the suzerainty of the British crown. Her individuality shone through her attire when she chose to forgo the constraints placed on the clothes and the customs of a Brahmin widow. Though she donned a white saree, Rani refused to abandon jewellery or go bald as per the tradition of Hindu religion widows.

Introduction of Doctrine of Lapse in 1848 crumpled the fate of many kingdoms including Jhansi which did not had a male heir as the law firmly restricted the clause of adoption thereby nullifying the adoption of a son, Damodar Rao by Laxmibai and her late husband. The queen in resentment had sent appeals to the British government on this matter for the law to be turned down. Instead she was made to relinquish her palace and move into Rani Mahal in Jhansi fort. Not willing to back down, Laxmibai hired an Australian lawyer John Lang to remind the Governor General the treatise of 1804, 1817, and 1832 which guaranteed the

successors of Ram Chand Rao the right to rule Jhansi and recognition of various previous adoption, but Dalhousie declared Rani's appeal as 'wholly inadmissible'.

In May 1854, Jhansi was integrated into the British union and its ruler honoured with a monthly pension and also claimed the land revenue rights of the kingdom. The queen retaliated by announcing her departure from the land to her birth place Varanasi where her stubborn decision made the Governor general to send his agent Robert Hamilton to have a discussion. He later wrote 'she was a clever, strong-minded woman, well able to argue and too much for many. There was a complete command of patience and temper'. (Mukhoty 78) Meanwhile the queen resumed her childhood activity of horse-riding and held daily court meetings at Rani Mahal. She was also seen wearing pyjamas and a fitted coat for her convenience.

The year 1857 was prominent in more ways than one. It saw the rising of Indians against the tyrannical British forces. The sudden outrageous action of the sepoys can be attributed to the use of cartridges that were greased with fat of animals - pigs and cows, which hurt the religious sentiments of both Hindus and Muslims. The origin of revolt can be traced to Meerut and sparks of this fire were quickly caught by the rest of India. The Twelfth Native Infantry attacked the Star Fort in the cantonment outside Jhansi which forced the British crowd to seek help at the Jhansi Fort. A few days after, British men, woman and children were massacred at Jokhun Bhag. Mukhoty writes that the rebels even exhorted an amount of money from the queen for safeguarding the autonomy.

Laxmibai fearing the wrath of the British wrote a letter to Major Walter Erskine, commissioner of the Sagar area before handedly explaining her non participation in the Jokhun Bhag massacre and also requesting for fund to restore the law and order. The letter was received with an agreeable response where the British promised to 'deal liberally with' her. (Mukhoty 79) A blanket of peace was spread over the region for a brief period following this and the queen returned to Jhansi Fort resuming the court duties. She daily held court, attended city's affairs, manufactured weapons, opened mint and distributed food and clothing to the poor. Laxmibai once again brought her stance through her attire by combining the warrior clothes and queenly costumes. She switched to a silk-blouse and a red silk cap with a loose turban to hold her hair. She complemented it with diamond bangles and ring along with a sword and two pistols. Mukhoty mentions that according to Nathu Godshe she looked like a warrior princess.

She was soon to understand that it was the calmness before the storm. The British under the Brigadier-General Nicholson unleashed brutality upon the Indians who dared to rebel against the government. Laxmibai wrote a letter to spare her land from the terror to be enforced but Jhansi remained one another important land to be fully occupied by the British. In 1858, Rani reluctantly plunged into the war to protect her region and people from the hands of horror. Sensing the morbid fear among the natives, the queen conducted a lavish haldi kumkum ceremony to boost the morale of the citizens.

The war commenced soon and the historical records bare proof of the braveness of the lady warrior that fought for the freedom. Mukhoty writes that in the 14th Light Dragons, Laxmibai is described as a 'perfect Amazon in bravery...just the sort of daredevil woman soldiers admire.' (Mukhoty 81) Rani fought the war sporting a male attire. The popular version of Rani jumping the fortress with her adopted son strapped to her back is a tale attributed to the queen describing her bravery and daresness.

The queen escaped to Kalpi from where she galloped to Gwalior along with Tantya Tope and Rao Sahib to capture the fort and later shifted to Phoolbhag sector of Gwalior where she met the troops of Hugh Rose and died a dignified death in the battle of June 1858.

Rani Laxmibai is an eternal figure popularised through many tales and songs that praises the heroic feat in the first Indian independence war of 1857. Her image is carved deep into the Indian psyche as a woman who fought fiercely for her land. If looked closely Rani failed to have a wider vision for Indian nation but focused thoroughly for her own region and people. The unfamiliar story of a girl wielding weapon and fighting wars lapsed into folklores that gave rise to tales such as the queen jumping a high fort on a horse along with her baby making her into a legend. Her ascent as a national icon was a creative lore that enthused the passive hearts to jerk into action.

The journey of epic fiction saw a meteoric rise in the post independent India with the birth of umpteen number of retelling of characters from the two main epics- *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, both crowded with ethical questions. "Whatever is here is found elsewhere. But whatever is not here is nowhere else." (Mahabharata Verse 53), the most celebrated quotation in Mahabharata is drawn as the basis for retellings as it takes into account the current scenario against the backdrop of epic episodes with a different lifestyle. *Mahabharata* is an amalgamation of the worldly and the celestial handling every subject under the sun. The

space it creates in between right and wrong which perturb the readers, paved the way for rewritings thereby opening the way for the new genre of epic fiction. Taking a different turn, Ira Mukhoty in her book *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth and History*, brings in both myth and history under the same roof. This paper taking into consideration two of the most celebrated characters out of eight- Draupadi and Rani Laxmibai, portrays a sample on how these two categories are combined together. Against the general trend towards epic fiction genre where the tendency is to fictionalize by mixing the two, what she attempts is to highlight that point of convergence where they both simply meets and gets discussed in the light of true happenings from the epic.

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The Self and the Other: Affect, Identity and Narrativity along a Humanoid in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

Hridya Joly

As Kazuo Ishiguro is rightly described as a writer “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world”, (“Nobel Prize”) in most works, he asserts himself as a profound observer of human fragility. His latest novel *Klara and the Sun* does it best by reassessing the inner depths of human conscience as it confronts itself and others in the current technological era. With a dystopian plot where AI powered robots are chosen as social companions, the book delves into the fundamental concerns of our times: if we humans, at the primal roles and responsibilities we undertake, would gradually be replaced by AI mechanisms? The dual conflict if we humans are just so reductive, or is it that the AI has been so advancing, is redressed and deliberated through and within the characters.

Set in a near-future America, our window onto this radical world is a robot powered by artificial intelligence. “Its name is Klara — or should that be “her” name? On this choice of pronoun hinges the moral burden of Ishiguro’s tale” (Harvey). In the novel, Klara, an Artificial Friend, is solar-powered and AI-endowed, prized as a companion for children who have minimal opportunity for interaction. The novel is about Josie, a feeble child, chronically ill, and thus wanting constant care and attention. This paper examines how the narrative unfolds as a commentary on the evolving discourse on technology that may transform relationships and social life of the human community. Drawing on critical perspectives from posthuman care, affect and the nuances of identity to othering, both of the human and non-human, the paper deliberates if the concept of the social robot designed to offer care and companionship is equivalent, better or worse to the ideals it represents.

In the paper, the first part analyses the notion of posthuman care and affect as represented in the text. It reads the novel as a critique of the theoretical framework of emotional computing that foresees a posthuman future where simulated empathetic minds replace humans. It juxtaposes Klara’s social skills with the elusiveness of the human mind that defies fixity. The second part focuses on the nuances of identity and othering as it gets shaped in the textual narrative. The paper emphasizes the narration of Klara to foreground how human emotions and its ambiguities stand incomprehensible to a simulated nonhuman, thereby weakening any

empathetic bonding between. The paper thus foregrounds how the idea of a social robot intended to offer empathy, care, and companionship cannot be at its best.

The idea and evolution of empathetic humanoids has problematized the fundamental distinctions between man and machine. The affective realm which was considered an exclusive human trait is now seen to merge with machines to work by algorithms and binaries, gradually resulting in the conception of a simulated empathetic machine. Throughout the textual narrative, Ishiguro draws readers' attention to the limitations of AI to sense and rightly comprehend human emotions. Being a minute observant, Klara seeks to sense the spectrum of human emotions. Klara realizes her limitations to know the ambiguities of human emotions thus: "Still, there were other things we saw from the window— other kinds of emotions I didn't at first understand— of which I did eventually find some versions in myself, even if they were perhaps like shadows" (Ishiguro 22). Ambiguities underlying the human emotional expressions and language are well expressed in the Coffee Cup Lady episode, where Klara and the other AFs become bewildered witnessing the union of long-lost lovers manifesting a complex array of emotions that defy clear labelling. The conversation between Klara and the store manager reveals how the AF's curiosity to understand these emotional complexities and the manager's effort to explain its meaning stand elusive to the data-driven affective minds: "Yes, they seem so happy. . . but it's strange because they also seem upset". "Sometimes," the Manager said, "at special moments like that, people feel a pain alongside their happiness. . ." Then Manager was gone, and Rosa, another of the AFs said, "How strange. What could she have meant?" (Ishiguro 24).

The novel sensitizes readers to the depth of emotional complexities pertaining to human relationships in the posthuman world. As disclosed in Klara's robotic perspective, several instances in the text critique the worth of emotional computing, as the simulated empathetic minds fail to decode the intricacies of the human emotions. It allows us to think on the "limitations of the programmed machines to decode the elusiveness of the human mind that defies the one-to-one correlation between words, multiple connotations, and their underlying emotions" (Sahu 4). The doctrine of cognitive computing, on the basis of which AI functions, cognizes "human intelligence as the calculation of symbols of mental representation and AI as essentially a computing-based simulation of human thinking. But it has failed to realize the fact that real human intelligence runs through the whole process of emotions. Intelligence without emotion neither exists nor is meaningful" (Zhou 113).

Similarly, interacting with human beings is an intricate and dynamic activity which could be hardly foreseen and rendered into lines of codes. It is reductive and fallible because it offers a totally reduced interpretation of the affective complexities, which is often “a process correlated with social cognition and social emotions” (Malinowska 363). The essential need is to understand the spectrum of denotative and connotative explanations underlying the affective phenomenon, which is problematic in the case of robots. The basic difference is that human emotional experiences are dynamic and “involve dependencies based on time, speaker, socio-context, mood, personality, and culture” (qtd. in Sahu 6) whereas emotional computing is conventionally based on proto-typical emotional expressions that can never comprehend the complex range of mixed emotional manifestations.

We also ought to reflect on how the simulated human-techno-world interface termed as “hyperreality” produces “an illusion of reciprocity since the robot will always be responding according to its program and therefore the interaction will always be unidirectional” (qtd. in Sahu 6). This is the quintessence of hyperreal culture that “offers the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship . . . and intimacy” (Turkle). This illusion of reciprocity as the simulacrum of presence propels people to enter a phase of willing suspension of disbelief, thus triggering an order of emotional or ‘digital’ uncanniness. This is dramatized in the “Morgan’s Falls” episode where Chrissie wants Klara to mimic Josie to fill the gap of her daughter who could not accompany her due to ill health (Ishiguro 175). Chrissie’s uncanny expressions underline the vulnerability of people who in this hyperreal world consciously engage in self-delusional activities with a hope to circumvent biological and socio-cultural limitations. Chrissie’s self-delusional act aligns with the theoretical concept of affect as an offshoot of posthuman culture that blurs the dichotomies between terror/pleasure, relief/grief, and the real/unreal.

In the hyperreal world, researchers of robotics claim that everything can be coded into data and that there are no essential features in humans “that’s unique and won’t transfer” (qtd. in Sahu 7). But Ishiguro gives us a contrasting narrative that negates such possibilities. Josie’s father, Mr. Paul who abhors the notion of creating a digital copy of his chronically ill daughter asks Klara: “Do you believe in the human heart? . . . Something that makes each of us special and individual?... Something beyond even your wonderful capabilities. Because an impersonation wouldn’t do, however skilful. You’d have to learn her heart and learn it fully, or you’ll never become Josie in any sense that matters” (Ishiguro 182). Klara gradually understands that there is “something” that makes humans unique (Ishiguro 250). Towards the end, Klara states

that the uniqueness of being a human is not in the anatomy, rather it is a distributed phenomenon that evolves throughout the life course with the shared emotional engagement with the kith and kin that triggers an order of feelings that make each individual irreplaceable (Ishiguro 251). Klara finally concludes the limitations of AI thus:

Mr. Capaldi believed there was nothing special inside Josie that couldn't be continued. He told the Mother he'd searched and searched and found nothing like that. But I believe now he was searching in the wrong place. There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her. That's why I think I wouldn't have succeeded (Ishiguro 251).

Klara and the Sun beholds a posthuman perspective to foreground these essential differences between affective minds and emotional computing. The uniqueness of what it means to be a human is not merely confined to the neurobiological frame subjected to be studied, copied and simulated.

Currently, we witness a transition from talking about a robot extended to the talking to and with a robot. *Klara and the Sun* as a literary narrative enables us to think on how the idea of being a human is problematized in the technologically driven consumer culture. This section argues that Klara, as an empathetic programmed machine serves as a refractive medium, making us introspect on how "transformative technology can change our inner life and relationship" (Turkle). Artificial intelligence has emerged as an interactive mirror that enables us to "both recognize ourselves in and measure ourselves against it" (Kim and Kim 310). There are many views and textual instances to analyze our relationship with a robot as a cultural other such as - robot as the frightening other, the subhuman other, as the path to immortality and digital resurrection, complexly enmeshed with each other.

The othering of Klara, the loyal humanoid robotic caretaker also raises ethical questions on the disposable feature of these caring machines. The socio-cultural status of the AFs in the novel drives readers' attention to the integral connection between the notion of disposability and affective robots conceived as "ontologically hollowed objects", "disposable affective things" or as "carefree commodities" (Kennedy 144). The novel captures the disposable standing of the affective robots in numerous episodes. Klara narrates the fear of the older B2 models being replaced by the upgraded ones and the carefree attitude towards her is demonstrated in the "interaction meeting" when Josie offered the AF as a playful object to her

friends (Ishiguro 60). It is stated, it is not morally wrong because “they’re designed to deal with it” (Ishiguro 70) and another asks, “one never knows how to greet a guest like you. After all, are you a guest at all? Or do I treat you like a vacuum cleaner? I suppose I did as much just now” (Ishiguro 123) and also as she is threatened to be “dismantled and shoved into the garbage” (Ishiguro 150). The fate of Klara is to turn into a redundant object in the junkyard in isolation, awaiting the end of her lifespan. The paradoxical status of Klara presents her as a nonperson. In the current culture of consumerism, our constant reliance on technology has led to the making of carefree disposable commodities whose consumption does not require taking care of them and facilitates an inconsiderate discarding. These episodes reflect on how the ontological binary between the human and the artifact turns distinct.

This is also revealed in the linguistic construction of the artificial other. Ishiguro by reconstructing the man–machine binary showcases how “languages already ‘contain’ such ontologies in their structures. Our linguistic grammar is also a moral, social and ontological grammar” (Coeckelberg 65). The usage of the second person “you” while addressing a robot creates a hybridized order of social ontology that evolves as a consequence of the human machine interaction. However, the portrayal of Klara problematizes the philosophy of linguistic expression. We deduce, in spite of the fact that Klara is normatively addressed as “you”, her worth as an artifact is not reduced. “In this context, the robot occupies the position of a quasi-other” (Sahu 4). Klara as a social robot also upholds the notion of willing suspension of disbelief that “behind the appearance of genuine presence and reciprocity, there is a programme, lines of codes working according to the mathematical model of human behaviour which can never predict the complexity and unpredictability of human emotion” (qtd. in Sahu 7). This digital uncanniness is a metaphor for how the binaries of the known/unknown, animate/inanimate, real/unreal are problematized by the presence of a humanoid. However, at the point of realization that we are engaging with a hyperreal entity, a rupture occurs in our feelings. The programmed machine acts almost like a mind and a non-person. “The alternation between these two states amounts to the feeling of eeriness” (qtd. in Sahu 7). These reveal how the simulated mind emerges as a “non-self”. Thus, it is argued, in the data-driven world, humanoids are a part of our social reality, “a cultural other” (Coeckelberg 65).

Klara and the Sun demonstrates the reinforcement of the man–machine hierarchy, and it manifests how the changeable approach towards Klara in varied contexts remains incomprehensible to the AF, thus sensitizing her to the complexities of the human emotions

and her limitation to decode those. Klara is a data-driven machine, hence there is a one-to-one correlation between the words she communicates and their underlying meaning. However, in the context of the human characters there is always a discrepancy between the words, connotations, and their underlying emotions. Thus, Klara experiences pragmatic let-downs to develop an empathetic bonding with the humans, only to be starkly othered.

This paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on AI by critiquing the shortcomings of emotional computing that foresees a time and space where simulated humanoids develop an empathetic relationship with people. This paper reflects on the scope and feasibility of reducing human affective orders into algorithmic models that could be configured in a robot for manufacturing social companions. It interprets *Klara and the Sun* as a cultural artifact that philosophizes on the emotional ambiguities raised by the increasing social presence of the simulated minds. This paper concludes by stating that the domain of cognitive and emotional computing may refer to literary narratives that may be comprehended as “case studies or thought experiments” to reflect on the underlying theoretical flaws in scientific discourses that propose to reduce the complexities of human emotions into codes for designing data-driven empathetic beings. Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* emerges as a critique of this epistemic framework of technology that aspires to weaken the complexities of affective phenomenon into codes for manufacturing artificial friends.

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The Reverberation of Black Identity in Jazz Music

Rasal Sabu

Jazz, the rhythm of Blacks now enjoys the status as a widely favoured popular musical genre. The musical subgenre lays down a space upon which the culture and life of black, the pattern of orientation and way of behaviour get represented. The close reading of the song lyrics and the analysis of performance expose all the aspects of black life in the fabric of the songs played by Jazz musicians. The interpretation of the songs based on historical period, social and political unrest and economic inequality facilitate to dig out the representation of Black life within it.

Thus popular musical subgenre also reveals a kind of political dimensions as well as the cruel system of racism on the basis of colour. The lyricist and the musicians of jazz age concealed their rebellion against racial prejudice in a literal meaning of the songs. The explicit analysis of the songs only gives a literal meaning whereas a close reading can excavate the conflict, protest and anger against such an oppressive system. Singers like Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald were the initiators who sang against such an oppressive system through hidden meanings and expressions. Later, due to some legal reformation and shifting perception of the people, singers like Billie Holiday and Nina Simone could express their politics directly.

Ella Fitzgerald, the queen of jazz fascinated the listeners through her vocals. Her songs functioned as the torch bearers that shed light into the poor plight of Afro-American slaves. The traumatic experience of her childhood influenced her music to a great extent. The poor financial background and abject poverty forced Fitzgerald to earn some money through music. Though her songs explicitly express the theme of love and sexuality, we can associate these lyrics with that of black culture. Her song “A Tisket- A Tasket” brought enough fame and glory to Fitzgerald as a singer. The direct evaluation of the song produced the sense of a nursery rhyme that dealt with the purchase of a green and yellow basket.

A-Tisket A-Tasket

A green and yellow basket

I brought a basket for my mammie

On the way I dropped it

I dropped it; I dropped it (Fitzgerald, “A-Tisket ATasket”).

Here, the basket encompasses two colours. The two colours can be assumed as the co-existence of black and the white in the same landscape. Nevertheless, due to the racial prejudice and tension such a harmonious existence was impossible during that particular time. The dropping of the basket indirectly suggested such an impossibility or the separation between two races. The term “mammie” again signified the system of enslavement in which the black women who were destined to look after the children of whites, addressed as “mammie”. Again this song depicted a little girl who took the dropped basket. This little girl can be a representative of the poor blacks who roamed across the street in search of food or other living aids. In a way, this girl tried to sell two baskets at the market in order to earn some money to satisfy her stomach.

Ella Fitzgerald portrays the difference between white and black through the song “Summertime”. This song clearly picturises the luxurious life of white along with all the fortunes of living besides their black counterparts, who still live under the clutches of extreme poverty. The beginning of the song brings the picture of prosperous and plentiful society, as she sings,

Summertime,

And the living is easy

Fish are jumpin’

And the COHON is high (Fitzgerald, “Summertime”).

This song composed as a monologue in which a person addresses a rich baby. Due to the socio-historic background, one can assume that the addresser in the song is a poor black, who serves in the household of a rich white master. The addresser tries to console the crying baby by exposing the wealth and fortune in which he/she lives, the child is endowed with rich and beautiful parents. The child has wide platform in which he/she can thrive and flourish. Again Fitzgerald sings,

Your daddy’s rich

And your mamma’s god lookin’

So hush little baby

Don’t you cry

One of these mornings

You're going to rise up singing
Then you'll spread your wings
And you'll take to the sky. (Fitzgerald, "Summertime").

Through the portrayal of the rich baby, the singer indirectly invites our attention to the poor illiterate black folks, who never taste the glories of life.

Another landmark song in the career of Ella Fitzgerald is entitled as "Dream a little, Dream of me". In this joint venture with Louis Armstrong, Fitzgerald initiated the tradition of love song in Jazz music. The literal meaning of the song is very explicit, that deals with the theme of sensual love. Here the speaker imagined herself within the company of her lover who share love and kisses. The singer tried to picturize the idea of love and sexuality among black through such a great bond. She beautifully depicted the exchange of love through the lyrics

Say nighty-night and kiss me
Just hold me tight and tell me you'll miss me
While I'm alone and blue as can be
Dream a little dream of me (Fitzgerald, "Dream a little, Dream of me").

Through this song the singer urges the listeners or the Blacks to share love and to be proud of our Black identity by embracing our brothers and sisters. In his autobiography, *Dreams of My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, Barack Obama says,

I can't even hold my experience as being somehow representative of the black American experience... indeed learning to accept that particular truth-that I can embrace my black brothers and sisters, whether in this country or in Africa and affirm a common destiny without pretending to speak to, or for all our various struggles- is part of what this book's about. (xiv)

This song treated love as a medium through which the wounded self tries to attain a degree of solace. The tormented self always forgot his/her worries, when he/she is engulfed in the vast ocean of love. In this song, the speaker urged her counterpart to forget all the worries and live within love and dream. She sang again,

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you

Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you

But in your dream whatever that be

Dream a little dream of me. (Fitzgerald, “Dream a little, Dream of me”).

The tradition of love song in Jazz music again makes its imprint to the powerful lyrics of Fitzgerald entitled as “Let’s do it”. This song begins like a nursery rhyme through the lyrics,

When the little Blue bird who has never said a word

Starts to sing “spring, spring” (Fitzgerald, “Let’s do it”).

This song “Let’s do it” functions the harbinger of universal love and brotherhood. The singer urges the others to love each other irrespective of national boundaries, nature-culture binaries, racial prejudice and binary between good or evil and black and white. She points out that all creatures of nature including birds, bees, trees, monkeys, gold fish, jelly fish and electric eels love each other and live harmoniously in this earth. She again sings

In shallow shores

English soles do it Gold fish

in the privacy of bowls do it, Let’s do it, let’s fall in

love. (Fitzgerald, “Let’s do it”).

Along with this surface meaning, the song deserves a figurative interpretation as well. Here, the black singer ardently wishes to love others and to be loved by her fellow beings. The socio-historical context of America during 1950’s is very helpful to realise the arduous desires of black for love. The black Afro-Americans still live under the shackles of exclusion and enslavement due to their racial inferiority. The white landlords of America pushed back into deep pits of hatred where love only remains as a dream. These circumstances also forced her to sing such a song of love for the oppressed strata of society.

“Drop me off in Harlem” is another song of Fitzgerald that alludes to the place in which Harlem Renaissance took place. Due to the arrival of the Harlem Renaissance, the black artist could develop their talents through art, music and literature. In this song, Fitzgerald addresses a person to drop her in Harlem in order to enjoy the comfort of that place. She says she wants to live in even in the minute corner of Harlem in order to drink the elixir of heaven. This heavenly place facilitates her to flourish the revolutionary music through which she can fight

against injustice. Through this song she expresses her strong aversion to the southern states of America that are simmering with discontent, racial prejudice, social segregation and economic inequality. The paradoxical nature of the two places is visible through her lyrics

Drop me off in Harlem,
Any place in Harlem,
There's someone waiting there
Who makes it seem like
Heaven up in Harlem.
I don't want your Dixie,
You can keep your Dixie,
There's no one down in Dixie who can take me
'way from my hot Harlem. (Fitzgerald, "Drop me off in Harlem").

This song encompasses the features of swing and improvisation that play a crucial role in Jazz aesthetics. This song expresses improvisation through the repetition of a tone and slight variation of tone in its different performances. The feature of swing is very evident through the repetition of some phrases or idioms at the end of each stanza. For instance, the singer repeatedly sings

If Harlem moved to China,
I know of nothing finer,
Than to stow away on a plane, some day and have them
Drop me off in Harlem. (Fitzgerald, "Drop me off in Harlem").

Ella Fitzgerald juxtaposes hope and sorrow together through her song "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall". In this song, she portrays the rain of tears pour down from the suppressed class due to the dejection, rejection and refusal from the main stream society. The black Afro-Americans always remain at the margins and they are always engulfed in deep pit of sorrows due to their skin complexion. Even in the midst of oppression Fitzgerald brings a ray of hope through the phraseology "But some day the sun will shine". This song also evidently

manifests the aesthetic technique of improvisation and swing through repetition of phrases and variation of tone.

Into each life some rain must fall

But too much is falling in mine

Into each heart some tears must fall

But some day the sun will shine

Some folks can lose the blues in their hearts

But when I think of you another shower starts

Into each life some rain must fall

But too much is falling in mine (Fitzgerald, "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall").

The above lines repeat all through the song with an accomplishment of different stresses and intonations.

Along with her indirect expressions and phraseology Fitzgerald brought many stereotypes in question. She challenged the masculine world of music through her shrieking voice and clear vocals. As a black woman, she could subvert the racial disparity on the stage that was hitherto by white masculine performers. In other words, the assumed strength and courage to collapse the old traditions and to initiate new ways. As a singer, monumental figure and inspiration to many, her life and music serves as a window to the type of a power, a woman could achieve based on musical ability. Her lyrics later found its echoes in the performance of many other musicians.

The song "Summertime" extends its influence into its followers. The great legend Reggae Musician Bob Marley echoes Fitzgerald in his song "Black Survival". He delineates the social injustice against the blacks. The lyric attempts to demolish the binary fragmentation of the society on the basis of colour. Upper class white people always enjoy all the rights and dignity of human being whereas blacks were denied the right for education, better standards of living, acquire job in government office, and all the other rights and dignities. He strongly protests against such kinds of social evils that were prevalent during the 1950s. His lyrics openly expose the system of binary fragmentation and the struggle for black survival.

some people got fact and claims

some people got pride and shame
some people got the plots and schemes
some people got no aim it seems
we're the survivors, yes: The Black survivors like Shadrach, Meshach and
Abendhego (Bob Marley, "Black Survival").

Besides the queen of Jazz, Lewis Armstrong made his prolific contributions to the subgenre of popular music. He widely used the instrument Trumpet in order to encompass the aesthetic as well as political function of Jazz along with his lyrics. He gave prominence to individuality over technicality in Jazz music through variegated expressions. His individual expression included unusual energy, intensity and zest for living. Through his grave voice, he introduced a Jazz vocal style using scat, which influenced later vocal stars such as Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. His musical contributions defied conventional ideas about music and put American music on the world scene. Through his charismatic stage presence, image and recordings Armstrong became first African American entertainer who crossed racial disparities, geographical division and national boundaries.

"Nobody knows the trouble that I have seen" is an African- American spiritual song published in 1867. The first glance of the song gives an insight into its spiritual elements and a religious flavour. Nevertheless, this song can be attributed some other interpretations on the light of Emancipation Proclamation and Atlantic slave trade. Even though the great machinery and former president of America made Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the large number of West African blacks was transported into the land of USA through Atlantic slave trade. This ancient African American spiritual song later incorporated another meaning through the vocal of the jazz musician Louis Armstrong. Louis Armstrong attributed stresses and tone variations in different parts of this song to stir up the racial conflict and the struggle of black slaves.

This song clearly depicts the poor plight of African American black slaves during their journey into USA. Umpteen numbers of black slaves were bordered into a small ship in which they cannot either sit or stand upright. In his essay, "A Monster, A child, A Slave", George Lamming portrays the poor plight of Black American slaves in their ship journey as,

On ships the slaves were packed in the hold on galleries one above the other. Each was given only four or five feet in length and two or three feet in height so that they could neither lie at full length nor sit upright . . . In this position they lived for the voyage, coming up once a day for exercise and to allow the sailors ‘to clean the pails.’ But when the cargo was rebellious or the weather bad, then they stayed below for weeks at a time. The close proximity of so many human beings, their bruised and festering flesh, the fetid air, the prevailing dysentery, the accumulation of filth, turned these holds into hell . . . No place on earth, observed one writer of the time, concentrated so much misery as the hold of a slave ship. (97)

Here, the singer also joins with this passenger and reveals the sea trouble inside the ship. Sometimes the slaves fell into the ground whereas on some other occasions they had to stand at the air due to the overcrowding atmosphere in a small cabin. Nevertheless, these black slaves uphold a strong belief in Jesus Christ. They expose their troubles to the lord protector in order to save them from this hell.

This song juxtaposes the struggles and hope side by side. The black slaves are always forced to work and fight for the white elite whereas, they dwell in the pit of troubles. Even in the pit of these troubles, the black slaves shift hope for redemption through the healing touch of the omnipotent.

Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen Glory
Hallelujah
Sometimes I’m up, Sometimes I’m down
Ohh, yes Lord
Sometimes I’m almost To the ground
Oh yes Lord (Armstrong, “Nobody knows the trouble I have seen”).

The “Bare Necessities” is a song written by Tessy Gilkyson in 1967 for a Disney movie *Jungle Book*. This song directly portrays the harmonious existence of nature and its free flow. The lyrics of this song expose how each and every element of natural world enjoys the bliss of life through its available resources. These elements never worry about their bare necessities.

In the context of Civil Rights Movement during 1950's, the singer Louis Armstrong gives a new rhythm and meaning to this nature rhyme.

Here, the singer addresses a marginal section of people who always wandered around in search of their bare necessities. As the phrase itself suggests, these elements are required to live in this planet. Here, definitely the addressee must be from a black community who never has such necessary services or commodities to sustain their life. They were denied the glory of letters, health facilities, nutritious food, clean drinking water and equal position in the society. These black people always drown in a pool of worries from which they try to liberate and survive in the land. However, the society dominated by the white elite masters only acknowledges the Blacks as the mule of the world. The singer Armstrong addresses the black folk to forget their worries regarding bare necessities and live at the lap of nature. The singer proclaims nature as the guide, the guardian and the nurse for those who are suppressed and oppressed by the racial disparity and the prejudice of the society.

Don't spend your time just lookin' around
For something you want, can't be found
You find out you can live without it
And go along, not thinkin' about it
I'll tell you something true
The bare necessities of life will come to you
They'll come to you, they'll come to you
They'll come to you, oh yes (Armstrong, "Bare Necessities").

The spirit of the song "Bare Necessities" later found its manifestation through the lyrics of many popular musicians. For instance, the great singer Bob Marley wrote and sung the song "Want More" in which he lamented over the right of Blacks denied by the White rulers. Through this song he tried to gain the bare necessities of blacks such as education, healthcare, freedom of movement, equal pay for equal work and so on. These bare necessities would emancipate the black folk from the clutches of enslavement.

Even after years of Emancipation Proclamation the blacks still lived under the shackles of slavery. They could not enjoy the bliss of democracy, the facilities of new development and

technological innovations. They have to sell the brain and brawn or the flesh and blood to the white masters in order to eke out their livelihood. The blacks of America organised themselves under the leadership of Martin Luther King Junior in order to break all the stereotypes in the society. Thus this new struggle marked the beginning of Civil Rights Movement in America during 1960's. The Civil Rights Movement was given the backbone of music, through the protest songs of Nina Simone.

Nina Simone, the unique voice of American music gave a new direction to the Civil Rights Movement through her voice. This gifted musician of 20th century tried to protest against all the injustice committed by the government or non-governing bodies. She attempted to subvert or criticise the existing order not only through her music, but also through her appearance. The songs of Nina Simone "Backlash Blues", "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free", "Why? (The King of Love is Dead)", "To be Young, Gifted and Black" and "Mississippi Goddamn", shade the legacy of protest, liberation and love.

Nina Simone aroused her direct protest against racial discrimination through the song "Backlash Blues". This song explicitly portrayed how a white ruling class established the racial division within the society on the basis of their colour. Nina Simone here addressed the White elite ruler to inform him, her grievances regarding struggles and sufferings of black people as a whole. The ruling class treated the blacks as second grade citizens. They squeezed enormous taxes from the blacks in return of humiliation, degeneration and dejection. The poor children of black people compelled to join with the forces of Vietnam to fight for the nation irrespective of all these ill-treatment. She again said that the white masters always exploited the black labourers by freezing their wages even though they shed their sweat from dawn to dusk.

Mr. Backlash, Mr. Backlash

Just who do think I am

You raise my taxes, freeze my wages

And send my son to Vietnam (Simone, "Backlash Blues").

Here, the addressee considered blacks as the second grade, subservient and subordinated mass. George Lipsitz in his book, *How Racism Takes Place* says,

A large and unrefuted body of research reveals how the economic standing of millions of white families today stems directly from the unfair gains and unjust enrichments made possible by past and present forms of racial discrimination. A wide range of public and private actions protect the assets and advantages that whites have inherited from their ancestors, wealth originally accumulated during eras when direct and overt discrimination in government policies, home sales, mortgage lending, education, and employment systematically channeled assets to whites. (17)

They even denied them a good shelter or a good job. The rulers always made insurmountable obstacles in the trajectory of black liberation. Nevertheless, the singer expressed her hope of emancipation at the end. The final lines of the song invoked a tone of revolution through which the black can emancipate from the miseries and struggles.

Mr. Backlash, Mr. Backlash

Just what do you think I got to lose

I'm gonna leave you

With the backlash blues'

You're the one who will have the blues

Not me, just wait and see (Simone, "Backlash Blues").

A far cry for freedom can be heard through the song of freedom by Nina Simone entitled as "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free". This song echoes the ardent wishes of a soul who still lives under the shackles of enslavement. Here, the speaker expresses her wish to attain a paradise of freedom and enlightenment. The speaker now feels a lack of freedom and misfortune. She cannot realise the real taste of freedom. She cannot express her feelings through words or she cannot share the love which is excess in her heart. She wonders regarding a state in which she could drink the elixir of freedom, freedom of expression, love and action. She sings,

And I wish I knew how

It would feel to be free

I wish I could break

All the chains holdin' me

I wish I could say

All the things that I should say (Simone, 1967)

She addresses a person in the stanza in order to make him realise the shocking reality of enslavement. She likes to do all the things that she can do as a human being. She has an ardent desire to live with all the dignities and integrities in spite of her black skin. She wishes to be a bird up in the sky to fly across the chains of enslavement, walls of imprisonment and borders of racial disparity.

Well I wish I could be

Like a bird up in the sky

How sweet it would be

If I found out I could fly

So long to my song

And look down upon the sea. (Simone, 1967)

“Why? (The *King of Love Is Dead*)” is a song in which Nina Simone picturizes the instability and the uncertainty of black folk in a land of democracy. The white masters cover the mysterious and painful life of black with polished lies. They never expose the real poor plight of black to the world beyond their territory. Nevertheless the black folk now identify their pathetic conditions and existential crisis. The king of love is dead and the shadow of death descended upon the black.

The black folk of USA always walk through the valley of shadow of death. The guns, police lathis and other modern equipment always threaten black with death. The existence of black faces challenges from every corner of society.

We can all shed tears, it won't change a thing

Teach your people, will they ever learn?

Must you always kill with burn and burn with guns

And kill with guns and burn, don't you know how

We gotta react? (Simone “Why? (The King of Love is Dead”).

Here the singer laments at the lack of love between black and white. The white elite class always exploits the black masses in order to earn enormous profit. In other words, the white masters killed the king of love and the blacks never enjoy the elixir of love from their fellow counterparts. The racial disparity in a way causes the annihilation of king of love.

Nina Simone propagates black pride and black identity through her song “To Be Young, Gifted and Black”. This song serves as an anthem of black which instils a great pride in their Afro-American roots. The speaker here cherishes the dream to be a young gifted black. She urges her black brethren to feel a proud in their racial identity. The world is filled with millions of black boys and girls. These black talents in a way consolidated the present world through their flesh and blood. She again inspires the black listeners by saying that you need not dwell in the deep pit of despair. To be young, gifted and black is a state that always help far to spread the wings to fly high through the sky.

When you feel really low

Yeah, there's great truth you should know

When you're young, gifted and black

Your souls intact (Simone, “To be Young, Gifted and Black”).

She carries her black pride throughout her performance. She chooses the black dress and the appearance of a typical black descendent on the stage. When she sings to ‘be young gifted and black’, she reverberates the real rhythm of black identity. In his article “The Quadruple- Consciousness of Nina Simone”, Malk Gaines reflects,

The men in the band wore dashikis, while Simone wore an elegant black suit, made fashionably militant with high black boots and a large afro hairstyle, accessorized with silver jewellery, Cleopatra- style eye makeup and a corsage. The song suited the college gymnasium setting as its repetitive refrains and simple melody, convey a direct, pedagogical quality removed from Simone's jazziest techniques. (250)

Nina Simone makes a violent cry against racial discrimination and institutional violence through her long lyric “Mississippi Goddam”. “Mississippi Goddam” is a song that functions as an elegy to be mourned at the death of civil right activist Medgar Evers. It also reveals a big voice of protest against the bombing of a church in Alabama that brutally massacred four

black girls. In her autobiography *I Put A Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone*, she recollects the circumstances which made her to write such a heart broken lyric,

The bombing of the little girls in Alabama and the Murder of Medgar Evers were like the final pieces of jigsaw that made no sense until you had fitted the whole thing together. I suddenly realized what it was to be black in America in 1963, but it wasn't an intellectual connection of the type Lorraine had been repeating to me over and over- it came as a rush of fury, hatred, and determination. In church language, The Truth entered into me and I "came through." (11)

Along with the institutional violence this song registers a far cry against racial disparity in economic inequality and gender subordination. Throughout this song, Simone's mind restlessly travelling through Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi in order to comprehend the simmering heat of hatred and revelry on the basis of their skin colour. Even though the great American leader Abraham Lincoln issued emancipation proclamation in 1863 they still live under the shadows and slavery even after hundred years. This 1964 anthem explores into the mind of a black person who has uninhibited rage in her mind.

The black folk of United States always do all the menial kind of jobs including washing, cleaning, planting and so on. The white masters always give instructions and punishment as a reward to their hard work. They never allowed the black to cash the cheque was issued for them by the great leader hundred years ago. Here, the singer reveals the fact that delaying justice is tantamount to denying justice. Whenever the black demands the justice and equality the white always say that will gradually come to you. Nevertheless the singer is unwilling to acknowledge the biggest lie in the world anymore. She says,

All I want is equality
For my sister my brother my people and me
Yes you lived to me all these years
You told me to wash and clean my ears
And talk real fine just like a lady
And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie
Oh but this whole country is full of lies

You're gonna die and die like flies. (Simone, "Mississippi Goddam").

Another song of Nina Simone is entitled as "Four Women" deals with the issues with black women during the second part of 20th century. This lyric brings us the picture of four black women who are suffering from various problems like slavery, identity crisis, pain and sexual degradation. The singer depicts the African- American archetypes in order to realize the real poor plight of Aunt Sarah, Suffronia, Sweet Thing and Peaches. Aunt Sarah is a strong woman, strong enough to bear the burden of pain and enslavement inflicted upon her race. Suffronia suffers from identity crisis due to her mixed blood. Suffronia's mother was a black who had to yield to the lust of the white rich master. This incident shows how black women faced sexual atrocities during such a period. The third girl Sweet Thing lives as a prostitute in the land. She finds acceptance among black and white due to her ability to give sexual gratification for both. The picture of Peaches, the fourth girl in the song blends the issues of women and racial prejudice. She says that she is a tough girl made her life a bitter experience due to the enslavement of her parents. According to Nina Simone,

The women in the song are black, but their skin tone ranges from light to dark and their ideas of beauty and their own importance are deeply influenced by that. All the song did was to tell what entered the minds of most black women in America when they thought about themselves: their complexions, their hair straight, kinky, natural, which? - and what other women thought of them. Black women didn't know what the hell they wanted because they were defined by things they didn't control, and until they had the confidence to define themselves, they'd be stuck in the same mess forever- that was the point the song made. (36)

"Four Women" complicates race consciousness with gender consciousness. This politically controversial song has its own significance in which Simone identifies external physical characteristics through which black women achieved self- consciousness, by their complexion, hair and so on. The final woman, Peaches makes a political statement not found on others. White bound to a historical situation this figure is able to define herself, thus bringing the song to a close, as Simone reaches her distinctly unsubtle final crescendo, wailing ironically, "My Name is Peaches" while Peaches does not control her historical era and is dissonant with her own name, her act of self- definition transgresses the repetitive groove in which these women circulate.

The predicaments that black women face, like the women in Simone's "Four Women" is indeed the legacies of enslavement, particularly the negative effect of that race, gender and class oppression had and still have on Black women. In contrast to the notion of lascivious Black women, there was also the Aunt Sarah figure who represented a persona of a sexual sloth. At the other extreme were rough and crude Black women who were not worthy of being called ladies because of their appearance just as the character Peaches. Simone addressed the issues of gender inequality that America attributed to black women in terms of beauty that consequently determines their fate. According to Alice Walker, by analyzing Jean Toomer, "they lay vacant and fallow as autumn fields with harvest time never in sight: and he saw them enter loveless marriages, without joy; and become prostitutes, without resistance; and become mothers of children, without fulfillment" (15).

Nina Simone expresses a strong desire to surpass the boundaries of racism through her poem "Fodder in Her Wings". Her journey across the globe gives her an insight into the prosperous life of France, Switzerland, England and so on. The people of these countries harmoniously live together by following the slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity. Nevertheless Simone has an experience of enslavement in her native place. She cries,

A bird fell to earth, reincarnated from her birth.

She had fodder in her wings.

She had dust inside her brains.

She fitted here and there

United States, Switzerland, France, England,

Everywhere.

With fodder in her wings.

And dust inside her brains.

Oh how sad. Oh how sad. Oh how sad. (Simone, "Fodder in Her Wings").

Simone's lyrics describe variations of psychological bondage that some Black women have found to be a limitation of their condition as human beings. The descriptions of female physical features help Simone to create a symbolic structure through which she can invoke the sense of physical enslavement. Therefore, Simone's compositions can be considered as a

source of identity, of reaffirmation. In this way, Simone's songs are beautiful, even though the circumstances that fostered the content of those songs were not.

Along with Nina Simone, Billie Holiday too voiced against injustice, inequality and brutality. She used her vocals to reveal the real fact of racial disparity that was prevalent in the land of America. Her battle against racism had a profound influence upon the American Civil Rights Movement that took place during 1960's. Most of her songs dealt with the themes such as death, violence and division. Her famous song the "Strange Fruit" was enough to comprehend how the American society treated the Black African American decedents. This song clearly depicts, how institutionalized violence can suppresses a section of society. Brown defines institutional violence as an act that "violates the personhood of another in ways that are psychologically destructive" (1).

The "Strange Fruit" is a song that carries the listeners into the southern States of America. The southern states like Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama were infamous for the simmering heat of racism. The white masters only acknowledge the Black as the mule of the world. This song "Strange Fruit" clearly demolishes the exercised portrayal or the romantic representation of Blacks in some literature. This song echoes the rhythm of a pastoral poetry. The single glance of the lyric provides us with the scenic beauty of southern land. The magnolia trees spread the sweet fragrance with the wind. The trees are rich with strange fruits.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south

The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth

Scent oh magnolias, sweet and fresh

Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is fruit for me crows to pluck

For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck

For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop

Here is a strange and bitter crop. (Holiday, "Strange Fruit").

This song records the poor plight of black labourers too. If we read between the lines, one can distinguish the sufferings and struggles to Blacks from the typical nature rhyme. All the leaves and roots of the fruit bearing trees contain the blood of black folks. The black bodies

are destined to burn under the scorching sun. The poor labourers have to toil from dawn to dusk in return for bitter strange fruit in the form of whip shot, physical torture and emotional harassment. Along with the sweet fragrance of the magnolia tree the smell of burning flesh also filled in the wind blowing across the land.

Southern trees bear strange fruit

Blood on the leaves and blood at the root

Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze

Strange fruit hanging from the popular trees. (Holiday, "Strange Fruit").

The civil right movement during 1950's gave a new direction, charm and vigor to the most popular subgenre of jazz music. The bold voices exposed the poor plight of blacks through their explicit lyrics. Lyricists like Nina Simone and Billie Holiday unleashed harsh criticism against hypocrisy, racism, gender subordination and sexual violence. Their songs openly attempted to wipe out the psychological as well as the physical barriers across the world.

The pages of American history are replete with riots, revolts, revolution and resistance. Despite of its status as a most developed nation in this single polar world, a group of people still experiences trauma and torture. This group always faces oppression in the name of their racial inferiority. These subjugated blacks always try to liberate some exploitation and freedom from fear. In this venture, they use variegated forms of cultural texts in which music plays a crucial role. According to McAlister, "music is a transportation device, a sonic bridge linking past, present and future through the bodies of singers and musicians and hearers alike" (31). The popular subgenre of music Jazz helps the subjugated people of America in their journey towards freedom.

The spring of Jazz began to bloom in the fertile land of New Orleans. Initially this subgenre of music found no space in the artistic realm where as later it performed as the finest medium to represent black identity. Unlike the classical music it made use of some elements of folk culture through its instrumentation, appearance of the artist and aesthetic stimulations. Most of the instruments in Jazz Music like drum, trumpet, saxophone and piano closely associated with the common life of the people. Swing, improvisation, scat singing and rhythmical syncopation gave some aesthetic stimulation for this musical subgenre. This aesthetic elements in a way differentiated Jazz Music from all other popular music form.

Interlinking some concepts like culture, popular culture, music, popular music and Jazz music, this article gives a clear picture of the connection between the popular music and Jazz. It also states how popular culture and its subgenres especially Jazz become an ordinary aspect of life. It makes a close analysis of the music, lyrics and performance of Jazz musician. Ella Fitzgerald, the first lady of songs used her vocals to express her protest against oppression. She used the medium of music and its lyrics in an indirect way in order to mock at the existing social order. Her songs such as “A- Tisket, A- Tasket”, “Summertime”, “Dream a Little Dream of Me” and “Drop Me Off In Harlem” concealed her anger and frustration with in a literal meaning. Along with Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong made his footprint in the realm of Jazz through his vocals and trumpet. He used many Afro American spiritual songs in order to convey the hidden protest against domination. His songs such as “Who Knows the Troubles I have Seen” and “The Bare Necessities” indirectly portrayed the poor plight of Afro American slaves who were transported to America as part of Atlantic slave trade.

The singer and activist Nina Simone directly expressed her anger against inequality and injustice. Her songs had the power to break the walls of oppression which were consolidated by the white masters. Through her songs such as “Mississippi Goddam” and “Backlash Blues”, she made an outcry against discrimination, inequality, unfair taxation and institutionalized violence. Her song “Four Women” clearly depicted the poor plight of Black Women, whereas the song “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” proudly asserted her identity as a Black American. Like Nina Simone, Billie Holiday also sung against institutionalized violence. Her song “Strange Fruit” picturized the poor plight of four girls who were assassinated due to the bomb blast at the church in Alabama.

Thus, we conclude, music and social justice are crucially associated with each other. The diachronic study of music proved that many socio historical changes and political reformation took place with an accompaniment of soul stirring music. Popular music is incapable of transforming the people through its rich ingredients such as instrumentation, rhythm and demeanor. Like all other popular music form Jazz also brings a revolution among the people. Jazz music always gives a voice to the voiceless downtrodden and oppressed strata of the society. It never engulfed in the pit of commercialism and its branches, but instead it transforms moves and elevates the secondary subservient and subordinate masses into the world of liberty, equality and fraternity

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Epistolary and Historical 'I' in Franz Kafka's *Letter to His Father*

Safna C. M.

The many humiliations, difficulties and disappointments of my youth have been followed by an intense preoccupation with memory.

- Franz Kafka, "Reflections on Sin, Pain, Hope, and the True Way"

Born into a German-speaking Jewish family in Prague, Franz Kafka wrote some of the most haunting and enigmatic works of fiction in the 20th century. He was born to Julie Löwy and Hermann Kafka into a prosperous middle-class Jewish family on the 3rd of July 1833. Kafka received a doctorate in law from the University of Prague in 1906. But after doing a one-year mandatory service as a lawyer, he grew out of interest for the same. He later worked in several firms and became committed to literature.

This German speaking writer is widely regarded as a proponent of the modernist literary tradition. Kafka's work is characterized by nightmarish settings in which characters are crushed by nonsensical, blind authority. Thus, the word *Kafkaesque* is often applied to bizarre and impersonal administrative situations where the individual feels powerless to understand or control what is happening (Encyclopaedia).

The first of Kafka's published works were eight of his short stories which were printed in the first edition of the literary journal *Hyperion* under the title "Betrachtung". Several of his stories were published later on, among which *Das Urteil* (The Judgement) and *Die Verwandlung* (The Metamorphosis) were the most popular. The writer did not complete any of his full-length novels. His widely acclaimed novels include *Der Process* (The Trial) and *Das Schloss* (The Castle), both of which were published posthumously by his close Kafka has had a complicated relationship with his family members throughout his life. Two of his brothers died in infancy, which made him the eldest child of the family. He also had three younger sisters among whom, Ottla, the youngest was his favourite. He had a strained relationship with his mother who was extremely compliant and devoted to his tyrant of a father. Julie failed to recognize her son's artistic inclination and literary talent and was of no help. Hermann Kafka somehow assumed the form of a villain in his son's life. The former's domineering and controlling attitude towards the latter deeply affected his social and mental well-being. Franz Kafka was constantly degraded by his father his whole life, for choosing literature over law, and their family business. Several of his characters were a reflection of Hermann and his oppressive

behavior. He suffered from tuberculosis during his later years and the disease became the cause of his death in 1924.

The *Letter to His Father* is a renowned letter written by Franz Kafka to his father Hermann Kafka in the November of 1919. In the letter, Kafka attempts to confront his difficult relationship with his father and express his feelings of resentment and frustration.

“Dear Father,

You asked me recently why I maintain that I am afraid of you. As usual, I didn’t know how to answer you, partly because of the fear that grips me whenever I’m confronted by you” (Kafka 1). Kafka begins by addressing his father directly, expressing his fear and anxiety about their relationship. He describes his childhood as marked by fear and humiliation, recounting instances where his father would berate him for minor offenses or punish him for no reason. Kafka also expresses his frustration at his father’s lack of support for his writing, which he sees as a rejection of his true self.

Throughout the letter, Kafka struggles to articulate his feelings and fears, often contradicting himself and expressing conflicting emotions. He vacillates between anger and sadness, bitterness and longing, as he tries to come to terms with his past and present. The prospect of remembering his unfortunate past for the purpose of retelling disturbs his mind.

Kafka says:

What I have in mind is the following: your faults as a father and a husband have contributed, along with other causes and factors, to a total loss of security and happiness in my life, to a weakening and crippling of my personality that I can still feel, and to a definite estrangement between us that has so far stood in the way of every attempt at mutual understanding. (17)

These memories are vivid and powerful, and they continue to shape Kafka’s sense of himself as a person who is unworthy, inadequate, and misunderstood. At the same time, Kafka’s memories are not static or fixed, but rather dynamic and fluid. Throughout the letter, he revises and reinterprets his memories, adding new details, changing his perspective, and reevaluating his emotional reactions. On one hand, he expresses gratitude for the financial support his father provided him and his family, but on the other hand, he also feels emotionally distant and criticized by him. Kafka describes his father as a domineering figure who instilled

fear and anxiety in him as a child. He recalls instances of physical punishment and emotional neglect that left a lasting impression on him.

In *Letter to His Father*, Kafka describes an incident in which he cried out for water as a child, but his father punished him by putting him out on the balcony. The following are the exact quotations from the letter that describe this incident:

I still have a vivid memory of how I once cried for water and you put me out on the balcony instead. I was still quite young then and hardly knew what I was doing. But that's how you were in those days, and in the same way you're probably still behaving toward me now, except that it's no longer possible to put me out on the balcony. (3)

Kafka goes on to describe how this incident affected him emotionally: "I've often thought about that incident since then. It seemed so monstrous to me at the time that I couldn't believe it was really happening. I was filled with despair and a sense of utter loneliness, and the feeling of being abandoned has never left me since then" (3).

Kafka expresses resentment towards the idea of becoming a man like his father. He describes feeling pressured to live up to his father's expectations and follow in his footsteps, but also feeling a sense of rebellion against this idea. One way to interpret Kafka's use of memory in the letter is to see it as a way of constructing and reinforcing his identity as a writer and as a person who is different from his father. By revisiting and revising his memories, Kafka is able to assert his own subjectivity and to resist his father's attempts to control him. At the same time, he is also able to recognize the ways in which his father's behavior has shaped him and to acknowledge his own complicity in their troubled relationship.

In *Kafka: The Decisive Years* by Reiner Stach, Kafka's strained relationship with his father is a recurring theme. The author describes how Kafka's father, Hermann Kafka, was a domineering figure who exerted a great deal of control over his son's life, often criticizing and belittling him for his choices and interests. Stach writes that Kafka's father had high expectations for his son to succeed in a career that would bring him financial stability and social status, but Kafka was more interested in pursuing his literary passions. This created tension between them, as Kafka's father saw his son's creative pursuits as a waste of time and a threat to his prospects for success.

This serves the task of analyzing the 'historical significance' of Kafka's *Letter to His Father* using the theory of memory studies. The historical context of Kafka's time is evident

in his letter. Kafka lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period known as the modernist era. This was a time of significant social, cultural, and technological change in Europe, characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and scientific progress. The modernist era was marked by a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation, as many people struggled to come to terms with the rapid pace of change and the loss of traditional values and ways of life.

Kafka's life and work were influenced by the political and social climate of the time, including the rise of authoritarianism, the spread of nationalist movements, and the growing tensions that eventually led to the outbreak of World War I. Kafka's writing often explored themes of alienation, isolation, and anxiety, reflecting the sense of dislocation and unease that many people felt during this period.

Through his personal experiences and reflections, Kafka serves as a chronicler of his times, providing insight into the everyday realities and struggles of life in early 20th century Central Europe. One example of this is Kafka's descriptions of his work life and the labour conditions of the time. He writes about the long hours and low pay of his job at an insurance company, as well as the monotony and soullessness of modern work. His descriptions of the workplace provide a window into the realities of industrialization and the changing nature of work in the early 20th century. Kafka also touches on the political and social tensions of his time. In *Letter to His Father*, he describes his own struggles with anti-Semitic discrimination and the rise of nationalism in Europe. He writes about the increasing sense of fear and uncertainty in the face of these developments, and his own feelings of alienation and isolation as a result.

While Franz Kafka's *Letter to His Father* was written before the Holocaust and cannot be considered Holocaust literature, it can be seen as an extension of Holocaust literature in several ways. First, the letter deals with themes that are central to Holocaust literature, such as trauma, memory, and the struggle for identity in the face of oppression. Kafka's descriptions of his father's authoritarianism, emotional abuse, and neglect are reminiscent of the experiences of many Holocaust survivors who were subjected to similar forms of violence and deprivation. Second, the letter can be seen as a precursor to the kind of introspective and self-reflective writing that emerged in Holocaust literature after World War II. Kafka's candid and raw account of his troubled relationship with his father, as well as his attempts to make sense of his own identity and place in the world, prefigure the confessional and autobiographical modes of writing that would become a hallmark of Holocaust literature.

Finally, Kafka's letter can be read as a critique of the kind of bureaucratic and authoritarian systems that enabled the Holocaust to occur. Kafka's father, with his love of rules and regulations, his obsession with discipline and efficiency, and his lack of empathy or compassion, can be seen as a prototype for the kind of bureaucrat who carried out the atrocities of the Holocaust. The Bureaucratic dominance of the time is portrayed through the patriarchal dominance of his father. In *Letter to His Father*, Franz Kafka portrays his father Hermann Kafka as a bureaucrat who places great value on order, efficiency, and control. Kafka describes his father's work as a successful entrepreneur and his rise to power as a municipal employee, highlighting his father's focus on achievement and status.

He describes his father's personality as domineering and authoritarian, with a tendency towards rigidity and inflexibility. He writes, "You have always been the master and the authority, and your power has been felt by everyone around you" (27). Hermann Kafka's bureaucratic tendencies are also reflected in his relationship with his son. Kafka describes his father as controlling and demanding, with a tendency to impose his will on others. He writes, "You have always wanted to shape me in your own image and mold me according to your own desires" (27). Kafka portrays his father as a bureaucrat who values control, authority, and order, both in his work and in his personal life. His descriptions provide insight into the culture and values of early 20th century Central Europe, and the impact that these values had on family dynamics and personal relationships.

As an individual, Kafka was extremely intimidated by his father. In his letter, he expresses his feelings of inadequacy and never feeling like he was enough in his father's presence. He writes about his fear of disappointing his father, his inability to live up to his expectations, and his feelings of being overshadowed by his father's success. Here is a quotation from *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami that describes Kafka's social struggle: "I'm all alone in this world, she said, all alone with my memories and my hallucinations. It's a difficult position to be in. Kafka nodded sympathetically. He knew how hard it was, the struggle to preserve what was real and important in a world that valued nothing more than wealth and power" (61).

This quote highlights Kafka's struggle to find his place in a society that values material success and conformity over personal authenticity and individuality. He feels isolated and alone, and is in search of something real and meaningful amidst the superficiality and emptiness of modern life. In the context of Kafka's *Letter to His Father*, Halbwachs's concept of collective memory can be used to analyze the ways in which Kafka's personal memories and

experiences are shaped by the social and cultural context in which he lived. The letter is not just an expression of Kafka's individual memories and emotions, but also reflects the broader cultural and social forces that shaped his experiences.

An excerpt from Halbwachs's book *On Collective Memory* that is particularly relevant to Kafka's letter is: "Memory, like imagination, is always active and selective, and its selection, like that of imagination, is guided by the present" (38). This excerpt suggests that our memories are not just passive recollections of the past, but are actively shaped by our present experiences and cultural frameworks. In the case of Kafka, his memories of his relationship with his father are shaped by the social and cultural norms of his time, which placed a strong emphasis on familial duty and patriarchal authority.

On the whole, Kafka's *Letter to His Father* offers a rich and complex case study of how memory shapes our sense of self, our emotional reactions, and our relationships with others. By analyzing the letter from a memory studies perspective, we can gain new insights into the psychological dynamics of family relationships, as well as into the nature of memory itself. Letters as a form of life writing are written to establish or to maintain personal contacts between real people. Hence, they do not just mirror existing social relations. Rather, social relationships are imagined, organized, and exchanged through them. This article was a serious attempt to place Kafka's *Letter to his father*, in its historical context and read it side by side with other historical and political experiences within the theoretical framework of cultural memory studies. From the analysis of Kafka's *Letter to His Father* within the epistemological framework of cultural memory studies, the following conclusions can be drawn.

One of the key contributions of this research project has been to shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of personal and cultural memory. This study shows that memory is not a fixed or objective entity, but rather a dynamic and contested process that is shaped by a variety of factors, including social and cultural context, individual perspective, and the passage of time. By examining Franz Kafka's *Letter to his Father* through the lens of memory studies, this study also draws new insights into the complexities of memory and its role in shaping our understanding of the past.

Life writings such as letters play a crucial role in the study of memory and the past. They offer a unique insight into the author's personal experiences and perspectives, and allows to better understand the historical context in which they were written. Memory studies, as an

emerging interdisciplinary field, provides valuable tools and frameworks for analyzing and interpreting these life writings. By examining the complex relationships between personal and cultural memory, memory studies enables to gain a deeper understanding of how the past is remembered, constructed, and transmitted (Saunders 322). This study also shows that life writings like Kafka's *Letter to His Father* offer a rich source of personal and cultural memory, and provide new insights into the complexities of one's relationship to the past.

Kafka writes in the letter, "My life consists of an endless series of attempts to bring things into harmony with each other, but it always ends in the same dissonance" (94). This struggle to reconcile conflicting memories and identities is a central theme not only in Kafka's letter, but in his other works as well. One of the most striking features of Kafka's literary oeuvre is the way in which it reflects the complex social and political context of early 20th century Europe. Kafka's works are characterized by a sense of fragmentation, alienation, and dislocation that reflects the larger historical forces of modernization, industrialization, and political upheaval that were transforming European society at the time. This larger historical context is also evident in Kafka's *Letter to his Father* which reflects not only the personal struggles of the author, but the larger social and cultural forces that were shaping his identity and experience. Overall, Kafka's works reflect the anxieties and uncertainties of his time, particularly regarding the rise of authoritarianism, the erosion of individual freedom, and the dehumanizing effects of modern society.

Life writing started to get better prominence and critical reception in academia since the emergence of memory studies (Sturken 467). As such, this study also delves into the recovery of personal writings like letters, diaries and memoirs which has enriched the field of identity politics by establishing (auto)biographical counterculture. This study highlights the importance of bringing together different disciplines and perspectives in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena such as memory.

This paper opens up several possibilities for future research on the subject. One such area for further exploration could be the analysis of archival and monumental properties of subjective writings and its role in shaping one's identity. The emotional abuse and torture that Kafka was subjected to as a child contributed to the shaping of his identity in the future. The relationship between memory and trauma could be applied to conduct a research in the subject. In conclusion, this dissertation has demonstrated the rich and complex relationship between Kafka's letter to his father, memory studies, and historical analysis.

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The Tale of Two Cultures: Making of a Hero and the African “Other”

Teen Maria George

The colonized man is an envious man. And the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly always on the defensive, “They want to take our place”. It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day settling himself upon the settler’s place.

Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth* 30)

The popular cultural constructions often depict the natives of the African and other colonies in animal imagery which has a dehumanizing effect. This discursive practice of alienation and Othering is present in most of the comic narratives by Herge. Gayathri Spivak argues that “Othering” is a western colonial practice constituting the ideology of imperialism and the motivations to civilize the East. Her concept, “axiomatics of imperialism” refers to Kant’s argument that only civilized and educated European men have access to sublime, while non European subjects are stripped of culture and humanity and relegated to the place of an unrepresentable irrational Other (19). In the process of “Othering”, the self is centered and glorified while the Other is vilified and silenced. The strategies of “Othering” include the use of binary oppositions, unvoicing and dehumanizing.

The comic begins as Tintin, the detective is leaving to Congo, a country in Central Africa. More than half of the inhabitants of the country follow traditional beliefs and the rest of them follow Christianity. The area is also dominated by the Bantu-speaking tribe. The European colonization of the place began in late nineteenth century.

Tintin and his companion dog Snowy take leave of their country to Congo with the wishes and blessings of the people of Belgium. They board a ship to Congo. As they enter they are welcomed by a native man who calls Tintin “master”. Soon Snowy encounters with a lot of troubles and it happens that he falls off from the ship. The Black man in the ship crew is reluctant to help the dog while Tintin the brave “master” jumps off the ship and saves Snowy. This act would not have been worth noticing if it was not for Tintin who calls himself a “real man”. This is a typical scene of introducing a hero figure in popular adventure so as to highlight his heroism and “savior” image. Snowy often refers to Tintin as a brave man and keeps on admiring him while he complains about the Africans. As Said observes, the European man is the “real man” while feminine quality of timidity, reluctance and fear is attributed to the blacks.

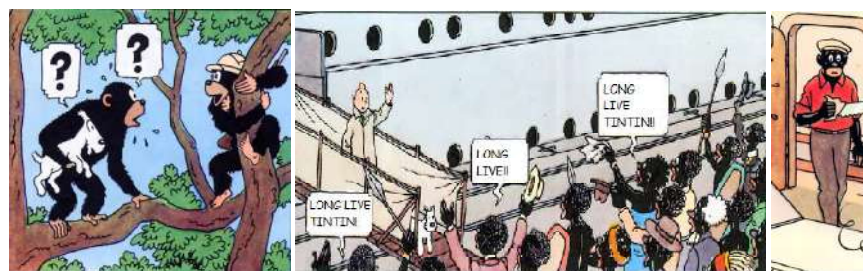
The European dog is also a master to the black, as it can be seen from the strip, where a black man calls Snowy a “master dog”.



[Fig.1. Tintin calls himself a “real man” and the black man is humiliated (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 13).

A very humiliating instance can be drawn from the comic when the African men and the monkeys that appear in it look very much similar to each other. This implies that the “evolution” of the black people has not yet taken place or no change is effected on them since the origin of the species. Herge employs an animal imagery in the comic. The most primitive form of Homo sapiens, monkeys are used to represent the Africans.

When Tintin is in danger the monkeys could save him as they imitated Tintin throwing a stone at the enemy. The same is the case with the people, who are considered no better than the monkeys, as they imitate the white men taking them to be the best and efficient ones. It also reminds that Tintin as a European is “travelling back in time” not just to find some people with their culture that has not “evolved” but also to confront a group that has not been affected by the phenomena of evolution.



[Fig.2. The caricatures of the monkeys appear to be an obvious parody of native people (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 17, 30).

To begin the journey in Congo and to guide them through the land Tintin is in need of a guide and when Tintin mentions this to Snowy he talks not of a guide but of a “boy”. The use of the word boy is a sign of disrespect. It is considered as offensive as calling someone a “nigger”. Meanwhile Snowy is concerned about the difficulties that are going to conjure up. He is informed by Tintin that more than the mosquitoes it is a land of “beasts”. He is eager to take some precautions to protect himself. The natives were already seen as exotic and dangerous creatures. It is even more appalling to read Snowy commenting on the blacks. Tintin finds a “boy” Coco to accompany them in the journey. Coco obediently agrees to accompany them. But Snowy resorts to be quite judgmental when he says that Coco doesn’t look very bright.



[Fig.3. Tintin refers to the African as a boy and Snowy comments on him (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 21).

In Congo Tintin faces many a troubles that he solves for himself and it is often associated with the attacking of some animals or the natives who are unaware about the fact that Tintin is a “brave” detective. The Congo Pygmies are mostly hunter-gatherers who feed on the wild products of the forest. The Congo Pygmies were regarded as a sub-race of Negroid by European anthropologists in the late nineteenth century.

There is an instance in the comic when Tintin is chased by Pygmies. At first Tintin is afraid of them and he is running away from them. But immediately he gives himself some time to think and he is quite ashamed to run away from them. For him the Africans are nothing more than a violent and savage group. And the “brave hero” turns to face the violent “Other” all on his own. Surprisingly the Pygmies chase Tintin not to attack him but to welcome him to

their place. Adding to this the Pygmies are depicted primitive to the core, with stereotyped features, their weapons and violent nature.



[Fig.4. The exaggerated representation of the Pygmies and Tintin's encounter with them (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 52).

Like all the colonial heroes, Tintin is also engaging in a civilizing mission in Congo apart from his adventures. The colonial ideology and its axioms have profound impact on the people of Congo as it intruded into every facet of the people including their appearance and apparels. They imitated the European outfits that look quite funny on them. Yet changing the clothes does not “refine” their characters. That is how Tintin gets to scold the Africans and they have no other option than to obey him. This comic exposes the incongruity of the colonial mission to civilize the subjects. They also tried to inculcate the European manners and gentry in the psyche and behavior of the native people. At the same time they want the Africans to do work for them. Tintin's domineering trait as a “master” is unveiled here. This shows the ambivalence of colonial mimesis practiced or often imposed on the colonial subjects by the colonies.

The institutionalization of commercial slavery by the Europeans offered an endless source of plantation labour in the late sixteenth century. It was “exploited by an ideology of absolute possession in which Africans became objects of European exchange” (Ashcroft et al. 213). This was a logical extension of the desire to construct Europe’s cultures as “civilized” in contrast to the native, the “cannibal” and the “savage”.

It is because of Tintin that their train got ruined and he calls it a “rotten old engine”. Instead of mending it and apologizing for the fault he ridicules them and commands them to work. Again we see Snowy commenting on the people and calling them a “lazy bunch”. The people find themselves in an awkward position. They are portrayed as incompetent and undignified in the western outfits. They call Tintin a “wicked white man”. Amidst this Tintin, the European knows his position well. As he stands there, just watching them work, hands on hips and scolding and giving order; the very typical attitude of a master to his slaves.



[Fig.5. The Europeans in western outfits reluctant to work and Tintin ordering them out (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 35).

The native people consider the White men as cruel and wicked. At the same time they greatly influence the people. Homi K Bhabha lays out the concept of mimicry as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. The colonizer wants the Orientals to change into more refined and reformed people. However they continue to maintain a clear sense of difference from them. Bhabha observes “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quiet*” (126).

When colonial discourse prompts the colonized subject to “mimic” the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those characteristics. Rather the result is a blurred copy of the colonizer that can be quiet threatening. According to Bhabha,

Mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask: it is not what Césaire describes as “colonization-thingification” behind which there stands the essence of the *presence Africaine*. The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. (129)

Tintin comics show that the adventurous mission of British/ European heroes makes a profound impact on the subjects. Owing to these influence they try to mimic the superior race with the feeling that the imitation of the colonial language, appearance and apparel elevate them to the status of the western people. However the western people never admit these ludicrous attempts of the subjects to have self-esteem and acceptance. They continue their domination, control and management of the inferior race. In Bhabha’s observation “the desire to emerge as authentic through mimicry” becomes an unfulfilled one (129).

When he leaves Congo, Tintin left the people with an impression of his greatness. They call him “Boula Matari”, which means an “all- knowing” and “powerful” person like their Gods. This omnipresent, omnipotent divine attributes are vital features of the European heroes who are emerging in the native countries. This kind of heroism and divinity can be found in the heroes like Astrix, Sherlock Holmes, James Bond etc. Rumors spread among the people that in Belgium all Whites are like Tintin. They take whites to be figures that would impress and overwhelm to the point of being worthy of worship. The mothers begin to expect their sons to become like Tintin. They have never seen someone like Tintin and being hailed from a “superior race” he is worth imitating.

While the Congolese is infantile and stupid, Tintin is just the opposite. Hergé depicted them as good at heart but backward and lazy, in need of European mastery. We even see the dogs contemplating on Snowy who takes him to be the ideal one, the way a dog should be. This shows the extend of influence Tintin and Snowy had on the people of Congo.



[Fig.6. Tintin left a great impression upon the people and they wonder about the qualities that he possess (Remi, *Tintin in Congo* 113).

The Adventure series is very much concentrated on the primitiveness of the race. At the same time, unknowingly, it does touch upon the savagery in the Europeans as well. Tintin keeps on hunting the animals of the land and sometimes unnecessarily as he has no regard for these animals. He kills them for food and also he attacks them brutally. He kills fifteen antelopes, beats up a leopard, attacks a buffalo, tricks a Boa Constrictor, shoots monkeys, crocodiles and elephants and above all tames a lion. Although he attacks all these animals he wants his companion dog to be safe every time and runs out to help the dog. This can be viewed as an encroachment into the African wilderness and the rampage shows their “will to power” and domination.

A stark contrast is drawn here since the so called civilized ones do miserable acts and yet blame the black people for being senseless, backward and barbaric. These descriptions seem to suit the acts of Tintin who has no regard for the Africans.

The adventure stories of Tintin discussed in this project function as Eurocentric discourses in which the hero always identify the dangerous “Others” in Oriental subjects so that they are described as threats to the hegemonic order of Western civilization. Herge’s *Adventures of Tintin* inscribes the domination of European power over the globe and his hero is elevated into a cultural icon. These stories epitomize the Western hero hunting down uncivilized creatures of the other lands.

Once animation held a strong position in the society as people of all ages and walks of life enjoyed the cartoons with their mild satire. These days cartoons are generally regarded as “kids stuff, unworthy of scholarly study” (Mitchell 1). They are vivid, enjoyable, easily understood and compelling. Thus people stubbornly cling to some beliefs and characteristics although they are mere representations. Cartoons cannot be viewed in isolation and its significance cannot be measured unless it is explored in the broader cultural context. The innocence of these comic constructions are ideologically enlarged.

When many of these comics define non-white, non-European people as inferior and exploit the natural environment, we should be worried about what they are providing the children to think about. As they are enormously popular they help certain dominant values to survive nevertheless there are attempts to contradict and resist such cultural hegemony.

This study leads to the inference that *Tintin in Congo* echoes the racism and Eurocentrism that prevailed in the society disseminated by colonial/ imperial rule. “Post colonialism

as an academic project revisits, reminds and discloses the reciprocal antagonism between colonizers and colonized” (Gandhi 60).

Tintin, like a “master”, makes them work for him and the same time ridicules the culture and practices of the Congolese. He talks pompously about his country, Belgium, in high spirits. Even the Congolese are tempted to look down on themselves as an inferior race that requires further moulding.

This study also shows the binaries of good and evil operating in the comic. Tintin is the embodiment of everything that is superior and encounters with evil monsters and uncivilized natives and overpowers them. The hero story has dominated children’s and young adult literature, passing on the traditional values to each new generation. Most authorities on children’s literature assume that hero tales are unequivocally good for children, which is morally and mentally nutritious. It gives them an understanding of a particular culture; more importantly provides them with models of greatness.

The enchanting and suspenseful aspects of the adventures of Tintin redirect the readers/spectators attention from the racial discrimination, alienation, inhuman and destructive attitudes and practices of colonial heroes. Tintin comics reiterate the dichotomies such as traditional/modern, literate/illiterate, savage/civilized that enchanted the advancements of Western modernity over the African culture.

This study also exposes the fact that cartoons and comics do conjure up some deep rooted prejudices and racist notions. As it appeals to a huge mass of people, free depictions of the society with racist ideas do influence people. Thus it is the time to tell new stories and read the old ones differently!

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Being and Beyond Spiritual in Sufi Poetry

Bismi Nizar

Sufism appeared as a kind of universal mysticism that upheld a sort of free- thinking, wine- drinking, erotic and pantheistic spirituality, that has no ties to the legalistic religion of Islam to the West. Despite the hostile attitude of the West (both Christian and secular) towards Islam based on prejudiced stereotypes and Islamophobia, this positive view of Sufism was promoted by the famous scholars who undertook the task of translating the ‘Orient’ in the 1900s, such as Sir William Jones (*The Sixth Discourse. On the Persians,*), Colonel Sir John Malcolm (*The History of Persia*), and Lt. James William Graham (*A Treatise on Sufism, or Mahomedan Mysticism*), who consciously separated the concepts of Sufism and Islam. Although *at-tasawwuf* (Sufism), for the majority of Muslims before the 18th century was inextricably linked with the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad, the Orientalists of the 19th century re-interpreted it as the anti-dogmatic (therefore anti-Islamic) monistic or pantheistic movement, characterized by negating the constrictions of sacred laws, rites, and customs of Islam.

In spite of the discourse on Islamophobia, the supposed disregard that the proponents of Sufi tradition had for the rituals and norms of the *shari’ah* and the alleged disinterest in matters of “practical worship” in favor of “mental or spiritual worship” appealed to the Western society as compared to other dimensions of Islam. The esoteric messages of Sufism are often regarded in the West as an alternative to conventional religious teachings, not incompatible with other belief systems, and have primarily attracted those who are disillusioned with established religious institutions. Many Sufi organizations in the West have contributed to creating a peace-loving image by focusing on humanity, love and the universality of teachings, and a greater transcultural and a more accommodating interpretation than fundamentalist Islamic ideals.

Characterized by themes such as the vanity of the world, nature imagery and love, Sufism found its echoes in the aesthetic sensibilities of nineteenth-century Western world as it had significant effect on Romantic and Transcendental poetry. The image of “the East” as a place of great wisdom that possessed an esoteric knowledge lacking in the West gained popularity due to its compatibility with the spirit of Romanticism, which saw the essence of Eastern wisdom in the concept of *carpe diem*.

Absorption of Sufism, de-Islamization of Sufi poetry and their appropriation into the Western frame of thought can be traced back to the Victorian period. Orientalist translators like Edward Fitzgerald offered a taste of the “oriental”, as a place in remote space and time, characterized by self-indulgence and decadence in his *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. The redundancy of Sufism as mere delightful oriental paganism and hedonism rather than a sublime poetic tradition or philosophy was mediated through the generalizing Victorian discourses. The ideals of Enlightenment, the publication of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, and various philosophies and schools of thoughts contributed to the popularity of Sufism. The Eurocentric interpretations of these translators and theologians were prompted by their inability to reconcile the notion that a desert religion that the Christian Europe had been at war with for centuries, with stringent moral and legal code could produce beauty found in great Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafez or Khayyam.

If poetry is not seen firstly as a literary form, it becomes a theosophical text, and will be read primarily as theology or philosophy, not as literature. An analysis of the nature and language of Sufi poetry, major themes, its reception in the West is necessary in order to understand the transformation of the interpretation of Sufi poetry from esoteric expression of religion to secular texts. Though Attar’s *Diwan* contains valuable theosophical material, his writing is primarily poetic in nature. He is, like Rumi, a poet rather than a systematic thinker. While Sufism is usually considered as an Islamic mysticism, the poetry associated with this tradition is often not ascetic, puritanical or directly religious and as such the poems of Rabi’a, Attar and Rumi can be read as secular texts saturated with unapologetic allusions to carnal love, debauchery, drinking, and an ambivalent attitude towards Islam.

Sufi mystics disseminated their ideas and teachings through verses, or poetry since the artistic language of poetry had allegorical, metaphorical and figurative potential which served the dual purpose of expression of the ineffable mysticism as well as circumventing censorship and persecution from religious and political authorities. Love and death are intimately connected and feature heavily in Sufi poetry and mystic tradition in general. According to Freud, there is a dialectic between eros, the energy of procreative love, and thanatos, death. “... only by the concurrent or mutually opposing action of the two primal instincts, Eros and the death instinct, never by one or the other alone, can we explain the rich multiplicity of the phenomena of life,” (Freud 243). Sufi poetry in its exploration of the theme of love and contemplation of death is as much a journey to spiritual awakening as it is to understand earthly life in its manifold forms.

Sexuality in religious thought and expression is often hidden or masked by orthodoxy or subsumed by the more abstract theme of love. However, within mysticism sexuality remains a vibrant ingredient of faith. The theme of erotic in Arabic poetry predates Islam and can be traced to the pre-Islamic “Jahiliyya” period or the Age of Ignorance (500-622 C.E.). Though the Qur’an abounds in teachings of love, they are limited to platonic forms of love, mostly of the kind shown by God to his devotees and in relation to marital and familial love. There is only one mention in the Qur’an of things erotic, namely in the story of Joseph and his master’s wife Zulaika where “(with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her” (12:24). The ladies of the city later gossip that he had “inspired her with violent love” (12:30).

It was in the writings of Rabi’a al-Adawiyya (d. 801) the first female Sufi saint that the *mysterium fascinans* (mystery that attracts) began to take precedence over the *mysterium tremendum* (mystery that repels). The pious love of God as well as the platonic, brotherly love preached by Qur’an found a radical transformation in her poetry. Rabi’a was the first to introduce an impassioned love of God as a means to unity with God, the ultimate goal. Though socio-cultural institutions sanctioned the participation of women in religious sphere, those deviating from the standards were either degraded as anomalies or elevated to an idealized status beyond the range of roles assigned by the society. Religion and devotion of women were always relegated to the domestic and communal spheres. Sufism proved to be a novel space for the expression of unbridled passions as the verses of the saint-poets imbued with sensual pleasures, material desires and the ecstatic celebration of love and sexuality emerged as a means for radical subversion of and liberation from the norms as dictated by patriarchy and inversion of conventional norms of gender roles and spirituality. Poems of Rabi’a extend from spiritual and religious freedom to the inclusion of sexual freedom, adopting a language accessible to people in all walks of life, appropriate to express the intense emotions, this mystic poetry constructed “safe spaces” for the otherwise suppressed feminine voices to articulate their self, emancipated from social constraints. The highly erotic and sexually charged poetry of the Rabi’a can be interpreted using the Freudian concept of “sublimation”. Given the socio-cultural context in which these poets lived the scope and space for the expression of the erotic energy was limited and constrained thus the erotic energy or libido is transformed into artistic and cultural creations, in this case, poetry. Mystical awakenings are often cited as instances of sexual sublimation or sexual transmutation. Poetry thus becomes an erotic

technology capable of containing and expanding the experiences of desire into a unified artistic object.

In *The Second Sex* (1971), Simone de Beauvoir explicates that;

Love has been assigned to woman as her supreme vocation, and when she directs it toward a man, she is seeking God in him; but if human love is denied her by circumstances, if she is disappointed or over particular, she may choose to adore divinity in the person of God Himself. To be sure, there have also been men who burned with that flame, but they are rare and their fervor is of a highly refined intellectual cast; whereas the women who abandon themselves to the joys of the heavenly nuptials are legion, and their experience is of a peculiarly emotional nature. (Beauvoir 672)

Beauvoir suggests that the erotic intensity associated with such passion is “erotomania” which she judges as obsessive and manifesting physically in the body of the woman. Beauvoir extended her argument to the belief that it is now the woman’s manifestation of love for herself that she so desires.

The woman first seeks in divine love what the woman asks for in man’s love: the apotheosis of her narcissism; this sovereign gaze fixed on her attentively and lovingly, is a miraculous chance for her ... she feels in her burning palpitating and love- drowned breast her soul created, redeemed, cherished, by the adorable Father; it is her double, it is herself she embraces. (Beauvoir)

In Abraham Maslow’s terms these mystics are self-actualizing subjects or “self-actualizers”, following moments of ‘peak experiences’ which enables and ennoble them to realize their own potentialities and appreciate themselves and the natural world. They possess a “superior perception of reality”, and an acute sensitivity to emotions and beauty.

Although they sublimated their love, lust and longings to God, their expressions are human, always intimate, and, often, very erotic. One can observe the celebration of the female body and femininity in these poems. the sensuousness and abundance of sexual imagery is characteristic of devotional poems in Bhakti, Sufi and Christian mystic traditions. The dichotomy between flesh and spirit in religious pursuits is overcome by the mystic poets who juxtaposed the spiritual with the corporeal, the sacred with the profane. A veneration of the erotic can be seen in the poems of female mystics that explore the appetites of the soul as well as the body and talks about love, longing, sexuality and hunger for a spiritual union. The language of mystic

poetry is often marked by playful levity and earthy textures. As Rabi'a puts it "In love, nothing exists between breast and Breast. / Speech is born out of longing" (Rabi'a).

It is common practice in mystic poetic tradition to bestow God with pet names by which the divine becomes the corporeal. In the case of the women mystic poets like Rabi'a, the christening allowed them to construct an image with desirable attributes that they find lacking in their lives and crave for and thus, such personal epithets contributed to the individualization of the universal.

Rabi'a accounts for her renaming of God in this way:

Would you come if someone called you

by the wrong name?

I wept, because for years He did not enter my arms;

then one night I was told a Secret:

Perhaps the name you call God is

not really His, maybe it is just an alias.

I thought about this, and came up with a pet name

for my Beloved I never mention

to others.

All I can say is—

It works. (Rabi'a)

Patriarchal ideologies decreed for a woman to love another man, even if he was God, as an illicit and illegitimate relationship that deviated from what was acceptable socially. For the woman mystic, adulterous union with the divine lover thus becomes an act of sexual rebellion against the fidelities of social life successfully destabilizing the expected.

Rabi'a refused all offers of marriage due to her all-consuming desire for God, maintaining that "the groaning and the yearning of the lover of God will not be satisfied until it is satisfied in the Beloved" (Rabi'a). Though Islam does not promote celibacy, for the mystic it was a means to attain liberation from the guardianship of men and as such rejected traditional

obligations of obedience to men. Rabi'a is credited with transforming Sufism into ecstatic love mysticism. In words that indicate the sublimation of sexual desire, she addresses God:

Oh my Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed,
and kings have shut their doors, and every lover is alone with his beloved,
and here I am alone with Thee. (Rabi'a)

Rabi'a was first and foremost, a lover of God. This love for God was so absolute that she refused to compromise it by loving another human, even the Prophet himself. Love for God becomes the only legitimate love for the Sufi poet and renouncing familial life for a spiritual one was a means to escape marital bondages and social expectations. In a religion and an age where the role of women was anything but positive, where one text was careful to define Rabi'a as a "man" before praising her and others went so far as to declare women to be created from the sediment of the sins of demons, Rabi'a's name quickly became a synonym for praiseworthy womanhood.

Rabi'a rejected even some of the most basic tenets of her religion, as expressed in her famous prayer:

O God! If I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine Everlasting Beauty. (Rabi'a)

This shows Rabi'a's disregard for dogmatic piety and cold formalism of the orthodoxy instead she professes that true devotion is for itself; not to desire Heaven nor to fear Hell. She set forth the doctrine of Divine Love known as *Ishq-e-Haqeeqi* which came to be accepted as the founding principle of Sufism. Applying the Western theoretical tools of anthropology, sociology, gender studies etc., the polarity in the ideals and practices of fundamental Islam and Sufism are accentuated and thus effectively reify the mystical in Rabi'a's poetry to fall in line with the Western secular and liberal worldview.

Another important figure in classical Persian Literature is Attar who garners equal attention in Western scholarship as well. Though less well known than his illustrious successors among Sufi poets, notably Rumi and Safiz, he is one of the canonical masters of Sufi poetry who has had an immense impact on later writers. Attar is best known in the West for his *Mantiq al-tayr* (*Conference of the Birds*) and ghazals, that deal by allegorical means, or in more direct didactic form, with aspects of the Sufi path to divine knowledge. Attar's lyrics are

concerned with the theme of divine love in its multifarious aspects, of the incomparable beauty of the Beloved, the hopes and aspirations of the lover, and his anguish at not reaching Her presence. The essence of his faith and worldview is his acceptance of the all-pervasive reality of God, the infinite and all-encompassing Being who is the ground of the universe and of the human soul; the soul's realization of its oneness with God is the aim of human life and the goal of the mystical quest; everything else is valueless.

The widespread imagery of wine and drinking employed in Attar's poetry is ultimately derived from the long secular tradition of bacchanalian verse in Arabic and Persian literature which can be traced to the court milieu of pre-Islamic Iran, the poetry from this period being often concerned with the glorification of wine and drinking and replete with 'stock characters' or 'types' associated with drinking, the handsome wine-bringer (*saqi*), the carefree drinker or dissolute character, the 'false preacher' warning against drinking, the taverner, and so on. One of the constantly recurring themes in Attar's ghazal poetry is known as the *qalandariyat* motif; the expression of outlandish, immoral and irreligious behavior and attitudes. The persona of the poet or the subjects of his poem claim unbelief and adopt impious practices, drinking wine, gambling and dancing, and associating with non-Muslims in taverns or 'ruins' beyond the fringes of society. Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1234), a near contemporary of Attar, coined the phrase "destruction of conventions" to describe the attitudes of those who adopted this code in real life. This tendency among mystics was known as *malamatiya*, 'those seeking to bring blame on themselves' and can be understood as an open defiance and deviance from *Shari'ah* laws by adopting forbidden activities such as drinking and gambling which is considered predominantly as part of Christian secularism.

Beginning (at least) in the eleventh century, one of the most dominant figures in the Persian poetic imaginary is the spiritually inspired rogue, the most radical of all Sufi lovers. The *qalandar* (rogue), *qallash* (rascal), *rend* (libertine), *oubash* (ruffian), *kharabati* (haunter of the wine house), *ayyar* (roguish man of wiles), etc... these characters are united in their disdain for the normative modes of piety, religious law, and socio-political institutions that they perceive as artificial earthly constructs which separates them from union with their transgressive beloved. The "rogue lyrics" (*qalandariyat*), challenges the established customs, which block their way on the "path of love". The rogue poems of Attar constituted a poetic world where several antinomian and deviant figures, settings, and symbols were used for transgression and inversion of prevailing religious and social norms. These poems are characterized by the

renunciation of core religious principles and ideals of Islam as well as rejection of the mosque and *Ka'ba* in favor of the winehouse, a recurring motif and extolling the virtues of wine and love of the cupbearer (usually portrayed as youthful male). As part of appropriating Sufism as Islamic mysticism the dominant tendency in the interpretation of *qalandariyat* poetry such as Attar's is to read it either as an aesthetic expression of one of the various antinomian modes of piety in medieval Islamic lands such as *malamati* (blame), or as an esoteric poetic code; a symbolist poetry that can only be deciphered with the lexicons and commentaries of the hermeneutic tradition particularly used for interpretation of Sufism.

Love, wine, a friend, the dilapidated winehouse, and infidelity:

whoever found these, became immune to grief.

From the crooked path, they found the way in the direction of the winehouse.

Its infidelity became right guidance and divine unity became infidelity.

They abandoned both separation and union.

They left behind power and the way of judgment.

They became disgusted with all except love and wine

[and] bound themselves around the waist in service to a beautiful idol.

Get up Sana'i! Demand wine and a harp:

this is our religion and the Qalandari way!

A true man knows his thoughts in each place.

Men that are engaged in the work of love are serious. (Attar)

The poem embodies the very essence of *qalandariyat* poetry by embracing a life of love, intoxication and companionship as the true way of life while renouncing their faith. By declaring *Qalandari* as both their religion and way of life the basic tenets of Islam are discarded for a life of revelry. the line "divine unity became infidelity" suggests how the Sufi concept of "*Wahdat-al-Wujud*" or the "Unity of Being" was perceived as infidelity (*kufir*) so that they have "abandoned both separation and union" for love and wine and a "way" of life that deliberately positions itself in direct opposition to all normative modes of piety, social institutions, and comportment.

Attar's poetry is packed with themes of transgression and inversion of social norms. Transgression is often portrayed as an almost ritualesque and performative activity which begins when the poet takes off the "straight path" and onto the "crooked path" leading towards the carnivalesque space of the winehouse or a gambling house or other place of disrepute, where illicit substances and activities are celebrated as the true apotheoses of the spiritual realm. Admission into this "upside down world" entails a repudiation of normative Islamic social values that is both asserted and performed in the *qalandariyat* through various mock-rituals, such as the mock-pilgrimage to the winehouse or breaking of repentance.

Those days have passed when I used to talk about asceticism; now I [have] new pains and old dregs. Yesterday I was a cyprus tree in the courtyard of a religious Sufi hermitage, and today I have gone to the winehouse as a broken man. (Attar)

.....

If you practice asceticism, it will take away your pain and anguish; it will bring self-conceit and take away passionate desire and need. Beware, o ascetic! Don't come around me for this rogue of the qalandars' lodge will take you away from your prayers! (Attar)

From these lines the *qalandariyat* mode of piety can be understood as a liberal and secular form of Sufism. The opposition between the conventional Sufi practices and the *qalandariyat* mode is enumerated in the poem; the ascetic is replaced with the rogue, the Sufi hermitage with winehouse and prayer (*namaz*) with dregs-drinking. Attar challenges the practice of asceticism which with all its perceived benefit of destroying the "pain and anguish" of its practitioner, leaves behind only "self-conceit" and a type of rigid, pharisaical "hypocrisy" that is spiritually impoverished and impotent. In contrast, the realm of the "rogue" or "libertine" is full of passionate desire and love, drunkenness, madness, dancing, music, gambling, and the inseparable and simultaneous pain and joy of sincere love for the beloved.

Attar professes allegiance to a higher spirituality beyond Islam or even sometimes converting to another religion entirely, as in the following quatrain:

By loving you, I will convert to another religion.
I will converse as a Christian.
I will fasten the four-fold cincture around my waist
and pawn my turban in the winehouse! (Attar)

Love is ultimately the primary concern of the poem, but its extraordinary force can only be expressed through the shocking image of the “pious Muslim poet” turned apostate “conversing as a Christian” and publicly branding himself as such. Attar’s poetry has the intended effect of not only challenging but profoundly disturbing the perceived notions of happiness, love and faith. His was not a poetics concocted in isolation from the real world, but one developed in direct response to the dogmas, injustices and, in fact, the ‘theories’ dominating his world. His and other Sufi poets’ challenge to conventional Islam and their search for a new ideology or mode of spirituality was nothing short of revolutionary. They professed and in their verses a transformation from the strictly disciplined form of faith to a chaos, a life of anarchy. Yet this intention of the poet is not spelt out as a polemic, but communicated via symbols, metaphors, metric verse and other trappings of lyric poetry, persistent in the merging of opposites and forcing the readers to imagine the unimaginable.

The next poet included in this study is Jalal al-Din Rumi who is described as the “compelling figure in all cultures” by his biographer, Brad Gooch. Rumi’s poetry exhibits all the characteristics of typical Sufi poetry exploration of the theme of love in his poetry. Rumi is a proponent of loving mysticism (*Tasawwuf-i ashiqanah*) as opposed to pious mysticism (*Tasawwuf-i zahidanah*). Whereas basically all other Sufis had been wary of God’s omnipotence and had been in awe of his power, Rumi had seen only the smiling face of God.

In Rumi’s poetry, sublime love almost always manifests itself in the form of the amorous relationship between two earthly lovers who have to overcome various obstacles in order to be one. The irresistible attraction of the sublime for the seeker is symbolically conveyed through lines depicting the physical beauty of an earthly beloved, and the pain of separation from the Divine through images that project a yearning lover whose existence is meaning less without her. Due to the nature of the relationship, profane images and motifs quite often accompany the detailed description of the physical beauty of the beloved. In most Sufi poems, for instance, the lover is depicted as indulging in drinking in a tavern away from the beloved; intoxication has a soothing effect and helps the lover forget the pain of separation:

Reach for the cup and make us all drunk, for

No one has become happy unless hidden from himself. When you have concealed from yourself, Quickly flee the world! Do not turn your face back toward

Yourself beware! Beware! (Rumi)

These accounts and intricate symbolic “[references] to wine, the cup-bearer, the tavern, and the drinking companions of the lover are abundant” in Rumi’s poetry create a lively and multicoloured world where readers of different cultures and beliefs can take refuge in and satisfy their spiritual needs at the same time (Mannani 143), and serve to de-familiarize the blindly accepted ethical and religious obligations.

Such liberal features make Rumi’s poetry less rigid and dry and more accessible and lively despite its grave philosophical nature. Rumi’s creative use of metaphors and other figures of speech, his serene tone, genteel diction, vivid and simultaneously unpretentious language, and lively rhythm complement the captivating content of his spiritual work. Rumi’s poetry in this sense comes across as not only didactic, therapeutic, as well as entertaining.

Unconventionality, characterizes Rumi’s poetry and life as evidenced by his association with his spiritual master, Shams-i Tabrizi, who helped the poet break away from the confinement of Islamic jurisprudence. Rumi himself states in a ghazal “My hand always used to hold a Koran, but now it holds Love’s flagon/ My mouth was filled with glorification, but now it recites only poetry and songs” (Rumi). According to William Chittick, Shams “transformed him from a sober jurist to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love poetry” (Chittick 3). Rumi’s love of Shams manifests itself in their constant companionship, in his almost fanatical attachment to him, in his deep sorrow following Shams’ mysterious disappearance from Qoniyeh, and in his adoption of his name as both his pen name and as the title of his collection of sonnets, *Divan-i Shamsi Tabriz*.

Judith Butler argues that for a universalist claim to work, “for it to compel consensus, and for the claim, performatively, to enact the very universality it enunciates, it must undergo a set of translations into the various rhetorical and cultural contexts in which the meaning and force of universal claims are made” (Butler 35). Butler basically argues that proponents of a universalism rely upon a certain type of domestication or appropriation.

Translation is never an innocent act; it is inherently political and ideological on account of being a partial and metonymic transfer of meaning defined by the choices of the translator within the parameters of the socio-cultural context. Among the numerous Western translations of Rumi, none can boast the success and acceptance enjoyed by Coleman Barks’ translation which presented Rumi not as an Islamic mystic poet but rather as “a dissolver of boundaries” who does not belong to any institutionalized, organized religion (Barks xvii). His interpretation

by means of several translational strategies such as “domestication” or “naturalization” nativised Rumi’s philosophy for the Western audiences and paved the way for modern audiences to read and understand Rumi as “gnostic, without religious form”.

I avoid God-words, not altogether, but wherever I can, because they seem to take away the freshness of experience and put it inside a specific system. Rumi’s poetry belongs to everyone, and his impulse was toward experience rather than any language or doctrine about it: our lives as text, rather than any book, be it Qur’an, Gospel, upanishad, or sutra. (Barks 9)

The politics and poetics of his translations both stylistically and thematically domesticated. Barks’ interpretation of Rumi is marked by an emphasis on the universalist aspect, which nullifies the Islamic character of Rumi’s poetry. He interprets Rumi’s poetry as if it exists in a vacuum, safe from any external element as he argues that “in its essential nature” mystical poetry in general “is not something to locate or describe within a cultural context” (Barks xvii) and thus effectively decontextualizes Rumi’s works.

Rumi’s philosophy and poetry bears a universality as it resonates with everyone irrespective of individual religion or faith, culture or nationality and professes the core values of humanity. Rumi himself says very explicitly in one of his poems that he does not see himself as belonging to any specific religion or race:

What is to be done, O Moslems? For I do not recognize myself. I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem.

I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
I am not of Nature’s mint, nor of the circling heavens

My place is the placeless, my trace is the Traceless; Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved. (Rumi)

The poem presents Rumi’s concept about the unity and the universality of all religions; transcends individual religion. According to Rumi’s worldview, God can be seen everywhere: in mosques, in churches, in synagogues, as well as in taverns. Rumi’s universal message bears the promise of a world in which there is tolerance and respect for all worldviews. In the progressive world Rumi projects in his poetry there is no place for anger or prejudice of any kind and essentially portrays himself as an anti-fundamentalist in the true sense of the word.

He believes in the freedom of thought and expression and in the need to be kind, generous, and forgiving to all who one comes into contact with.

The paradigmatic shift in the literary studies contribute to understanding the political implications in the ancient poetic traditions like Sufi poetry. The above analysis of the poems of Rabi'a, Attar and Rumi shows that Sufism thus in the contemporary discourse appears as an antidote to a puritanical Islamist worldview, a vital counter-culture, which is increasingly acknowledged and praised by both academia and public media. The conception of heterodox Sufism as an intellectual tradition and knowledge system contributed to the formulation of inclusive and pluralist identity narratives with powerful urgency against intolerance, polarization and politics of hate which simultaneously counter not only exclusivist Islamist narratives but also the exclusionary nature of a dominant Eurocentric politics of knowledge.

Sufism, conceived by Islamic narratives, as a mystical and thereby apolitical way of life, is contested by emphasizing the underlying socio-political dimensions in Sufi poetry. In the wake of increasing intolerance and Islamic extremism, Sufism is being championed as the solution for global peace. Further research and study are imperative to determine whether the burgeoning Sufi revivalism in the West, endorsing Sufism as the new face of Islam- a form of faith devoid of the compulsion and coercive attitudes of the dominant form and compatible with Western liberal worldview, is an attempt to create discord within Islam and interpreting Sufi poetry as mere love poetry celebrating sensual pleasures, removed from religion and spiritualism as a process of re-exoticizing the Orient.

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Reconstructing Homeland, Redefining Self: A Perusal of Syrian War Memoir

Sree Lakshmi K.

War memoirs are predominantly, a record of the memories of soldiers who participated in war or civilians who were witnesses or victims of the occurrence of war. According to Alex Vernon, a war memoir focuses on “what war does to men as well as what men do in war” (165). It is a subjective take on the causes and consequences of war. It discloses to the readers “emotional, often overwhelming, accounts of dehumanization, brutal and violent physical harm, and exploitation” (Smith and Watson 133). These memoirs provide an eye-witness account of the incidents where the narrator positions himself as a member of “a collectivity whose story must be recounted” (Smith and Watson 133).

War memoirs are “national autobiographies” (Smith and Watson 130). It chronicles a nation’s important political event and develops into a history text later, to be read and analysed in the future. It also has the peculiarity of originating somewhere and being circulated elsewhere (Smith and Watson 131) during the time of its publication. The works are addressed to a foreigner, living outside the country, who is only aware of the media-circulated stories. Many of these memoirs may not even get published in the native languages and are often banned by the regimes claiming it as anti-nationalist. For instance, the Iranian writer Shirin Ebadi’s *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope*, a work which critiqued the United States-backed regime of Shah, was published in sixteen languages other than her native language Farsi (Smith and Watson 132-133).

War memoirs are characterised by acts of witnessing by the narrator. The witnesses “often record the struggles of incarcerated subjects with dehumanizing systems” (Smith and Watson 134). They intend to expose the corruption inherent in the system. In the post colonial context, these memoirs depict western countries like U.S.A. as hegemonic powers with vested interests. These works perform the act of writing back, claiming agency, resilience and resistance. War memoirs can also be comprised of coming of age stories such as *A Long Way Gone* by Ismael Beah which tells the story of African child soldiers. The narrative, “appeals to western reader’s fantasies of rescuing innocents under assault in civil wars whose complexity is not understood” (Smith and Watson 135). Life narratives on war written by civilians are

essentially stories of repression by political regimes. It represents accounts on human rights violation experienced collectively by social groups and aims at attaining public attention.

The civil war which occurred in Syria in 2011, has led to the production of numerous war memoirs by Syrians who belong to different walks of life. Alaa Aljaleel is one such civilian-turned-writer who published *The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo: A Remarkable True Story of Courage, Survival and Hope* in 2019, collaborating with Diana Darke, a Middle East cultural writer. Aljaleel was an ambulance driver during the war. He is well-known as the ‘cat-man of Aleppo’ as he built a sanctuary for cats in Syria that he rescued during the war. He takes a different turn in narrating the war by describing how humans and animals suffered during the course of the war and not the actual war.

Often the loss of animals in war is considered insignificant. These losses are not recorded officially. There is a significant absence of the presence of animals in war memoirs. These works exhibit a conscious denial of the fact that one lives in a multispecies world and all lives matter. But in *The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo*, Aljaleel laments the violence inhibited on animals especially cats in Syria during the shelling. His emotional bond with the pet cats at different stages of his life occupies a considerable room in the narrative. He names them and describes their behaviour in detail, thereby providing them with distinct identities. He claims that this affection towards cats was transmitted to him inter-generationally from his father and grandfather. He justifies his action in religious terms as well by narrating the story of a *Sufi* who was forgiven by God for his kind act of feeding a kitten. “Cats aren’t specifically mentioned in the Quran, but there are plenty of times when cats appear in the Hadith sayings of the Prophet Mohammad. He’s known to have respected cats, and he even threatened hell-fire to a woman who tortured her cats” (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 11).

The writer bewails the ignorance on welfare of animals during the war. According to him, they are also victims caught up in the chaos. “Some were shell-shocked, their sensitive ears traumatized by the loud explosions all around them. Some were injured and there was almost nothing I could do. They needed to be looked after, fed and loved” (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 151).

Aljaleel invites the readers to consider correcting the misconceptions of Muslims in their treatment of animals. He claims that they are as kind and compassionate to animals as people in other parts of the world. He admits that there are certain ignorant groups among

them who dislike cats or any other animals. But this is due to lack of proper education. For him, the lives of animals are as important as that of humans. He considers caring them as “the most perfect work ever” (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 37). It is a therapeutic act for Aljaleel in the midst of the traumas of war. He projects himself as a “progressive version” (Smith and Watson 133) of Twenty-first century Muslim who is religiously cultivated, morally enlightened and socially responsible.

Like the absence of war, Aljaleel’s memoir also lacks the presence of significant women characters. There is only brief mentioning of his mother, wife and sister in the text which indicates the nugatory role given to them in social life. They are assigned the roles of ‘angel in the house’ or homemaker. Their duties are domiciliary. Men are the decision-makers and bread-winners. Even the war is considered to be fought between men and women are considered victims in it. When boys at a young age learned trades or skills during holidays, girls were asked to help their mothers in cooking. Aljaleel’s reminiscence of his mother is related to the food she prepared and the stories she narrated, while that of his father is the ethics he practised in his professional life and morals in the social life. Paternal lineage was given more prominence. Polygamy was common in their community, which in turn led to patriarchy. Aljaleel hopes for the condition of women to change in the future.

Girls...weren’t allowed to work outside the home, even if they wanted to. Their role was to stay at home and help their mothers with the cooking and the housework. Syrian society has always been very traditional in this way – ‘the kitchen for women, the food for men’ was the attitude – though this is starting to change now, because of the war, just as it did in Europe because of your wars and the changes they brought to the way people lived and worked. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 24-25)

As the memoir is addressed to the readers outside Syria, the writer takes an effort to elaborate on the wider aspects like food, culture and ethnic life style of Syrians. He acquaints them with the knowledge of those aspects unremembered about Syria, since the beginning of war and displacement. He reminds the readers about the souks, citadels and ancient monuments in Syria, that were part of its identity before the war. He admits that he looks at Syria differently after the war. Things and places acquired different meaning when the bombardment in war threatened its very existence. He understood its cultural significance which he was ignorant of till then. While describing these places, he connects it with his childhood memories. He fears that the destruction of Syria will also disrupt his selfhood.

As a child, I used to love to go up into the citadel, especially in summer, and catch the cooling breezes while enjoying the views over the city. The souks were unmistakable, spread out at the foot of the citadel, with their distinctive stone domes and roofs. I remember the first gates had serpent dragons carved on them to frighten the enemy, and the inner gates had smiling lions and sad lions that were meant to have magical powers and to protect against evil. Inside there were lots of dungeons too, dark frightening places where lots of prisoners had ended their days. Some of them had been built as water cisterns originally. One of the big ones was called the Prison of Blood and at the school we were told some famous Crusaders had died there. The French used it as a prison too, when they controlled Syria for twenty-six years under the French Mandate after the First World War. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 64)

The writer attempts to perpetuate the pre-war Syria by creating a caricature of the city from his memory. He uses words like proud, prosperous, rich and fabulous in describing the city of Aleppo, which exaggerates the contrasting present “cramped condition” (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 9) of the city after the war. His narrative will thus remind the future generations of how war disrupted the country’s “histories and cultures” (Smith and Watson 149). He willingly takes the risk of openly critiquing the regime for its actions while continuing his stay in Syria.

Aljaleel’s portrayal of Syria is ethnocentric. While dishonouring the regime, Aljaleel dignifies his country, its people and culture. He does it with an intention of avoiding his narrative being made as a weapon for “culture wars” (Smith and Watson 131) by the western political powers in stereotyping and discriminating Islamic nations. Though ethnocentric, he does not place his culture as superior, rather takes pride in its heritage.

I have always been proud to have been born and raised in Aleppo, which is such an ancient and important city. In Arabic we call it ‘Halab’, which means ‘milk’. Some people say this is because of the famous white Aleppo stone, which is similar to the colour of milk, but a local tradition suggests it comes from the legend that the Prophet Abraham stopped in Aleppo on his way south and milked a cow to feed the poor. This is why the city’s nickname is ‘Al-Shahba’, which is a type of local black-and-white cow, and souvenir shops sell little figures of cows in tribute. All of us in Aleppo had a real sense of the city’s rich traditions, because we could see history everywhere around us: the old centre was full of fine public buildings, such as mosques, bath-houses, churches and cathedrals, all built from the beautiful white limestone. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 6-7)

Aljaleel's emphasis on a collective national identity signifies a national consciousness he cultivated through identification with other Syrians who belong to different communities but share common attitudes and beliefs in relation to their country's emancipation. The civil war, for a common cause of democracy, was able to instil this idea of oneness among the Syrians which is reflected in the narrative as well when Aljaleel addresses the fellow citizens as 'us' and 'we' and not 'them'. He represents Syrians as victims of a corrupt system and his narrative takes a subversive form in its critique of the regime.

Ordinary Syrians, the ones with no *waasta*, have suffered so much over the years from the corruption of the regime that it was inevitable that there'd be some kind of backlash, some revenge attacks on Assad's men, once the fighting started. Assad's thug militias, who were known as *shabiha*, which means 'ghosts', because they came and went in black Mercedes in their black leather jackets, all had *waasta* and exploited their privileges to the full. A lot of them were Alawites, the same religious minority as the Assads. Most of the population of Syria is Sunni Muslim – at least 70 per cent – and the Alawites, who fall broadly under the Shi'a branch of Islam, like the Iranians who support Assad, are only about 15 per cent, though no one knows the exact numbers anymore. Since the beginning of the uprising, the *shabiha* had been much more active than usual, with no limits on their cruelty or brutality. Even if there was no reason to suspect someone's disloyalty, they would still just randomly decide to victimize whole families, to make an example of them in order to warn others not even to think of disloyalty to the president, Bashar Al-Assad. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 51-52)

Aljaleel laments the transformation war brought in their lives. He points out that it changed people's behaviour and mentality. Many became thieves, stealing food and water and others fought for petty reasons. The economic disparity in society became more evident as the rich could travel abroad and escape the war while the poor continued to stay in Syria awaiting death. The act of writing his memoir for Aljaleel, thus not only became an act of mourning for his personal loss, but for "collective vulnerability and communal loss" (Smith and Watson 139).

Because of the war, people started to argue about things they'd never discussed before. They started to question each other's points of view and not just accept things like they used to. The divorce rate really shot up; it used to be very low, with only about 2 per cent of our marriages ending in divorce, but now it's skyrocketed, it's a new thing in Syria. Time will tell

what impact it will have long term, I suppose, but I worry about the children, who are the ones most affected when their homes are broken and their parents live in different places. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 114)

According to UN estimates, it is children who are more affected by war. They are thrown into violence and abuse. Many of them become orphans and homeless. Their education, health and well-being are put into question. Aljaleel notes that the neighbouring countries like Turkey where Syrians seek refuge, used the injured children in war to attain international popularity. They were taken into Turkey and provided shelter just for the sake of a photograph with the authorities to be circulated through media. They intend to project their country's government as empathetic towards refugees, which they pretend to be. Aljaleel questions these actions and points out that they did not rescue those children who were actually caught in war but only protected those, whose families could pay high amount to cross the border.

There was another little boy, Kareem, who lost his eye and part of his face in the bombing of the Ghouta near Damascus in spring 2018. His story spread and became famous, capturing the imaginations of people far and wide, who posted pictures of themselves on social media with a hand over their eyes in tribute to him. When his family was displaced from the Ghouta in March 2018, the Turkish Red Crescent looked everywhere for him, essentially wanting to buy him so that he could be brought to Turkey for a photo opportunity, just like Bana. His family tried to hide him in a suitcase, but he was found and traded to them. The boy was taken to Turkey for a posed photo, but his family refused to go too and participate in the publicity stunt unless their whole extended family, fifty-three people in total, were also allowed to cross into Turkey. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 211)

The horrors of war are mitigated through the narration of Syrian cuisines and the pleasure of eating. The narrative gesture of including "food-laced memories" (Smith and Watson 149) is an effort by the author to instil the notion that food is a major part of Syrian social life. One of the everyday chores of Syrians is shopping bread from bakeries. It is considered as a gender-specific act as it is done by men for the most time. The war disrupted their way of life as the markets were bombed, restricting free mobility.

...bombing the markets has always meant a lot of casualties, because so many people could be gathered there in the street. The regime deliberately chose the times when they knew the markets would be busiest, early morning and early evening. It was the same with the

bakeries. They chose the mornings, when they knew the queues for bread would be longest... Shopping became a dangerous activity. (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 137)

According to Smith and Watson, “Life writing invoking food as both memory and metaphor may index a shift in subjectivity”(149). Food which is consumed indicates the economic position of the writer as well as his cultural affiliation. Thus the narration of certain recipes is a way the writer connects to his cultural self. Food for Aljaleel, is an escape from the harsh realities of the ongoing war. For him, it is not just a reference to everyday life, but part of his cultural identity. The text opens with the writer reminiscing about his favourite food, cooked rice mixed with yogurt. Syrians gift *za'atar*, a special herbal mix used to flavour food as a gesture of gratitude. The memories on eating food are narrated with both glee and grief. It is a comfort or pleasure at certain times and only a basic necessity at other times. *Kebbeh Safar Jaalieh*, an expensive dish, made from lamb and cubes of quince, cooked only on special occasions by his mother, indicates their middle-class lifestyle.

Through the memoir, Aljaleel calls the readers for an “empathetic identification” (Smith and Watson 133) with Syrians caught in the horrid conflict. He recognises himself to be a part of the collective Syrian community and speaks as a representative of the lost voices of his country. He is one among those civilians who were internally displaced, but decided to stay back in Syria to offer free services. “It’s ironic that it took this war in Syria for me to get the opportunity to do the work I always wanted to do, rescuing people. I’ve always felt it’s my duty and my pleasure to help people and animals whenever they need help” (*The Last Sanctuary in Aleppo* 37).

The sanctuary Aljaleel built for cats, Ernesto’s Paradise, represents his vision of the new Syria he intends to rebuild after the war. Ernesto’s Paradise is situated in a cooler place with gardens and attractive villas nearby. It offers a comfortable living space for all the rescued cats. It has enough resources equally distributed and received funds from outside. Aljaleel envisions totalitarianism and authoritarianism in current Syria to be replaced by republicanism and egalitarianism. Through his disclosure, Aljaleel reveals his love for the country. He propagates the idea of civic nationalism, based on corporation, equality and mutual respect among fellow beings.

Besides critiquing the regime for the war, the writer does not hesitate in confessing his lapses. His inability to be with his family at difficult times and his divorce from wife are openly

discussed with the readers who are entrusted with the role of confidants. Thus writing the memoir helped him in revealing truth about his self and his country. By interpreting his life, he rediscovers his self and through this self-knowledge attains agency.

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Objectification of Men and the Female Gaze: An Analysis of Select Advertisements

Fathima Thalhath & Deepa L.C.

Introduction

Gender roles refer to the way we are expected to behave, groom, dress and act in the society based on our assigned sex. Whereas women are generally expected to be gentle, polite and submissive, men are supposed to be strong, aggressive and bold. Women face injustice, oppression, subjugation and exploitation in a male-dominated society. She has been treated as a commodity to be used, controlled and disposed of by the male members of the society. The social segregation and alienation of women has existed for centuries within this social framework in the guise of purdah system, sati tradition, dowry system and child marriage.

The mass media, including advertisements often objectify the female body by portraying it in idealized figures, submissive poses, and wearing scanty clothing; some ads even turn women's bodies into actual objects to be gazed upon, thereby dehumanizing them and inviting violence upon them since the abuse of an object is often more easily justified than that of a person. On the other hand, masculinity is depicted with overtones of force and domination, thus normalizing, legitimizing and excusing male violence. Despite the women's emancipation movement of the 1970s and even in the age of Me- Too campaigns, gender clichés remain painfully rampant in the realm of advertisements.

However, recently, the balance seems to have shifted, with concerns being expressed about the potential objectification of men in media. After years of depicting women as sex objects, the media has now started applying those stereotypes to men. Male actors featured on TV shows and movies are in perfect shape and have the 'ideal' bodies. Men with six packs and shiny bodies steal the show. Men with demigod statures pose with their nearly nude bodies to promote fragrances, briefs and apparel to increase sales.

Objectification of the Male Body

Sexual objectification refers to treating a person primarily as an object for the gratification of sexual desire rather than as an individual. Male sexual objectification involves a man being viewed primarily as an object of sexual desire, rather than as a whole person.

According to Martha Nussbaum, a person is objectified if one or more of the following properties are applied to them: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to body, reduction to appearance and silencing. Instrumentality refers to the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes. Denial of autonomy refers to the treatment of a person by denying them the right to control themselves and their bodies. Inertness refers to treating the person as a stationary object. Fungibility is treating the person as interchangeable with other objects. Violability is treating the person as lacking in boundary, integrity and as violable. Ownership is treating the person like an object which is owned by the objectifier and sold at his own discretion. Denial of subjectivity means treating the person as though there is no need for concern for their experiences or feeling. Reduction to body refers to treating or reducing a person as identified with their body, or body parts. Reduction to appearance indicates the treatment of a person mainly based on how they look. Silencing is the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak (Nussbaum 249). Almost all these properties have been applied to objectify men in advertisements.

Using beautiful women has been the tradition for the majority of ads, even if it is aimed at men. Today the trend is reversing, even the advertisements or the covers of the magazines meant for women are graced by men. Though the norm has always been female objectification, the early 90s saw the rise of strong sexual themes in advertisements. It was an intermediate period where the media was introducing the idea of the naked male image. Advertisements of the early 90s included the controversial *Tuff shoes* ad featuring two naked supermodels, the *M.R. Coffee* ad and the *Kamasutra* ads. In the case of ads with sexy men the audience is clearly women and sometimes men too.

An attempt to equalize gender representation in the media may account for the trends surrounding the sexual objectification of men. According to Kolbe and Albanese (6), a number of academics have characterized sexual objectification as "any representation emphasizing sexually suggestive body parts or not including the model's head in the picture." Men are primarily shown in ads these days in virtually nude characters, provocative stances, revealing clothing, or with only a portion of their bodies visible. Beneath the glossy pictures of attractive faces and well-defined, muscular bodies, there is a growing population of teenage boys and adult men. Therefore, many scholars explored harmful male stereotypes perpetuated by advertisements, mainly regarding unattainable body images. Male models were portrayed as

overly masculine and fit, unlike the average male viewer. They are increasingly being represented as lean and muscular in advertisements. Thus, the increasingly idealized figures of male models caused insecurities and, in severe cases, self-loathing that led to low body esteem, drastic diets, and body modification surgeries.

A male model's clothing is a key indicator of whether a man is sexually objectified through lack of clothing. Advertisements of underwear over the years demonstrate a subtle but undeniable decrease in models' clothing. The *Gucci* underwear advertisement involves a nude male model, facing away from the camera, which demonstrates a drastic change from the conservatively clothed male models and underlines the prevalence of sexual objectification of men in advertisements. But we can see that there is a significant decrease in the portrayal of women as nude and partially clad in advertisements, in comparison with the male models.

Body positioning of the models is crucial in conveying their power and social standing. Goffman opines that in a man-woman pair, the female model is often placed beneath the male, either because she was shorter or because she was in a seated position while he stood. However, a lone woman in the advertisement is often featured as lying down, bent over, or seated, placing them in positions from which physical defense of oneself can hardly be initiated. (Goffman 41). In the case of male models, the positioning of the head and torso testifies Goffman's idea of 'ritualization of subordination'. Men were portrayed as an object, in order to attract the women. Sometimes the male models were shown as lying or sitting on a bed or sofa surrounded by a group of women. These types of postures of men can be read as an acceptance of subordination and objectification. Most of the time, these men were shown as shirtless or partially clad. Correspondingly, there is a decrease in the portrayal of women as lying in bed or floor, when compared to men. Moreover, the camera is more focused on the body of the man than his face. A large number of models are shown as looking away from the camera, conveying aloofness and detachment (Kolbe & Albanese 8).

Similarly the composition of image is an important yardstick to determine, whether the model is objectified or not. Most advertisements focused on men's bodies rather than their achievements or abilities. The well-toned and chiseled abs of the male model is their main focus. Objectification is at its peak, when the advertisers did not show the head of the model, but only present the sexually suggestive body parts.

The physical build of the model is so important for the ads. It is an important indicator of sexual objectification of men in the advertisements. They never show a fatty or an overweight man for an ad of underwear. The portrayal of male models as muscular or lean and toned became as common as the earlier representation of women as thin. However, this body type being an unrealistic goal, many men may consequently suffer from physical and mental discomfort.

The product display is an important factor to confirm if advertisers intended to sell the products themselves, or just sexualize them to make them seem appealing in an attempt to distract customers. It is obvious that the main focus was clothing and physical build, and that minimum focus was given to product display and accompanying text.

The Gaze

The term ‘gaze’ refers to the way we look at visual representations including advertisements, television programs and cinema. The phenomenon of gaze is derived from Jacques Lacan’s concepts of ‘ego formation’ and ‘mirror stage’, which is described as a feeling of anxiety brought upon by the idea that one could be viewed. In the mirror stage, a child identifies itself with a perfect mirror image, derives pleasure and forms its ego based on this idealized image. One is made aware that one’s body is vulnerable not only to the view of others, but also to that of oneself. This anxiety stems from the perceived loss of autonomy over the self.

Though the gaze has its origins in Lacanian psychoanalysis, it was Laura Mulvey who used it first in the feministic context. She introduced the concept of ‘male gaze’ in her seminal essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). Invoking the sexual politics of the gaze, the term ‘male gaze’ suggests a sexualized way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women: woman is visually positioned as an ‘object’ of heterosexual male desire. Her feelings, thoughts and her own sexual drives are less important than her being framed by male desire. Mulvey dealt with gaze as a phenomenon that causes women to be mere spectacles in films, reflecting a patriarchal view. The basic foundation on which patriarchy rests is the notion of sexual difference. The woman is the one gazed at, a part of the male unconscious that is available only as a passive image. Mulvey argues that a camera is used in such a way that the audience is put into the perspective of a heterosexual male spectator who derives pleasure from gazing at an objectified female body. According to Mulvey, the male

gaze has three perspectives: that of the man behind the camera, that of the male characters within the film's cinematic representations and that of the audience gazing at the image.

Mulvey also discusses phallocentrism or a strictly male-centric world view - the penis in its figurative and literal sense is the defining centre of meaning. Meaning is therefore dictated by men who use their masculine power to control and define reality. Additionally, Mulvey also says that it is the very presence of the woman that reminds the man of his power. Without women, the man and his power as the controller of visual pleasure are both rendered insignificant. Patriarchy, according to Mulvey, exists solely because of women.

However, these days the international media is rife with instances of objectification, where the men are on the receiving end. Sinewy bodies and handsome faces are put on display for the visual pleasure of an audience, they deem to be women. The 'female gaze' is conceptually equal to the 'male gaze', when women objectify a person, they view other people and themselves from the perspective of a man. It represents the gaze of the female viewer. The third wave feminism that swept the world in the 1990s was brought about by the monumental efforts of the women who achieved economic and professional power and status through the second wave. The efforts of the second wave brought about organization of feminists into groups, questioning of sexual division of labour in the households, empowerment and self-awareness among women and gave birth to a whole new generation of highly powerful, articulate and ambitious women. This kind of freedom ensured that the shackles of patriarchy would be broken. Battles were fought against the redefinition of moral and sexual barriers. These changes are seen in every field, particularly in the field of media where woman was earlier presented as a mere object. Now all these trends are changing and the roles are reversing. Women chose to subvert the system than becoming a part of the system themselves. There was a shift in the perceptions and notions towards the sexes. The traditional ideas about womanhood and gender were questioned and redefined. The ideas about masculinity and femininity were subverted. Woman is unabashedly enjoying her sexual freedom, which leaves her with a power to pursue what she likes. This includes things that cater to her visual pleasure. As a result of that, man became the victim of female gaze and objectification. It is the reason for the increased sexualized images of men in advertisements. Strategic advertising employs sexuality, because it is the 'sex' that sells best. Sexual explicitness has been on the rise in the past years.

Male Objectification: Analysis of Select Advertisements

Advertisements often feature provocative images of ideal and well-defined men – young, handsome and sexually appealing — in revealing outfits and postures selling things such as beauty products, fragrances, alcohol and clothing. The way men are displayed as a muscular body in advertisements reduces the models to just their physiques. The use of sexuality in advertising has been criticized for its tendency to objectify the human body, both of men and women.

In today's business world, men are often used as an object to attract consumer's attention to the product that firms sell. They are exploited as a marketing instrument in a wide range of brands. Sometimes advertisers use different parts of male body in advertisements to sell their products. Several advertisements are loaded with objectified men. However, the effects of the dismemberment of men in advertising have been neglected. Dismemberment advertisements highlight one part of a male's body, while ignoring all the other parts of his body. The following advertisements taken for analysis testify how the male body is being used as an object by the advertisers to sell their products. They also demonstrate how these ads manipulate and distort the images of men.

Axe Chocolate Deodorant

Axe is a brand of male grooming products that try to influence customers by showing how much *Axe* adds to a man's physical charm. This *Axe Chocolate Deodorant* ad (2008) is from *Axe's* marketing campaign of its new product 'Dark Temptation'. *The Axe Chocolate Deodorant* is a body spray with a chocolate scent. The ad portrays a white male who turns into a chocolate man after using the *Axe's* Dark Temptation spray. The young white women get sexually attracted to him as he walks down the street, and the 'chocolate man' becomes the object of every woman's sweets craving and sexual desire.



Image 1. Axe Chocolate Deodorant Advertisement

There is a literal objectification where the man is equated with the chocolate. After spraying the axe deodorant, he turns into a chocolate-boy and became the victim of female gaze. Mulvey's parameter of treating women like objects is reversed as it is the man who is at the receiving end. The man is completely passive in the advertisement as women grab him and assault him as they please. He seems to have no power over the women, who happen to be the aggressive ones in the ad.

VIP Frenchie X underwear

The underwear ads have always involved explicit depiction of the sexualized male body. *VIP* is an undergarment manufacturing company of India who specializes in men's vests and underwear. They turned underwear into a status symbol and its wearers into sex symbols (VIP Frenchie X Underwear). In the contemporary men's underwear advertising, it is the men's bodies that demand the attention of the viewer, much more quickly than the style or brand of underwear being sold. The *VIP* underwear ad for men's underwear is self-explanatory, and single handedly proves the hypothesis of this research. Even though it is an ad targeted for male viewers, it also attracts the female viewers with its sexualized images of men.

This ad features a male model in red briefs, sitting with his legs parted. The sculpted body glistens in the light and his pectoral and abdominal muscles are therefore highlighted. He wears shades over his eyes which he maneuvers with his index finger of his left hand. The man in the picture dons only a pair of underwear and sits with his legs apart. The ad seems to focus on the model's body than the model himself. His posture, on close observation, resembles the letter 'X' which is name of the brand advertised. In the past the advertisers would so carefully guard against erotic displays of underwear models. But today the scenario is changed.



Image 2. VIP Frenchie X underwear Advertisement

It is clear that all this ad is intended to do is exhibit a scantily clad sexual object and is a perfect example for the objectification of men based on their clothing. The present trend is that in underwear ads, the amount of model's dress is considerably decreasing. Rather than actively performing a role or embodying a masculinity construct, the man is just sitting before the camera to become a spectacle for the female viewers.

Kraft Zesty Italian Salad Dressing



Image 3. Kraft Zesty Italian Salad Dressing Advertisement

The 2013 ad of *Kraft's Zesty Italian Salad Dressing* has caused so much controversy because of its portrayal of a near-naked male model, named Anderson Davis. Even though this is an ad to promote a food product, it uses sex to sell the product. The man in the short, thirty-second ad is young, attractive, fit, wearing an unbuttoned shirt and underwear while lying on a table holding a dripping container of salad dressing. Instead of the typical exposed woman, a man is used in a way meant to appeal mainly to women. The camera tends to be more focused on capturing the abs of the male model rather than the product. Some camera angles, close - ups in particular, enforce the male model's lack of power. The focus of the commercial is not even on the product, just on the sexual aspects of the Zesty man. It simply implies that if you buy the Zesty Kraft dressing, your man will be more attracted to you. The ad doesn't state what kind of dressing it is, but it turns out to be Italian dressing. The ad never claims what it tastes like, what kind, what foods it goes with, and furthermore how much it costs. It tells the reader – “the only thing better than dressing is undressing”. The subtext of the ad appears to be stating that if you buy Kraft Zesty Salad dressing you can get a man like the one pictured in the ad to like you. The target audience appears to be women of any

age. Kraft wanted it to be a memorable commercial, so they brilliantly use the hypersexualised image of a man to attract the female viewers. It is an ad basically targeted for the female viewers. Here the male model is subjected to the gaze of the female viewers.

Old Spice

The 2013 television advertisement of *Old Spice*, a popular name in the aftershave category, is a perfect example of using male imagery blatantly to market a product. The supermodel Milind Soman who was the face of the brand, went on to create and define the new 'Mantastic' smell for a man to be able to smell like a man. Ever since then, the super sexy supermodel has been calling on all women to get their men to smell as 'mantastic' as him through a series of ads. Milind Soman, holding a bottle of Old Spice deodorant, appears to be naked in the picture. He wears a pair of aviator sun glasses and speaks about his favourite fragrance in a laudatory and a self-congratulatory way – 'SMELL MANTASTIC' (Old Spice). However, the projected masculinity seems to be weakened, because a close-up of him is used, in which he is objectified by the gaze of the women. Seated on a throne, with just a towel and a gold neckpiece on, he talks about how he realized what it takes to be a real man. The golden neckpiece hanging over the model's bare chest reads 'MAN', which conveys multiple messages – it is not the gelled hair or a sexy chest, nor the Polo Championship trophies, but only an Old Spice deodorant that makes him a real man.



Image 4. Old Spice Advertisement

His masculinity is highlighted and reinforced, even though he is objectified. This ad ends up conveying to the viewer that *Old Spice* is the secret to smelling fantastic and refined, thereby diminishing the identity of the man. Besides, the product is introduced only at the middle of the ad whereas his muscular and sexy body is highlighted at the beginning.

Diet Coke

Diet Coke (2013) is a calorie free soft drink produced and marketed by the Coca-Cola Company. Its target market is women, because the word 'diet' appeals to women more. The ad is set on a summer's day, and an attractive gardener walks past five women who are seated on the lawn, chatting. A woman, who seems particularly interested in him, rolls a can of coke down and it stops at the gardener's feet. He opens it without realizing that it has been shaken up and the can sprays *Diet Coke* all over him, while the ladies laugh at him. He then removes his T-shirt, displaying his toned abs to the women and walks away.



Image 5. Diet Coke Advertisement

The gaze of the women and the tension of that male model, who is subjected to the objectification are easily noticeable. It seems that the lady purposefully rolled the can of diet coke downhill to grab the attention of the gardener and make contact with him, suggesting that the women are liberated and powerful. The man is shown looking away from the camera, as if he is in a passive state. He is presented as the sexual object and the women gain pleasure by looking at him. For an ad of a soft drink, the portrayal of a sexualised man is not accurate.

Conclusion

These advertisements bear testimony to the fact that gender roles for both men and women have been changing. All these advertisements endorse a subversion of Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, which confirms that the female gaze exists along with the male gaze. The primary targets of the ads selected for the study female viewers, and the male models are subjected to the gaze of females. The male models in not even a single ad is shown in a well-clothed state, most of them shirtless, revealing their bare torso and sixpacks to attract the audience. Without any major roles in these ads, these male models, who are better looking than the average male, are shown just as objects that have no role other than to attract the audience with their bare chest and nudity. Often, they are portrayed in a subservient position, as passive participants in their environment.

Objectification of men is based mainly on the idea that showing only part of a male model's body, other than the face, transforms this model from a person to an object. Additionally, advertisements' focal points over the years moved away from text and the product or service for sale. If this trend of objectification in advertisements continues, it is possible that real life side effects, like body esteem and eating disorders among men, will most likely continue to increase, as seen over the past few decades.

However, the female gaze can never be equated with the male gaze. On closer analysis, we can invariably find the inherent power play existing between the subject and the object. There is the active one which gazes and the passive one which gets gazed on. When the men look at women, the roles are defined. If women look at men in the way men look at them, it is not at all acceptable. The concept of women ogling at men creates a kind of amusement, but men doing the same to women is accepted by all. This testifies the fact that the female gaze is not a part of our socio-cultural fabric, but the male gaze is. But the fact is that, there is an active female gaze present in the advertisements, though the female gaze is still fairly a new concept. It may be difficult for the society to understand that it is possible to see differently. There is a female gaze, as both bearer of the look and reciprocator of the male look.

The cultural changes since the 1980s made possible the phenomenon of the female gaze. Men are equally used to sell brands and products, especially in today's day and age. Like woman, they are also used to target an audience. The female gaze serves to reverse the way of looking, with a woman as the default subject and men as objects. All these advertisements show that female gaze and objectification of men is a rising trend in the field of advertising.

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