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Centre for Australian and New Zealand Studies
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Pankaj K. Singh

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From the Editor

In the inaugural issue of *IJAS* in 2008 an excerpt was included from Tasmania-based creative writer Robyn Friend's novel *The Lovers' Handbook* which is partly set in the Punjab of 1980s. In the 2012 issue a Denmark(WA)-based travel writer and poet Virginia Jealous's few poems composed in/on India were included while 2013 issue featured a short story by Perth-based writer Rashida Murphy, who migrated from Jabalpur in the mid-1980s. Continuing this feature of cultural dialogue this issue presents a touching personal reminiscence of Canberra-based creative writer, academic and parliamentarian, Satendra Nandan. A native of Fiji, connected to India by ancestry, education and later by marriage, who has now found a home in Canberra, Nandan journeys across several locales and cultures. The poignant, meditative and serene narrative beautifully blends shades of emotion, the twists of time and existential questioning.

While the paper making a comparative study of certain provisions in law in Australia and India and another discussing women's contribution to farm labour and the absence of its acknowledgement explicitly reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the journal, even the papers on literary works and theatre share ground with sociology, history, politics, etc. Not only the two papers on Aboriginal literature but even those on celebrated mainstream Australian writers focus on issues of history, nation, identity, gender politics and cultural crosscurrents, etc.

The delay in bringing out this issue has been due to reasons beyond our control, please accept our apologies. The next volume of *IJAS* will be a special issue on "Aboriginal Writing". Papers dealing with any aspect of this theme are welcome.

Pankaj K Singh

Antyesti Samskara: The Sea

Satendra Nandan

[This is an excerpt from a personal remembrance in his forthcoming book *Across the Seven Seas.*]

Indian by ancestry, a native of Fiji by birth and now living in Canberra , Satendra Nandan is a poet, professor and parliamentarian who has brought the Fijian-Indian experience in its varied hues on the global scene with his rich corpus of creative writing. His girmit grandparents arrived in Fiji around 1890s. He was elected to Fiji's Parliament in 1982 and again in 1987 and was a Cabinet minister till the coup in 1987. After that he joined University of Canberra. In 2005 he returned to Fiji to help establish second university in Fiji and cam back to Canberra in 2013 and was appointed Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Design in University of Canberra.

A winner of several awards, fellowships and grants he has held many prestigious positions in Fiji, in Australia and internationally as well. He has twelve acclaimed books to his credit. Some of these are Lines Across Black Waters, The Loneliness of Islands *and* Faces in a Village *(poetry),* Seashells on the Seashore*(short stories),* Requiem for a Rainbow*(autobiographical),* Beyond Paradise *and* Between the Lines*(prose) and* Brief Encounters: Literature and Beyond, *a book of essays. Lyricism , history and philosophy blend with an uncanny ease as his verses move across time and space. Even his fictional and non-fictional works are virtually melodies of memory enriched with wit and fun, passion and contemplation. Emotion and expression blend beautifully in Satendra Nandan's writing as he captures the magic of life with a serenity and tenderness that makes his writing such a delight to read.*

We return often to our place of birth, even if it's only to attend a funeral. Yesterday I was back in Fiji, my special piece of earth, to cremate my mother's body and perform the antyesti samskara, the Hindu funeral ceremonies.

Of course one never returns to the same place -- spaces change, there are new people occupying your old houses, different and indifferent neighbours. You, too, have altered your estate and memory plays its

own tricks. The wholeness can never be repossessed for the dispossessed, and yet you long for the paradise that never was or will be.

The present is your postcard of pain, loss and relics of remembrances in the attic of memory.

However much you love someone, you'll never know the depth of your love until you have lost her. Just as you'll never know the grief of your heart, until you can imagine the love of that other heart.

I arrive in the verandah of my youngest brother's big house -- he, too, is living in a house built by someone else. My wife, my three children from Canberra and a nephew from Sydney, had travelled together.

Everyone, it seemed, had been waiting for us, especially me -- I'm the child furthest away from my mother and my motherland. Canberra adds it own distances to abandoned places, dislocated lives.

I'd talked to my mother on Sunday -- she sounded well, her voice whole. It gave me a lot of peace of mind to talk to my mother virtually every weekend. Our conversations were brief.

How're you, Amma?

She'd reply in brief, broken sentences understanding some of the English words that came out naturally from me. My mother knew no English--I listened and breathed it daily. I'd make a few routine inquiries about my elder brother and my elder sister and their children.

Then I'd put the phone down knowing my brother and his wife, both doctors, were giving her the best of care. On Tuesday at 9.15 pm, I get a call from my other brother in Auckland.

Mother had passed away at 7.20pm. "Passed away" conveyed an expected death.

We'd planned to see her in September. My first concerns are to make arrangements to fly to Fiji. But tomorrow there are no flights from Sydney to Nadi. Jyoti and my daughters sit by my side on the bed. Rohan, my son, comes from his house. There's a cold sadness spreading from room to room. It's winter here. Looking at Jyoti's face and my children's, I sense the deeper suffering of my mother.

You can bury the grief of your parents; how does one bear the sorrows of one's children?

My mother was not an articulate woman. She spoke in her silences and acts of affections. Like so many women of her generation in Fiji, they lived in their children. How can I ever forget her image in widow-white framed in the doorway waving goodbye to me, my wife and my daughters, Gita and Kavita, on December 3, 1987, as we left my brother's home to come to Canberra for a few months, away from the evil that I felt was infecting Fiji after the coups. We stayed on in this migrant city of rolling hills, little lakes and transplanted trees.

Next morning the grizzled stubble on my chin is like my lawn, grey with frost. But preparations for this journey have to be made. Travel plans to a funeral keep one's mind off the unimaginable absences that could fever your brain or break the heart.

After that December morning I had gone back to Fiji after five years, three months and eight days later. My wife and children never saw my mother alive again. Now all had come to her funeral. Rohan, the eldest, had returned after almost eleven years. He had never been to this home where my mother had died. In her death, she'd brought us together under one roof, with relatives from other cities and countries. We were the last to arrive. My mother had known only one country, Fiji. She'd died eight kilometres from her place of birth; and five kilometres away she was to be cremated that afternoon.

At the Wailoaloa Beach on the edge of the largest ocean, so blue and beautiful.

I grew up in the village with the gaiety of festivals--Ramleela, Diwali, Holi--and the grief of funerals. Death was part of our lives. The last family funeral I'd attended was my father's, 18 years ago in 1978. But my mother's funeral was being held in Nadi town, the streets of which I had walked barefooted, holding her sari, from shop to shop to buy the cheapest garments. The town had been transformed. The timber, single-storey buildings had given way to three-storey concrete blocks. Instead of farmers on horseback, we now had colourful vans and coaches, taxi drivers and young businessmen, selling some of the most curious handicrafts to sun-burnt tourists.

At my mother's funeral, there're only muffled sounds. Sorrow is subdued. I see my brothers and sisters, grey men and women, their wives and husbands, their strong sons and daughters, all with tearful faces. The coffin lies upstairs. I look at my mother's serene and lovely face. Her lips are open and two of her beautiful teeth are visible. The mouth is a wound that even death will not heal. I touch her face and touch my forehead. My children simply stare at their dead grandmother, now confined to a rough-hewn, wooden, crudely varnished coffin box. She is covered in a pure white kaffan(cotton shroud).

I greet many faces, people I haven't seen since the day I'd flown to India to study, almost forty years ago. Life's trajectory had taken me in other directions, to other destinations, to a deracinated destiny. And here at my mother's funeral, I was seeing, as if for the first time, the people in whose lives I'd grown, in whose thatched houses I'd spent my childhood and a part of my youth. My older cousins and their relatives had come from Votualevu, LegaLega, Nasua, Sablau,

Maigania, Korovuto, Tunalia,TagiTagi . . . places in my heart.

The coffin is brought downstairs--there's more space here. Men and women go round the coffin with folded palms, pay their last respects as the pundit keeps mumbling the mantras which I scarcely understand. But understanding of words in death is not necessary. Just as well. For if one could understand death, how terrible living would be. I know whatever is being chanted, it gives solace to the living. It gives a final grace to my mother's last journey.

For me it was quietly moving, the mantras, the prayers and these women and men seeing on my mother's dead face the intimations of their own mortality. Then they sit down on mats and paals sewn out of sugar-sacks. Some men keep standing on the edges of the garden full of green tropical plants and flowers my sister-in-law has lovingly planted. Gardening, she'd said, is so healing. There are lots of flowers for my mother's funeral rituals. I cannot name them, these brilliantly coloured petals I hold in the palm of my right hand.

The pundit, a young man in his 30s, in his pink cotton shirt and brown tyralene trousers, begins the ceremonies. At my father's funeral, 18 years ago, the pundit was an older person from our village--he must have worn a dhoti and a white kurta and recited the mantras from his memory, holding a red, tattered Sanskrit book probably a version of the Ramayana. This younger priest begins by reading in Hindi a chapter of the Bhagwad Gita perhaps our world's most celestial poem about death, about the transcendent soul, about the cessation of birth itself. Unlike many other scriptures, where birth after death is important, the quintessential teaching of the Gita is how to end the cycle of recurring births. Rebirth is the reason for all our suffering.

The *Gita* has become the foundational text of Hinduism, a beautiful poem embalmed as a sacred text like the Bible or the Koran. Hinduism, too, needs its prophets and its sacred texts. From the

deserts the prophets came and from the prophets the deserts and profits! The Gita is interpolated in the world's longest poem the *Mahabharata*, an epic of moral chaos both within the individual and outside, where dharma has been ruthlessly damaged by Duruyodhana, the blind king Dhristirashtra's demonic son.

It is difficult to sit on the floor for more than an hour. The modern pundit senses our discomfort and finishes the Gitapath after two chapters.

One by one, my brothers, our wives and sisters are called by him near my mother's body. We dip a mango leaf in a glass of water and let the glistening drops roll into my mother's mouth. All her children perform this post-mortem sacrament. The pundit shows his slight disappointment with my gestures--I've not let the drops from the green leaf trickle into my mother's mouth, instead they roll down her right cheek like tears breaking. One of my sisters notices this clumsiness and smiles indulgently as my mother would have.

Then the speeches begin, first from the pundit--he emphasises my mother's inclinations, in her old age, towards Hindu holiness. Abusinessman, a Sikh, who has known the family from our childhood, talks eloquently about a mother, quoting from his sacred text. Then the former headmaster of our primary school, where my brothers and I had studied, tells of my mother's love for her children's education.

Listening to all this, my brother's son Rakesh asks me to say a few words on behalf of the family. This is normally not done - at a funeral; others speak on behalf of the family. I can barely utter a few words but in the pocket of my blue jeans I've a copy of my poem *Siddharth*

written in 1978, when, on my return from Australia, I saw my father dying in the village in his home where my youngest brother was now living. Both he and his wife had returned as doctors--they had a three-year-old son named Siddharth, now standing tall behind me watching intently.

The scene of my father dying in one room and little Siddharth playing in another room next to it, had brought in me a new awareness of life. It reminded me of young Siddharth, the Buddha's other name, who leaves his kingdom, his wife and child at the midnight hour to go in search for an answer to human sorrow, the greatest of which is death. He was twenty-nine years old.

I take out my poem, a Hindi translation. My father had died 18 years ago aged 65; my mother died at 81. And all their children are alive; there's gladness in that thought. I do not say much but read the poem, for I want my mother and father remembered together in their death. In life they might have been separated in body, in love, in those little denials and disappointments that all living flesh is heir to. In their death I wanted to imagine and remember they were undivided. In death, so much we thought important in life is so insignificant, yet so immeasurable. So I read:

Death makes its way

Day by day, cell by cell,

Between the silences

In drops of blood.

The hibiscus blooms

Beyond desire;

We live from moment to moment

On the faith of maya.

Rays of a sinking sun splinter the sea.
Twilight brightens another sky;
My father is dying;
No, not I.
A foetus tied in
Strings of sorrow -
What womb dare hold him now?
The earth -
The first, the last mother.

There's no pain like this body
Nor no life like this death
The endless apotheosis
Of all living;
Arjuna's vision in Krishna
The nuclear fission of an atman:
Of darkness or illumination?
I cannot say.
The dying man will not tell.
Draw the curtain

Eyelids flicker…

Faces light up the landscape

Through battered hills, broken trees;

Men, women behind the chariot wheels,

Glow like memory-motes

In the last rays

Of a Kuruchetra sun.

A tear blinds the third eye;

The sea is broken by bits of rain.

Now all sorrows surcease:

Waves are nothing but water.

So is the sea.

II

Rain falls on dry grass

The earth's smell fills the air

Stones stir with drops

Voices tumble over dark waters

Waves become whales

In dry coconut skulls!

The Nandi floods again;

Pundit has lopped Lali's tail

And I haven't even learnt to swim!

Siddharth, my son, my father

Eyes lit with another life:

Of the Four Sights you've seen two

In your father's father:

A sick man, an old one, too.

The third they'll not let you see

A corpse cleaned like a salt-fish,

Powdered, scented, tinted

With marigolds, hibiscus
petals

Burnt on the sea-sand.

A muthi of ashes

Enough for his roti.

Ants crawl on living stones

Worms live in the marrow of our bones.

The fourth, a monk, you may yet become

To know the helpless endlessness of our being.

No old paths lead to that knowledge

No other footfalls are heard

Nor even the sound of a tiny bird

Chirping the mantras of dead men:

'Oum! Amen! Shantih!'

Siddharth, once again,

Follow your own footsteps

Over ashes and blades of grass

And teach us to live

In life, from Life!

This gesture is unusual. The pundit wants the poem and chants a few farewell mantras. The coffin is lifted and carried by us, brothers and cousins, and loaded into a van. There's no wailing. My mausi, my mother's only surviving elder sister, weeps uncontrollably.

I see this as the most beautiful setting for a crematorium in the world. The sea beats against the shore with the monotony of the human heart. And like my mother, through the tangled thicket of life, we, one by one, reach the shore to see the infinity that lies beyond, in the mystery of water that connects everything, except that this sea is my wounded sea.

At the death of one's last parent there's a sense of finality in this loss, as if the last link is being broken from a world you've known so intimately. After all, one's childhood is one's most authentic history. And if you've been in exile, the loss is all the more felt for you'll not hear the speech of your mother again. Your mother tongue is replaced by another language, in another landscape. The sounds are different, the thoughts, distant. And the songs of your childhood are no more the songs of your children.

A Long Way to Go . . .

Jackie Huggins

Jackie Huggins in conversation with ***Pankaj K Singh***

*[This **unfinished** conversation took place in Shimla on 31 March 2014 when Jackie Huggins came to Himachal Pradesh University to deliver the Keynote Address at the International Seminar on "Life Writing: Strategies of Writing the Self", as it ended rather abruptly due to several delegates wishing to have a dialogue with her, and the questions related to anger and activism in her writing and in Aboriginal writing in general could not be taken up, and she couldn't take these online due to her very busy schedule involving lot of travel, etc.]*

Jackie Huggins is a well known Aboriginal activist and historian, who is a member of the Bidjara and Birri Gubba Juru people. Academically trained as a historian and anthropologist she is active in the areas of reconciliation, social justice, literary and women's issues. Author of the acclaimed biography of her mother Aunite Rita *and of* Sister Girl *she is a popular speaker and offers Aboriginal view of history, values and struggles of Indigenous people*.

PKS: *This is your second visit to India. You first came to India in 2006 when we met at Pune. How do you feel being here?*

Jackie Huggins: Every time I come here I continue to be fascinated with your country and I draw much more in the parallels between Indian culture and Aboriginal culture. Coming to beautiful Shimla has reinvigorated my interest and love for India.

PKS: *What are the things you find strikingly similar?*

Jackie Huggins: When I came off the plane it was an incredible feeling to be surrounded by brown skin people like myself, because in Australia while it claims to be multicultural the dominance is still Anglo-white. So that was my first impression of India when I came here. And also being able to be part of a culture I feel comfortable in.

In my country you can go for many miles and not see a person,

here you cannot do that. So the population really strikes me.

The grace and beauty of Indian people also appeals to me. The incredible hospitality and friendship will remain with me forever. It is said that our two lands were connected during the ice age. We consider ourselves one of the oldest living, surviving cultures on the planet and believe the cradle of humanity comes from Australia and that the people went north to India and Africa. Of course it is disputed.

PKS: *In contemporary Australia how big is the presence of Aboriginal population?*

Jackie Huggins: We are around five hundred sixty thousand out of the total population of twenty-one million, that is, the Aboriginals are 2.5% of Australia's total population. Now we are a significant minority but we make the loudest noises as we have a right to do so in the hope that they are listening. We have a long way to go in our reconciliation process. But I have seen changes in my life time.

PKS: *Of what kind?*

Jackie Huggins: For instance, as a young girl I dreamed that our history and culture would one day be taught in schools. And now the national school curriculum includes Aboriginal topics. Asia and the Indigenous people were two priority areas for restructuring of the school curriculum.

As globalization is beginning to have impact on our lives, we now have an increase in Aboriginal professionals in areas such as law, medicine, engineering, teaching, etc. even though the number is small. We have 10 engineers, 150 medical doctors, 200 lawyers. Education has changed and offers the possibilities of realising the full potential in life.

I could now be served in shops and I can now sit in the front in the restaurants, but my mother could not. I am free to rent a house

while it was not so easy for my mother in 1970s.

PKS: *In what ways racism still exists there?*

Jackie Huggins: Racism is ever present in our lives that we are Aboriginals in our own country. I can tell you many things that happen to me at a regular basis. For instance, remarks are made about my people in front of me which I challenge. Sometimes I still can't get served. I think our country has a long way to go in terms of recognising the truth of our existence. After many years of reconciliation process!

PKS: *Though your people are a small number yet the Aboriginal Australian literature is quite prolific and quite visible. What kind of response it gets in Australia or how effective is Aboriginal writing in Australia?*

Jackie Huggins: Now we have playwrights who write for television. The television serial "Redfern Now" won several awards, including AACTA (Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts) Award for Best Television Drama Series. Alexis Wright won Miles Franklin Award for *Carpentaria. Rabbit- proof Fence* was produced by one of the top directors in Australia, and is hailed as a classic.

[Here our conversation abruptly stopped]

Cloudstreet: In Quest of an Ideal Home

Ajay Khurana

The theme of quest is a hallmark of Tim Winton's fiction. It mostly operates at the personal level. A protagonist finds himself/herself trapped in an existential agony or guilt and undertakes a journey to resolve it. For instance, in An *Open Swimmer,* Jerra is stuck at the threshold of youth and fails to become a successful adult as he encounters the dread of his guilt of incest and murder. In *Shallows*, Quennie chooses between her call of duty and a happy relationship with her husband. In *That Eye the Sky*, the focus shifts to home and family. The survival and prosperity of twelve year old Morton, his mother Alice, who is a housewife, and his teenaged sister, Tegwyn, who looks forward to a glamorous life in the city, is endangered as his father Sam meets with an accident and slips into coma. Sam's recovery ensures for them a secure and blissful personal home.

A similar drive continues in *Dirt Music*, "The Turning", "Scission" and *The Riders*. In them the oppressed women seek emancipation from the fetters of patriarchy, while sensitive men strive for reconciliation with their errant or erratic wives, to build a harmonious relationship and a stable and happy home for the family. In *Cloudstreet*, this quest expands further as it includes culture, race, religion, the *other* and nation into the arena of a personal ideal home.

I

Number one Cloudstreet is a road in suburbia of Perth. There is nothing remarkable about its locality, though it has a distinct feature− an old, large, dilapidated house that has seen it's hey days during the recent past. For a small period of time it was also a nursery for raising the young Aborigine girls into the protective folds of English culture. Today, it is like a dead place, devoid of any ennobling

identity. But soon the tide turns in its favour when it is occupied by its new owners, the Pickles and their new tenets, the Lambs.

It gains a new identity when the Lambs run a daily needs shop in its 'front room', just on the road. It gains such success that soon the house becomes alive and is widely recognized as the Cloudstreet. The 'Number one' is dropped. But that change is merely the beginning of its complex transformation.

Cloudstreet is about forsaking the old and false identities and realizing the new and right ones. It is a story of twenty years, beginning towards the end of World War II across two generations of these two families and depicts the life of Perth during that time. Though they live under the same roof, in separate, independent portions– the left and the right– yet they share nothing save the only toilet, the common entrance and the vacant room, which is at the centre. It is the narrative of how its first generation characters, the parents– Sam and Dolly Pickles and Oriel and Lester Lamb– and its second generation characters, the children– mainly Rose Pickles, Quick Lamb and the 'slow boy' Fish Lamb– come to terms with each other and develop a genuine relationship.

The old, large, dilapidated house which provides them shelter and means of livelihood, gradually truly becomes their home. Through the struggle and strife of twenty long years, they resolve their respective differences, dilemmas, illusions and limitations among themselves and about their nationality. It is, then, that Cloudstreet truly become a metaphor for an ideal home--a place charged with a strong sense of belonging, happiness, prosperity, humanism and pluralism.

Home emerges as its central concept and implies diverse meanings. Home is neither a stable structure of four walls in which a family lives, nor those walls which are architecturally and aesthetically built--it is what a family makes of it. Apart from its

many comforts, home is the meeting place of living souls: of their desires, emotions and philosophy. For a woman it has a special meaning, for a man yet another, while for children or parents and grandparents, and even for relatives, it usually has more distinctive meanings.

Its true meaning is so varied that it enfolds neighbourhood, locality, city, society, culture, religion, nation, continent and the whole world. All these meanings gets illuminated when different members of a family, or divergent citizens, tribes and races come in contact with each other, either in interaction or in confrontation.

II

Self-identity and self-realization begin at one's home, virtually at one's own ground of existence. There are two kinds of homes in *Cloudstreet* − the smaller one, which is personal and the larger one, which is one's country. In the smaller house one lives with family and leads one's life. Here usually some strong conflict exists with one's spouse, or children, or siblings, or parents, or even with one's own individuality and character. Such conflicts propel a seeker for an ideal home where there are harmonious relationships and peace with everyone. With the first four major characters of the first generation, Sam and Dolly Pickles and Oriel and Lester Lamb, the quest is more for survival and a personal ideal home, based on gender preoccupations. Almost two-third of *Cloudstreet* depicts their lives.

In the larger home of the country the self comes in contact with multitudes, which initiates evolution of another kind of identity. In peculiar situations it becomes more direct, intense, hostile and violent, especially in a heterogeneous nation. In the last part of the novel the focus of quest shifts on the political identity of a few characters. Winton highlights some urgent politics issues, such as the identity of Australia as a nation and the attitude of the dominant white race toward the natives, the Aborigines. He explores the lives and

characters of Rose and Quick as white Australians when they get married and many personal changes occur for them.

Simultaneously, Winton has also sensitively portrayed the plight of the Aborigines and shown them as an integral part of Australia. Through *Cloudstreet* he attempts to raise the consciousness of Australians asking them to shed their prejudice against the Aborigines by adopting true humanistic and pluralist values.

Surprisingly, Winton has conceptualized this dark aspect of Australian political identity not as a moralist but as one whose family has been integral to the whole experience of Australia. As disclosed by him, the Pickles and the Lambs are the fictional projections of his own maternal and paternal families respectively: "My parents' families were the initial inspiration" (McGirr 97). Further, Rose and Quick reflect the persona of his parents as his father was a patrolman and so is Quick. The story of these families is his ancestral history as well as of Perth; he "reinvented […] Perth in the forties and fifties and sixties for myself" (83).

III

The ideal national home in *Cloudstreet* obviously implies Australia. A nation gradually assimilates people from other cultures, nations, races, tribes and religions thereby becoming diverse and heterogeneous. Timothy Brenan in, "The National Longing for Form" rightly observes, "The idea of nationhood is not only a political plea, but a formal binding of disparate elements" (Ashcroft 130). Ernest Renan elaborates its concept in "What is a Nation?" He says, "Man is slave neither to his race, nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers, nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation" (Bhabha 20). Certainly in most democratic countries

contrasting elements coexist, and form a uniform national identity. Today with advanced means of communication and technology, globalization and immigration, the internet, no nation can afford to remain homogenous or 'closed'.

Primarily there are two streams of history that made Australia a nation– history from above, which is the history of white Australia and history from below, which is the history of the Aborigines. The history of white Australia began in January 1788 when Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay, declared the vast land as "terra nullius" and claimed it as a British colony. Its political nature was of a penal settlement which mainly consisted "of British excess population, the undesirables who included homeless children, prostitutes, poachers, pickpockets, alcoholics, vagabonds and ethnic minorities" (Basu 355), "shoplifters"(Ferguson 104); "criminals"(102) convicted for "petty thefts" (104). But soon by the vision of its Governor, Lachlan Macquarrie, these "convicts transformed into citizens" and "Sydney into a model colonial city" (105), beginning with its own "a handsome hospital" (106) and agricultural production. Gradually a strong community feeling developed among these people and they adopted the name 'Australia' for their colony, even celebrated the Foundation Day– the day of landing at Botany Bay. In 1871 the Australian Natives Association was formed to bind various colonies into a Federation. The idea gained widespread recognition and eventually in January 1901, the Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia was formed. It consisted of the six colonies of New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania, with the British monarch as its head.

Its spirit was imperialistic as the people owed their allegiance to England, or the white race, or Europe. The white Australians considered themselves as racially, culturally, economically and intellectually superior to the indigenous people. The Government adopted the policy of 'White Australia'. For its promotion, two

distinct policies were adopted for the native Aborigines and the immigrants. For the former, "The idea of 'terra nullius' was made popular in order to establish Australia as a nation of settlers rather than conquerors" (Basu 356). Every possible attempt was made to erase the presence of the Aborigines' culture. To convert or assimilate them into the white Australian culture, it "adopted the policy of assimilation" from 1947 to 1964 (Narang 47). As per the second, large scale immigration was permitted, but mostly restricted to the Europeans.

During the mid-twentieth century the Australian Government adopted the policy of multiculturalism and a reconciliation approach towards the Aborigines. Among the factors responsible for this shift were the decline of British imperial hegemony following the independence of its various Asian and African colonies, the two World Wars, especially the Second War in which America emerged as the new superpower– both militarily and economically, the cold war and the strategic position of China as an Asian power. Thus, under pressure, in the 1960s the Australian government gave up the white Australia policy with significant amendments in its Law and Constitution. For instance "in 1973 the government declared Australia as a multicultural society" (Narang 47). As pointed out by Ellie Vasta in "Multiculturalism and Ethnic identity: The Relationship between Racism and Resistance" and quoted by Narang: "The overall objective [of multiculturalism] was the goal of a socially cohesive multicultural Australia based on an overarching set of values, which would be strengthened by cultural diversity" (48). Under this policy the second wave of immigrants came to Australia and this time non-Europeans were encouraged to settle here. Simultaneously, a concrete reconciliation policy was adopted for the Aborigines. As Bruce Bennett also observes in his essay "Pluralism and Australian Literary Culture" that there is a tension between "pluralism and monism in most nations" but confesses that

"the health of a modern democratic state depends largely on how much diversity it can produce and promote while maintaining a degree of national cohesion– 'an imagined community' as Benedict Anderson called it" (18). Similarly, according to Mark-O-Connor, as stated in an Afterword, "Ethnic chauvinists do occasionally appear among Australia's immigrants, but they are often forced to unite in the name of multiculturalism, and if they preach a partial separatism must do so under the flag of tolerance and diversity"(205).

From the Aboriginal perspective, Australian history began 60,000 years before January 1788. Before it was claimed as British property, Australia was occupied by a number of tribes that are collectively called the Aborigines. Their wisdom or culture or the art of living is contained in the Dreaming which is a loose collection of stories that are orally transferred from generation to generation. With the British arrival, and their aggressive racial and imperial policies, the Aborigines' life, property and wisdom were endangered. They were killed in large numbers and the worst suffers were the children. "It is suggested that between 1910 and the early 1970s, about 100, 000 children were removed from their indigenous parents…." (Basu359). Among these, those with dark skin were given to orphanages and those with comparatively fair skin were given to British families (359) as servants. They did not have any land rights and became landless on their own land.

This history from below became assertive when the educated and influential Aborigines instead of taking side with the white Australia, turned their support and resources for the liberation of their own people through "aboriginal activists, church groups, aboriginal advancement association" (Singh 27) and political activism, academic interpretation and media involvement. Steve Hemming in "Changing History: New images of Aboriginal History" says, "Aboriginal perspectives have been increasingly published and have started to have an impact on the way Australians see themselves and

Australian history" (21). They demanded civil and political rights from the judiciary as well as the Australian Government. Meanwhile, the policy of multiculturalism paved the way for the reconciliation process and significant events occurred for Australia to become a true nation. For instance, in 1961 the Australian Government granted the voting right to those Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders who were enrolled in the electoral roll. In 1984, it was extended to the remaining population. In 1975, the Racial Discrimination Act was passed which prohibited discrimination towards the Aborigines on the basis of "race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin" (29). In 1992, in Mabo vs. Queensland case, the Australian High Court awarded the right of land possession to the Aborigines and this judgment further legally nullified the myth of terra nullius. The report on stolen generation asserted the grave blunder committed to the Aborigine children. Finally, the latest feather in the cap for the reconciliation was the Australian Prime Minister's apology in 2008 to the Aborigines for the discrimination and the excesses committed against them. Thus, Australia has gradually grown from a homogenous group of people to a stable, diverse heterogeneous nation, where the settlers, the native Aborigines and people from across the world live as its citizens.

The paper examines the lives of Rose and Quick as a quest for their true political identity and an ideal national home. In this journey they initially, vehemently assert their racial identity but through some enlightening experiences, finally gain their true humanistic and spiritual values. The focus remains on the notions of place and placeless-ness, *self* and the *other*.

IV

Bill Ashcroft and others in "Nationalism" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* view that the "sense of place and placeless-ness" is central to both the colonial and the post-colonial experiences.

It defines one's identity and sense of belonging. Accordingly, there were three places in the context of the colonizer: the primary place called home country– England, the secondary places that were separately created in all the colonies as settlements, and the tertiary places of the native's habitation (117).

During the colonial period, a strong link was maintained between the first two places– the home and the settlements. Every possible attempt was made to create a homelike atmosphere in the settlements. The English created their own Victorian style homes away from the natives' area. The natives were treated as untouchable, inferior and outcast and were allowed entry only as servants, craftsmen, mediators and supporters, but never as fellow human beings (Ashcroft 117).

This policy of separatism was uniformly followed in all colonies. In Australia, the countryside was the heartland of the Aborigines. In *Cloudstreet* Quick confronts a black man and enquires about the location of his home, his answer "Not this side" (367) refers to the urban Perth which undoubtedly grew from the English settlement. Even when they come in large groups to the city, the hard fact is that they stay together at its entrance. Quick once saw hundreds of them stranded "at the throat of the city" (368). As H. Reynolds acknowledged, they are "the fringe dwellers of Australian historiography," as quoted in Hemming's "Changing history: New Images of Aboriginal History" (8).

Australia is now an independent republic, yet the natural born citizens like Rose and Quick still suffer from the ambivalence syndrome, that is to say, whether Australia is their ideal national home or not. Rose's ambivalence is exposed suddenly when she breaks-up with Toby Raven, the man she had a crush on and then, when she marries Quick.

Rose is a true Australian and "hated Australians who tried to be English" (279). She never knew that in the guise of an Australian Toby is actually an English agent. He is a budding writer and considers his moral obligation to report back to England the kind of life the white people live in the countryside. He is attracted to Rose because she belongs to it and Oriel Lamb is the subject of his story. Before a publisher he naively asks her, "Rose, tell them where you live. Tell them about the lady in the backyard (Oriel) who lives in a tent. Tell them about the slow boy you used to love". He adds hesitatingly, "I'm working up this grotesquerie about . . . well there's this shop girl [Oriel] and a famous writer and . . ." (298). Rose feels humiliated, instantly abandons him, but confirms her true nationality.

After marriage to Quick, who too is proud to be an Australian, it is the same Rose who earnestly wished to settle in the urban Perth, without realizing that Perth exhumes the colonial nostalgia or the dirty spirit of colonialism. "I want to live in a new house, said Rose. In a new suburb in a new street. I want a car out the front and some mowed lawn. I want a small, neat house that only *'we'* live in, Quick. I don't ever want to live anywhere old, where people have been before. Clean and new, that's what I want" (326). They rent a small apartment in Nedlands and Quick "sign up" (p 327) with the State Housing for a home.

Here they discover the presence of the *other*– the Aborigine. An Aborigine dangerously stalks in the city and at night sneaks into people's houses and brutally murders them.

> The town is in frenzy down there. This is what it means to be in a city, they say, locking their doors and stifling behind their windows. On the streets at night no one moves. No one goes out. There's a murderer out there and no one knows what he wants, where he is, who he is, and why he kills. This is Perth, Western Australia, whose

ambitions know no limit. And the streets are empty. (365)

Quick too discovers them in the broad daylight during his routine patrolling. It is a new realization for him. He sees a naked, black man. He couldn't believe his eyes and questions his reality: "Are you real?"(368). He doesn't arrest him for being naked and turns back. But "high on the hill […] He saw dozens of them beneath the trees, hundreds like a necklace at the throat of the city" (368).

Their patriotism and pride in 'real' Australia are shaken and they are deeply upset. Rose behaves as if she has seen a monster that has gone berserk. She bluntly refuses to live in Perth as she is frightened to be alone and appeals to Quick for safety: "I don't sleep all night. You can't leave me here on my own. I am going mad. I can't even read. Even in the day, I'm frightened" (366). They dispose of their apartment and seek refuge in Cloudstreet, where they feel "safe" and "Happy" (369).

Rose and Quick, then, turn out to be like colonizers in seeing themselves as the *self* and the Nedland 'monster' as the colonized/ *other.* This 'self' undoubtedly includes all white citizens of the First World, who have their roots in England, the Europeans, the Americans, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the South Africans and the Canadians. Conversely, the other people, whether Black, Brown or Yellow, such as, Indians, Africans, South Asians and the Aborigines are clearly seen as the *other*, though the focus here is only on the Aborigines.

Elleke Boehmer defines in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*: "The concept of the other, which is built on the thought of *inter alia*, Hegel and Sartre, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined" (21). This 'subjectivity' or 'authority' is of the colonizer, against which the *other* /colonized is perceived. Such an interpretation is based on

psychoanalysis: "[. . .] Lacan has postulated that self- identity is constituted within the gaze of another" (21).

Rose and Quick see their *self* as English which as projected by the colonizers is authentic, beautiful, powerful, intelligent, superior, active, positive, knowledgeable, ambitious, skillful, artistic, educated, rational, scientific, real, civilized, cultured, religious, advanced and familiar. The *other,* that is, the Aboriginals, are visualized as exactly the opposite of it, and described with such adjectives as inauthentic, ugly, powerless, idiotic, inferior, passive, negative, ignorant, placid, untrained, illiterate, emotional, arbitrary, beastly, unreal, uncivilized, uncultured, irreligious, primitive, unfamiliar and mysterious.

Likewise in *Cloudstreet*, the Aborigine is always negative or less than human. He has "the hare lip and the cleft palate" (364). Rose describes him as "a cold-blooded maniac" and "some mad bastard" (366). Lester encounters one at his doorstep, selling props, but having an assortment of animal features: "The black man's hair stood like a deserted beehive. His feet were bare. His toes splayed on the ground like he was as much bird as he was man" (62). Quick observes them "beneath the trees" (368) in large numbers and naked as if they are some kind of a herd.

All these deplorable images are deeply embedded in the consciousness of Rose and Quick. They lie dormant so long as the Aborigine is absent from the range of their senses. But when he enters the range, they react negatively. There are three specific ways in which the Aborigine has been negated in the novel and the Australian history – by avoiding him, killing him or by assimilating him into the white culture.

Rose and Quick's approach is defensive. She is pregnant and is more concerned about the safety of her unborn baby. They prefer to go away from the present threat to the safe custody of their parental

home in the countryside.

The city's responses are as expected. The fight is actually against a criminal but it instantly becomes the fight against the race. "The city is howling with outrage. They're talking of bringing in the army, bringing across the Sydney homicide squad, Scotland Yard [. . .]"(373).This collective feeling strengthens their sense of oneness and belongingness to one home only– England or the White Australia. This violent racial spirit manifests again at the Aborigine's capture and execution. It is front page news and brings euphoria to the town. "The city went wild with exaltation. There were hanging parties, theme nights, ugly jokes" (394).

The third policy strikes a balance between the first two extremes. The colonized can be brought into the protective folds of the English culture and religion. During the past, Cloudstreet was owned by a widow. She was inspired by the local Father to convert it into a nursery of education– to train the young Aborigine girls in the English traditions and, "She showed them how to make their beds and wash, how to dress and how to walk. She read aloud from the novels of Sir Walter Scott [. . . .] The widow showed them how to serve at table and wear hats in church" (36).

These policies were not only discriminatory but such conversions were also unrealistic because the Aborigines are not one person, called the Nedlands monster, who is pervert and endangers social peace. He is also not a matter of few girls who can forcibly be abducted and educated. Out there is an entire race, living on their own land, having their own distinctive history and culture. All of them cannot be executed or erased out of history. They cannot be converted into the English culture through secular, professional and religious education, though the colonizers drunk with the wine of Darwin's theory of evolution believed that the *Aborigines* are primitive and would soon become extinct or rather it is the sacred duty of the English either to annihilate them or assimilate them.

Tim Winton suggests three solutions for making Australia an ideal home not only for Rose and Quick but for all its people. It is mainly Quick who offers these solutions but Sam, Oriel and Lester too have their say. This brings unity to the text, proving that though it is Rose and Quick's direct quest, yet Sam, Oriel and Lester, all belonging to the older generation, are also an integral part of Australia and the quest for national and racial identity is equally crucial issue for them.

The first suggestion is hinted at when Sam interacts with an Aborigine on the day of election. He feels gloomy after casting his vote knowing very well "that those tightfisted boss lovers" (405) will once again win and continue with their repressive and exploitative policies against the workers. In such a dejected mood he comes across an old, well-dressed, black man, standing by the side of his home. Surprisingly Sam treats him as a fellow human being and as a companion voter. He sees in him the image of his own old age: "Jesus, thought Sam, paint him white and he might be me old man" (405), signifying the superficiality of their racial differences.

Sam asks him twice as to whom did he vote for, hoping to be relieved from his own dejection, but unexpectedly it escalates. On the first enquiry the old man "just smiled" (405) suggesting either Sam is a true gentleman or is ignorant of the harsh truth that the Aborigines do not possess the right to vote. When Sam asked again, the man "dropped the smoke and toed it" and "walked away shaking his head" (406) without speaking a word. Later, Sam is bitterly disappointed to know the sad truth of black's political exclusion as reported by Rose and reacts sharply at their inhuman treatment: "Jesus, that's a bit rough, isn't it?" and suggests "They need a union" (411) to justify and struggle for what naturally belongs to them. Sam, thus, suggests a political way to end the 'evil' that exists between the white Australia and the Aborigines.

The right to vote would grant them the status of equality with the white Australians. It would be a good beginning of the reconciliation process. With time, there would be mitigation of ill-will and gradual fading of superiority and inferiority complexes.

In fact, "Citizenship was granted to the Aborigines after a national referendum in 1967" and "the White Australia policy, which had been gradually dismantled since the 1950; effectively ended in the 1970s [. . . with] the passing of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975" (Nagai 273).

The second method of reconciliation is a strict and true adherence to the religious dogma. Quick spontaneously exults at the news of the Nedlands monster being hanged, "Whacko! [. . . .]Thank God for that", while Rose exclaims, "Good riddance", "giving Harry [her baby] her breast" (394). They feel safe. The mother's fear is dissolved. She can move back to her apartment and fulfill her cherished dream of an independent, personal home. But their parents Oriel and Lester are disappointed and severely condemn the reference to God.

Oriel bawls out: "Killin is men's business, [. . .] not God's. If you think it's somethin to celebrate leave God out of it" (395). Rose and Quick are taken aback and miss the crucial point their mother has illuminated– the true projection of God's character. God is pure love, with untold blessings and forgiveness as His governing principles. He equally loves the white Australians and the Aborigines. Plato too in *The Republic* has cautioned poets against the misrepresentation of God's nature: "God must be held to be sole cause of good; we must look for some factors other than God as cause of the evil" (71).

Obviously people infected with pride, prejudice, power, hatred and fear are the embodiment of evil and willingly kill. The real fault is with them. Quick thinks that the Aborigines are the evil but his mother corrects his bias.

Lester advocates the right interpretation of the *Bible* and an honest adherence to it. He quotes two commandments to explicate his stance. As per the first, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"* (395). If it is truly followed, all the existential dilemmas will be overcome including the dilemma of the *other*. For if a soul incessantly chants the name of God, his heart and mind will be filled with His love, reverence and service. There will be no room left for hatred and prejudices of any kind. The entire earth inhabited by so many *other*s will become his home. He will truly inherit the kingdom of God.

The second commandment "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (395) commonly refers to the next door resident but the implications are much wider. In "Works of Love" Kierkegaard clarifies: "[. . .] the neighbour is the one who is nearer you than all others" (Bretall 287). He further adds, "Neighbour is itself a multitude, for neighbor" implies "all men" (288). Its implications for colonial and postcolonial situations refer to the neighbour as a neighbour race, a community, a nation, a culture, a religion and even a species. The colonized is the next door neighbour of the colonizer; the Aborigine is the true neighbour of the white Australian. As per God's instruction, he should be loved and honoured, as the white man expects for himself. Such two loving neighbours will have a peaceful nation.

Winton leaves out other commandments for the sake of art but not without a distinct guideline from the *Bible*: "*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*" (395). He advocates a total recourse to religion when dealing with the *other*. The existentialist Kierkegaard too has stressed it as an ideal choice in one's dilemma. He has also guaranteed its positive outcome for the chooser "his nature is purified and he himself brought into immediate relation to the eternal Power whose omnipresence interpenetrates the whole of existence" (Ellman 830). Such a purified individual cannot

treat the *other* with racial prejudice. A truly religious person will accept the *Aborigines* as equal citizens of Australia.

He warns against any misuse of religion as it will only widen the gap between the white Australia and the Aborigines. For instance, the missionary activity taken up by the widow in the novel is hardly backed up by religious sincerity and compassion. Therefore, "The mission girls climbed into bed with one another at night and cried." (36) Similar accounts are found in autobiographies such as *Kick the Tin* and *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* where the missionaries did great damage to the Aboriginals in the name of religion.

> Winton suggests the possibility of a spiritual arousing or an epiphany. He believes in the religious potential of his fellow citizens and the spiritual nature of life, though there is a clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural or the limited and the infinite. But for Winton, realism includes both of these worlds as quoted in Yvonne Miles, "Singing the Great Creator: the Spiritual in Tim Winton novels":
>
> I wanted to include both realms because I feel that this is true realism: the supernatural and the natural accepted as one thing, as inclusive. Life is big enough for these experiences. Those moments of unreality [. . .] are the just opposite [. . . .] The weird things that happen in my books aren't devices [. . . .] The world is a weird place. (33)

As such his characters experience some kind of spiritual awakening, especially when they are unable to face their respective dilemmas and fail to make the right decisions. Quick experiences such "[. . .] moments of grace (i.e. beautiful religious experiences) which display the power of the creation inherent within them" (32). He has his first mystical experience when he saves a black child from drowning in the Swan.

One fine afternoon when he relaxes for his midday snacks at the beach, he sees two kids lying atop "an upturned car roof" (397) floating. He swings into action and jumps into the river. He brings them back but all in vain. The black child "is long gone" (398). To any spectator, Quick is a patrolman and it is his duty to save people's lives and protect their property. But the event is extraordinary for Quick. Due to certain associations of his past, the incident of drowning has a cathartic effect on his soul. For the first time he sees the black child not as the *other*, but merely as a child. In his little dead body, he sees his own image, images of his very close family members, and the image of any father whose family is ruined: "That's Harry's face [his own son]. That's his own boyhood face [….] That's the sight of the world ending, someone's son dead. [And, then, its culmination]. That's my brother [Fish, who was saved from drowning once]. This is my life over again. This will always be happening"(398). But that is merely the beginning of his enlightenment.

Soon he is shocked to know that the Nedlands monster was the dead child's father. But now his mind does not agitate in disgust, it remains calm. He honestly questions the monster's diabolism and his own attempt at hiding his tears: "Him! Murderer, father of seven. The Nedlands Monster, the face of evil. That was his son he'd been holding and trying not to weep over in front of a crowd. He'd seen himself, Harry, Fish in that dead boy's face. Quick felt something break in him as he stared at his boots" (398). It is a complex experience of a white Australian about an Aborigine which leads to an entirely new awareness in him.

Quick's experience reminds one of the experience of Vivekananda on the divine touch of his master Shri Ramakrishna. He discovered the unity of existence and that each and everything and being in it was God. It is quoted in his biography: "The magic touch [….] immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was astounded to find that really there was nothing in the universe but

God [….] I sat down to take my meal, but found that every thing the food, the plate, the person who served and even myself was nothing but that" (96).

Though Quick's experience is not absolute, yet he pierces though the outer layers of things and identities and sees beyond them, directly at the core. Only this core is real and true in identity. He gains the true insight about himself, the *other* and the whole of humanity. He discovers the unity of mankind beyond the superficial racial and cultural differences.

Quick is transformed. His attitude becomes positive and the choice of his words most appropriate. Winton has subtly captured this noble change in his reference to the monster: "The murderer's wife. A man's wife. A man. With evil in him. And tears, and children and old twisted hopes. A man"(399). He enlightens Rose about this truth so that she can also be purified of the evil in her, "But it's not us and them anymore. It's us and us and us. It's always us. That's what they never tell you. Geez, Rose, I just want to do right. But there's no monsters only people like us" (402). He transcends his racial identity and voluntarily includes the Aborigine happily into his ideal national home.

The impact of this realization is tremendous. It shatters the "imaginary differences" (McLeod 2) fashioned by the colonizer about the colonized, a fact so well observed by Frantz Fanon. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he points out the dirty brainwashing by the colonizers: "This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species" (30). To the negative images like "noble savage", "heathen children" (Bourke 3), "sub-human" (Hemmings 24),"stone age race"(Bourke 5), were added words like "simple, primitive, dirty, ugly and degenerate"(5). Thus, *Cloudstreet* is an attempt to liberate the Australian Aborigines from all such negative adjectives and present them as real people having a

beautiful heart.

Though the first experience of Quick has enlightened him yet it is incomplete. Its culmination takes place when he with his family sleeps at night in the wheat fields of Bullfinch. It is amid nature that Quick discovers the true relationship of the Aborigine with their land and Australia.

> Quick's sleep is disturbed by Fish, his brother, and a strange rustling sound. He beholds a rare, breathtaking spectacle that can happen only in the countryside. He wakes up Rose, even the infant Harry, to savor it. Four of them see naked, black children passing by in the moonlit night.
>
> He propped himself on an elbow and saw a line of figures moving between the trees [. . . .]They were children, naked children. Placid faced, mildly curious, silent but for their footfalls, rising from the ground like a mineral spring, following the faint defile of the land to a gravity beyond them, faces and arms, eyes and legs traveling in eddies, some familiar somehow in the multitude that grew to a vast winding expanse, passing them with a lapping sound of feet[. . . .] The children parted the wheat like the wind itself and took all night to pass. (419-20)

Obviously, the presence of many Aborigines does not frighten them. Besides, the way they move, renders a perfect moonlight serenade also. They are, in fact, absorbed by it; it is like a vision, seldom experienced by a white Australian. It reveals that the Aborigines have an integral unity with nature as if they were some of its fundamental elements or some special species that can capture her spirit in their gliding movements, as is conveyed by the two similes of the spectacle. Furthermore, being integral to the natural landscape, the land belongs to them. They are the natural citizens of Australia

and it is their home too, as much as of Rose and Quick and the white Australia. Rose and Quick cannot negate them in their ideal home.

It also shatters the myth that Australia was a land in wilderness and belonged to none and that it was "*terra nullius*, empty or uncultivated land" (McLeod 25) and the colonizer had every right to claim it as his property. This myth actually hides the brutal war of invasion. The land did belonged to the Aborigine though not in the strict English legal sense of 'owning' it. As pointed by Maire ni Fhlathuin– the aboriginal relationship to their land was "unfamiliar to Cook and his contemporaries" (25).

The awakening and the consequent purification creates a nobler individual who, then, is able to take the right decision and accomplish impossible tasks. Rose willingly wishes to return permanently to Cloudstreet and does not mind even if it is "like a village" or "a bloody tribe" (419), what matters is that they "belong to it" (418).

That is where come the symbolic overtones of 'village', 'old' 'new', and 'tribe'. Her new apartment is ready and she can easily give up Cloudstreet but her idea of an ideal home has changed. She identifies with her nation, for Australia is also an old place that has been inhabited by a tribe– the Aborigines, since times of antiquity. Because of her vision of the moonlight, she has realized the diversity of nature or existence and that a nation is an ideal home where divergent races and communities co-exist in harmony and mutual respect. She now compassionately accepts the Aborigines and her large family as her ideal national home.

Therefore, she willingly abnegates her independence she priced earlier so highly– her dream home. She now understands the false nature of independence and confesses to Quick: "If it means being alone, I don't want it. If I'm gunna be independent do you think I need a husband? And a kid? And a mother and father, and inlaws and

friends and neighbors?" She even reveals its negative effect. "When I want to be independent I retire. I go skinny and puke. I want to live [. . . .] I don't want our new house. I want to be with people [. . . .] I want the life I have"(419). Quick too is extremely happy as he missed his home dearly.

V

Through the engaging story of *Cloudstreet* and the lives and characters of its two families, the Pickles and the Lambs, Tim Winton has raised an urgent, contemporary issue of Australia. It is crucial as it is about the true Australian identity. He does not want his country to still adhere to the white Australia policy and vehemently discriminate against the Aborigines. He sincerely wishes that his people recognize the Aborigines as rightful fellow citizens and human beings rather than some Nedland monsters or the *other* and to grant them fundamental civil and human rights, like, right to live, right to organize, right to vote, right to education and right to the possession of land. They should be allowed to live independently and peacefully as the whites want to live.

Winton shows the possible ways to achieve this transformation. This is where he addresses the higher issues of religion and spiritualism. He not only believes in the transforming power of religion, but also in the spiritual potential of his people. They should pierce through the external differences of race, colour, culture and religion and gain realization about the human soul. This discovery can be made either through the right interpretation of religion or by a threadbare analysis of the mystic nature of the *self*. This quest is at the heart of *Cloudstreet*. When a personal catharsis is reached, there is enlightenment. It dismantles illusions, fallacies, misunderstandings, pride and prejudices, ignorance, apprehensions, stereotypical attitudes, weaknesses, and a violent temperament. There is expansion of consciousness and transcendence of a limited

space and a restrictive identity. The seeker truly becomes human and encompasses all diversity into the sacred fold of his vast experience. He truly attains happiness, prosperity and unity with existence as Quick and Rose attain after their epiphanies. Cloudstreet, the home of Pickles and Lambs, emerges as a metaphor for the Australian nation and shows how Australia can become an ideal home for all its citizens.

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Process and Limitations of Amendment Procedures in India and Australia

Shreya Mishra

Introduction

The scope of comparison among two things increases with the presence of both similarities as well as differences. India and Australia have certain things that are common between them: they were both colonies of the British, they are both federations, and thus they both have written Constitutions, which is an essential feature of a federal nation. A written Constitution is like the Bible for a nation's working. It lays down principles which are integral to a nation's identity. Amendment powers assume an important role when it comes to the working of the Constitution. Amending a legislative Act is about altering a certain provision in order to make it conform to the existing societal norms, but amending a Constitution requires deliberation to a much greater extent, inclusive of the notion of conformity, and it may involve changing the guiding principles themselves. The historical notions of both the Constitutions assume importance in the present context because the Australian Constitution was bestowed upon the Australian people by the British Crown, whereas the Indian Constitution was created by the Constituent Assembly. Thus, interesting questions arise with respect to the status of both the Constitutions. The existing framework with regard to the amendment procedures in India and Australia shall be examined in this paper. It shall focus on a comparative analysis of the operation and scope--limited or unlimited thereof--of the amendment powers of India and Australia, in the light of the amount of flexibility and/or rigidity imparted through the respective provisions. Certain trends with respect to amending procedures shall be identified with respect to both the countries; e.g. the repercussions of such amending procedures including *The Basic Structure Doctrine* (India).

Procedure for Amendment in India

The Constitution provides for three classes of amendments of its provisions which shall be discussed later in the paper. The basic procedure is laid down in Article 368, which says:

"*Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and Procedure therefor*:

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article.

(2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in each House by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill:

Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in:

(a) article 54, article 55, article 73, article 162 or article 241, or

(b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or

(c) any of the lists in the Seventh Schedule, or

(d) the representation of States in Parliament, or

(e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislatures of not less than one-half of the States by resolutions to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent.

(3) Nothing in article 13[i] shall apply to amendment made under this Article.

(4)* No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article [whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976] shall be called in question in any court on any ground.

(5)* For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article[ii].

Procedure for Amendment in Australia

The amendment process in Australia has been provided for under Section 128 of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900*:

"This Constitution shall not be altered except in the following manner:

The proposed law for the alteration thereof must be passed by an absolute majority of each House of the Parliament, and not less than two nor more than six months after its passage through both Houses the proposed law shall be submitted in each State and Territory to the electors qualified to vote for the election of members of the House of Representatives.

But if either House passes any such proposed law by an absolute majority, and the other House rejects it or fails to pass it, or passes it with any amendment to which the first-mentioned House will not agree, and if after an interval of three months the first-mentioned House in the same or the next session again passes the proposed law by an absolute majority with or without any amendment which has been made or agreed to by the other House, and such other House rejects or fails to pass it or passes it with any

amendment to which the first mentioned House will not agree, the Governor-General may submit the proposed law as last proposed by the first-mentioned House, and either with or without any amendments subsequently agreed to by both Houses, to the electors in each State and Territory qualified to vote for the election of the House of Representatives.

When a proposed law is submitted to the electors the vote shall be taken in such manner as the Parliament prescribes. But until the qualification of electors of members of the House of Representatives becomes uniform throughout the Commonwealth, only one-half of the electors voting for and against the proposed law shall be counted in any State in which adult suffrage prevails.

And if in a majority of the States a majority of the electors voting approve the proposed law, and if a majority of all the electors voting also approve the proposed law, it shall be presented to the Governor General for the Queen's assent.

No alteration diminishing the proportionate representation of any State in either House of the Parliament, or the minimum number of representatives of a State in the House of Representatives, or increasing, diminishing, or otherwise altering the limits of the State, or in any manner affecting the provisions of the Constitution in relation thereto, shall become law unless the majority of the electors voting in that State approve the proposed law [iii].

Comparing Australian and Indian Constitutions

1. Power of Amendment provided by the provisions

With respect to the Australian Constitution, there are two views. According to the first view, the *Colonial Laws Validity Act of 1865* provided the power to amend. The other view says that s 128 is only a manner and form provision and does not create a power to amend. The view nullifying the above-mentioned views says that s 5 of the Colonial Laws Validity Act does not come within the purview of s 2(1) of the Statute of Westminster 1931, from which emanated the

power to amend the Constitution; also, s 128 of the Australian Constitution definitely implies a power to amend the Constitution (Thomson 329).

The Indian Constitution provides for three kinds of amendments. Firstly, those that can be effected by Parliament by a simple majority such as that required for passing of any ordinary law- the amendments contemplated in articles 4 [iv], 169[v], para 7(2) of Schedule V[vi] and para 21 (2) of Schedule VI[vii] fall within this category and are specifically excluded from the purview of article 368 which is the specific provision in the Constitution dealing with the power and the procedure for the amendment of the Constitution; Secondly, those amendments that can be effected by Parliament by a prescribed 'special majority'; and Thirdly, those that require, in addition to such 'special majority', ratification by at least one half of the State Legislatures. The last two types of amendments fall within the ambit of article 368.

2. Limitations on the power of amendment with respect to the provisions in the Constitution

The preamble to the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* records that the people of the colonies "have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" (Blackshield, Williams 1390). Several reasons are usually advanced for denying that the preamble in any way restricts s 128 amendments to the Constitution. First, the words "indissoluble Federal Commonwealth" can be viewed as "merely historical" for the purpose of constituting a "recital of the intention" which the Constitution Act in 1900 sought to implement. Second, resort can be had to rules of statutory construction concerning the preamble as an interpretative aid. Third, there is no reference in the express words of s 128 to the preamble; nor is there scope in s 128 to imply such a restriction. Finally, the concept of federalism is at best vague and without sufficient essential features to act as a limitation (Thomson 335).

It might also be noted that several sections of the Constitution, for example Ss.91[viii], 92[ix], 95[x], 104[xi] and 105A(5) [xii], contain a phrase similar to "notwithstanding anything in this Constitution." The suggestion is that the phrase would invalidate any s 128 amendment to the Constitution which conflicts with any agreement or variation made pursuant to s 105A. That view has, however, been labelled "wrong" and “incorrect". The words "notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution" have been interpreted as not being sufficiently clear to give greater and overriding weight to s 105A and any other section in which they appear (Thomson 336).

The position in India is most interesting. On its face, the Indian Constitution permits the amendment of all provisions. However, in a series of cases, the Supreme Court of India has imposed limits on this power. At first, in *I C Golak Nath v State of Punjab*[xiii], the Supreme Court held that fundamental rights under the Constitution could not be amended. This was later overturned by the Supreme Court in *His Holiness Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru v State of Kerala*[xiv], where a majority held that although any provision of the Constitution could be amended, this could not be done in such a manner as to alter the 'basic structure and framework' of the Constitution. This includes the federal character of the Constitution, as well as the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the democratic and secular character of the Constitution. The Supreme Court's judgment in *Kesavananda* has since been affirmed upon a number of occasions and is now well accepted in India. The attempt of the Indian Parliament to remove the jurisdiction of the Court and restore its full power to amend the Constitution, through the enactment of the forty-second amendment, was rejected by the Supreme Court in *Minerva Mills Ltd v Union of India*[xv]. The Court held that the 42nd amendment was invalid because the Parliament could not use its limited power of amendment to expand it into an absolute power (Twomey 13).

3. Amending the Section of Amendment

There are two questions which require to be answered. First, whether s 128 can be amended, and second, if so, whether the amendment requires the approval of only a majority of voters in a majority of States or of a majority of voters in all the States. That s 128 can be amended is the view that has most frequently been espoused. It has, however been suggested that, although there is no direct discussion of this question in the Convention debates, it is nevertheless been contended that the "political compact" between the Commonwealth and States would be contravened if the power of amendment extended to s 128 itself. The conclusion that s 128 is amendable can, however, be justified on a number of grounds. (Thomson 339) First, the semantic arguments need to be laid down. Section 128 is within covering clause 9[xvi] which commences with the major title "The Constitution". The words in s 128 give no support to an implication which would exclude s 128 from its opening words by reading them as "This Constitution, other than this section, shall not be altered except in the following manner". Second, there is no "manner and form" provision entrenching s 128 itself. The procedure that needs to be followed to amend s 128 has been the subject of differing views. On the one hand, it has been argued that s 128 can be amended by the approval of a majority of voters in a majority of States. An intermediate position is that this is all that is required for amendments to all of s 128 except to the penultimate paragraph. Amendment of that paragraph would require the approval of a majority of voters in all States. At the other end of the spectrum is the argument that an amendment to any portion of s 128 comes within the penultimate paragraph of s 128 and therefore requires the consent of a majority of voters in all States (Thomson 338-340).

In comparison, the Constitution of India provides for amending the article of amendment itself, but there is an attached proviso to the procedure in that apart from the usual procedure laid down in clause (2), such a Bill has to be ratified by not less than one-half the States with resolutions having been passed in the respective State Legislatures to that effect, before presenting such a Bill for presidential assent. Thus, there is a clear provision as to amending the

article of amendment itself.

4. Judicial Review

The Constitution of Australia does not contain any express provision for judicial review, yet the process goes on and judicial review has become an integral part of the constitutional process. The historical origin of judicial review in Australia is traceable to the colonial era. The colonial legislatures were regarded as subordinate legislatures *vis-à-vis* the British Parliament and they had to function within the parameters of the statutes enacted by the British Parliament. The colonial laws were, therefore, subject to judicial review, and thus the process continued long after the colonies ripened into self-governing dominions. The doctrine of judicial review was thus ingrained into the legal fabric of Australia and, therefore, no need was felt to include a specific constitutional provision in the basic laws of these countries (Jain 1694).

The 'Essential Features' case was a landmark case in the Indian Constitutional history, and the Court laid down a fundamental premise that all legislative Acts shall be subject to judicial review. Judicial review was laid down as a 'basic feature' of the Indian Constitution in the case. This was followed by the Court in various cases, one of the most important being the 'Anti-Defection case'[xvii], in which the constitutional validity of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution inserted by the Constitution (Fifty-second Amendment) Act, 1985 was challenged. The Constitution Bench in its majority judgment upheld the validity of the Tenth Schedule but declared Paragraph 7[xviii] of the Schedule invalid and severable from the Schedule because it undermined judicial review, one the basic features of the Constitution (Bakshi 388).

5. The Question of Sovereignty

The preamble of the Australia Act 1986 states that this is '[a]n Act to bring constitutional arrangements affecting the Commonwealth and the States into conformity with the status of the Commonwealth of

Australia as a *sovereign*, independent and federal nation.' But Australia's long evolution of legal independence, from the *Colonial Laws Validity Act 1865* (UK) to the *Australia Acts of 1986*, is fundamentally reversible by Britain, because this evolution wholly depends on the maintenance of key British statutes, which in the case of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900* (UK) and the *Australia Act 1986* (UK) are subject to repeal at Westminster. Despite the fact that the British repeal of Australian Constitution is unlikely in practice, the fact that it is possible in principle (once the relevant sections of the Australia Act (UK) have been repealed) ensures the absence of Australian sovereignty. This is because a state must be entirely self-determining and, therefore, free of any dependence on the authority of another power, in order to be sovereign (Tate 35).

Although the *Australia Act 1986* (Cth) marked the end of the power of the British Parliament to legislate for Australia, the Constitution remains an enactment of the former Imperial Parliament. Despite this, the members of the High Court have made it clear that the source of the sovereignty, or "grund norm"[xix], legitimizing the Constitution now lies with the Australian people, and that Australia is therefore now a fully independent nation (Blackshield, Williams 1390). In *Sue v Hill*[xx] a majority of the Court even held that, for the purposes of s 44 of the Constitution, the United Kingdom should now be considered a "foreign power" (Blackshield, Williams 1390). The High Court's conception of Britain as a 'foreign power', with as little claim to sovereignty over Australia as any other foreign state, was most apparent in the majority judgment of *Kirmani v Captain Cook Cruises Pty Ltd (No 1)*[xxi] where the High Court had to decide on the legal capacity of the Commonwealth to override British legislation applying to Australian States. While the majority decision in the *Kirmani case* certainly extended Australia's legal independence from Britain through the use of the external affairs power, it did not extend Australian sovereignty (Tate 50-52). These decisions affirmed the reality of Australia's political and legal independence (Blackshield, Williams 1390).

In comparison, at the time of its establishment, the Constituent Assembly in India was not a sovereign body. It stood organised on the basis of the Cabinet Mission Planx[xii] (Chandra, 303-304). Its powers were derived from the sovereign authority of British Parliament (Behuria 43-45). When on 15th August, 1947, India became Independent, the Constituent Assembly became a fully sovereign body and remained so till the inauguration of the Constitution of India. During this period, it acted in a dual capacity: first as the Constituent Assembly engaged in the making of the Indian Constitution, and secondly as the Parliament of India, it remained involved in legislating for the whole of India (Behuria 43-45). The preamble of the Indian Constitution establishes India as a "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic". The word "Sovereign" was added to the preamble through the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976. Thus, India is a fully sovereign nation and it has been guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

6. Flexibility and/or Rigidity

A.V. Dicey defines two types of Constitutions: the flexible as 'one under which every law of every description can legally be changed with the same ease and in the same manner by one and the same body', and the rigid Constitutions as 'one under which certain laws generally known as constitutional or fundamental laws, cannot be changed in the same manner as ordinary laws' (Dicey 127). The Constitution-amending process in Australia has proved to be very rigid in practice. Many amendments deemed essential by the Commonwealth Government have been rejected at the referenda. A learned author has said: "Constitutionally speaking, Australia is the frozen continent"(Sawer 208). Since 1900, when the Constitution came into force, only 9 amendments have been effectuated, although 37 referenda involving a number of amendments have been held (Howard 565). The process of popular referendum has proved to be a difficult method to amend the Constitution. Some proposals though approved by a majority of the electorate throughout Australia, have failed to be effective because they could not secure majorities in four

of the six States. No proposal has failed so far because it has secured approval in a majority of States but has not secured an over-all majority throughout Australia (Bowie, Friedrich 830).

The more elaborate procedure of referendum or constitutional convention has been avoided in India. The constitution-makers thus sought to find a via media between the two extremes of flexibility and rigidity so that the Constitution may keep pace with social dynamism in the country (Jain 1760). The Legislature has brought about more than 95 amendments to the Indian Constitution ever since the Constitution was brought into force in 1950. This is testimony to the fact that despite the elaborate, step-by-step procedures involved in passing of a Bill, the amending procedure is very much feasible. On the other hand, the Judiciary has established by enunciating the doctrine of inviolability of the basic features of the Constitution that the Constitution is not a party manifesto which can be amended by the party at its will to suit political expediency, but a national heritage which ought to be amended only when there is a broad national consensus favouring a specific amendment (Jain 1794).

Conclusion

Comparative Constitutional Law not only manifests the interplay of words and interpretations displayed by corresponding provisions in various Constitutions, but also gives an insight into their large-scale repercussions. The Australian Constitution has a rather rigid amendment procedure, and it has resulted in the Constitution remaining more or less in the same form as it was enacted in 1901. On the contrary, the Indian Constitution, which was enacted nearly 50 years after the Australian Constitution was enacted has witnessed successive amendments at a rapid speed. Despite the difficulty of achieving change, Australians continue to debate a wide array of proposals for constitutional reforms, including the ideas of an Australian republic and an Australian Bill of Rights (Blackshield, Williams 1387). The contemporary debate about a republic is not about whether Australia should amend its Constitution to become an

independent nation. The debate is about whether the Constitution should be altered to reflect the existing reality of independence, and whether the nation should take a final symbolic step of replacing the Queen with an Australian President (Blackshield, Williams 1390).

It might, of course, be said that if the Australian people were given a voice in the selection of legislative principles on which power should be exercised, there would be less occasion for independent action by Parliament itself. But, properly considered, approval of specific legislation of great importance is merely an application of the general principles of democracy. Here, too, Parliaments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. Everyone agrees, or pretends to agree, that to-day the countries of the world are being opposed by a principle openly asserted against democracy (*Resjudicatae* 267). India is the largest democracy of the world, and has a huge population which gets impacted by the legislations passed by the Legislature. Through the method of regular elections, the electorate chooses the government. But the need of the hour is that amendments should not be brought about arbitrarily, and should take into consideration the ethos, values, and opinions of the stakeholders involved. In other words, pre-legislative consultation should be implemented at all tiers of the government for major Bills that are to be passed in the Parliament. Democracy shall be successful only if people are given a strong voice and are bestowed with decision-making powers. Thus, every amendment in the Constitution should be representative of the ambitions and visions of the public at large.

Endnotes

[i]Clause 3 was inserted by the Constitution (Twenty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1971 which also added a new clause (4) in article 13 which reads, "Nothing in this article shall apply to any amendment of this Constitution made under article 368".

[ii]The Constitution of India, 1950.

***** Clauses (4) and (5) were inserted in the article by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976 *vide* section 55. This section has since been declared invalid by the Supreme Court in *Minerva Mills Ltd. And others* v. *Union of India and other* (1980) 2 S.C.C. 591.

[iii]The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900.

[iv]Article 4 provides that laws made by Parliament under article 2 (relating to admission or establishment of new States) and article 3 (relating to formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States) effecting amendments in the First Schedule or the Fourth Schedule and supplemental, incidental and consequential matters, shall not be deemed to be amendments of the Constitution for the purposes of article 368.

[v]Article 169 empowers Parliament to provide by law for the abolition or creation of the Legislative Councils in States and specifies that though such law shall contain such provisions for the amendment of the Constitution as may be necessary, it shall not be deemed to be an amendment of the Constitution for the purposes of article 368.

[vi]The Fifth Schedule contains provisions as to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes. Para 7 of the Schedule vests Parliament with plenary powers to enact laws amending the Schedule and lays down that no such law shall be deemed to be an amendment of the Constitution for the purposes of article 368.

[vii]Under Para 21 (Sixth Schedule), Parliament has full power to enact laws amending the Sixth Schedule which contains provisions for the administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. No such law, however, is to be deemed to be an amendment of the Constitution for the purposes of article 368.

[viii]S. 91 of the Australian Constitution says- "**Exceptions as to bounties**:

Nothing in this Constitution prohibits a State from granting any aid to or bounty on mining for gold, silver, or other metals, nor from granting, with the consent of both Houses of the Parliament of the Commonwealth expressed by resolution, any aid to or bounty on the production or export of goods. "

[ix]"**Trade within the Commonwealth to be free**:

On the imposition of uniform duties of customs, trade, commerce, and intercourse among the States, whether by means of internal carriage or ocean navigation, shall be absolutely free. But notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, goods imported before the imposition of uniform duties of customs into any State, or into any Colony which, whilst the goods remain therein, becomes a State, shall, on thence passing into another State within two years after the imposition of such duties, be liable to any duty chargeable on the importation of such goods into the Commonwealth, less any duty paid in respect of the goods on their importation."

[x]"**Customs duties of Western Australia**:

Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the Parliament of the State of Western Australia, if that State be an Original State, may, during the first five years after the imposition of uniform duties of customs, impose duties of customs on goods passing into that State and not originally imported from beyond the limits of the Commonwealth; and such duties shall be collected by the Commonwealth.

But any duty so imposed on any goods shall not exceed during the first of such years the duty chargeable on the goods under the law of Western Australia in force at the imposition of uniform duties, and shall not exceed during the second, third, fourth, and fifth of such years respectively, four-fifths, three-fifths, two-fifths, and one-fifth of such latter duty, and all duties imposed under this section shall cease at the expiration of the fifth year after the imposition of uniform duties.

If at any time during the five years the duty on any goods under this section is higher than the duty imposed by the Commonwealth on the importation of the like goods, then such higher duty shall be collected on the goods when imported into Western Australia from beyond the limits of the Commonwealth."

[xi]"**Saving of certain rates**:

Nothing in this Constitution shall render unlawful any rate for the carriage of goods upon a railway, the property of a State, if the rate is deemed by the Inter-State Commission to be necessary for the development of the territory of the State, and if the rate applies equally to goods within the State and to goods passing into the State from other States."

[xii]"**Agreements with respect to State debts**:

….. (5) Every such agreement and any such variation thereof shall be binding upon the Commonwealth and the States parties thereto notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution or the Constitution of the several States or in any law of the Parliament of the Commonwealth or of any State."

[xiii]AIR 1967 SC 1643.

[xiv]AIR 1973 SC 1461.

[xv]AIR 1980 SC 1789.

[xvi]S. 128 falls within the covering Clause 9 (Note 1) of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900*. S.128 was amended in 1977 through *Constitution Alteration (Referendums) 1977*.

[xvii]Kilhota Hollohon v Zachilhu and Ors. (1992) 1 SCC 309.

[xviii]**"Bar of jurisdiction of Courts**:

Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, no court shall have any jurisdiction in respect of any matter connected with the disqualification of a member of a House under this Schedule."

[xix]Kelsen's pure theory of Law establishes the idea of sovereignty arising from a grund norm or a 'basic norm'.

[xx](1999) 199 CLR 462

[xxi](1985) 150 CLR 351

[xxii]The British Government sent in March 1946 a Cabinet Mission to India to negotiate with the Indian leaders the terms for the transfer of power to Indians. The Cabinet Mission proposed a two-tiered federal plan which was expected to maintain national unity while conceding the largest measure of regional autonomy.

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Family at the Cultural Crossroads:

Hannie Rayson's *Mary*

Subhash Verma

The dynamics of family is one of the oldest themes known to the stage. In Australian theatre also plays concerning the family are frequently performed. The plays of Hannie Rayson, the Melbourne-based writer who is widely regarded as the most influential woman playwright of the contemporary Australian Theatre, express a profound concern for the role of family in the Australian society, as she believes, "we're all connected in some way to family" (Marriner, Web. 2010). Family issues are interesting because everyone in some way or the other can relate to them. As Sam Shepard, an American dramatist puts it, "Everything can be traced back to the family: what doesn't have to do with family? There isn't anything, you know what I mean? Even a love story has to do with family. Crime has to do with family. We all come out of each other – everyone is born out of a mother and a father and you go on to be a father. It's an endless cycle" (Bigsby 21).

Family issues are intensely personal yet powerfully universal. Hannie Rayson's plays *Mary* (1982), *Hotel Sorrento* (1990), *Scenes from a Separation* (1995), *Life After George* (2000), *Inheritance* (2003) and *Two Brothers* (2005) are dramas of individuals and social dramas at one and the same time. Her plays are motivated by the idea that pressures from the exterior world enter the family realm and may even contribute to the disintegration of the Australian family unit. Her plays show how modernization has affected the family in the Australian society. According to Rayson family means different things to different people. It is difficult to talk about the typical Australian family, especially as society and families change. She accepts that families may span several generations, several households, and may change in response to events such as divorce, remarriage and children leaving the parental home. The

dramatist believes caring, supporting, protecting and loving are what all families have in common.

In *Mary*, one of her earliest plays, Hannie Rayson gives us glimpses of family dynamics in a migrant community. In Australia, migrants came from different countries around the world and hence from different political, economic and social environments. As a result Australia became a multicultural society. The term 'multiculturalism' is used in two ways. The first acknowledges the everyday reality of the diversity of cultures within Australia. The second refers to official policies on migrant settlement and integration, which support cultural diversity and help different cultural groups to maintain distinct identities while living together within a single society. *Mary* is written in response to the question as to how to maintain family ties in a different country and in a different cultural milieu.

Mary was first produced by Theatre Works Eastern Suburbs Community Theatre Company at Melbourne in December 1982. It was directed by Susie Fraser. Prior to this *Mary* was toured to secondary schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area. A product of community theatre, it is a play that has been composed by working closely with members of the community over a twelve month period. The play received a "Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust award in 1980" (Jevons 24).

The play's tours to Australian schools in 1981 served a dual purpose. It was an opportunity for the students to work with professional theatre workers as well as familiarizing theatre workers with the milieu of adolescence; the concerns, hopes, values, and attitudes towards school, family, life, sexuality, work opportunities, social life, etc. Several students in the group came from migrant backgrounds. From this experience emerged the idea that rather than focusing solely on the experiences of a Greek girl within her own family setting, it would be interesting to juxtapose a Greek family with an Australian one. For the basic structure of the play, Rayson spent two months meeting and interviewing many Greek women,

collecting hours of tape recordings related to their personal experiences of being Greek and growing up and living in Melbourne. This was followed by weekly meetings with a group of young people. The result is a play based on the personal stories and anecdotes of over fifty different women of all ages.

Mary is set in Doncaster, an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne. The set represents two modern homes in a newly developed residential area, separated by a garden fence. On the one side of the fence lives an Australian divorcee and her adolescent daughter. On the other side lives a Greek family. As Leonard Radic observes, "The fence between them is a potent dramatic symbol. For while the Greeks have done well for themselves – well enough to make the jump from Richmond to Doncaster – they have yet to win acceptance from their Australian neighbours" (14). There are five female characters in the play. Mary Stephanides is a teenager of sixteen years. Evdokea Stephanides is her mother and Menny is the grandmother. Mary's family came from Greece but now the family has made its own house in Doncaster. In the Anglo-Australian family there is Gail Selwyn, who is a teenager of sixteen who is Mary's friend and classmate. Carole Selwyn is Gail's mother. Mary's family has just moved from Richmond, an inner suburb of Melbourne to Doncaster.

Mary has just changed her school from Richmond, where she had many Greek friends, to Doncaster where she is the only Greek in the class. Mary's friend Gail teaches her Australian ideas and Mary revolts against her mother's Greek conservative ideas of motherhood. Now she wants freedom. She would like to go to party with her friends and wishes to take her own decisions. All these things are unacceptable to her mother, Evdokea and she tries to restrain her daughter from adopting Australian culture. This leads to tension between the mother and the daughter.

There are many differences between Australian society, culture and life style and Greek society and culture. The play juxtaposes the Greek-Australian family with an Anglo-Australian one "not to make qualitative comparisons, but to highlight points of

similarity and difference" (Foreword). The play presents a contrast between the Greek and the Australian family units. A Greek family is a joint family. All the members live together under one roof. Parents, children, brothers and sisters, grand-parents and grandchildren are all tied by kinship bonds and are accommodated under the same roof. Evdokea, in the play thinks about her four sisters and their children, who live in Greece. She tells the audience, "My sister, she could not believe when she see the picture of this house. She writes to me and say 'Evdokea, you must be so rich to have such a house'. Is no good to be so long away from your family. I like them all to be here with me" (5). Gail, though an Anglo-Australian, likes this idea of a joint family and longs for it, as she says, "Sometimes I think it'd be good to have a really big family. Lot of brothers and sisters" (27).

Mary's grandmother Menny lives happily with her son and daughter-in-law. Greeks love to keep their elders with them. Generally Greek families care for aged parents. On the other side, Australian society is highly individualistic. Old people are generally put in the old people's home. Hence one can understand Gail's reaction when she learns that her grandmother is coming to stay with them for a few days. She feels sick.

> CAROLE. Your Grandmother. She's thinking of coming down next month for a few days with Auntie Lorna.
>
> GAIL. Aw, Shit.
>
> CAROLE. She has to see the eye specialist. Her eyes are going now, apparently. Poor old lady.
>
> GAIL. Has Auntie Lorna put her in the Old People's Home yet?
>
> CAROLE. Well, she's on the waiting list, but Lorna says she won't go. She refuses. It's a terrible business. I feel very sorry for them really.

GAIL. Stupid old stick. (32)

Greek culture is more community-based where the extended family plays a major role in an individual's life, a more community-oriented way of living exists, and there are strong family networks. Evdokea is a typical representative of Greek culture, and she considers Greek culture and values much superior than "Silly Australian ideas" (32).

By contrast Australian life gives lot of freedom to individuals to be what one wants. Gail takes her own decisions even though she is a teenager. Her sister lives with her boyfriend. For her mother, "It's her life. Whenever she'll feel comfortable she will marry. It's her own decision" (12). Later on Gail's mother Carole narrates to Ted, a man with whom she is engaged, "The only thing is I'm just a bit worried about Gail, my daughter. Yes. She's sixteen. No, it'll be ok. She can stay at a friend's place" (12). Privacy is of utmost importance in Australian society. One can dress the way one wants, travel anywhere, be passionate about things one appreciates. As a social being individuals are less dependent on others in daily lives, whereas in Greek culture an individual's choices may be influenced by friends, family and society.

Another dissimilarity that is evident between these two cultures is the attitude towards divorce. In Australian society there is easy acceptance of divorce, while in Greek society divorce is considered a stigma because the Greeks give more importance to keeping the family together. When Gail tells Evdokea that her parents are divorced and her sister lives in Fitzroy with her boyfriend and her mother approves it, Evdokea is surprised, "What you mean your mother has no say with the boy friend?" (26). Evdokea is not comfortable with this position of a mother allowing her daughter to stay with her boy friend. She thinks that Gail's sister is living in sin. For Evdokea a bad girl is one "who doesn't respect her mother, smokes cigarettes and uses bad language" (Hutton 8) and for her these are the qualities of a typical Australian girl. Gail tells her mother, "No, I don't think Mrs. Stephanides approves of us very

much… you being divorced, and Merryl 'living in sin' with Marc in Fitzroy. She reckons, "What's your mother think about the boyfriend. She no like this, ah?" (26). Gail's mother Carole is a divorcee and now she is engaged to another man, called Ted McMohan. She goes out with him on Saturday nights. Carole shares all these things with her teenage daughter, "I'm going out to dinner with him Gail. What's wrong with that?" (15).

Mary is primarily a family play. It explores the relationship between mothers and daughters and their quest for identity. It shows that after sixteen how daughters want to define themselves as a person other than their mother's daughters. It also assesses the role of a good mother and her obligations towards her daughter.

As the play opens Menny, Mary's grandmother, is struggling to learn English. Evdokea, Mary's mother also has difficulty in speaking English. As it is a migrant family they are more fluent in their mother tongue, i.e. Greek. In fact the main problem the migrants face in Australia is their lack of proficiency in English. Even if migrants speak English, their accent or lack of fluency hampers their employment opportunities. Evdokea faces humiliation due to her bad English. In an interview Rayson herself tells, "When I was writing *Mary* I'd be with these grandmothers who did not speak English, I'd have a feeling for these women" (Varney 153).

The Greeks' migration to Australia started with the first fleet in 1786. After World War II the civil war took its toll on the Greek economy and the government encouraged emigration as a way of solving problems of poverty and unemployment. Between 1947 and 1982 many Greek families migrated to Australia and in the play Mary's family was one of them. For many years, Melbourne was said to be the fifth-largest Greek-populated city in the world, and today it is the largest Greek-populated city outside Greece. Many of the Greeks who came to Australia are associated with the emergence of a café culture. Milk bars, cafes and fish and chip shops enabled generations of migrants from Greece to establish themselves in cities and towns all over Australia.

Life was not easy for the new arrivals. Women also had to work in order to keep the family afloat financially. In the play Mary's mother works in a restaurant and her father works in a factory during day and drives taxi at night. Like other Australians, migrants need a level of emotional stability and at the same time, the maintenance of their own culture is equally important as it provides a sense of belonging and identity.

Mary explicates the relationship between mothers and daughters. The mother-daughter relationship is one of the most long-lasting and emotionally intense social ties. Although often positive and supportive, this tie also includes feelings of irritation, tension and ambivalence. Evdokea is more emotionally invested in this relationship than her teenage daughter Mary. At Richmond, Mary was among Greek friends, but in her new school she has no Greeks in her class. Her Anglo-Australian friend Gail teaches her some Australian values which are different from Greek culture. Initially Mary misses Richmond and her Greek friends. In a letter written to her friend Roula, she recalls her old house and her life she has just left behind:

> That's something that bothers me about this house. It doesn't seem to have any memories. No Greek has ever lived here, I can tell. The walls seem shocked to hear our Greek music this afternoon. And when I went to the milkbar – I had to walk nearly a mile – I didn't see one Greek face … Remember how we used to play 'Spot the Aussie'? Mum is worried that we might lose ourselves here. Of course, I reassured her, yet inside me I understood her fear. She is frightened that Stavors and I will forget our Greekness. It's silly of her, I know; how could one 'forget' such a thing. (6)

In the new school as there are all Australians in her class she starts avoiding morning assembly in the school and spends more time in the school toilet. Slowly she starts telling lies to her mother. Once Mary and Gail go to town for shopping after school and Mary does

this without taking her mother's permission. When Evdokea gets worried and inquires, Mary replies, "she had a late class" (20). In Greek families after the school hours Greek children are expected to partake in family activities.

On the one hand, Mary's mother Evdokea says that they have moved for the sake of the children, yet on the other hand she expresses her fear that it might not be a good thing for Mary and Stavros. Edokea came to Australia after an arranged marriage, and has worked hard with her husband to give the family all the things they wouldn't have had in a Greek village. She is frightened that teenager Mary, who is just starting to find her own way, will grow away from her, and lose her Greekness. She needs Mary to promise that she will stay close to family. Being a good mother, Evdokea worries about her daughter's habits, life style, how she spends her time and money and other health-related concerns. Every now and then she tries to teach her right from wrong. She expects Mary to make a career and gain financial independence. When Mary and Evdokea return home after Sophia's party they have a talk about Nicholette, a girl in the party, over smoking a cigarette.

EVDOKEA. Did you notice Nicholette smoking the cigarette?

MARY. Sure.

EVDOKEA. Her poor mother. She was so ashamed. Ever since Nicholette been to the university, she doesn't respect her mother. She's turned against the family.

MARY. Mum just because she had a cigarette.

EVDOKEA. She wear Jeans, she use bad language, she go out at night with the boyfriend, she smoke cigarette. A good girl doesn't do these things.

MARY. She's only trying to live her own life.

EVDOKEA. Live her life and bring shame to everyone else. Con say she always criticizing the Greeks, that girl.

MARY. You will never understand, will you?

EVDOKEA. I understand all right. I understand that you work all your life so your kids can go to school and have the books and the toys and the nice clothes and plenty of food to eat. They go to school and to the university and they get silly Australian ideas. They think they know everything. Just because they read the books. They think their parents are stupid. But you don't learn about life from reading the books, Mary. That's where you're wrong. That's where you're wrong. You learn with age. Always respect age. Mary. (32)

Evdokea is always nice and polite to her daughter. However, as a product of Greek society she does not allow her daughter to grow up on her own and to take her own decisions. Mary does not understand her mother's emotional map. She wants freedom. She feels the need to spend more time with her friends. Gail asks Mary to go for a party on Saturday night at her friend's house. Evdokea doesn't allow Mary to go to the party and Mary starts resenting that she's the only one not being allowed to go for a party at night.

Both Mary and Gail wrestle with their responsibility towards their mothers and their desire for independence. They want to live life other than their mothers' daughters. Mary does not attend the party and becomes more rebellious. Gail advises her, "You've got to stand up to her [Evdokea] more. You let her push you around. She treats you like you're ten years old. No offence or anything but she does and you let her" (34). Mary likes Gail's suggestion and starts answering back

to her mother. When Evdokea asks Mary to join uncle Con's party, she straightaway rejects. Gail instigates her to remain firm on her decision. Mary replies to her mother "I can't. I can't do it" (35).

At the end of the play Mary wants to attend a concert at her school one night but her mother does not allow her. Mary openly revolts against her mother,

> MARY. You won't let me do anything. It's not fair. Everyone else is allowed to go except me.
>
> EVDOKEA. I don't care about everyone else, Mary.
>
> MARY. Well how come other kids' parents let them go out at night? I'm sixteen, Mum. I'm not a baby.
>
> EVDOKEA. You still my baby. (38-39)

Evdokea thinks Greek culture is the best culture. She does not want Mary to go out for the concert because she thinks that there will be no Greeks. Moreover Evdokea does not approve of Mary's friendship with Gail as she believes that Australian culture would have a bad influence on her daughter. She is unable to understand the rebellious behavior of her daughter. She feels helpless.

Mary was a different girl at Richmond when she was among her Greek friends. When she changes her school in Doncaster she finds no Greek friend and under the influence of Australian culture she starts finding the shortcomings of her own culture. She feels suffocated as she is not allowed to go out on her own. When she goes out, it must be with her family or with Greek friends. Her Australian friends, and their values, are suspected by Evdokea:

> MARY. You see. You'll never change. You make life impossible for me.
>
> EVDOKEA. A good girl doesn't talk to her mother like this.

MARY. I don't want to be a good girl.

EVDOKEA. Well, go, then go!

MARY. I am going.

EVDOKEA. Go. But forget you have a family. And don't come back to this house.

MARY. You make me hate Greek. [*She storms out*]. (39)

Mary experiences psychological ambivalence. She experiences simultaneous feelings of love and irritation about her mother. At the end of the play Mary writes an essay on "'The changing role of women from the village to the factory and how it has affected one family – my own' My mother, no… Evdokea Vardaki…" (40). In the essay Mary acknowledges her mother's sacrifices and accepts that her mother's life has been guided by Greek values and traditions. She considers her life different from her mother's. "And I understand why she cannot see it any other way. Yet, because my life has been so different…" (41).

One of the advantages of exploring another culture is that it invariably provides clearer insights into one's own. For this reason Rayson has juxtaposed a Greek family with an Anglo - Australian one. Her intention in no way was to make a qualitative comparison, i.e. one is better than the other, but to highlight points of similarities and differences of lifestyle, attitude and values.

Mary is also about the quest for identity. It is the quest of a mother to prove herself a good mother. It is a quest of a daughter also to define herself as a person other than her mother's daughter. The play throws light on the relationship between mothers and daughters. The play does not take sides; that, in a way, is one of its strengths. The Greek mother, doing what is expected of her according to the time – honored traditions of her birth place, is drawn with sympathy and understanding. And so is her daughter, trapped uneasily in a no-man's (or no woman's) land between her mother's unbending discipline and

her Australian friend's more relaxed way of life. The title of the play is rightly chosen. It is Mary, the Greek teenaged school girl, who is the central figure, too old to accept her mother's hard line Greek disciplines which alienate her from her friends, too young to defy her parents and choose her own path. Her one explosion of frustration comes in a brief outburst to her mother: "You make me hate Greeks" (39). The mother's dilemma is also presented beautifully towards the end of the play when Evdokea says to Mary:

> There are times when I look at you, little girl of mine.
> When you seem like a stranger to me
> Who have you become, little girl of mine
> Someone so different to me. (41)

As a family play *Mary* focuses particularly on mother-daughter relationship, which in any case becomes a bit ambivalent as the daughter grows up and wants to be her own person coming out of the shadow of her mother. The relationship becomes even more fraught with ambivalence when cultural conflict among the migrant communities also adds to the tension. While the mother holds on to the values and practices of their native culture the young daughter is influenced by and approves of the values and practices of the host country, their adopted home. The open ending of the play suggests that it is healthy to maintain the ties with one's culture, but it is also essential to embrace the cultural traits of the new country, a suggestion so relevant for other migrant communities in Australia as well.

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Children's Narrative and Social Realism: Gender Politics in Kirsty Murray's *Vulture's Gate*

Akshay Kumar

Kirsty Murray, one of the most acclaimed Australian writers of fiction for children and young adults, presents deeply moving and interesting stories of children in her novels. Her novels have won and have been short listed for numerous awards including the Western Australia Premier's Book Award, The New South Wales Premier History Award, The Aurealis Fantasy and Science Fiction Award, and the WA Young Readers' Book Award.

Through the ordeals and adventures of her young protagonists, and through their personal and social relationships Murray brings alive children's world in her narratives—their desires and expectations, their emotions and imagination, their individual will and capacity to cope with situations, and so on. Realism is central to the narratives in that history, politics and culture explicitly provide the context of children's stories. Murray wanted to give Australian children *their own stories,* rooted in their own country and culture, stories they could identify with. To give them a sense of Australianness, she takes her young readers into phases of Australian history in the four novels in *The Children of the Wind* series. She covers a span of one hundred and fifty years of Australian history, starting from mid-nineteenth century and ending in early twenty-first century. While presenting engaging narratives of young protagonists she also educates the young readers about the evolution of Australian nation.

It is but natural that gender politics so prevalent in any patriarchal society would also be a matter of concern for her. In *Bridie's Fire,* she deals with the plight of young girls after the Irish Potato Famine, how they were fighting with hunger and squalor in Ireland and living in workhouses. She portrays at some length the suffering of these immigrant girls in Australia after the selected girls were transported to Australia under the Earl Grey Orphan

Immigration scheme. For their survival they had to suffer exploitation, violence or make compromises such as marriage with settled Australians, indulgence in prostitution and bear with sexual harassment by their employers, etc.

Vulture's Gate is a dystopian narrative built around gender issues. Initially it is presented that there is only a single girl, surviving after the plague. Gradually, Bo, the protagonist of the novel, discovers that there are seventeen other surviving girls. The colonial authorities have captured them and have put them in Zenana, but not for their safety, rather they want to exploit them sexually and use them as surrogate mothers.

Interestingly when Murray was contemplating to write a novel on the issue of female foeticide, she was pleasantly surprised to find that an Indian author, Manjula Padamanabhan in her novel *Escape* has also visualized such a possibility where only one girl survives in the world. Both the writers present the mind-set of males how they will react when they come to know that they have only a single surviving girl.

Both the novels are futuristic novels. In both novels, the authors present the agony of protagonists, being lonely in the world when the females are extinct. Padamanabhan and Murray deal with biological as well as psychological development of their protagonists, Meiji and Bo. The basic difference between them is that Bo is an optimistic and self-dependent girl who does not give up hope and fights against the odds of her life whereas in *Escape* Meiji's uncles take all decisions regarding her life. Some of the themes around which *Vulture's Gate* develops are the predicament of being a female in men's world, the psychological and physical violence and the slow realization of the female self, the ordeals of single mothers, the myths about marriage being a protection for a woman and so on.

Being Female: Dangers and Difficulties

Being a female in a patriarchal society means one has to encounter

many difficulties—the most prominent is sexual harassment. Men hanker for a female body for their sexual pleasure. They do not care for the women's emotions, desires and feelings, rather they just want a control on them to satisfy their lust. So, in a patriarchal society, female is always treated as a shadow of male, "temperament, role and status" (Millet 26). They are marginalized in their 'role' and 'status' in the society. Kirsty Murray criticizes such patriarchal ideologies by depicting strong female characters in her novels. Murray talks about their desires, experiences, emotions and sensibility.

Murray depicts an imaginative Australia in *Vulture's Gate*, having an absence of government and people are fighting for their survival in these odd circumstances, where females died due to plague and surviving women lost their capacity to conceive a girl child. In this situation a girl, Bo, is left alive on the earth. She is living all alone in a forest, away from the colonies. Her grandfather had put her in the jungle, when females were dying of plague. She develops a strong respiratory system fighting against plague, but her grandfather does not put her in colonies again, because it is more dangerous for a single girl to be among men in cities rather than to be in a jungle. Here Murray talks about a common notion that cities are not safe for women. If they are in jungle, at least they are safe from the assaults of men. In cities, no doubt, they are more vulnerable.

Bo is a twelve years old girl, living all alone in a forest. Her grandfather is also killed in a fight with outstationers, a group of rogues. She is living with roboraptors and hunting in the forest. She has no one to talk to. She finds Callum, a boy the outstationers had captured, and who ran away from their imprisonment but met with an accident while escaping from there. She takes him with her from the spot of the accident. This is the first time that she finds some one of her own age and a human being after the death of her grandfather. She has almost forgotten even the use of language. She is not able to make correct sentences because she has not talked to anyone after the death of her grandfather. She finds it is easy to live with roboraptors because they do not ask questions, but Callum is a living human

being, he has his queries and asks lots of questions. Murray presents the impact of loneliness on Bo, when she takes Callum to her home and listens to his heart beat when he is unconscious, it comes as a familiar sound to her and she observes him in each detail. She feels that he is like an angel who has come to take her away from her lonely world.

> For a while, Bo squatted beside him, studying his sleeping face. It had been so long since she'd seen a living human being up close that every aspect of his features fascinated her. His eyes were set wide apart and framed by high, arching brows. His long black eyelashes lay like butterfly wings against his cheeks. She traced her finger along his cheekbone. His skin was smooth and silky. His lips were dark pink and he had a small dimple in his chin. He was like a boy out of a fairy story. Before leaving him, she gently rested her cheek against his, savouring his sleepy warmth. (*Vulture's Gate* 28)

In this scene, Murray talks about the urge of women also for human company. They too need someone who listens to them, cares for and understands them. They too want to share their emotions, thoughts and feelings with someone. But in patriarchal societies people have a notion that women have no desires or wishes of their own, and they are happy confined behind the threshold. It is presumed that women do not seek emotional support or company and that they are born to follow men and their norms.

When Callum comes to know that Bo is a girl, he remains stunned for a while. Despite her concern and support for him, he treats her like an epidemic. He does not believe that any girls are existing and that Bo who has saved him is a girl. She convinces him that she is not a dinosaur which is extinguished, but he finds it hard to accept the fact that girls are not totally extinguished from the world. She convinces him that perhaps there are many other girls also who exist and have developed resistance power against plague.

After the revelation of her identity as a girl, Callum's attitude changes towards her, he becomes more cautious about her. He wants to be with his fathers where he can protect her from the gaze of the colony people. Here Murray explores a common belief of patriarchal society that females are physically weak and they cannot protect themselves. So they need men for that purpose. They can become an easy prey of sexual abuse, because of their biological condition.

Callum wishes that his fathers accept Bo and that they will live together like a family, as long as she does not grow up enough to be a woman, but Bo is clear about her fate, soon she will grow up into a woman. They cannot conceal her identity for long. Once people will come to know about her, either they will kill her, like a bad omen or they will try to satisfy their lust. She does not find a secure place for females, where she can live happily with Callum. Reekie rightly says that it is all, "females' lived experience"(145), that is, they are kept under control.

Here Murray presents the socio-cultural norms of patriarchal societies. As Callum comes to know about Bo's gender, he forgets about her sacrifice and her concern and help for him. He is stuck with a single issue that of her gender only. She has sacrificed everything only for his company, but he is not ready to accept her because she is a female.

At first he does not accept her as his friend but as she convinces him that she is simply a girl, her gender does not create any difference in their friendship then he is ready to be her friend again. But now a change is visible in his thinking which is common in the patriarchal world. He wants to protect her, and as any other man would think of protecting her he would like to put her behind the walls. He does not find an open place fit for her. Here Murray portrays how the patriarchal society puts females behind the walls in the name of protection, and their freedom is snatched away from them. Callum also wants to protect Bo by putting her in his fathers' home. She has never thought of spending her whole life in an apartment, but she has to remain confined within the walls if she needs Callum's company.

In order to save herself from assault by men and the threat of sexual harassment, Bo disguises herself as a boy as Meiji also does in *Escape*. It can happen even in the normal course of life when a woman may have to disguise herself as a boy for her own safety. In *Bridie's Fire*, Bridie too conceals her identity as a girl, when she goes to the gold field, because females were not allowed in gold fields. She changes her name and attire, and becomes a boy, Billy. She works with gold miners and lives among them on the gold field. By disguising herself as a boy, she can go out for jobs, where females were banned to go. Moreover she will be free from the threat of sexual harassment.

In *Vulture's Gate* women are extinct, because of the plague (as female foeticide is unthinkable in Australia). Bo is not put in the forest, the way Meiji is put in a palace to protect her from generals. She is in the forest because the plague has affected whole of the world, they are not extinguished by some orders to make it a better world, as it happens in the case of Meiji.

In *Vulture's Gate* Poppy, her grandfather, has taken her to a jungle. He does not use any sort of chemicals to stop her growth. Moreover, she is clear about her gender. Poppy has equipped her with sufficient knowledge to make her choice, what she wants in future. Bo lives all alone, but psychologically she is quite grown up. She has read about fairies, kings, queens and about the social status of woman.

> Bo took the book back and began to read aloud. '*Once upon a time a king and a queen lived peacefully with their twelve children, who were all boys. One day the king said to his wife, "If the thirteenth child you are about to bear turns out to be a girl, then the twelve boys will have to be put to death. . . .'* (*Vulture's Gate* 34)

The story is a comment on the mindset of men in general. The moment they find a female among them they might sexually assault her irrespective of her age, status or relationship with them. Bo does

not find such an incident in life where anyone kills one's sons if one begets a daughter but she finds that men use women for their sexual pleasure and to procreate. They are always used as an instrument whether it is an ancient civilization or a modern one.

Vulture's Gate is a dystopian novel set in an imaginary future yet men have the same ideologies as in any contemporary patriarchal society--they want women either to exploit them sexually or to procreate. Murray presents this aspect in the novel by depicting a place Zenana where the colonial authorities put the surviving females. The authorities shift them to Mater Misericordiae, a laboratory where they use females as surrogate mothers. The authorities even force them into prostitution. This subjugation forces them to take a decision to run away from Zenana, as Showalter says, it is "Women's experience . . .which guides itself 'by its own impulse' to autonomous self-expression" (4). It creates in them an impulse to define themselves as women, not as breeders or instruments of sexual pleasure, and to assert that women are human and they too have an individual self.

In this respect, the ending of the novel is highly suggestive. Bo and other surviving girls whom she meets in Zenana, run away from there and board the ship. They are in the middle of the ocean, where on the one side, they are happy for their escape from Zenana, on the other side, they are worried about their future. They want a secure place for themselves, away from men's cruelty, but there is hardly a place like this. Yet they have to survive in this world. Here Murray presents that Bo is mentally mature enough to understand the gender bias against females. She understands her longings as well as the crushing attitude of the society towards women.

In *Escape* Meiji's uncles hide her identity of being a woman by using herbs and potions to stop her physical growth. They want to conceal her identity always. She is sixteen years old, but looks like a twelve years old child. They do not only stop her physical growth but also keep her a child psychologically as well. She does not know anything about the outer world. She is always kept behind the walls.

She is not even aware about her gender that she is a woman. She has only bookish knowledge.

Here Padamanabhan presents that in the patriarchal society men want to control even the mind of women. They want that females should only beget their children and look after their households. They should not participate in the social affairs. They do not even permit them to take important decisions of their own life, as it happens with Meiji, the growth of her mind has been controlled by male members of her family. One is reminded of what Lord Alfred Tennyson wrote about this divide of male and female roles in human society:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth,
> Man for the sword and for the needle she,
> Man with the head and woman with the heart,
> Man to command and woman to obey,
> All else is confusion. *(web*)

It is clear that as per such patriarchal thinking women are ruled and men are their masters. They have no say in the important issues of life, nor do they have an independent existence, even though by nature men and women are complementary to each other.

Marriage and the Myth of Protection

Kirsty Murray and Manjula Padamanabhan talk about a natural desire of sexual gratification among opposite sexes, but when these longings overpower men, then they become crazy to satisfy their lust through any means, as they depict in *Vulture's Gate* and *Escape* respectively.

Murray presents it through the character of Mollie Green, an old man, who proposes to Bo to marry him. Bo meets him when Bo and Callum have run away from the forest to go to Vulture's Gate, where Callum's fathers reside. Their bike, Daisy May, goes out of fuel and they also need water and food to continue their journey. Then, they stop at Mollie Green's place. It is a beautiful and well designed place in a green valley. Bo tells him their story, and then he offers

them food and lodging. They find many empty huts there. It is strange that Mollie Green lives all alone in such a placid estate.

Bo asks him as to why he lives all alone and all the huts are empty. He tells them that he was living happily with his sons, but they got a crazy idea that there are some girls alive in the world. So, they left him alone here in the hope of getting wives for themselves. Here, Mollie remarks that the days are gone now, when people had mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Here Murray seems to be hinting at the perils of the mind-set of those people who abort female children in the womb. They have already created an imbalance in sex-ratio in some areas. If female foeticide continues, soon the time will come when there will be no woman on the earth. People will read in books about females. They will read stories and try to imagine women, as people imagine about fairies, when they read fairy tales.

Bo tells Mollie her secret that she is a girl. She does it out of reverence towards him. He is an old man, like her Poppy. Callum advises her not to disclose her identity, but she does not listen to him. Mr. Mollie remains stunned for a couple of minutes, then he says that he believes in miracles. After knowing about her gender, Mollie's attitude changes completely. He gives them princely treatment; he does it only to attract her. Soon after he proposes to her. He argues that marriage can provide her with a comfortable and secure place. If she goes out alone, people will sexually exploit her as she cannot conceal her identity for long. She will grow up soon and her physical changes will reveal her identity to everyone. Then this world will be hell for her.

What Mollie says about the dangers lurking in the outside world for a girl is true but he is not warning Bo about the dangers because he is concerned about her safety. He is terrifying her about the outside world as he wants to keep Bo with him to satisfy his own lust. To make his hunger for female body look moral he proposes marriage to Bo, unmindful of the fact that he is an old man and she is just a child.

Through this episode Murray seems to be reflecting on the institution of marriage in patriarchy. Marriage is supposed to give a secure place to a young woman and save her from the sexual assaults of other men. While on the one hand, it makes a woman think that she is the weaker sex and needs the protection of a husband, on the other hand, it gives the man complete control over her life and a freedom forever to sexual gratification. She presents women who can have decisions independently and can help others. They do not need any support and they are not weak characters rather they are strong enough to cope with any odd circumstances in their lives. Bo is a strong child, who is living all alone after the death of her grandfather. She has saved Callum after the accident and she takes him to his fathers. Here Murray in fact presents Callum as dependent on her rather than she being dependent on him. No doubt, they become friends and fill an emotional vacuum in each other's life.

This notion of security and comfortable life for women after marriage is a myth propagated by patriarchal society. In India women suffered even more due to the practice of child marriage and *Sati* system. In child marriage the idea is also to control the female child's sexuality right from her childhood. In the practice of *Sati,* apart from economic factors (that she should not claim her right on her husband's property) controlling her sexuality after the demise of her husband was also a factor which sent her to the husband's pyre.

Mollie Green argues that no doubt she is a young girl and he is an old man, but he will wait till she matures enough to be a woman. Then they will procreate. She does not have to be worried about Callum, he will adopt him as his son and he will look after him. He will provide them with a comfortable life. When he dies, she can marry Callum. Then he will be old enough to be her husband. He will provide a secure life to Mollie's offspring. It is a good deal where they are getting a secure place and in return Mollie will get a wife and an adopted son. Murray is here highlighting the patriarchal idea that a female is just an object to satisfy man's lust and that she is an instrument to give birth to his offspring. She has a primary duty to nurture his children and take care of her husband and his household.

As she puts it through Mollie Green's words in the novel:

> 'A woman is better off having a man to protect her, Bo. Be a long while before Callum is a real man. So you and me, we should get married. I'll treat you right, take care of you. You'll be safe here with me. That's what a husband is for--to safe-keep his wife. I'll husband you, be a father to Callum and then, when my time is over, Callum will still be young enough to take my place. Be your husband in my stead. Maybe follow on as a father to those sons you and I will make together one day.' (*Vulture's Gate* 94)

He never thinks that Bo may have different ideas about marriage or about her own life. He presumes or 'pretends' that this is best for Bo while in reality his idea is completely driven by his lust for Bo. And then within marriage Bo will be completely under his control, to be used or abused as he wishes.

In *Escape* Meiji too faces 'similar' conditions when she becomes a prey of sexual assault. Her experience is worse than Bo's, as she is assaulted by an old man, the employer of her uncle Youngest. Meiji and her uncle face lot of hurdles in the Wasteland, as they move further to find a safe place for Meiji. Their food and water go out of stock. Then, Youngest decides to find a job for himself in an estate. He visits an aged estate owner, named Swan, who allows him to work in his estate. When Swan asks him as to how many people will live with him, Youngest replies that only his younger brother will live with him. Then, Swan shows much interest in Meiji, who is now named Bird.

Youngest does not take her with him during his first visit to Swan. He makes an excuse that Bird has got fever, but Swan insists on his bringing Bird over. Actually, Swan exploits young kids sexually, so he wants to meet Bird as soon as possible. Youngest does as he is told. He gives her some pills to pretend that the child is sick. However, as he reaches the estate, Swan orders him to take off her

clothes. Meiji is almost unconscious at that time under the impact of the drug.

Youngest does accordingly, and then Swan comes to know that Bird is a girl. It is like a jackpot for him. He becomes mad to see a female after a long time and charges on her. Youngest is really sad that his lifelong efforts of keeping her safe have dashed to the ground. Now this old man will ruin her.

Youngest realizes that the only way to protect Meiji would be to kill the old man. Then he projects the death of the old man as a natural death due to his old age, that happened in a couple of minutes. At first, he puts Meiji at a safe place and then informs other servants and drones about his death.

Both the old men, Mollie Green in *Vulture's Gate* and the employer of Youngest in *Escape*, have the same intention, to satisfy their lust. Only their method of pursuing it is a little different, not so violent in the case of Green as in the case of the man in *Escape.*

Rape and Prostitution

Another form of women's sexual exploitation is prostitution and Murray refers to that also in her works. In *Vulture's Gate,* Murray deals with the concept of brothel, where people run the business of prostitution. The colony people keep women in Zenana. It is projected that it is a secure place for women, but actually it is a brothel. They use these women to incubate test tube babies and the rich colony people come to select them as wives. In fact the women are instructed that if they do not want to become surrogate mothers, then they have to lure these suitors to select them as wives. These suitors know it very well that even if they ill-treat these girls they will never complain to the authorities, and even if they complain the authorities will never entertain their complaints. The colonial authorities thus easily run their business of prostitution.

By including the idea of surrogate mothers and test tube babies, Murray presents the degradation of females, as people are

using them merely as instruments of breeding. They conceive babies, give them birth, but cannot keep them with themselves. Even their motherhood is abused as they cannot bring up their children and love them.

The colonial authorities put the females in Zenana, not for their security but only to make them healthy breeders. Li-Li, a girl in Zenana, tells Bo that when they menstruate, they will put them in Mater Misericordiae to incubate test tube babies in their wombs. They will keep us as surrogate mothers, until we die or reach the stage of menopause.

After arresting Bo with the group of Festers, the colonial authorities put everyone under showers. Then the colony soldiers come to know that Bo is a girl who is disguised as a boy. They take her to an island, named Mater Misericordiae. It is a place where they do medical checkup of females, about their physical maturity. They verify their status of being virgin, and puberty; if they are not old enough to procreate then they put them in Zenana.

Through such mechanical handling of women Murray appears to be commenting on a common notion of patriarchal society that women are important only for sexual gratification and for producing children. Their own emotions, desires and feelings have no significance for them.

After Bo's medical checkup, they put her in Zenana. There she meets other seventeen girls who are kept there like Bo. They are kept like princesses there, as she has read in her fairy tales' books. They have a very comfortable life and get healthy food there. At first, Bo thinks that they want to save girls and want to create balance in sex-ratio, but soon she understands that it is a brothel.

Li-Li further tells her that when we will be old enough, rich people will come and select us to produce their own children. They come here to exploit us sexually too. They know that we do not have any other option except to surrender before them, otherwise they will

make us breeders until we die. It happened with her mother too. They had put her in Mater Misericordiae and she never came back. If we are lucky, we will get a husband before such a fate.

> 'I don't know!' said Li-Li, her whispering growing louder. 'I don't know everything. All I do know is that the mothers can only incubate a few babies each year so they keep you on the island forever. Incubating and incubating forever and ever until you die. That's why I went with Hackett. I thought he would want me to be his wife. The pretty girls are chosen by the husbands. They don't have to die. I let Hackett hurt me because I thought he'd help me get back from the island when I grew up. Once they have all your eggs, you can come back to the Colony and get married, if one of the men wants you. I don't want to be like my mother and die on the island.' (*Vulture's Gate*198)

Murray illustrates here the patriarchal notion that women are merely mothers or wives, but as women they have no independent existence. Even as wives they may become victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment and be compelled to indulge in prostitution. It is a myth propagated by patriarchy that women do not possess enough strength and intelligence to take firm decisions and lead their families, and need the guidance and support of males. The truth, on the other hand, is that women are often exploited and abused by the men in the family, and very often by the husband, who ironically claims to be her 'protector'. Domestic violence is reported not only in India but also in other countries across the world. Even Virginia Woolf had said:

> Wife-bating was a recognized right of men, and was practised without shame by high as well as low . . . . Similarly, the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was

> not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the "chivalrous" upper classes . . . . (49-50)

In fact women have been exploited by men in all times whether it is in the form of domestic violence or sexual assaults outside home. In Australia, even during the period of settlement, the British Government had transported a number of female convicts to Australia. It was an attempt to create balance in sex-ratio as well as for the physical gratification of the male population.

For female convicts marriage was the only way to get a secure life, but there too their male counterpart had complete control on their life. If they did not opt for marriage they had to indulge in prostitution or became victims of sexual assault. By introducing places like Zenana and Mater Misericordiae in *Vulture's Gate* Murray is able to highlight the abuse of women. The males who select these girls for marriage exploit them sexually on the assurance of a secure life. These surviving girls after the plague suffer like the female convicts or the girls of the Earl Grey Orphan Immigration Scheme who married settled Australians on the assurance of secure life, but were exploited in the name of marriage. Through such description of women's total control Murray raises a voice against subjugation of women and female foeticide.

Rape does not torture one physically only, it torments the victim mentally as well. It wounds one's heart and soul, and sometimes it drags a victim to death also, as it happened in Delhi, where *Nirbhaya* was raped brutally by a group of boys in a moving bus. They had raped her and then inserted an iron rod inside her body. After thirteen days' critical condition, she died in Singapore. There was no sense of shame or regret on the part of the culprits.

Murray presents the mental condition of these rape victims in *Vulture's Gate* and *Bridie's Fire.* In *Bridie's Fire*, Honour Gauran, an immigrant girl under the Earl Grey orphan Immigration Scheme, is a victim of rape. The Immigration barrack sends these immigrant girls

to different households as servants. Honour is also sent to a family, where her master tries to take advantage of her. Somehow she saves herself from her first employer but second time she does not prove lucky, her second employer rapes her. When she complains against her employer, the authorities chide her by saying that she is lying against her honourable employer. Here Murray exposes the ruthless attitude of British authorities, who considered these girls as 'immoral dregs' of Ireland and did not pay attention to their complaints of sexual harassment.

In Bridie's Case, her master, Martin Degrave too tries to rape her, but somehow she saves herself. Her Mistress shows her resentment for some time towards her husband but soon she forgives him. Then, everyone accepts him and forgives him as he has committed a 'minor' mistake. Bridie realizes that if she continues to stay here she will be some day the victim of his lust. So she runs away from there to Ballart gold field. Other immigrant girls like Biddy O Ryan are pushed into prostitution and Caitlin marries a settled Australian, not out of love, but it is the only option for her to save herself from rape and prostitution. They were already suffering as they had lost their loved ones, their families, and their countries. In Australia they were doubly colonized, as being Irish as they were treated as inferior and then being girls they were also sexually exploited.

Though *Vulture's Gate* is a dystopian novel set in an imaginary situation in future, yet the condition of women is not different from the women of settlement period. Hackett, a rich colonial man comes to select his wife in Zenana, according to the colonial tradition, but there he takes advantage of Li-Li. He takes her out for a trip, and convinces her that if she lets him have physical relation with her, he will take her home as his wife. She agrees which creates a problem for her. The colonial authorities think that she has grown mature enough to procreate. So they take her to Mater Misericordiae, where they find that she is deflowered. Yet, the colonial authorities do not take any action against her violator. They

even let him visit Zenana. Thus Murray depicts women's subjugation both in the name of marriage and outside marriage, in the form of rape and prostitution.

In *Escape*, Manjula Padamanabhan depicts a different condition, where Meiji is unaware about female anatomy and her sexual desires. Meiji finds a pornographic magazine at Swan's residence. She finds it disgusting and then Youngest explains to her female anatomy.

Murray talks about sexual harassment and suppression of women at some length by including references to Mater Misercordiaeand, Zenana, etc. but unlike Manjula Padamanabhan she does not show any sexual cravings in her protagonist Bo or even Callum.

Murray's concern about gender discrimination, about women's degradation in patriarchy is effectively presented in the novel. She is not only concerned about Australian women but takes up issues in other countries as well, such as female foeticide, which is in a way the starting point of the novel. If female children are unwanted then a situation of the kind may come as is imagined in the novel where apparently only one girl survives. She takes some issues more prominent in Indian society as female foeticide, child marriage and child labour etc. and others common to all societies, as lust for sex, women's status as breeders and their subjugation as second sex. Women neither have a safe place within the family, nor outside home.

Through a simple narrative meant for young readers, with a young girl and a boy as protagonists, she sensitizes the adolescent minds about the harsh truths about gender discrimination and the ill-treatment of women. At the same time she educates them about the absurdity of treating half the humanity as mere objects or commodities, whereas nature has made men and women complementary.

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Revisiting the Past: Critiques of War in the Plays of Louis Nowra

Veena Sharma

The world's history is full of incidents of destruction of empires and masses due to wars. Even in the Australian history, wars have been a defining influence. Australia has been involved in a number of wars and conflicts since the establishment of the Commonwealth, like the First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War and wars with Korea, South Africa, China and Japan. A major part of the national identity has been built on an idealised and romanticized conception of the Australian experience of wars known as the 'Anzac' spirit, forgetting the violent and brutal aspects of these homicidal wars. Many war veterans are full of bitterness, disillusionment, anger and guilt, and consider it shameful to connect themselves with the 'Anzac' tradition.

The theatre of Australia portrays the inhumanity and mayhem of various wars, and quite consciously focuses on the grotesque and shocking aspects of the individual Australian soldier's experience. It argues that the war legends of heroism and glory are made out of the pain, loss, bereavement and trauma of those who fought in the wars. Louis Nowra, one of the most vibrant contemporary Australian playwrights, often revisits the past in his plays, to raise important political issues like colonialism, racism, class inequalities and violence of genocidal wars and their devastating effect on the people.

Following Alan Seymour, who wrote ***The One Day of the Year, a famous play*** written in 1958 about Anzac Day, and others who wrote about war and its impact, Louis Nowra, an Irish-Australian playwright, in several of his plays captures the madness of war and the devastation it causes to humanity. He observes that the Australian experience of wars is more deadly and retarding than heroic as the 'Anzac' legends celebrate. He revisits the trauma caused by the historical wars to plead indirectly for maintaining peace and non-

violence in the present time through his plays, *The Golden Age* (1980), *The Precious Woman* (1980), *Inside the Island* (1980) and *The Language of the Gods* (1999). The setting of his plays resonates with the killing fields of Gallipoli, Vietnam, France, Belgium, etc. during wars. The themes of grief, loss, disillusionment, trauma, shame and remorse remain central in the plays. The plays forcefully reiterate that remorse should not be just at the individual level but also at the national level. The nation should learn from its involvement in wars that there is no point in fighting against humanity.

The Golden Age, a play in two acts, is often described as Nowra's most bitter indictment of war. The play is set during the Second World War and at the time of Nazi upsurge. It is based on a true incident of the discovery of a strange primitive tribe in the forests of south-west Tasmania in 1939 and how the attempts to assimilate them in the mainstream culture lead to their oppression and destruction as they are moved to an asylum, echoing the damaging colonial policies of the past. Simultaneously, there are painful echoes of the war cries coming from the battlefield in Berlin.The action moves from locations in Hobart and South-West Tasmania to Berlin in the last days of the war.

The play conveys the horrors and madness of war that uses weapons of mass destruction. As Veronica Kelly remarks, "Nowra's theatre frequently uses war as a metaphor of genocide, slaughter, cesspool of hatred and humanity out of joint" (*Louis Nowra* 32). Francis, a former engineer and now a soldier in the war is really disheartened by the bloody massacres in the battlefield. When off to Berlin during war, he meets a local priest who had lost both his legs due to war. In his letters, Francis shares with Betsheb, his beloved from the discovered tribe, what this man tells him, "This is a bad world and you have lost your way in it" (54). He further writes to her, "I imagine a battle is like being caught in a butcher shop that is burning down" (54). He is terrified and is afraid of dying. He writes another letter to Betsheb describing her, the madness and violence of war:

> There is no point to this slaughter. The Germans will lose, but they don't give in; they would sooner destroy the world than surrender . . . . The snow and blood are endless. (57)

Even the soldiers who fight wars dislike killing just to comply with the authority. They are not even allowed to question whether the orders are wrong or right, or if there is another way out.

Francis is later detained as a prisoner of war in Berlin's military prison. He is a convict under trial for shooting a rocket scientist. Peter, his upper class friend, comes to see him with whom he shares his pain:

> PETER: Long time no see, mate.
>
> FRANCIS: Peter! [*He stands up. They greet each other warmly*.] So long, so bloody long!
>
> PETER: I'm fixing up the final Australian repatriation.Heard about your case this morning. How long have you been here?
>
> FRANCIS: Eight or nine weeks . . . I'm like a lizard. I follow the sun around the courtyard, trying to warm my blood. . . . . . . [*Gesturing*] Those windows . . . . War criminals stare out of those windows, that's where I am: the rapists and murderers section. (68)

This conversation depicts how a soldier is dehumanised by the brutality of war and how he suffers all through this. The trauma of being separated from his family and his real identity disillusions him completely. Nowra here revisits the past when thousands and thousands of Australians were held as prisoners of war during 1939-

1945. These prisoners suffered sustained trauma, hardship and severe medical problems like Francis suffers in the play.

Francis feels sad that wars are waged to make peace. He further describes the madness of war, which has reduced him to the level of a murderer and has alienated him from humanity and his beloved Betsheb. His bitter remarks become the universal criticism of war on behalf of all those who have to fight in wars to comply with the government orders:

Civilisations perfecting death. Bombs, fighter planes, slaughtered soldiers, extermination camps, rape, blood, lust. I couldn't pretend the war would end and I would return because every morning I thought I would die that day. I couldn't write any more gentle letters because I have nothing of that left inside me any more. It's gone, the little I had. Once I stopped writing to her I knew I couldn't go home again. This prison perfectly suits my state of mind; I have been bred for it, just as I have been bred to kill. . . . It's as if this century has imagined a monster, concocted it from the deepest underworld of its brain and now it has escaped and is devouring everything. Nothing makes sense. (69)

Francis here becomes a mouthpiece of all those soldiers and warriors who are not able to recover from the loss and grief suffered due to wars. They are full of guilt and shame for destroying humanity.

All his aspirations have dashed to ground. He regrets destruction he has wrought on people in the name of war. He feels he is not capable of doing anything constructive now. He gives vent to his agony and tells Peter:

> FRANCIS: I have even lost faith in my ability to build something mechanical. How I envied you with your wealth, your background, your sense of past, family, belonging. I am rootless now. It's not such a bad feeling because it's

no feeling at all.

PETER: You've spent too many years fighting. Everyone has.

FRANCIS: Don't you see, Peter, the war will never stop; we humans don't give up until we perfect something. Mind made perfect matter. (70)

The catastrophic impacts of the war have left anarchy, disorder and despair everywhere. The play powerfully raises the question how the modern civilisation with its supposedly great knowledge and technical sophistication can consider itself superior when it cannot find a simple solution to war.

Rated as one of the best plays of Louis Nowra, ***The Precious Woman***, deals with apocalyptic civil strife in 1920s' China. Su-Ling, the precious woman of the title is the sheltered wife of warlord Teng. When he dies, their son Bao pursues his father's ruthless policy of oppressing dissent, and he exiles his mother. After a period of grief and introspection, she joins and soon leads the rebels to fight against the tyrant son. In the end, he is defeated and his bloody body is brought before Su-Ling. She kicks the corpse with hatred not for her son but for the tyrant who had possessed his body till the end. Both her husband and her son meet their end in the same manner as they used to kill others.

The play depicts madness of seeking power and the impact of such madness on the lives of others. General Teng, the warlord and later his son Bao, a cold-blooded killer, crippled in both body and soul, and devoid of sentiment, institute a reign of terror against the rebels and their families in their province. He watches while the rebels are buried alive, arguing that what he is doing is "a perfectly logical strategy" and not the actions out of madness (154). The whole province is echoing with the sounds of terror and violence. Even the photographer who is making money by selling pictures of the rebels

Bao has executed, tells, "Landscapes and dead bodies are the favourites. Especially picture of dead rebels, it's tangible evidence that the rebels are losing" (132).

Bao, the deformed son, is equally his warlord father's eager pupil and strives to outdo him in governing the province through atrocity and the 'logic' of terror. In Nowra's theatre, the strongest and bleakest versions of transmission of values from father to son for cultural continuity across the generations, as Veronica Kelly puts, are those "which are, in patriarchal terms, the most successful; where the brutalised son fashions himself as a replica of the tyrant father, rendering him the sincerest form of homage" (*Theatre of Nowra* 79). The club-footed Bao despises his own body and all compassion as 'weak.' He rejects his mother and femininity with hysterical violence, and sees to it that she is deposed and banished after his father's death so that she doesn't become the governor. He scorns all those who were not strong enough like him:

> They were incapable of pursuing anything to its logical conclusion, . . . but I can see, with a sharpness and clarity that is as crystalline and pure as a diamond, what is the right action. I know that my father didn't go far enough. (178)

Bao is exceptionally tyrannous and he wants to surpass even his father in torturing the rebels. He is a true portrait of a hard-core war criminal.

The play also depicts how war affects others in the family. War transforms Su-Ling, Bao's mother, to a hard person with all feelings now dead. She has learned the brutal complexity of political action. She has learnt that "the weak will always be slaughtered by the strong. That compassion in this world is a vice, a weakness" (183). She grows from a protected Governor's wife to a guerrilla leader, a warlord, to save others from tyranny of his son, and finally warrants her son's death. It is ironic that Su-Ling, so protected by Teng is now in the position whereby she is required to protect others.

The Precious Woman can be seen as a journey of a woman, a wife and a mother affected by madness of war: the progression of Su-Ling from darkness and ignorance to a kind of understanding, awakening and enlightenment. It is also a journey from dependence to independence, submissiveness to dominance, possession to self-possession, and to questioning. The last line of the play, "Why? I loved you both, so much. So much" (186), is the ultimate question ("Director's Notes" 189). War begets war and that is why both her son and her husband are sacrificed on the altar of war they created themselves.

Inside the Island, a play in two acts and set in the summer of North-Western New South Wales in 1912, invokes the First World War. A matriarchal imitation of English society ruled by a wealthy pastoral property owner, Lillian Dawson, is destroyed by an outbreak of ergotism, a madness caused due to consumption of fungus infested wheat crop. Because an army regiment happens to eat it, the play chronicles the destruction caused by army as the soldiers' rampage—rape, murder and pillage. The whole story revolves around this rampage and it also hints at the fact that the cruel tendencies of the soldiers fighting wars are not innate but they are trained for that.

There is nothing grotesque or strange in the behaviour of the soldiers following the eating of the flour in the play. It is almost something that can be said to be foreordained. A statement made by Chin Chang, a critic: "Given these recruits and given the trauma they have undergone at the request of their nation, what else does one expect them to do?" (120) is not unreasonable. The soldiers are merely acting out what they have been programmed to act out, what they have been prepared to act out their entire lives. This becomes clear from the conversation between George and the Captain when George shows his distaste for the Army as he doesn't like to kill anyone, whereas the Captain says, "I used to feel like that, but an English major told me you get used to it" (64). The soldiers running

amok give a glimpse of the Australians mentally lost on the battlefield and buckling under acute mental stress. When Lillian asks the Sergeant about fighting the wars, he replies, "I did see a man run over by one of those new mechanical ploughs last year. He was chewed up something bad. I guess a battlefield is a bit like that" (27). Nowra himself shares that he once came upon an excerpt from an Australian soldier's diary, written during the battle of Poziers: "Several of my friends are raving mad. I met three officers out in No Man's Land the other night, all ranting and mad" ("Author's Preface" 11).

Moreover, the ergot scenes prophesy the next stage of the imperial legacy, since the theatricalising of the young soldiers' nightmare picks up the details of apocalyptic mechanised warfare on the Western Front: an event which in the play's fictional moment of 1912 lies in Australia's immediate future—its involvement in the impending First World War ("Lest We Forget" 101). In this war, the most important battleground was the 'Western Front' in France and Belgium where great battles were fought by Australian soldiers and many were wounded and many others died. Within the play's original moment of reception in 1980, the images could also be read as those of the traumatised and poisoned Vietnam troops. The Captain attempts to understand what this Dionysiac performance is trying to tell him:

> What was going on inside of them . . . it would be a mistake to believe that what they experienced—the hallucinations, the horror—wasn't part of them. What they saw . . . the things that went on in their heads. . . . Can they ever see the world the same way they saw it before? (90)

The soldiers and the warriors who have fought in wars are not able to recover from the post-traumatic stress and bear mental scars their entire lives. This not only affects them as individuals but also displaces them from their families and society.

With ***The Language of the Gods***, set in the Celebes

(Sulawesi), in 1946-47 and having two acts, Nowra again takes up the issue of civil conflict. Peter Braak , a Dutchman is the Governor of the Celebes and is living there with his family: a wife, a son and a daughter. He loves this country and its ancient culture but clings to the old imperialist models. The Dutch empire and its colonial rule start to collapse due to the fighting by the Indonesian Republics. Peter Braak is killed in the end by Dely, a Bissu, the transvestite who is repelled by other characters in the play as an exotic oriental and sexual other and who is later discovered as Braak's Eurasian son by a housemaid. The story is about displacement--political and personal, decay, colonialism, conflicts and fall of empire. The issues of war, homicide, loss and displacement are chiefly focused in the play

The play is set during the civil conflict in Indonesia and at significant turning points in the lives of his characters, whose worlds are about to change forever. Here the key moment occurs when the Dutch return briefly to Indonesia after the defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War. The play gives a powerful account of a time when European imperialism was ending. Nowra went back half a century to a critical period in Indonesia's rise to nationhood—to 1946-47 when Celebes was still a Dutch province, but a province in an advanced state of colonial disintegration. The Dutch attempt to save their colony in the face of the guerrilla wars being fought by the Indonesian Republicans. Many of them want to go back to Holland as they don't feel safe in Celebes. Even the Indonesian women who are married to Dutchmen are seen as traitors working for the Dutchmen and they have the fear of being killed by the Indonesian Republicans.

Nowra's main theme in the play is displacement, both political and personal, during the time of war. With a couple of exceptions, his characters are refugees from other worlds and cultures, thus displaced from their original roots. During the war, some Dutchmen were interned by the Japanese in camps and many others like Peter Braak, escaped to Australia. After the exile, they had come to Indonesia to earn their living. They feel as strangers now in Holland, their native country, as they have been away for long and in

Indonesia because they are seen as enemies here. Even Dely, the transvestite priest and a pivotal character in the play, is an outsider in his own country as he is a bissu and that too homosexual. Earlier in the play, he tells the Governor how war has destroyed everything:

> DELY: But not many of us are left. The war . . . scattered us. Like rice thrown in the air—scattered us to the winds. Some ran away when the Japanese killed our best dancer. The Japanese commander at the time did not like us. Effeminate was his word.
>
> BRAAK: Did the dancers return after the war?
>
> DELY: Some did. But we need more. I have my eyes on some boys who will make good Bissu. Parents don't seem to like their sons becoming Bissu anymore. Maybe it's all this talk of revolution and politics. Uncertain times. (3)

War wreaks a great havoc not just on the innocent civilians who die or who are damaged by bereavement or dislocation but also on their succeeding generations as well.

Captain Westerling, the Dutch army officer, is killing the Indonesian Republicans and anyone who is helping them. Some of the Dutch officials are also killed as a payback for Westerling's terrorism. However, Braak opposes this tyrant and pleads with him to stop this violence as war leads to nothing but grief and loss on both the fighting sides. He mourns the death of his friend who during the war felt frustrated staying in the refugee camp in Australia, because this hurt his ego and identity:

> I was a lucky one. Like a lot of us. I escaped to Australia. But one of my best friends, he survived the Japanese and I was looking after him. He went into the bathroom. I heard a shot. He came out with his face in ribbons of flesh and blood. 'My apologies,

> Braak', he said, 'I couldn't bear looking at myself in the mirror.' He had shot his reflection. (11)

War is a humiliating and depressing experience not just to the soldiers but also to the civilians. The emotional trauma and stress due to fractured identity, as happens in the case of Braak's friend, destroys the civilians who with heavy hearts leave their country and take refuge in camps during war.

Braak unlike others sympathises with Dely and other natives because he has himself spent twenty-five years in the Indies, to the point where his love for the Indies has almost become "an infection in the blood" (13). He tells his Javanese servant, "They'd have to take me back to Holland in a coffin" (13). He is against war and conflicts. He even requests Captain Westerling to stop the violence. All the members of his family find it hard to sustain themselves in this new country at war. Among them who do not doubt his place in his colonial outpost is the murderous Dutch army captain who nurses a psychopathic hatred for the Republicans.

As the war doesn't seem to end, Braak is able to sense the imminent danger of the collapse of the Dutch empire, which he discloses, to Paul, another Dutch, and Eva, an Indonesian woman married to the Dutch:

> I am a camera, Paul. I observe and photograph everything and report, without prejudice. And my report? Everything is out of kilter. We now govern the Indies with one thing in mind—to recover our former greatness and make a profit. We are not great rulers anymore. We are great leeches and are sucking the blood from this body. Our greatness was our oppression, but we no longer oppress, we are the oppressed, because deep down we know these people no longer have the mentality of the oppressed but the mentality of victors. You are an artist, Eva, you can see a dark cloud approaching, like the trembling air

before a thunderstorm. (31)

There is no hope left amidst the chaos and violence of this civil conflict. Braak is filled with sense of self-condemnation and the feelings of guilt and shame.

As a picture of colonialism in its dying stages, *The Language of the Gods* is highly evocative. The play cleverly captures its characters at a point where Indonesian history was about to turn a new chapter. Perhaps Nowra felt that the allusion to the passing away of colonialism and the rise of the Republic would not be lost on the Australian audiences. The opening of the play at the Malthouse was quite suitable for its timing. At that very moment, the one-time Portuguese province of East Timor was systematically being destroyed completely and the local population being murdered by the roving bands of militiamen and uniformed Indonesian soldiers. History was repeating itself. No one in the audience could have failed to make the connection between the real-life events being played out in Dili and surroundings, and the events depicted in the play. Nowra almost certainly spoke for all of them through the play and expressed his hope for peace in East Timor.

Nowra returns to these various events of military conflict in the past to comment on contemporary situations as well. Even today, various countries have been waging war against each other on trivial issues, which can otherwise be settled by having peaceful dialogue with each other. He believes remembering and dismembering the nation's baleful and brutal past is very important so that peoples' forgetfulness does not lead to committing the same blunders again in the name of political correctness. Building of war memorials in the name of 'Anzac' spirit is not as important as creating the public spirit of brotherhood for celebrating national identity. As Abrams, a critical thinker, also observes:

Memory is not just about the individual, it is about the community, the collective attitudes and norms, and the national image of that time. In this regard, memory—both collective and

individual—exists in a symbolic relationship with the public memory and the idealized history of the past. (79)

Nowra through such gripping and horrifying anecdotes from history as narrated above appears to be making a plea to the whole world to become more thoughtful about the consequences of wars and civil conflicts, as these only inflict violence. His humanistic vision, as reflected in his other plays as well, which calls for building a society based on equality, security and dignity for everyone irrespective of race, class or gender, questions the sanity of political decisions(ruled by colonialism, racism or sheer personal ambitions of the rulers) which irrevocably destroy innocent individuals physically as well as mentally.

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From Innocence to Experience: An Adolescent's Quest in David Malouf's "Southern Skies"

Nisha Misra

Acclaimed as one of the most significant and celebrated contemporary writers, David Malouf is a name to reckon with on the Australian literary scene. His works that reverberate with existential concerns reflect his deep interest in history and psychology, and in the landscape. A self-proclaimed homosexual, his personal life, particularly childhood, also shaped his thematic concerns and characterization. David Malouf's fiction is often characterized by the operation of opposing pairs like Australia vs Europe, edge vs centre, nature vs culture, self vs other. The last pair is often personified by two, mostly male, characters—'charismatic masculinity' (Randall 71). His characters, mainly in his short fiction, are on a quest for knowledge, self-awareness and stability, which culminates in a moment of epiphany. In fact, he seems to be more interested in the innocence to experience journey of childhood, particularly in his short stories, as he himself states, ". . . there are a lot of different childhoods there: I'm very interested in how young minds get a grip on the world and find out who they are and how to move in the world" (Interview by Kris Coyne 34).

Adolescence is the most crucial stage of development in any individual's life. Feeling of uncertainty, conflict, loneliness, fear of the unknown, depression, vacuity and other existential dilemmas characterize the adolescent years. "Technically, adolescence is the period from the beginning of sexual maturity (puberty) to the completion of physical growth"(Morgan 464). But in a broader sense, this transition from childhood to adolescence refers to a period when

> In a stunningly short time, the child takes on an adult like physique and intellect and is dubbed a "teenager". Some theorists portray the adolescent's world as especially peaceful, a time to make decisions about who one is and how one is to live one's life. Others

> portray adolescence as a time of great stress—as a struggle to keep one's psychological balance in the face of the crisis of puberty. (Morgan 464)

Erik Erikson in his theory of psychosocial development makes identity- formation as a key aspect of adolescence, though identity related issues may be faced by an individual at any point of time in his life. His theory divides the entire life span of an individual into nine stages with **identity vs identity confusion stage** relating to adolescence where there is "conflict" or "crisis" to be resolved, like in other stages, for the healthy development of an individual. However, Erikson does not consider this "crisis" as "a threat of catastrophe but a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential. . ." (Erikson 286). This conflict or crisis is responsible for the success or failure of the development of a certain psychological quality in an individual. A period characterised by simultaneous physical, cognitive and social changes along with the pressure of making crucial personal and professional choices, the potential for personal growth and failure is equally high at this stage. "From among all possible imaginable relations, [the adolescent] must make a series of ever narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual, and ideological commitments" (Erikson286). Identity crisis or confusion occurs when these choices remain unresolved and the individual begins to be haunted by the existential question of "Who am I?"

David Malouf has explored the existential journey from innocence to experience in stories like, "The Valley of Lagoons", "At Schindler's", as well, however, the present paper seeks to examine his rather long short story **"Southern Skies"**to explore an adolescent boy's quest for his real self, his vocation in life, and his place in the vast universe. It traces his journey from innocence to experience leading ultimately to his self-realization and self-discovery. His growth culminates finally in an epiphanic moment, when he discovers his vocation in the skies. Simultaneously, the physical hankering and the physical awareness of the growing body, is another

consistent theme and the epiphanic moment combines the two. The Professor in the story, plays a significant role in the boy's discovery of the self and the body. He is also an integral part of the boy's family and the immigrant community as a whole, for he serves as the "last link" (Malouf 108) between the old and the new world which they have come to inhabit. Thus, the narrative also touches upon the theme of the immigrants' nostalgia for the Old World.

The narrative, a Bildungsroman, deals with " the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis— into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world" (Abrams 193). Employing the flashback technique, the story is narrated from the point of view of the protagonist, the boy, who is in a reminiscent mood, recalling the tumultuous days of his adolescence, when he was passing through a phase of identity crisis in his life. As already stated the main dilemma that haunts the psyche of an adolescent is that of 'Who I am?' And What I am going to do with my life? The focus always remains on the 'self'. The protagonist of "Southern Skies" is perturbed by similar questions resulting in restlessness and feelings of alienation and anxiety.

Revolving around the narrator protagonist and the Professor, the narrative traces the growth of the narrator through four crucial stages of development—at the age of seven, thirteen, fifteen and seventeen— with the Professor remaining a constant presence through all the stages. The Professor here signifies the 'other' in Malouf's world. The presence of this other is essential as it becomes a catalyst in the character's initiation into the mature world, that is, the 'other' becomes a kind of rite of passage leading the protagonist to an understanding of self.

The narrative moves on two planes. Though it begins with the description of the Professor, his "position" in the society, it gradually unfolds as a drama in the life of an adolescent boy, desperately trying to understand the purpose of his life, to find his vocation, his roots, his

real self. It vividly portrays his desperate wait for something to happen in his "uneventful adolescence".

> I think of those days now as being all alike, and the nights also: the days warmish, still, endlessly without event, and the nights quivering with expectancy but also uneventful . . . . But what I am describing, of course, is neither a time nor a place but the mood of my own bored, expectant, uneventful adolescence. I was always abroad and waiting for something significant to occur, for life to somehow to declare itself and catch me up. I rode my bike in slow circles or figures of eight, took it for sprints across the gravel of the park, or simply hung motionless in the saddle, balanced and waiting. (113)

During the first two stages of the narrator's life that correspond to his childhood, nothing much of significance takes places, as far as his quest is concerned. Neither is there any kind of physical hankering nor the need to establish an identity in the big wide world. But in his little universe there is an unconscious attempt to affirm his independent identity. To use Erikson's terminology this is the 'Industry vs. Inferiority" stage when "children learn to win approval by making things and doing things approved of in the culture. In literate societies, they learn to read; in preliterate societies, they learn the skills necessary for survival. Failure to produce or do valued things leads to a sense of inferiority. A favorable ratio of industry to inferiority leads to a sense of competence and pleasure in work" (Morgan 473). The narrator in this case suffers from a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the Professor even though he is unable to see him as a model as per the wishes of his parents and hence feels repelled by him. However, he is also subconsciously attracted towards him and harbours the desire to impress him, which one realizes later in the narrative. At this stage, however, the narrator is more concerned with ridiculing the Professor, mimicking him, thwarting his parents' efforts to groom him into a fine gentleman in the manner of the

Professor. " 'I wish, when the Professor comes', my mother would complain, 'that you try to speak better. The vowels! For my sake, darling, but also for your father, because we want to be proud of you,'. . .'And put shoes on, or sandals at least, and a nice clean shirt. I don't want that the Professor think we got an Arab for a son' "(108). For the narrator, the Professor at this stage, is nothing more than a nuisance, a pain in the neck for he is expected to be his formal best, neat and tidy, well versed in his lessons, whenever the Professor pays a visit. In fact, all his energy is directed towards resisting the influence of the Professor, which is being imposed on him and on a dozen other children by their parents who look up to the Professor as "both the embodiment of a noble past and a glimpse of what, with hard work and a little luck or grace, we might claim from the future" (106).

The narrator's parents' attempts to make him into a fine gentleman have deeper connotations than the mere concern for a growing up child. The theme of Australia vs Europe also gets manifested in their attitude towards their child and the reverence they show to the Professor. They in some measure also become symbolic of the first colonial settlers who, disappointed with the "existential harshness"(Malouf interview by Chris Coyne) of the Australian landscape, tried to transplant Europe in Australia. They who see their child through the eyes of the Professor, always regret their decision of having left the "Old Country"(107), where otherwise, he would have grown into a fine gentleman. On the part of the narrator he "had succeeded, almost beyond my own expectations, in making myself indistinguishable from the roughest of my mates at school. My mother must have wondered at times if I could ever be smoothed out and civilized again. . . I was spoiled and wilful" (109). And all this was to assert his independent self, to break the restrictions imposed by his parents, to resist the Professor and to grow out of his shadow. Thus, the nameless narrator also becomes symbolic of young Australia trying to outgrow the control and influence of the 'Old Country'.His own behaviour is a source of immense pleasure to him and he feels "magnificently justified", in embarrassing his parents before the Professor and presenting himself as an "incorrigible

tough" (109). But his ways instead of repelling the Professor, charm him: "The more I showed off and embarrassed my parents, the more he encouraged me. My excesses delighted him. He was entranced" (109-110). Another important strand of Australian fiction to a certain extent and of Malouf's to a large extent becomes evident here—mateship, the significant 'other' is usually a male lending homosexual undertones to the narrative.

Here it will be also worth mentioning the underlying autobiographical nature of the narrative as David Malouf too in his childhood had passed through a similar phase. David Malouf's father and mother had come to Brisbane from Lebanon and middle-class Edwardian London, respectively. His mother exercised a stronger control on him than his father. Talking about it David Kerr in his article "Uniting the Hemispheres: David Malouf's Fiction", where he quotes even an excerpt from Malouf's semi-autobiographical work 12 *Edmondstone Street,* contends :

> She wished to model the life of the growing boy on what would have been acceptable in Edwardian London. In *12 Edmondstone Street, he[*Malouf] writes :[“]Forbidden to use the local slang, or to speak "Australian" we grew up as in a foreign land, where everything local, everything outside the house that was closest and most ordinary, had about it the glow of the exotic. The effect on me was just the opposite of what my mother must have hoped. “G'mme”, I would snarl when my sister and I were out of earshot - playing Australian and tough [”].(63)

During the first two stages the question of 'self' and the consciousness of the growing body do not seem to impinge on the psyche of the narrator in a serious or disturbing manner. Though at the age of seven, he did in a very subtle and unconscious manner becomeaware of his physical self when during one of the community outings, while serving the “Pils” (107) to his father and the Professor, his father happened to "lay his hand very gently on the nape of my

neck while I blushed and squirmed" (107). However, all through the first half of the narrative his sole motive remains to annoy his parents by embarrassing them in the presence of the Professor and ridiculing and imitating the Professor (especially his hunched stance) who is kind of hero-worshipped by his parents. Perhaps it is the excessive importance that his parents attach to the Professor which coaxes him to rebel against them and behave in a boisterous manner as he does. It is ironical that the narrator should be so adamant to distance himself from the person who finally becomes instrumental in his search for self and leads him to an awareness of his body.

The fifteenth year (the third stage) of the narrator's life, turns out to be a crucial one, for it marks his formal admittance into the "tumultuous" world of adolescence.The carefree lad of the first half of the narrative begins to be haunted by the existential question of identity, self, meaning and purpose of life, his vocation and place in the vastness of the universe. Accompanying the mental anguish is the growing awareness of his body that is characterized by the narrator's self-love, resulting in a number of amorous adventures, particularly towards the end.

In a physical sense, the events of adolescence mark the transition from the child to the adult characterized by "the growth spurt" when the growth rate, both in boys and girls doubles. "Changes in the primary sexual characteristics are accompanied by changes in the secondary sexual characteristics like body proportion, hair quality and distribution, voice and other physical features"(Morgan 466-67). The narrator of "Southern Skies" too undergoes similar physical changes. He is quite fascinated by his own physical self. The reader cannot help but be amused by the Narcissus in him:

> I was fifteen and beginning to spring up out of pudgy childhood into clean-limbed, tumultuous adolescence. By staring for long hours into mirrors behind locked doors, by taking stock of myself in shop windows, and from the looks of some of the girls at school, I had discovered that I wasn't at all bad-

> looking might even be good- looking and was already tall and well-made. I had chestnut hair like my mother and my skin didn't freckle in the sun but turned heavy gold. There was a whole year between fifteen and sixteen when I was fascinated by the image of myself. I could get back from people simply by playing upto them—it scarcely mattered whom: teachers, girls, visitors to the house like the Professor, passers-by in the street. I was obsessed with myself, and lost no opportunity of putting my powers to the test. (110)

What is significant at this particular point of the narrative is the interest that the narrator invokes in the Professor, who has always been attracted to him since the latter's childhood, showing greater interest in him now. He seems to be on a lookout for opportunities to visit the football field where the narrator often plays football. In the beginning, in the company of his father but"Now, as if by accident, the Professor came alone. . . he would be waiting . . . yet again, to be passing, and had a book for me to take home, or a message . . . [though] formal on these occasions, but I felt his interest" (111).

The narrator is now quite elated at his power to command the attention of the Professor. And just to 'put his power to the test' he would accompany the Professor talking about nothing in particular. Psychologists believe that "like peer group relationship, dating [?] helps the young person find a sense of identity—knowing what kind of person you can attract helps you know what kind of person you are" (Morgan 477). Perhaps, unconsciously the Professor's company gives the narrator "a warm sense of myself"(111). It helps him identify with the Professor who is looked upon with awe and respect by his parents and other community members. Here, it will be worthwhile to quote Amanda Nettelbeck :

> An interesting aspect of Malouf's fiction. . .is. . . [that] *Malouf's* travellers are, on the whole, male, and usually they enter into the journeys of their lives in relation to another (male) character. . .In part it is

> through his relation to another that each character comes to realize himself. (58)

Malouf, like Erikson, thus does not make identity intrinsic to an individual rather perceives its existence in relation to others, usually male figures. The other male figure, like the Professor in the story, plays a crucial role in completing the phantom half of the protagonist's self that he is desperately seeking.

The attention that the Professor gives to the narrator and the attraction that the latter feels for him do point towards the homosexual aspect of the narrative. However, Malouf gives this masculine relationship an altogether different perspective by imbuing it with transcendental character as becomes evident towards the end. In the narrative both the Professor and the narrator feel the pull towards each other. In fact, the latter's increased involvement with the Professor, also makes hima butt of ridicule for his friends. The narrator, who is too conscious of his image, in his effort to get back into their good books "passed him off as a family nuisance, whose attentions I knew were comic but whom I was leading on for my own amusement. This was acceptable enough and I was soon restored to popularity, but felt doubly treacherous. He was, after all, my father's closest friend, and there was well that larger question of the Old Country" (111). He now feels guilty for the wrongs he has been doing to the Professor, more so because the Professor's presence gives him a sense of wholeness. It seems to give some purpose to his directionless adolescence. As he begins to ignore the Professor, he cuts off his visits completely. And now it is his absence that irks the narrator for he had "come to depend on him" (112).

The narrator's existential dilemma manifests itself more strongly in the absence of the Professor. His ". . .map of the self . . . refuses to remain clear and unchanging" (Nettelbeck 19). He whiles away his time pedalling up and down to the library, football practices or meeting his friends in search of something substantial to happen in his "uneventful adolescence". Off and on, he happens to come across the Professor, during the latter's evening strolls or when lost with his

telescope into the wide expanse of the skies. He often feels subconsciously that the Professor's telescope is aimed at him. Even his amorous adventures with his girlfriend do not satisfy his search for self. Here also he is more fascinated by the power he wields over her, who is ready to go to any "numbers" of "sexual progress" in their relationship. But the numbers were not "infinite" (113), while he was longing for something vast, limitless, infinite. The narrator's matter-of-fact approach to the sexual act makes him a typical Maloufian hero who expects some kind of metaphysical reality to emerge from the physical act which eludes him as the girl is unable to complete the incompleteness of his being.The narrator feels lost, afraid of what life has in store for him:

> . . . afraid that when the declaration came, it too, like the numbers, might be less than infinite. I didn't want to discover the limits of the world. Restlessly impelled towards some future that would at least offer me my real self, I nevertheless, drew back, happy for the moment, even in my unhappiness, to be half-boy, half-bike, half aimless energy and half a machine that could hurtle off at a moment's notice in anyone of a hundred directions. Away from things—but away, most of all, from myself. My own presence had begun to be a source of deep dissatisfaction to me, my vanity, my charm, my falseness, my preoccupation with sex. I was sick of myself and longedfor the world to free me by making its own rigorous demands and declaring at last what I must be. (114)

Perhaps this anxiety and anguish of the narrator can be interpreted in terms of the fact that the key task for the adolescent is answering the question 'who am I?' Adolescence, in fact, is primarily characterised by the tension between role confusion and identity. 'Seeking identity' involves searching for continuity and sameness in oneself—being clear of one's skills and personal attributes, to discover where one is headed and the purpose of his life, to believe

that one can count on the recognition from "significant others". The adolescent who forms a sense of identity gains two key benefits "a feeling of being at home in one's body" and "a sense of psychological well being" (Morgan 472). But in the case of the narrator, neither he is at home with his body nor is there a sense of psychological well being. The question of "Who am I?" haunts him incessantly, but the answers are out of his reach, strewn perhaps in the limitless expanse of the skies. The narrator does often wonder at what the Professor does every night with his telescope. What is it that beholds his attention but is invisible to him? The skies fascinate and beckon the narrator who little realizes that it is in the infinite expanse that his final destination lies to which the Professor holds the key.

The heightened state of his existential angst becomes obvious in his own estimation of himself as "half-boy, half bike, half aimless energy and half machine" (114). While he is riding home one night, the Professor absorbed in his telescope in the skies invites the narrator home. The Professor's invitation to have coffee or beer with him comes as a surprise because though a respected person in the community, he has always remained an enigma. Always a special guest in others' homes, the Professor on his part has never entertained anyone, not even the narrator's father. Abachelor, he stays alone in his house, modeled after the fashion of the Old World and no one knows about his family. His house and personal life are a forbidden territory. However, the narrator has been invited to cross the threshold of that forbidden territory, who ". . . had never been . . . to this side of the house. . . had never been much interested in what lay beyond the hallway . . ." (116). Having crossed one threshold the narrator crosses the second one when he opts for beer rather than coffee, which surprises the Professor who ". . . stopped a moment and considered, as if I had surprised him by crossing a second threshold" (117).

The Professor's house is a perfect replica of the Old World with old threadbare Persian rugs, sonatas by Beethovan, symphonies by Mahler, Old Country chest just like in the narrator's house, lumps of coloured quartz, meerschaum pipes of fantastic shape, a little

earthenware lamp which is actually a phallic grotesque and other weird things that make the house seem more like a museum of antiques. But what fascinates him more are the photographs "of the Old Country, a foggy, sepia world that I recognized immediately from similar photographs at home" (117). One of the photographs is of half a dozen men in military uniform, the Professor being one of them and the date in copper plate reads 1921. They were the "heroes of a lost but unforgotten" war.

Another photograph shows the professor in the company of ladies, all decked up in the style reminiscent of the Old World. But the photograph that holds his attention is the one depicting the landscape of the old country:

> This is the place, I thought. That is the land my parents mean when they say 'Old Country': the country of childhood and first love that they go back to in their sleep and which I have no memory of, though I was born there. Those flowers are the ones, precisely those, that blossom in the songs they sing. (119-120)

The glimpse of the 'Old Country' puts the narrator back into deep depression, that he had gone into sometime back, those "sweet-sad glooms of adolescence that are like a bodiless drifting out of yourself into the immensity of things . . ." (115). It makes him aware of his own rootlessness. His parents have something to look back to, to be proud and nostalgic about, a sense of being, of self, of identity (though now thwarted in the new world but nonetheless a memory of it was still there to hold onto). The narrator's thoughts again turn in upon himself:

> What is it, I asked myself, that I will remember and what to preserve, when in years to come I think of the past? What will be important enough? (120)

The narrator at this point comes to respect and admire the feelings of his parents and the other members of his community for the old

world. All that he had rejected and ridiculed in his childhood, including the Professor, begins to assume importance now. He realizes that it is not for nothing that his parents respect the Professor and all that he stands for. The Professor is admired and respected not just for being an intellectual, teaching Mathematics to the apprentices, but also because he is "the last link" between the old and the new world. He is but, to quote David Malouf's "Gray's Anatomy,":

> A little umbilicus
> That tethers us [them] still
> to a lost continent [World] (88)

The Professor, like the narrator's parents, also feels the pain and nostalgia for the Old World, but he is a source of inspiration to them and other members of the community who had been compelled to take up jobs as labourers or factory hands, or to keep dingy shops, just because their degrees in medicine or law, were not acceptable in this world. The narrator's father himself, a lawyer in the Old World, works in the Vulcan Factory:

> . . . but we their clever sons and daughters, would find our way back to the safe professional classes. For our parents there was deep sorrow in all this, and the Professor offered hope. (106)

Looking at the remnants of the Old World the narrator is able to empathize with the nostalgia, for 'home' 'Old World', of his parents and his own anxieties and uncertainties get framed in his parents' sense of rootlessness as well.

The narrator in a subtle way also throws light on the sorrow, the ambivalent position, the feeling of alienation and rootlessness, the longing and nostalgia for the Old World, of the immigrant populace who try to root themselves in the "raw and desolate shore" (107) of the new world. Their nostalgia for the Old World, their expectations from their children who in turn rebel against everything related to the Old World, find expression in the story. It forms the

background against which the drama in the life of the narrator is enacted.

The surprise invitation by the Professor proves to be the first step towards the narrator's destination when he asks the Professor as to what he did on the roof with the telescope. The Professor tells the narrator that he made observations and the sky "which looks so still, is always in motion, full of drama if you understand how to read it". He tells the narrator that the skies were full of "large events. . . . And beautiful, since they unfold. . . to a kind of music, to numbers of infinite dimensions like the ones you deal with in equations at school, but more complex and entirely visible" (120). The Professor, as he explains to the narrator the mystery of the universe, is overcome with emotion and the narrator too feels a bit relaxed:

> The room for a moment lost its tension. I no longer felt, myself to be the focus of his interest, or even of my own. I felt liberated, and for the first time the Professor was interesting in his own right, quite apart from the attention he paid me or the importance my parents attached to him. (120-121)

The narrator is so fascinated by the phenomenon described by the Professor that he too wishes to look into the skies but the Professor advised him to come some other time as the sky was not very clear that day. A feeling of loss suddenly grips him, "Some truer vision of myself had been in the room for a moment. I had almost grasped it. Now I felt it slipping away as I moved back into my purely physical self" (121). The infinite expanse seemed to have beckoned him, a moment ago, and the loss of it disheartens him. Spacescape and landscape are important characters in Malouf's works. They become an extension of the protagonist's sense of self which eludes him till the time he recognizes the correlation between self and space. Apart from the male figure, space/place may also be seen as the significant 'other' that completes the quest for selfhood or wholeness.

The seventeenth year, the final stage, in his present quest, still

finds him struggling to do something in life, to give his life some direction, some purpose, to be a face in the crowd and not just a part of it. And this he tries to achieve by helping John, one of the family friends, clear the overgrown garden. The hard work and effort that he puts, the sweat on his brow and his blistered hands give him temporary satisfaction." I slashed and tore at the weeds till my hands blistered, and in a trancelike pre-occupation with tough green things that clung to the earth with a fierce tenacity, forgot for a time my own turmoil and lack of roots. It was something to do" (122). His fierce engagement with the weeds is an attempt to gain control over the environment.He is able to forget his own lack of rootedness. However, the effort and energy that he has to put to uproot the plants only make his own rootlessness more obvious. Unlike the plants he has no ground of his own in which to dig his roots.

During his young adolescent years, the narrator had always craved for attention and was proud of his power to charm people. However, he feels "confused" when John's wife Mary shows interest in him and asks him to sit by her side, and before he can understand anything, " Her hand moved over my shoulder, down my spine, brushed very lightly, without lingering, over the place where my shorts tented; then rested easily on my thigh" (124). The sudden appearance of John embarrasses the narrator who is overcome with shame and disgust. The consciousness of his physical self begins to impinge itself on the psyche of the narrator, who furiously pedals away not knowing where he is heading to, and unintentionally finds himself before the Professor's house. As he stands there looking at the infinite sky and pondering over the question of 'time', the Professor calls out to him and the narrator notices that the telescope is not directed up towards the sky but downwards where he is standing. Is the Professor's interest just the stars or something else too? Is there another side to his sophisticated self that is also a part of the forbidden territory?

> It occurred to me, as on previous occasions, that in the few moments of my standing there with my head

> flung back to the stars, what he might have been observing was me. I hesitated, made no decision. Then out of a state of passive expectancy, willing nothing but waiting poised for my own life to occur . . . (125).

And then the much-awaited moment arrives. The Professor fixes the telescope for him and gradually the drama of the infinite unfolds before the eyes of the narrator– Jupiter, Saturn, Alpha Centauri, the constellations:

> Solid spheres hovered above me, tiny balls of matter moving in concert like the atoms we drew in chemistry, held together by invisible lines of force and I thought oddly that if I were to lower the telescope now to where I had been standing at the entrance to the drive I would see my own puzzled, upturned face, but as a self I had already outgrown and abandoned, not minutes but aeons back. (126-27)

The anxieties and conflicts that his tumultuous adolescence has brought with it are now on the verge of extinction. The infinite expanse has opened its arms to welcome the narrator into its vast realm:

> I had a clear sense of being one more hard little point in the immensity—but part of it, a source of light like all these others—and was aware for the first time of the grainy reality of my own life, and then, a fact of no large significance, of the certainty of my death; but in some dimension where those terms were too vague to be relevant. It was at the point wheremy self ended and the rest of it began that Time, or Space, showed its richness to me. I was overwhelmed. (127)

The narrator's search for his 'self,' thus, culminates in the epiphanic moment as he finds his vocation among the stars in the

skies. With the help of the Professor the narrator is able to give direction and meaning to his life while exploring the stars in the vast expanse of the universe. A kind of peace descends on the narrator in this moment of illumination or enlightenment, a feeling of satisfaction. Ultimately the narrator is now able to find his 'roots' which now provide him stability.

However, ironically this moment of ecstasy at finding his vocation in the infinite skies in an epiphanic moment of self-realisation is also rooted in his body. In his ecstasy, the narrator is oblivious of what the Professor is exploring. It is definitely not the stars. Yet, the narrator slowly becomes aware of the Professor's hand moving down his back to his belly and finally into his pants. He must have been aware of it all the time but, "Too many larger events were unfolding for me to break away and ask, as I might have, 'What are you doing?" (127-128). The suggestions of the Professor's homosexual inclinations indicated by his excessive interest in the growing boy in the narrative become explicit here in the act of the Professor.The narrator, however, remains "untouched" by the physical aspects of the moment's experience and is indeed grateful to the Professor for providing him that epiphanic glimpse into the skies. Despite the Professor's sexual act he is obliged to him for what he had led him to see:

> We stood on opposite sides of the occasion. Nothing of what he had done could make the slightest difference to me, I was untouched: youth is too physical to accord very much to that side of things. But what I had seen—what he had led me to see—my bursting into the life of things I would look back on that as the real beginning of my existence, as the entry into a vocation, and nothing could diminish the gratitude I felt. (128)

As the Professor stands there, rather guilty, tears blur the narrator's eyes out of sheer joy and "with extraordinary lightness" (128) he leaves the place. The Professor, thus, not only helps him find

his real self, his place, his vocation in life, but also makes him aware of his physical self. The homosexual encounter becomes a liberating moment for the protagonist so that the act becomes insignificant for him—the intellectual awakening supersedes the sexual awakening. As Stephen Kirby observes, "Malouf celebrates the subversive possibilities of [homosexual] desire in a way that obliterates its sexual component. . . . Don Anderson described this story as typifying 'the peculiar sexlessness that pervades Malouf's fiction' " (390-392). The quest for selfhood entails both physical and psychological growing up necessary for an individual's well-being. Sexuality and vocation are two important parts of this growing up and the narrator-protagonist is ultimately able to negotiate the two. The Professor helps him to cross over the threshold that distances him from the world of adult experience and in the process helps him achieve the state of wholeness or 'individuation'. Also the dense texture of the narrative makes not just for an engrossing reading but also effectively captures the existential complexities being faced by the adolescent narrator. Weaving the magic of words Malouf's description of the landscape and the skyscape is so intense that they seem to represent the turmoil and the quest of the nameless protagonist. Reverberating with a mystical and musical quality, such is the power of the text that one can almost see and hear the symphony of the spheres and stars as they are being observed by the narrator. This journey of self-discovery of the adolescent boy is beautifully interwoven with the themes of memory, nostalgia, desire, guilt, freedom, infinity and so on, even as the narrative remains focused on the two dominant themes of sexuality and vocation , so central to the growth of any adolescent.

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Fusion of Family and Work in a Farm Woman's Life in Australia and India: An Overview

Papiya Lahiri

> [Farm Women are] a tremendous, unseen, unrecognisable force. They contribute a tremendous amount to the wealth, the stability and economic success of the farm. Added to that they contribute a tremendous amount to the community, to their schools and [they contribute] their organisational skills. And I think mostly it is unrecognised. – Farm woman, southern NSW, aged 42 (Alston 1995, 38)

Women have always had an integral role in agricultural production especially in the developing countries. Yet, there has been an international lack of acknowledgement of women's contribution to agriculture. Farming is presented as a male occupation and the recognition which women receive is only as 'helpers', wives, mothers or daughters of the principal farmer. They have been termed "invisible farmers" and "silent partners of agriculture" (Alston 2000, 3) because of their absence from public positions of power and authority.

In examining the work of women, it becomes clear that established definitions of 'work' are biased against women. Both in India and Australia, for people working in fragile eco-regions such as forests, hills, arid and semi-arid plains, agriculture and animal husbandry are the main sources of income, where they depend heavily on natural resources for their survival. For example, they collect firewood for cooking, fodder for cattle feeding, roots and tubers and wild fruits for human consumption. In addition to this, collection and selling of bamboo, gum, Mahua flowers, tamarind, honey, beedi leaves, palm leaves, sal leaves, spices, broomsticks and herbs, etc. form an important source of income to these people. In all these tasks women play a key role in the management and marketing of the farm products. They contribute 70 percent of the work and the rest is done

by men. In families where there is no male member, women do everything. It is very rare that we find a man doing the work of a woman. In the research done by Margaret Alston on Australian farm women in 1991, she found women responsible for such work in more than 90% cases. While such tasks are necessary for smooth production, they are not seen as contributing directly and have not been recognised as legitimate 'work'. Margaret Alston is a farm woman in southern New South Wales. She runs a cattle property with her husband and also works full-time as a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Charles Sturt University and divides her time between her academic and research work, and maintaining and looking after her husband, four children and her farm.

If we talk about the place of women in farm families, we see them only as secondary to the males. A practice which ensures that farms are owned and controlled by men is passing the farm from father to son (a patrilineal inheritance) and women's common point of entry to farming is through marriage. Women are often only subordinate in their relationships (as the Mrs./missus) with members of their husband's extended family, and have to seek permission from the family for the purchase of household goods like uniform and books for children's education or new whitewash for their house. This is primarily because they lack economic independence to be able to spend money earned from the farm. Lucy, a farm woman in northern NSW, says:

> Right now, our bedroom needs curtains, and before I can buy the material, the men [husband, father-in-law and two brothers-in-law] discuss it at a meeting. They decide which daughter-in-law can have the money for curtains or some other thing for their house. We don't even go to the meeting. We wait at home like children waiting for Santa Claus. (Gould 20)

The status of women varies from place to place. Socio-economic profile of the rural women is different from urban women and the status and awareness of hill women is also different. Indian

Census 2011 reveals that around 35 percent rural women are cultivators, 44.93 percent fall in the category of agricultural labourers and 1.60 percent is engaged in livestock, forestry and other allied activities. A study conducted by Women and Population Division of FAO revealed that in developing countries women provide 70 percent of agricultural labour; 60 to 80 percent labour for household food production; 100 percent labour for processing the basic food stuffs; 80 percent labour for food storage and transport from farm to village; 90 percent for water and fuel wood collection for household (Girija 24).

It is a common practice in both the countries for the yearly farm income allocations to be decided in meetings by the male members from which women are excluded. The political economists in Australia and the Panchayats heading the rural communities in India argue that the farm family labour unit is an example of interdependence between men and women but they conveniently choose to ignore the fact that the same units become sites of exploitation of women and children who continuously live and work within a gendered hierarchical system. Men control the agenda in rural political bodies where they have most of the public space compared to women. Men's activities are accorded greater legitimacy, while women facilitate them by catering, washing clothes and serving food.

Farm women are a part of an economic unit—the family farm which gives an occupational identity and an opportunity to fulfil their personal needs, however less they be. The integration of the farm and the home makes it difficult for women to apply for developmental programmes, following urbanized models, because the more farm women become involved in the productive side of this enterprise, the more they find themselves entangled in family relationships. This minimises the distinction between work and home for them. For urban women, on the other hand, their work frees them from the constraints of family kinship and allows them personal autonomy, though this freedom could mean their being exploited in the workforce. For farm

women, their interdependence with farm men, essential to successful family farming, does not necessarily translate into equality.

There are certain key factors that determine the status of farm women which could be listed as the following:

- Socio-economic background and general consciousness
- Level and extent of women's participation in women centred development programmes and the pattern of general awareness among them
- Education
- Health awareness
- Participation in decision making process

Women's almost total responsibility for housework extends to childcare tasks. Childcare is, in fact, seen as part of the private sphere of women, and the allocation of this work acts to confine and restrict women's activities in other areas such as farm work, off-farm work, community, social and leisure activities. There is a dialogue in a recent Hindi film "English-Vinglish" where a housewife named Shashi Godbole learns to speak English after going abroad in the hope of winning respect from her husband and eldest daughter who feels ashamed of her mother's speaking in Hindi with the English subject teacher at school. She explains the condition of housewives in the family to a French "when men cook food, it's considered an art and when women cook, it's mere duty."

The domestic responsibility and the increasing expectation of the farm women that they will work on and off the farm, places pressure on many women as they attempt to juggle disparate tasks. Since women stereotypically accept that they will perform traditional female tasks, they report feeling guilty if all expectations are not met. For instance, Marianne, a 42-year-old Australian farm woman who had been working on the farm for three years, reported feeling guilty that she was not keeping the same level of task performance in the house:

> ... I don't leave a lot of lunch for him, so he generally

> has to hunt around for his lunch, which used to worry me as I didn't have it left ready for him...when I have been working four days a week, I found that I got a bit disorganised (Alston 2005, 46)

Similarly, in Indian farming communities also if the mother finds the child crying when she returns home after working, she feels tremendous guilt for being responsible for it. This becomes more challenging for widows and single women. They, too, view themselves as accountable for traditional female tasks as well as the outside farm work. Often, the realisation of never being acknowledged for the priceless work they offer, dampen their spirits over and above the monotony and drudgery they have to face daily in their lives. For instance, Deborah a widow, speaks about providing meals for shearers in the following manner:

> ... it is dreadful work, see... the locals were shearing... and I did it for the first year [provided meals], and I just thought I got no thanks for it and I was a fool because I had all the sheep work to do and the lot... I found I was getting to bed at two or three in the morning to get up at five and it just wasn't... and you got no concession for price or anything else, so I decide to... not do it. I was only a fool. (Gould 35)

Age is also a factor in the way women interpret their role on the farm. Most women over 40 years accept a traditional assignment of roles and are prepared to maintain their work in the household for example, June, a 64-year-old Australian woman, commented about her role: "... that's what I've been put on this Earth I suppose to do" (Alston 2005, 28). Despite the fact that many older women accepted a traditional assignment of roles in their own lives, they are aware that the world is changing and that sex roles are less stereotyped. Hannah, a retired Australian farm woman, compared her own life on the farm with that of her daughter-in-law, Louise, who lives in Hannah's old home:

> Well, that's a big change now... On the days Louise is teaching, [my son] would have [the baby] with him all the time and he would probably be quicker at changing a baby's nappy than I would be these days... Well, it doesn't do the men any harm. Besides, I think it suits that relationship between the father and children... Some of the farm wives have got their jobs to do outside too, so it is just fair that the men do a few in the house. (Alston 1995, 27)

The nurturing role of the women extends into the communities where they live. They have always been heavily involved in activities of keeping their "communities functioning at a level that ensures an adequate quality of life for rural dwellers" (Pritchard 26). Older women have devoted much time and energy to voluntary community work throughout their lives. For younger women it is becoming more difficult to make the same commitment because of lack of time and problems of distance yet women are still seen devoting a great deal of time to charitable works, community groups, etc. as these are imperative in rural setting where there is a high level of interdependency of each other for mutual requirements especially for survival in more isolated areas. In Australia some are members of organizations such as the Red Cross, the Country Women's Association (CWA), Meals-on-Wheels, show societies, hall committees, the Nursing Mother's Association and the View Club to name a few. Similarly in India also the farm women are involved in NGO's, Mahila Mandals, Self-help groups, Indira Mahila Yojana and Rastriye Mahila Kalyana Yojana (National Women Welfare Plan), Anganwaris and Balwadi programmes which are being run by government and voluntary organizations. Ironically, even in these women-centred programmes, women are found to be marginalized. Various studies and reports show that women were found unaware about these programmes. Women had no idea about The Mahila Suraksha Yojana and Mahila Samridhi Yojana that have been started

Australian and Indian Farm Women

Women's roles and responsibilities are pivotal not only to the management of natural resources but also to the management of domestic economy. Studies have shown that women work longer hours, pool their income to the household budgets, and manage the day-to-day food consumption and cash flow needs. During dry climates, the male members of the family have to migrate to other places for finding jobs and the entire responsibility of managing households falls on women. In India the girl child of the family becomes a victim of family circumstances. She has to discontinue her education in order to take care of her younger siblings and becomes their foster mother at a very young age of eleven or twelve.

In one of the research projects by IHS (Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies) in the district of Sirmour, a study was conducted in 2007 to find out the knowledge of men and women in identifying various species of plants. Women identified 95 species and listed their use whereas men could identify only 62 species. This shows the level of knowledge among Indian farm hill-women. Also, the study showed

that no other group is more affected by degradation of natural resources than farm women because for them every morning starts with a long march in search of fuel, fodder and water irrespective of the fact whether the women are old, young or pregnant. Crucial household needs have to met on a daily basis. In the hill areas women become the victims of drudgery. They have to work for 14 to 16 hours every day. In the district of Sirmour, the major agricultural operations for women involve "transplanting, harvesting, cutting twigs and clearing the fields." (Butalia 37) They cut grass and sell it as fodder. They have to travel long distances on foot and cut or collect firewood and sell it or bring it home for use. The image that almost always comes before our eyes is that of a woman with a pile of hay or firewood on her head and not of a man. Ironically, many of these women are often listed in the census under the category of non-workers and none of their tedious works are counted or recorded. Worse still, it is still a tradition here that the male members of the family consider themselves as the bread winners and decision makers of the family and hence do not share the domestic day to day work; they consider it the job of the females. Women in the hills are wedded to the socio-cultural environment which offers little scope for their personality development.

Women have always made a significant economic contribution to family farming which has changed from on-farm cottage-type industries to an on-farm, off-farm combination of activities. But ironically, what has not changed is the lack of recognition of women's contribution and the undervaluing of the precious and indispensable efforts of these women. It has been observed that illiteracy and ignorance are the root cause of discrimination against women. What is required is economic empowerment, reducing vulnerability of poor women in the situation of crisis. The success of women participation depends on their capacity building measures and these in turn depend on better awareness about health, education, legal rights, improving functional literacy and better leadership skills. Micro-credit helps them organise their own business and production units. There is a dire need to start

such programmes in hill areas. There should be the provision of imparting educational and vocational training which calls for involvement of both agriculture and livestock researches and transferring of new technologies to this area. While designing agricultural policies, gender discrimination and inequality of resources among womenfolk must also be considered by the policy makers. But most of all there is a need to change the mindset, particularly of men which still sees women in stereotypes of secondary and subordinate roles. As a 39 year old NSW farm woman says:

> I think women's place could be very, very large and very, very important if men let it be.... I think we need to educate them to an understanding that we actually have brains and could be their biggest asset. (Alston 1995, 52)

Hence in Australia as well as in India the compliance of younger farm women may be dependent on a number of factors, chief among these being recognition of their status and contribution, both formally and legally. With this there is a need to revise the gender expectations if women are to continue generating income by fusing both their work and family. They need to be heard and seen so that they could become free of patriarchal gender relations and stereotypical rural ideology.

I would like to end my paper with a poem of mine entitled 'Feelings'

FEELINGS

In the wake of the most horrid night
It is the soft murmur of a mother
that allays the smouldering heart of a child
Never to get upset again
Well perceived yet not expressed well

Well heard yet not spoken well
Meaning ending into futile bearings
Empty words over-flooding ears

In the spring of hope the winter of doubt
In the summer of activity the rains of laziness
Yet to continue enduring every pain
Is to cut a long story short

Every meaning getting clearer with more doubts
Every unknown detail muddling thought process
To convert and thus to make it through
The known and the unknown

The journey is long and the way tough
Beguiling tendencies waiting to share our company
Tenderness awaits the harshest situations
Reward with every overpowering hurdle.

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Celebrating Cultural Diversity: Life-Narratives by Aboriginal Women

Aditya Singh Dulta

For around 40,000 years before 1788, the Aboriginals, the original inhabitants of Australia, resided there undisturbed up till January 26, 1788 when the colonizers hoisted the Union Jack and annexed their land to the British crown. The English colonizers peremptorily believed in their own superiority--racial, linguistic and cultural. The Aboriginal tribes were termed as ugly, unhygienic, primitive, barbarian, uncivilized and remnants of a "stone age inevitably doomed to extinction" (Bourke 1). The natives were subject to large scale killings and the few left were confined to 'reserves' or 'missions' in the name of 'protection' where they were actually exploited in every which way. The children born out of the exploitation of native women were called 'half-castes' and were forcibly removed from their mothers, the aim being to bring them up in State-run institutions so that they could be assimilated in the white society as domestic helps and factory hands. 'White Australia' policy was invoked since federation in 1901 and the Aboriginals were not included the official history of Australia and not even in the census up till 1967. It is an irony of epic proportion that the first people of Australia were granted citizenship of Australia by the settlers 179 years after colonization in 1967.

Aboriginal women's autobiographies and biographies have emerged as a major genre on the literary firmament. Numerous life-narratives by Aboriginal women--both autobiographies and biographies--tell their side of the story of the whole process of colonization and also of the self-assertion of the Aboriginal people. The present paper examines Colin Shirley Perry or Shirley Smith's *Mum Shirl* (1981) which is among the earliest of autobiographies and Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) which has been a best seller, to explore how the representation of Aboriginal culture is central to these life narratives.

Mum Shirl is the title of Colin Shirley Perry or Shirley Smith's autobiography and she herself was known by that nickname. It was given to her by the jail inmates whom she visited regularly even though she was not related to them. She was born on Erambie Mission near Cowra, and grew up with her grandparents. She shared a close relationship with her grandfather, and even after his death often looked to him as a source of spiritual and emotional strength. She became an activist after her brother's incarceration, which led to her frequent visits to the jail. There she saw that the prisoners hardly had any visitors to share their feelings, thoughts and problems with. The Department of Corrective Services allowed her access to prisoners and visits to other jails too in New South Wales. They regarded her with great affection and she has been variously described as a saint and a hero. She worked for the poor, down trodden and needy, both blacks and whites outside the jail too. She often found food, shelter and all sorts of assistance for all destitutes newly arrived in Sydney and worked tirelessly for the vulnerable, especially children, single mothers and the alcoholics. She generously helped them with her time, energy and money. As a result she had her own share of problems to deal with, for instance, poverty.

She was also influential in land rights struggle, the Aboriginal embassy episode, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Housing, etc. In particular, she is remembered for her role in helping to found the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern, where she was later employed and continued her valuable community work. She was awarded an M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire) in 1997 for her services to the Aboriginal community and an A.M. in 1985. She died in 1998, at the age of 73.

My Place by Sally Morgan is one of the most celebrated autobiographies by an Aboriginal woman. This work stands testimony to the ordeal of three generations and contains stories of Sally Morgan's mother, grandmother and granduncle, besides herself. Morgan herself says in the course of the work that her aim is to put on record the Aboriginal perspective so often missing from the dominant

narrative and culture, imposed from above. Sally Morgan was raised by her mother and grandmother and lived under the impression that she was a white and of Indian origin, though since childhood she had some vague ideas and hints about her family's past. She resolves to discover her roots despite stiff resistance from her grandmother, and travels to her ancestors' land. The journey turns out to be an emotional and spiritual pilgrimage as she does manage to find out her family's antecedents, besides their culture, relatives and also the humiliation and exploitation to which her grandmother was subjected. It is a poignant search for truth and roots which she ultimately discovers and this does have a healing effect on Morgan, her mother and grandmother as later they agree to share some facts of their past life which they had hitherto kept buried under silence.

Apart from the political, geographical and economic subjugation, colonialism also works through cultural subjugation. It instills in the mind of the subjugated a sense of inferiority of their own culture and superiority of the colonizer's culture. To successfully accomplish the mission of colonization, education, customs, language and practices of the colonizers are disrupted. As a consequence, for the subjugated the assertion of cultural values, pride in cultural traditions and articulating the same in words are important aspects of the retrieval of the sacred and unviolated self, both personal and collective.

Replying to the accusation of Aboriginals being 'uncultured' and 'ungodly', the activist authors state that the Aboriginals had well-developed customs, laws, religion in the form of spirituality that defined their relationship with the land since at least forty thousand years before the arrival of the colonizers, from The Dreamtime or The Dreaming, which refers to the genesis of life, earth and the creative epoch since time immemorial. This sacred knowledge has been passed over to generations through the word of mouth. It also exists in multifarious forms like songs, dance, ceremonies, sculptures; body, rock and sand paintings, etc. Because of their oral tradition and different kind of writing the Aboriginals were supposed to have no

culture. As Penny Van Toorn says,

> Few non-Aboriginal people recognized the richness of oral traditions, or considered the possibility that graphic signifying systems such as sand drawings, body scars, paintings, or carvings might be viewed as forms of writing. Most assumed that only literate societies were advanced, civilised and rational, and took orality to be a sign of the backward, primitive and ignorant. (20)

Besides containing the sacred and spiritual knowledge, the Aboriginal cultural repository of The Dreamtime also enlists the prescribed roles (social, cultural, religious, gender, kinship) and responsibilities of men and women and other aspects of daily life like "homicide, sacrilege, sorcery, incest, abduction of women, adultery, physical assault, theft, insult including swearing, and the usurpation of ritual privileges and duties" (Bourke and Cox 56).

Such continuity between the past and the present is hard for the western school of thought to grasp, as Bill Edwards says that "Aboriginal creative epoch cannot be understood within a western framework of linear time . . . with the separation of past and present . . . The Aboriginal concept of time is therefore cyclic . . . the heroic time which existed in the past and still exists today" (79). On the contrary,

> Western ideas about reality and religion are based largely on the general acceptance of dichotomies between natural and cultural, material and spiritual, past and present, secular and sacred, subject and object . . . In traditional Aboriginal thought, their is no nature without culture. The distinction between subject and object breaks down as people identify rocks, trees or birds as representations of their own beings, and not as things solely objective and external to them. (Edwards 81)

Aboriginal **spirituality** was natural, spontaneous and genuine, not regimented, institutionalized and thrust upon like Christianity was imposed by the settlers. As Mum Shirl recounts, 'Bible-bashing' and 'brain-washing' were religiously practised on little children in the 'missions' every day. The Aboriginals have sincere devotion towards God and they have a sacred view of all creation. Each and every object and aspect of creation, including human beings are manifestations of God. Therefore, Mum Shirl dedicates her autobiography to her beloved grandfather and fellow Aboriginals, whether they lived in the deserts, the Reserves or Missions, in shanties, prisons or on streets. Mum Shirl calls all these people along with nature and Mother Earth as a part of the miracle produced by God. She recalls her grandpa's philosophy that after man threw seeds on the ground; God nurtured it with enough rain, sun and wind for it to grow. Man made bread or damper after harvesting the produce. Therefore, with this simple act of sharing their food, the humans were taking part in a miracle. Every day is a miracle and human beings themselves are miracles. Therefore, it is the prime responsibility of every person to love, value and respect oneself so that one can spread it around, and make earth a beautiful place to live in.

The Aboriginals have **great reverence for the land of the ancestors**. They identify with it throughout their life no matter where their current location of livelihood and residence is. This identification with their motherland is in stark contrast to the present day generations across the globe, who migrate to cities far off and then feel ashamed to acknowledge their humble places of origin. Even the Aboriginals have to move away from their place of birth in search of livelihood but they want to die and get buried on their own soil as Mum Shirl says, “White people don't seem to understand that Aboriginal people are supposed to be buried in their own areas. It is not a fashion or a fad; it is a law. The spirit should rest where the body came from” (107).

Moreover, the indigenes have a firm belief in the omnipotent

and the omnipresent. Arthur Corunna, Sally Morgan's granduncle says, "God is the only friend we got. God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. You stick to Him, He's the only one. Don't listen to what others tell you about God, He's the best mate a man could have. You don't have Him; you don't have no friend at all. You look away from God, you go to ruin" (210).

Another remarkable feature of the Aboriginal culture is their **faith in the institution of family and kinship.** An Aboriginal family is a cohesive unit and an organic whole just like a human body. If one part is severed, the entire body writhes in pain as the wholeness gets disturbed and disfigured. As Colin Bourke and Bill Edwards explain:

> Aboriginal kinship and family structures are still cohesive forces which bind Aboriginal people together in all parts of Australia. They provide psychological and emotional support . . . even though they create concern among non-Aboriginal people who would prefer Aborigines to follow European social preferences for nuclear families with few kinship responsibilities. (100)

Recalling her family life, Mum Shirl says, ". . . what I remember most about these days was the happiness and the laughing and the music . . .We could all dance in those days because you didn't have to throw your hip out of its socket and call that dancing" (12). The settlers' culture suppressed the natural expression of the self, not only because singing and dancing are seen by them as special arts which only a few can learn but more drastically because they destroyed or disrupted the Aboriginal families by their oppressive and exclusionary policies.

Though condemned, segregated, socially discriminated against, banished from the hearts of metropolitan centres and pushed to the fringes of suburbs, the Aboriginals manage to survive due to the intra-community cohesion akin to the centripetal force, as the saying goes, 'unity is strength'. Mum Shirl says, "There were maybe about

600 or 700 Aboriginal people living around the inner suburbs of Sydney. We all knew each other, and we had little to do with the white people, except that we shopped at their shops, and always had to go to them for jobs and work, but mostly we seemed to be with each other" (18).

The Aboriginals were tender at heart and loved their fellow beings unlike the settlers who brought with them a culture of selfishness, plunder, exploitation and apathy. Laurie, Mum Shirl's brother, for instance, confessed to a crime he never committed to save his friend who was the sole bread-winner of his family. Though incarcerated and living under miserable conditions in jail, he is moved by the plight of the fellow prisoners on the verge of insanity due to isolation and loneliness. He requests his sister, Mum Shirl, to pay a visit to them to boost their sagging spirits. As Mum Shirl says, "But he took it all, the bashings, the solitary, the bread and water, the gaols were very hard then. And when I went to see him, he would ask me to do or bring something for some other prisoner" (29). Despite several hardships in her own life, she continued to visit the prisoners.

For the Aboriginals, humanity, kinship, compassion and sharing come very naturally but the government's attitude towards them remains callous. Mum Shirl says that in cities like Sydney and Adelaide, the Housing Commission rules prohibit house owners, especially Aboriginals, to lodge more than a certain number of people in their own houses due to reasons best known to them apart from aesthetics and hygiene. The government does not bother about hundreds of blacks living on streets, under shacks or in abandoned car bodies, etc. Aboriginals risk penalties and litigation and provide shelter to the needy tribesmen in their houses in the suburbs. For an average Aboriginal, hiring an accommodation is an Odyssean journey because of their skin colour and the huge costs involved like bond money, advance rent, etc. , which runs into thousands of dollars. Mum Shirl, citing a particular case, lays bare the callousness of the authorities, "How these people think the young girl and her children will spend the night, or where, or what she will feed them in the

meantime. I have no idea, and sometimes I wonder if those questions ever cross their minds" (44).

In marked contrast to the callousness of the government and the white people, the Aboriginals are so full of love, care and concern for each other, even for those with whom they may have quarrelled sometime. Mum Shirl proudly says, "Even those relatives I have arguments with, they turn around and help out when you least expect that they will. When my sister became ill and was in hospital, everybody went around to see and tell everybody else and everyone was phoning up and down the country, which costs a lot of money" (50).

The Aboriginals have vast kinship patterns and they value and nurture relationships at all costs. Mum Shirl says that she sometimes comes across white families where brothers and sisters are not on talking terms though they live in the same town and both have telephones, but " The difference with the Black families is that they are close even if they don't have phones, and even though very few can write letters. We have what we call the 'grapevine' and it gets messages around in no particular order, but it is much surer and faster than sending a telegram" (50).

In the pre-invasion era too, whatever the men hunted and whatever the women gathered it was shared with all the members of the family. If one got food, no one went without food. They share whatever little they have, be it food, love or grief. Mum Shirl says, "The Black community has got so little, to be shared between so many. Anybody who goes out there and gets a hold of a little bit more and brings it back and shares it around—you think we are going to be ashamed of that? That's survival" (51). **Sharing** is a very strong quality of the aboriginal culture. It is no wonder that when even one Aboriginal goes up in the social ladder, the whole community feels proud of it.

In sharp contrast to the individualism and materialism of the white Australians **are the Aboriginals who believe in sharing**

and closeness within the family. The white families in their spacious and affluent bungalows had a separate room for each member of the family, including children, with their personal set of toys and a nanny to look after them. Individualism and privacy were considered indispensable though these were impediments in forging strong filial and interpersonal relationships. Sally Morgan who was privileged to complete her education recalls,

> The kids at school were amazed to hear that I shared a bed with my brother and sister. I never told them about the times we'd squeezed five in that bed. All my classmates had their own beds; some of them even had their own rooms. I considered them disadvantaged. I couldn't explain the happy feeling of warm security I felt when we all snuggled together. (42)

Morgan's father died when she was just nine years old. Her extended family members came to the rescue of Nan, her grandmother, and her mother, Glady, and supported them till Glady found a job as a florist. Uncle Frank brought chickens and veggies and advised Glady to undertake driving lessons, etc. Gradually, Glady picked up the threads of her life and successfully ran the household though she was just thirty-one and her youngest daughter, Helen, only eighteen months old. The strong kinship network, the blessings of the ancestral spirits, the strong spirituality inside, and the inherent tendency to work hard do the trick for Aboriginals and they survive despite momentous hardships. As another Aboriginal, Caroline Jones states:

> Aboriginal people gave meaning to my life by showing through their suffering, their courage, their unselfishness, their sense of family, their forgiveness, their survival and their sense of the sacred what it is truly like to be human. For me they are the steady beating heart at the centre of our Australian spirituality. (Edwards 97)

Morgan's granduncle, Arthur, did not accept offers for better

jobs than his present one, as he did not wish to go far away from his ancestral land. However, when he learnt about the whereabouts of his long lost sister, Nan, he instantly rushed to Perth to see her with whatever little money he had in his pocket. The western utilitarian philosophy and the prospective burden of feeding one more mouth never crossed his mind. Ironically, he was informed about Nan through a letter by their own biological white father, Alfred Howden Drake Brockman, the rich owner of the station who did not wish to keep her, his own daughter at his house, even though she worked as a servant to his white children. Arthur says, "In 1927, I got a letter from Howden . . . The letter asked if I'd like to have daisy with me. It said that they didn't want her no more and they wondered if I could come and get her. Too right, I thought. Nothing I'd like better" (200).

Another significant aspect of Aboriginal culture highlighted in their autobiographies is their **deep respect for life, nature, women, children and even animals.** The Aboriginals did not kill or separate even a young animal from its mother for food. By contrast, the white colonizers had no qualms about removing young native infants from their mothers and families as if they were inanimate objects. The damage done to the child could not be undone ever, as Bird says,

> We may go home, but we cannot relive our childhoods. We may reunite with our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunties, uncles, communities, but we cannot relive the twenty, thirty, forty years that we spent without their love and care, and they cannot undo the grief and mourning they felt when we were separated from them. We can go home to ourselves as Aboriginals, but this does not erase the attacks inflicted on our hearts, minds, bodies and souls. (114)

Women got more respect, importance and equity in the traditional Aboriginal culture as compared to the so-called modern western culture. The term used since ages to describe the indigenes,

'hunters and gatherers', itself bears testimony to the acknowledged complimentarity and indispensability of men and women to each other. Though the large Aboriginals families were a close-knit structure, women were allowed some time and space exclusively for themselves where men were forbidden. The sacred Aboriginal pagan religion had exclusive songs for women only which were shared and practised in women-only gatherings. On the contrary, many white women were left all alone in their opulent houses by their men. Besides producing, rearing children, gratifying the carnal desires of their husbands and ringing the bell to lord over the Aboriginal servants, white women had precious little to do. Also, these unfortunate women were silent spectators to their husbands' infidelity who exploited the Aboriginal women servants, and to the spectacle of children born out of such unholy and forced alliances. To save the honour of their families and husbands, these women planted fictitious stories about the parentage of such children. For instance, in Morgan's work, Alice and her daughter, Aunt Judy, both circulate the lie that Nan was the daughter of some Maltese Sam and not Brockman, the owner of the station and husband of Alice. For their lustful adulterous pursuits the white men were never punished either by law or by society. On the other hand, the traditional Aboriginal law awarded stringent punishments including death for adultery and crimes against women.

Aboriginals have always been **in tune with nature**. Mum Shirl says about her grandfather, "Grandfather would be quite still on the grass in the shade, close his eyes and listen to the sound of the water. He always said that the sound of running water calmed the troubled soul, and even when his mind and soul were not troubled, he would find a peace in the gentle murmur of nature"(3). On the contrary, the European settlers with their imperialist and capitalist thought treated Mother Earth, and in fact, all nature as a commodity to be exploited to the fullest to make profits. They recklessly plundered and looted the natural resources in far excess of their requirements unlike the natives who take the gifts of nature in proportion to their needs.

Sally Morgan, describing the harmonious relationship between Aboriginals and nature and its various objects says that their households are often inundated with pets like cats, dogs, budgies and rabbits, etc., or even stray animals discovered moving outside their house. They are respected and loved as creations of God with a right to live on earth just as human beings. On the contrary, though the whites too keep pet animals like dogs, etc., they primarily do it for utilitarian purpose like security or for aesthetics, or just for avoiding boredom in their nuclear families. Mum Shirl reveals in the course of her book that in order to escape the noise that a barking dog produces, some white people get their vocal cords removed and hence betray their inhumanity, insensitivity, utter callousness and superiority complex.

The Aboriginal life and lifestyle resembles that of a child: pure, transparent, without affectation, greed and hypocrisy unlike the hypocritical, sick, materialistic and selfish ways of the so-called educated and advanced white Australians. Hostility and suspicion were unknown to the Aboriginals. Even in 1788, when the first set of colonizers started to pour in, the natives wanted to include them into their scheme of things. The natives showed them around and shared with them the knowledge of natural wealth and rich habitats to survive. However, the indigenes gradually realized that the whites had no love lost for them and were there to expand their empire and exploit Australia's natural resources. Alcoholism and diseases like cholera, typhoid, syphilis, stress and mental disorders were alien to the pre-contact indigenous community, but after colonization many fell victims to them.

> The settlers groomed on the tenets of scientific advancement, industrialization and capitalism were greedy, selfish, inconsiderate, and had a tendency to hoard even by depriving the Aboriginals of the basic amenities of life. Mum Shirl reveals their callous and selfish nature:

> In my lifetime I have borrowed, begged and stood over for money . . . Sometimes I have felt great shame at the length I have had to go to get hold of it but it is shame for those people who have it, and who don't give it easily, not shame for myself or the people who need it . . . . The Aboriginal people have had to fight . . . get arrested, get their heads kicked in by the Police and get carted away in paddy-wagons—to draw attention to some of their needs . . . . Still they give so little. (45-46).

It is their poverty, the oppressive policies of the government and the racial prejudice of the mainstream which has reduced these proud, dignified, wonderful human beings to such a sorry state where they are given to alcoholism, crime, dejection and suicides. Though the Aboriginals comprise approximately 3% of the general Australian population according to the 2011 census, yet their presence in jails is as high as 16-22%, largely due to the apathy of the government, executive, police, and even some sections of the judiciary and the media.

For Mum Shirl serving suffering humanity is religion and she wonders at the hypocrisy of the whites in the name of religion. Mum Shirl was not a regular at Church but rightly says,

> But I knew God would understand what I was about. I felt I was living his Commandments, and that he would bless me, and His Commandments were in line with the ideas that my grandfather had also given to me. It is not the Catholic religion that is out of plumb with Aboriginal religion, it is the way Catholics practice their religion, or don't practice it. That is what chases so many blacks away from the Catholic Church. They can't get used to these people who preach one thing and yet do another as soon as they walk out of the Church. (68)

Even though Mum Shirl had become a celebrity and had the rare privilege to be invited by the Prime Minister to tea, to a dinner in the honour of Queen Elizabeth, and was awarded the highest medal M. B. E, she never lost sight of basic human values and her concern for the poor and deprived. Once Mum Shirl was a guest of the famous actor, Neil Diamond, in America. It would have been a dream come true for many but Mum Shirl felt out of place with the ostentatious display of wealth, indulgence in luxury at the cost of physical fitness, and at the rich being out of sync with nature and godliness. She observes,

> Apparently these rich people who stay at places like this don't like to be reminded of the poor or ugly things, so everybody has to pretend that they don't exist . . . . I was glad to leave Las Vegas. It was a strange place to me, with people who didn't know night from day, getting up when the sun was going down and having their breakfast then, and going into the Casinos and winning or losing so much money. (96)

Mum Shirl was surprised and saddened to see people like her host, Neil Diamond, intoxicated in the artificial and make-believe world and totally oblivious to the happenings in the real world outside. For the white colonizers outward appearance of cleanliness and orderliness were very important. They universalise their belief system as it is the primary strategy of imperial control. As Ashcroft et al say,"The assumption of universalism is a fundamental feature of the construction of colonial power because the 'universal' features of humanity are the characteristics of those who occupy the position of political dominance. It is these people who are 'human', who have a legitimate history, who live in the 'world.'"(70).

There was no spontaneity or ease in the colonizing settlers even in their relations with other human beings. They created two exclusive blocks of haves and have-nots in Australia too. Morgan's own locality was divided into two virtual segments along racial and

class lines. Morgan says that the very young white children were friends with her and loved to visit her house. It was only when they became adults and victims of the prejudices of their elders and the dominant white culture that they started evading her and running down the Aboriginal culture and lifestyle.

Morgan talks about her school friend, Steph, who lived in the affluent part of Manning. ". . . We took to visiting each other on weekends. I was fascinated by Steph's family, they were neat and tidy. I loved Steph's bedroom . . . Surprisingly, Steph was equally fascinated by my home. She loved the free and easy atmosphere, and the tall stories and jokes" (84). Had the two civilizations mingled and borrowed traditions and customs from each other, a new culture rich in spirituality and material progress could have emerged. However, due to the racial chauvinism of the colonizers they despised the Aboriginals and their culture as inferior and looked at every black person with disdain. Nan speaks of the humiliating treatment she got from the whites all her life, "People looked at you funny 'cause you were black. I kept my eyes down . . . they treat you like dirt. You see, in those days, we were owned, like a cow or a horse. I even heard some people say we not the same as whites. That's not true, we all God's children" (328).

The European colonizers were completely oblivious to the spiritual side of life and constantly hankered after the material. Nan rightly says, "Blackfellas know all 'bout spirits. We brought up with them. That's where the white man's stupid. He only believes what he can see. He needs to get educated. He's only livin' half a life" (336). Similar views are espoused by Nan's brother, Arthur, when he says, "Those Aborigines in the desert, they don't want to live like the white man, owin' this and owin' that. They just want to live their life free . . . They don't kill unless they hungry, the white man's the one who kills for sport. Aah, there's so much they don't understand" (209).

Olga Gostin and Alwin Chong differentiate between the two world views. In respect of the indigenes they say, "The Aboriginal world view is essentially inclusive or holistic. Humans and all species

of human endeavour, as well as nature and all natural phenomena, including animals and plants in all their diversity, are seen as equal manifestations of timeless spiritual or cosmic order" (147). In reference to the European worldview, they say,

> The European quest for knowledge . . . is essentially an individual search driven by specialist interests backed by open access to the accumulated knowledge of past generations stored in written form. The cosmic order has itself been secularised and the quest is to establish verifiable facts and theories in an atmosphere of detached critical analysis and intellectual debate. (148)

These differences in culture and experiences leave an imprint on both the form and content of the literary artefacts of the two civilizations as Penny Van Toorn says,

> . . Aboriginal autobiographies tend to be less introspective. They often move quickly from event to event in a transparent, perfunctory prose, reminding us perhaps that introspectivity is a luxury enjoyed primarily by leisured elites who assume their thoughts and feelings are important and unique. In the Western tradition, the past is often pictured as far away, elusive and elaborately meditated, whereas in Aboriginal autobiographies certain past experiences are so painfully present and immediate that it is extremely stressful for the writer to put their memories into words. (36)

Through their own stories and that of their ancestors, Sally Morgan and Mum Shirl testify to the fact that the Aboriginals had their own unique culture with hallmarks of spirituality, kinship, sharing and reverence for everything created by God--animate or inanimate, which continues even today to a large extent in spite of the onslaught of colonization earlier and later the unleashing of

industrialization, materialism and individualism by the white political masters.

The contrast between the Aboriginals' and the colonizers' culture and its political implications, as illustrated in these life-narratives, can be best summed up in a poem by another Aboriginal, Dianna Rose Yoka, "Who is Stone-Age?":

I was talking to a friend
The other fine day
I commented on many things
And then she had her say.

'Aboriginal people
Are coming out of stone age'
She finally said to me.
'Why is it that
White man's view is always
Taken as truth!
Who are they to label?'

Two hundred years ago
We had an affluent society
We knew our place
In the scheme of things.
And then 'they' came to this fair land
To rape, pillage and plunder.
They tore the sacred land apart
and made the stock exchange instead
Their sacred site and wonder.

They used only the intellect
And in their rapacious greed
They pitted science against religion.

They change the laws every year
For some new fancy, whim.

So who is stone age now, my friend.
Is it white man who is prehistoric?
He cannot find the answers yet
Because he only lives in
Rhetoric. (191)

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Salvaging Culture and Community:

Uncertain Reclamation in Kim Scott's *True Country*

Virender Pal

Aboriginal or native literature around the world is usually written with a specific purpose. Most of the Aboriginal writers write to present their point of view and to tell the truth about their societies which have been misrepresented by the Europeans for centuries. In fact, defending their societies against misrepresentation and shattering the negative stereotypes of their people remains the main driving force for the native writers. This is what noted Aboriginal writer Alexis Wright says:

> I do not like the way we are being treated by successive governments, or the way our histories have been smudged, distorted, hidden, or written for us. I want the truth to be told, our truths, so first and foremost, I hold my pen for the suffering in our communities. (qtd. in Heiss 12)

The stories are written not for earning money or to entertain the readers, rather they are written to inform the readers, to alter their thinking about the native communities. The once described as savage and barbarian communities are presented in their true form in the native literature. A prominent Canadian author of mixed descent, Lee Maracle, argues that as a "listener/ reader you become … the architect of great social transformation" (3).

Kim Scott is an Australian author of mixed descent. He was born to a white mother and an Aboriginal father. He was the first Aboriginal author to win Miles Franklin Award in 2000 for his second novel *Benang*. The present paper is a study of Scott's first novel *True Country*. The similarities between Scott and Billy, the protagonist of the novel, make clear that the novelist has taken a lot of raw material from his own life. Billy, like Scott, is white in colour but Aboriginal at

heart. Scott discovered his Aboriginal roots while teaching to a native community in Western Australia, Billy also discovers his roots and culture while teaching to a native community at Karnama. The non-fictional aspect of the novel makes clear that the attraction of the Aborigines of mixed descent for their ancestral culture is real. People like Billy exist in reality who want to reclaim their culture.

Kim Scott's novel *True Country* tells about the transformation and absorption of Billy, a young school teacher in the Aboriginal community. Billy is part Aboriginal who traces his aboriginality back to his grandmother. Billy can pass on as a young white male because of his fair complexion and features and can enjoy the racially superior position enjoyed by the whites in Australian society. However, Scott shows Billy coming to the remote community of Karnama leaving behind all the luxuries offered by a city life.

The novel narrates the story of a community that has been deracinated and de-cultured by the assimilationist policies of the white Australian government. Billy who is culturally and socially a white man comes to Karnama and then returns to Aboriginality. In fact, the beginning and the end of the novel are very important in this case. The novel begins with the description of a basketball game:

> Many kids and young people, dark ones, were over near the store and basketball court. One tall boy leapt into the air, hovered, and tossed a basketball toward the backboard. The orange ball gently arced and descended through the hoop without touching it. (17)

Basketball is essentially a white man's game and the description of the game makes it clear that the young Aborigines enjoy the game immensely. Although the game of basketball may not be a strong cultural symbol, as the novel proceeds it becomes clear that Western games have taken a toll on Aboriginal cultural practices. Dances that used to "mend the spirit" (West 37) and were an integral part of Aboriginal life style are now arranged for community visitors and are now performed only for money:

> They show that film somewhere, good for them, eh? May be make some money, and laugh at us. We stupid blackfellas dance for them. The other principal, last year, he pay us. What's wrong with this fella, eh? (74)

Dance in Aboriginal culture is not like European dancing that aims at physical fitness; in the native culture, dance is more of an ancestral worship and is done for spiritual well-being but the dancers of Karnama have forgotten the spiritual importance of dance. Dance for Aborigines was an important part of *tjukurpa,* the myths and rituals that were integral parts of rich cultural life of the Aborigines (Petchkovsky 346).

How the Aborigines are biologically or genetically programmed to respond to their culture is evident from Billy's response. His first association with the Aboriginal community at Karnama starts with dancing:

> Laughing and teasing, the men easily persuaded me to join the last of the dances. All safe one these, nothing Samson told me. I took off my shoes and socks. I felt ridiculously free, pounding my feet among them, seeing, across the shoulders before me, the row of plastic chairs and the pale furrowed brows sweating in the sun. (74)

Billy's feeling while dancing makes it clear that all is not lost for the Aborigines. If a person like Billy who is a stranger to Aboriginal culture can feel "ridiculously free" then the Aborigines can still redeem their culture.

There is a stark contrast between the beginning and the ending of the novel. The novel begins with the description of white man's game, but ends with the discovery of Aboriginal cultural symbols by Billy:

> On the shelves were wooden objects, carvings, engraved and ochred wood. There were tapping

> sticks, didgeridoos, spears…other things. He looked at them, held some. They were smooth and worn and fell into hand readily. (296)

Billy's transformation to being an Aborigine is complete by the end of the novel. Scott shows that Billy has developed the sensibility of an Aborigine and can feel the presence of his ancestors around him:

> At the foot of the bed, his long-dead father in work clothes. Like the photo of him leaning on the front of his grader, with his white sleeves rolled over his dark arms. Grandmother too, white hair and dark skin, tickets from the horse races are bunched in one hand, flowers in others. (199)

The ability to communicate with the deceased elders and premonition of death are the important aspects of Aboriginal sensibility and almost all the works written by Aboriginal writers mention this.

It is indeed important to note that Billy, an outsider, becomes an Aborigine in sensibility, but the people living on the mission have become too oblivious to their culture and some of them even dismiss Aboriginal cultural practices as "blackfella stuff" (90). The novel shows that the policies of the white Australian government have been successful in obliterating the cultural identity of the Aborigines. One such policy was that of 'stolen generations.' Fatima Nangimara who is introduced in the novel as a person without "any understanding of their culture" (28) is a member of stolen generations. Fatima tells about the impact of her removal from her family:

> We didn't know how to speak the language. We forgot about our language. We talk in English. I couldn't understand my mummy. I forgot all about our language. We forgot about it. (38)

Forgetting her language meant Fatima could not be trained in

her culture because language acts as a carrier of the culture. According to John J. Macionis language plays an important role in transmission of culture:

> Language not only allows communication, it ensures the continuity of culture. Language is a cultural heritage and the key to cultural transmission- the process by which one generation passes culture to the next. Just as outer bodies contain the genes of our ancestors, so our culture contains countless symbols of those who came before us. Language is the key that unlocks centuries of accumulated wisdom. (64)

Stopping of transmission of culture can have serious repercussions on the people and the impact of loss of culture is clearly visible on the Aboriginal community living at Karnama. According to sociologists: "culture can be an enormously stabilizing force for a society and it can provide a sense of continuity" (Kendall 82). But the sense of continuity is not present among the Aborigines at Karnama. The whole structure, not just the exterior, but the foundations as well are crumbling down and the Aborigines have developed the habits that were stranger to them and their ancestors. One of the biggest problems in the society is that of alcohol consumption:

> We don't like grog, really. It's no good for us. We don't like it. Them young ones, they get drunk, they want to fight. They get a car and think they're like in a video. One day someone get killed' a kid may be. They drunk they hit wives, fight with other blokes, go after their rumbud. They don't listen. (143)

According to the studies, "many people begin drinking to enhance positive emotions and reduce negative ones, and alcohol does reliably lower anxiety and depression and improve self-esteem at least temporarily" (Taylor 136). The Aborigines drink at Karnama to improve their self-esteem and to develop a sense of forgetfulness for what happened to their society. The awareness of annihilation of

their culture is acute among the elders:

> Tell us, we learned anything from white man yet? Nowadays, people make a mistake. May be tired. Little by little Aborigine going down. Drinking and dying. Making circles, littler and more little. We don't like looking and seeing it that way, we want to fly up again.
>
> They can't forget about our roots, and they can't leave behind and go to the whiteman's roots. That no good. (144)

It must be mentioned here that prior to the arrival of the whites in Australia, the Aborigines did not have any form of government recognised by the so-called civilized world. In addition to that the Aborigines did not have any formal civilizing institutions like schools and colleges. They stayed civilized without the pressure from any outside agency like police or military. They had a form of government that has been called "gerontocracy" (Briscoe 151). The elders in the community were responsible for maintenance of law and vices like domestic violence, incest and greed were unknown to the society, but the arrival of the whites altered the structure of the society and the authority of the elders was undermined and white law replaced the community law, but the justice eluded the Aborigines. The whites were allowed to go scot free after brutally murdering the Aborigines. A sense of "unhappiness, defeat, and festering, helpless anger" (241) seeps in the community after the murder of Franny. The elders know the reason behind this mess:

> We Aboriginal people. Look at us. We're low down, we down there in the dark, and nobody. One time it was different, for us and this land. We had ones that could fix things, and could fly, disappear, punish.
>
> We feel we must find our traditional homeland, go home, go back and try to forget. Or no? Maybe we

> should try to find answers to these problems. We are trying so hard for the past and hopes to return. Maybe some of that past and our power. (242)

The distinguishing features of Aboriginal culture are the centrality of family and the extended kinship system. An Aboriginal family generally included all the members of the tribe and generally all the women who were the members of the groups were considered "*ngunyjtu*(mother)" and such principles also pertained to father; grandfather/ grandmother, son/daughter relationships, and so on (Petchkovsky and Roque 363). Thus the Aborigines grew up in a culturally and socially rich environment, but the children who were brought up as the members of stolen generations did not have the opportunity to do so. In fact, nobody was allowed to live alone in Aboriginal culture so the psycho-somatic diseases like depression and anxiety were not known among them. Moreover, the younger ones were carefully nurtured by the elders and the youngsters so trained under the Aborigines were inherently civilized who did not need any police and military to keep their civilized behaviour intact.

The mainstream literature is full of negative images of the Aborigines. In the literatures written by the whites, Aborigines are responsible for all the problems. The white Australian government and its policies are not held responsible for anything. These negative constructions about Aboriginal culture have immensely affected the psychology of the Aborigines. The modern research in psychology makes it clear that man's personality is not a prison of his thoughts only, rather it is also affected by what is prevailing in the environment around him:

> The dynamics of personality is to a large extent governed by the necessity for gratifying one's needs by means of transactions with objects in the external world. The surrounding environment provides the hungry organism with the food, thirsty with water. In addition to its role as the source of supplies, the external world plays another part in shaping the

> destiny of personality. The environment contains regions of security and of danger and insecurity; it can threaten as well as satisfy. The environment has the power to produce pain and increase tension as well as to bring pleasure and reduce tension. It disturbs as well as comforts. (Hall and Lindzey 47)

The Aborigines in the novel are treated by the whites as if they are in "a zoo" (165). The images that are perpetrated by the whites are also negative: "The Aborigines just sit at home, because there's no work for them, and play cards" (30). Moreover, the whites have formed the images of the Aborigines that they are not good at work:

> 'they're none of them real top workers. Can't rely on any of them really. Rather have a good time, and be with their mates, fishing, playing cards and talking'. (31)

The important question is if all these images are true. Scott is candid about the problems faced by the community: alcoholism, domestic violence and petrol sniffing, etc. Scott also makes it clear that nobody is immune to these problems. For example Deslie is an Aborigine who was a "proper well-trained blackfella" (200). But he also suffers from problems and sniffs petrol:

> Deslie was better now. But every now and then, no! he dipped a rag in the lawnmower tank may be. Petrol ate up his insides, his brain, everything. Burned the nostrils, moved astringently, forcing into fissures and pushing hollows and enclosures within him that could never be filled. Next day at school he knew nothing, not even numbers, and was quiet. The others might whisper about him. His cousin gave him a proper hiding,too, after his sniffing. (204)

What is the reason behind this self-destructive behaviour of Deslie. The reasons can be found in their confinement to one limited

geographical area of Karnama. The Aborigines were a hunter-gatherer community who used to move to another place after exhausting resources at one place. In fact, it has been observed all over the world that whenever a hunter-gatherer community is incarcerated on to reserves, their mental problems multiply. A lot of research has been done among a rural Brazilian tribe, the Guarani Indians, and the consequences of their displacement, as stated below, equally explain the problems and predicaments of the Aborigines in Australia due to their displacement from their land:

> Their suicide rate in 1995 was 160 per 100,000 markedly higher than it was a year earlier and dramatically higher than the U.S. rate of about 12 per 100,000. The reason for this high suicide rate may be found in a sudden change in their living conditions. The Guarani have recently lost most of their ancestral lands to industrialization. Communities that used to live by hunting and fishing are now crowded on to reservations too small to support that way of life. Nearby cities tempt the Guarani with consumer goods that they desire and yet can ill afford on their low wages. Because hunting, farming and family life have religious signification, their demise has significantly affected religious life. Life has lost its meaning for many of the Guarani. (qtd. in Davison and Neale 274)

Kim Scott does not shy away from discussing the problems that are plaguing the Aboriginal communities, but he also makes it clear that white man's institutions have exaggerated those problems. Official records and reports do mention the problems faced by the Aboriginal community, but they do not talk about the root cause of these problems. The root lies in the white man's policies of assimilation and dispossession of the Aborigines through the concept of "*terra nullis"*, without providing them the means for basic sustenance .For example, the Aborigines living at Karnama do not have even basic things like utensils (55) and they do not have proper

houses to live in (34). The accounts that are written about the Aborigines are meant to malign their societies and are often outcome of racist bias against the Aborigines. In *Shadow Child*, for example, the white foster mother of the Aboriginal children accuses a four year old girl of indulging in masturbation (12). In *True Country* too, Aborigines are accused of the same thing:

> In 1965 an indignant principal writes at length, under a single globe in a hot insect-ridden night, of an eight-year-old girl 'sexually involved with several old men in the old people's camp on the other side of the river where they stay because otherwise the mission shoot their dogs and because of their lack of dress. She apparently enjoys this pastime and many children watch their actions. (94)

Scott does not comment on the veracity of such journal entries, but his style of narration makes it clear that these entries were made by men who were alienated from their families and their wives " packed their bags repeatedly, and repeatedly wept, and threw shoes, smashed plates, spat" (93).

The story is woven around the search of Aboriginal connections of Billy. He has come to find out the truth about his Aboriginal connections in Karnama:

> Because I wanted to. I think, I wanted, I'm of … my grandmother… My great grandmother must have been Aboriginal like you, dark. My grandmother is part…. My father told me, but no one… (95)

The elders of the community know about Billy's connection to the community, but nothing is revealed to him. There is only one sentence in the novel which reveals the relation between him and Walanguh: "Your pudda-grandmother-my sister, she die, eh?" (170). This information is also not meant for Billy, it is meant for the readers. Billy never understands the statement of Walanguh. This makes clear

that the Aboriginal elders are not interested in revealing the relations to Billy, rather they want to initiate him into Aboriginality and wake him upto Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal sensibility. There has to be somebody who is to be initiated into culture to save the community and Billy seems to be the person marked for the purpose. The reason behind choosing Billy is clear. He is chosen because he can be taken seriously by the younger Aborigines. His religious beliefs undergo a change at the mission under the influence of Aboriginal culture:

> I think God is changing. He must to stay alive in these people. Perhaps we need to think Him as a great spirit, a creator spirit, an artist, a creative force behind the world, living in the world and giving ceremony and the land. What am I saying? (259)

The description here is not of the Christian God, but it is the description of the Great Spirit of Dreaming.

The problem of transmission of culture figures in many Aboriginal novels. Another novel that talks about transmission of culture is Alexi Wright's *Carpentaria*. There is a striking similarity between the novels as Elias in *Carpentaria* achieves his goal only after his death. When Normal goes for the burial of Elias in the sea, he is led by the sea to an island where he finds his grandson Bala, son of his estranged Will Phantom. Thus Elias paves the way for reconciliation of father and the son. In the process, Normal also finds a student in Bala, his grandson, to preserve his knowledge of sea (*Carpentaria* 507).

Similar is the case in *True Country* where the Aborigines and the whites understand the importance of Aboriginal culture only after the death of Walanguh. The younger Aborigines have forgotten their culture. That is why Beatrice a young girl becomes afflicted with a sickness that cannot be diagnosed through white man's medical knowledge:

> And at last people told her that someone did sing

> her daughter, because she did not do proper thing after Walanguh's death. Fatima should have told her. (217)

Beatrice's condition after Walanguh's death accentuates the traditional knowledge of the Aborigines. Even the white man appreciates. A newspaper carries a report regarding the cure:

> GIRL SAVED BY BLACK RITUALS
>
> An amazing series of rituals to rid a dying black girl of a tribal curse `was carried out in one of Perth's major hospitals.The girl was believed to have been cursed by Aboriginal elders. (278)

Beatrice's cure by Samson, Fatima, Moses and others shows that the Aboriginal culture remains relevant even today and it cannot be allowed to vanish with elders. Billy learns that "there were many things they [elders] knew and understood that others did not."

The greater job that is done by Walanguh's death is initiation of Billy into Aboriginal culture. In the novel, a crocodile appears three times and for all the three times it is a life threatening force, a barrier that stands between Billy and his initiation. It is the crocodile's death that allows Billy to cross the river and visit the old camp where he has his epiphanic moment. It is interesting to note thatWalanguh claims that "old days people could make magic" and then narrates the story how "spirit of his father sitting on the top of that crocodile" (78) which killed him. He further narrates:

> Allright. Night time came. He been sleeping. And he dream. He dream he grab crocodile with a big fishing line and he walk that crocodile, he been pull him all the way to marsh and leave him there in the sun, upside down. (79)
>
> The people later found the crocodile dead with "swollen guts" (79).

The scene described by Walanguh is similar to the scene of death of crocodile observed by Billy

> There, trapped in the fishing net slung across the river was a large crocodile. The net was the one Gerrard had given Samson. Samson the ranger. The crocodile had torn the net away from one bank and wrapped it around itself again and again in a great tangle, and now was stiff, half in half out of the water, belly up, with its great jaws thrusting at the sky and its white teeth bared. (293)

How the crocodile dies remains a mystery. In fact, there are some problems faced by all the non-Aboriginal readers in comprehending the stories while reading Aboriginal literature. There are some cultural codes that can be deciphered only by the Aborigines,but one explanation that can be offered is that Walanguh's spirit kills the crocodile to pave the way for Billy's initiation. The novel testifies that the Aborigines have some powers which are supernatural,for example,Walanguh comes to know that Billy is the grandson of his sister. How he comes to know about Billy's ancestry is a mystery and even greater mystery is about how he comes to know about the death of Billy's grandmother (170).

The para-psychological powers of the Aborigines have been acknowledged by so many white researchers. In his book, *The Australian Aborigines*, A.P. Elkin testifies these powers:

> Many white people who have known their native employees well, give remarkable examples of the aborigines' powers for knowing what is happening at a distance, even hundreds of miles away. A man may be with his employer on a big stock trip, and will suddenly announce one day that his father is dead, that his wife has given birth to a child, or that there is some trouble in his own country. He is so sure of his facts that he would return at once if he could, and the

> strange thing is, as these employers ascertained later, the aborigine was quite correct; but how he could have known they do not understand, for there was no means of communication whatever, and he had been away from his people for weeks and even months. (qtd. in Rose 133)

Thus it is clear that the Aboriginal culture has some unique features which cannot be allowed to vanish from the world. The decades of de-culturation have played havoc with the culture of the Aborigines and there are only a few elders who possess these secrets, and the knowledge that had helped them in surviving the driest continent in the world. As the Aborigines move away from their culture, their powers "diminish" (Rose 141). Kim Scott tells a story but the main concern remains the preservation of Aboriginal culture. Through the story, Scott makes clear that even in the predominantly white Australia Aboriginal culture remains relevant so it must be reclaimed and preserved.

However, it is significant that the novel is open ended. The Aboriginal people "welcome" (299) Billy in their fold, but the novel finishes without any response from Billy. The writer drops subtle hints that Billy might reclaim his ancestral culture, but whether a person born and brought up in white culture can become an Aboriginal (culturally) remains uncertain.

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Re-writing of History in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*

Harsh Bhardwaj

Narratives of history are usually written by the conquerors or the dominent class and all records and data claimed as factual in history are nothing but subjective accounts framed around an incident or era. Re-writing history is a literary device to present the other side of the truth that lays buried throughout a period. It is an attempt to restore dignity and justice to the historically marginalized and misrepresented groups. This paper endeavours to study how Peter Carey, an Australian writer, re-writes through fiction the history of a group branded as outlaws in the colonial history. Outlaws comprise important elements of national identity in many advanced industrialized countries and form an important part of the 'collective memory.' The myths surrounding outlaws share common themes across the world, such as, an outlaw is a "friend of the poor, oppressed, forced into outlawry, brave, generous, courteous, does not indulge in unjustified violence, trickster, betrayed, lives on after death" (Seal 11). The overwhelmingly positive qualities associated with the myths surrounding heroic outlaws are not always based in historical fact, but "exist in most of the world's folklores, celebrated particularly in song and narrative" (Seal 2).

Memory is a collective myth shared by a group, which is often found in postcolonial writings. These memories are not personal, but inherited through storytelling with its concomitant distortion of detail. Memory and history are constructions of the past, though the factual elements of mythological memory are often difficult to identify. These myths by glorification of the past, contribute to linking of the past and the present in the formulation of a contemporary stance, and can have a therapeutic effect on historical identity. Hayden White suggests that there is a tension between what he defines as the two aspects of memory, 'traditionalized memory' which is "information about, and accounts of the past that are latently

stored in its corpus of traditional lore" and 'rationalized memory' which is about "the community's past"- written and accessible (53). The present research examines how this memory of the past rather than written history is used in fiction by the writer to fill in the big ellipses, often misunderstood for a very long period of time.

Australian history and culture have certain unique elements as any other country; some of its portions are prominently pronounced while others lay ignored. One of the indistinct chapters in its history is that of the bushrangers who have been branded as the outlaws in the Australian society. A novel called *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey is an attempt to rewrite the story of a local hero, Ned Kelly, who was of Irish descent but was assimilated in the local community of Bushrangers[1]. He was branded a criminal by the white rulers in history. But Carey presents his story from the other side, how a local hero who was venerated in the local tales as a Robin Hood[2], got labelled as a social nuisance by the British historians. With the following lines from William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*: "The past isn't dead. It isn't even the past," Peter Carey underlines the essential purpose of his re-working the past in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. The shadow of Ned Kelly, in full metal jacket at that last showdown at Glenrowan (Victoria), looms large in Australian folklore. His legacy of great (white) Aussie tradition of rebelling against unfair rule, particularly of the English variety has now toned down to a general irreverence for authority, pomp and ceremony (McQuilton 27). Kelly still cuts a divisive figure in his homeland -- as an icon to many, and embarrassment to others -- so the choice of title is something of a gauntlet, challenging the presumptions of both the camps perhaps, but there can be no denial that the author's empathy lies with the doomed bushranger. Carey sets out to put flesh on the bones of the legend, humanizing the Wild Colonial Boy and unearthing the man beneath the myth (McQuilton 35).

True History of the Kelly Gang re-creates the life story of Australia's most famous outlaw, Ned Kelly, infamous in history as

thief, bank robber, and murderer. He was hanged in Melbourne in 1880 at the age of twenty-five. Carey's title recalls J. J. Kenneally's *Inner History of the Kelly Gang*, first published in 1929, which is one of the countless historical narratives devoted to the Kelly gang legend. David Coad states that, "It is intentionally ironic that Carey's text, like Kenneally's primer, purports to be 'true history,' as if novelistic discourse could, or should, reconstitute history as truth. To add to the deception of the title, only a small section of the novel at the end is in fact about the Kelly gang. The center of focus here is the leader of the pack, Ned himself" (2).

The story of the novel has been packed in thirteen parcels accompanied by an end-piece. Each parcel is minutely described bibliographically as if it were a historical document from the hand of Ned Kelly himself. The writer uses epistolary form as narrative to retell the legend of Ned Kelly by inventing a first person narrative addressed to Ned's daughter. The letters by the outlaw, have been allegedly written to explain himself to the authorities, the general public and, most poignantly of all, to the daughter he will never know. In the narrative, Ned's childhood unfolds as endless struggle, which is often lightened by some odd comic moments, and has been susceptible to a range of spineless adults with either too little power or too much, especially the males, who whether family or police, instead of looking after their young, seem only to make things worse. The living conditions of his times have been meddled by punitive law and order, accompanied by infertile land, and poverty. In Ned's struggle for survival, Ned's skirmishes with the law begin at a very young age, with the stealing of a calf at the age of 12. His mother Ellen also plays a pivotal, turbulent role in her son's destiny, with her own family's history of being on the wrong side of the law. Her desperate, single-handed efforts to raise her ever growing family, and the stream of suitors who use and abandon her, draw Ned into an ambiguous position of helpmate and father figure at a small age. She is one of the first people to betray him, selling him unexpectedly to her ex-suitor, a bushranger named Harry Power, who makes an unwilling accomplice of young Ned, earning him his first substantial

(and unjustified) reputation with the police.

Ultimately, in spite of two contented years of working and living quietly at the Killawarra sawmill (away from his family) and his love affair with the beautiful Mary Hearn which begets his daughter, it is gets certain that there can be no happy ending to the tale. A sense of foreboding gathers momentum as events overtake Ned. He remains almost to the end a reluctant outlaw. He has faith in writing to a politician as a solution, makes numerous foiled attempts to clear his name, even to print his own words, but the police's murderous intent towards the gang, not to mention the unjust incarceration of his mother, eventually leaves him little choice. This heartbreaking tale depicts the making of a criminal by the society and circumstances of his time.

Carey and Kelly (cerebral novelist and homespun outlaw) seem an unlikely combination in many ways, but what the author and his subject most obviously share is their nationality. Carey's novel follows a trend which has been described as the "Empire writes back" in which postcolonial novelists, for instance, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, Jean Rhys and Salman Rushdie use the novel (an English art form originally) to tell their stories from a different perspective. Paula Shields remarks, "*True History of the Kelly Gang* is also one strand of the story of Irish emigration. Kelly, of Tipperary lineage, describes the social status of the Irish in nineteenth century Australia as 'a notch beneath the cattle', light years away from the trendy export we've become" (26).

Peter Carey gives Ned Kelley a chance to defend himself which he could never get under the tyrannous British rule. He makes the narrative in epistolary form, so as to enable the protagonist to clarify his every action from a contextual overview. The rendition of the tale is so realistic that Andreas Gaile describes the text as a "near-perfect illusion that almost manages to dupe the reader" (215). Paul Eggert lauds Carey for making this illusion of reality so convincing that some readers may "believe that Carey's work is a real autobiography, printed from a manuscript actually written by Ned

Kelly" (123). The historical authentication is emphasized throughout the narrative. Kelly's narrative is preluded with an "undated, unsigned account" of the shooting at Glenrowan on June 28th 1880. An anonymous voice, presumably that of Thomas Curnow, a school teacher who betrays Kelly causes his arrest , then assures the reader that the parcels that make up the text are written in "Ned Kelly's distinctive hand" (2). This voice is followed by the objective voice of an archivist introducing and describing the first parcel, before Kelly's own narrative voice commences. These techniques allow the novel to be framed in the historical context, and the reader only enters the text proper after moving through various voices that all validate the historical authenticity of the text (Woodcock 145). The title of the novel indicates the problematic character of historical truth. Bruce Woodcock emphasizes that historically a "true history" was considered a reliable chronicle, distinct from fable or myth. Despite their name however, true histories tend to be a mixture of fact and fiction, and were often written in epistolary and picaresque styles (Woodcock 145). Woodcock has noted the presence of such styles in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, which, although fictional, asserts its own factual reliability.

The novel is primarily composed of thirteen parcels of letters, these letters are interposed with newspaper cuttings; some annotated by the mother of Kelly's child, and some notes from archivists and anonymous editorial background. All these contrive to make the narrative as authentic as possible. The title of the novel points to the tension between historical truth and subjectivity. Although the novel is titled *True History*, it is actually a fictional account of Ned Kelly's story, presented as truth in the form of Ned's personal history. The title's "true" and "history" sit uneasily alongside each other, their proximity drawing attention to the subjectivity of all historical discourse (Fletcher 198). Carolyn Bliss makes sense of the title by seeing it as referring to Ned's true history and illustrative of his "sad and ultimately futile attempt to find the truth" (291). The inseparability of personal truth and subjectivity is further established with Ned's opening sentence:

> I lost my father at twelve yrs. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false (2).

In these lines, the truth is explicitly sanctified by Ned by invoking the divine, but in the same vein Carey abandons historical fact with the introduction of Kelly's fictional daughter.

"The past is not dead…," implies that past lingers on in various forms; individually in individual's memories, or collectively in the form of myth. Memory, both individual and collective, is central to this novel. It emphasizes the unreliable aspects of the process of remembering: fabrication, misunderstanding, nostalgia and selectiveness (Huggan 143-44). The novel is a fictionalized and highly personalized account that revisits a problematic chapter of Australia's colonial history. Carey's reassessment of an Australian nationalist hero came at a time when the nation's past was brought into the public consciousness and questioned through cultural debates such as the 'History Wars' and 'Stolen Generations.' Graham Huggan argues that the socio-political reassessment of the past in turn necessitated a reassessment of the national icon, Ned Kelly.

In this novel, Kelly relies upon Irish cultural memory to assert his Irish identity. Carolyn Bliss is of the opinion that the cultural memory is not formed from Kelly's own experience, but is the result of inherited cultural memory. His actions and attitudes are formulated by his identification with Irish tradition in the backdrop of colonial rule in Australia. Carey manages to problematize this cultural memory in colonial Australia. Kelly symbolizes this memory, which is usually nostalgic, but it often understated the oppressive moods of those times. Carey's deconstruction of Kelly's Irish identity, with its emphasis on misunderstood aspects of Irishness, mirrors misunderstandings and omissions in the construction of Australian cultural identity. Although Kelly in *True History* contains features of the mythologized Kelly of Australian cultural identity, he is a more

complicated representation, exhibiting additional imagined facets to his character, such as his romance with a fictional woman and existence of a daughter (Seal 65). This fictionalization provides ample scope to create a "truth" different from the already established myth around Kelly gang. This enables one to delve into the intricacies of Kelly's life which explain Carey's truth, hence deconstructing the cultural truth which either valorizes or demeans Kelly and conceals the etiology underlying the past. The minute details of the cultural past are made apparent in Kelly's internal dialogues of memories, stories and myths. It is even revealed that the natives regarded the Irish as colonial as any other European on the basis of their race and origin.

The Irish folktales that appear throughout the novel form another example of Irish cultural memory, and are used by Ned Kelly to give meaning to his self and life. The novel has some references to the characters of Irish folklore as Cuchulainn, St. Brigid and the Banshee (99). Andreas Gaile suggests that the Irish folklore in the novel provides a much lacking "national mythology" for the "patchwork of transported cultures" in Australia. These folktales have been deployed in the novel with the intention to foreground the way in which narratives are used, misused and misunderstood in order to create other narratives. *True History of the Kelly Gang* revisits the Kelly myth and revaluates Ned Kelly as national icon by historicizing as well as demythologizing him. For Carey, the Kelly story is in part an answer to the question posed by the notion of the 'convict seed': "Can you have a decent society when you begin with these people?" Ned proves that he is 'not caught up in this deterministic notion at all' and by doing so shows 'he is one among us in a way,' redeemed and absolved from the malicious convict stains. Carey employs devices of metafiction and intertextuality to validate his fictional account as truth (Gaile 38-39).

In *True History*, Kelly's status as a principled and courageous rebel is, as Carey realizes, one reason why 'Australians still respond to him so passionately'; he did not allow himself to be subjugated by the oppressive forces of his time. Rather he faced all odd

circumstances heroically and inspired some people with his courage and graciousness. He instilled a spirit of hope among his men to never view their history pessimistically. Kelly embodies what Eric Hobsbawm calls 'social bandit,' one of the 'bandit-heroes' who reflect a longing for 'freedom, heroism and the dream of justice' amongst the poor and embody their yearning for 'the fellowship of free and equal men, the invulnerability to authority, and the championship of the weak, oppressed and cheated' (13). He is an altruistic criminal and at the same time raises questions about "who" imposes the label of "criminal" on "whom." Carey's account of Ned in this novel is a reply to the authorized versions of the history of the British Empire and of the ruling class of the penal colony of Australia.

The novel elucidates Ned Kelly's versatility as how Carey's departure from the traditional Kelly myth creates a new myth, which is perhaps better suited to a contemporary Australia that is moving towards more inclusive modes of identification. Carey's refiguring of Kelly illustrates that the reason one continues to invest in Kelly is that he can successfully be adapted to reflect what an Australian wishes to see in himself. Just as Kelly can reflect a hyper-masculinity and a conservative, insular nationalism, he can also reflect the opposite; progressive gender and transnational identities (Fletcher 192). The best example of Kelly's standing among contemporary Australians could be seen in the spectacular inaugural ceremony of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, where a group of armoured Kelly figures paraded waving mock firearms spouting streams of sparks (Huggan 145). This asserts the fact how a long dead outlaw still holds a symbolic importance even in the contemporary scenario.

These outlaws in postcolonial terms can be considered as "subalterns[3]" as they were not only oppressed but perennially silenced. The case of these outlaws is different from other examples of the marginalized as the blacks, the *dalits* of India, etc. The latter had their sighs of oppression marked in history, which suggests that in spite of partial treatment by the colonial history, they were recognized as the oppressed. While the Australian outlaws had been

misrepresented as anti-social bandits who harmed rather than who were harmed. Even their generations had been oblivious of their truth and the past. The case of these outlaws becomes acute in the sense that no historian tried to tell their side of the story unlike the blacks and the *dalits*.

Michel Foucault argues that every entity in the society is a discursive formation. In the present novel, it is implied that the colonial history has labelled all the practices and people with dissenting voice or a potent challenge to their socio-political interests as abnormal or outlawed. Foucault states that: "...if you are not like everybody else, then you are abnormal, if you are abnormal, then you are sick. These three categories, not being like everybody else, not being normal and being sick are in fact very different but have been reduced to the same thing" (78). It is also natural why would colonial historians present the Other's truth that is detrimental to their own interests. So, if those outlaws had no means to tell their side of the story, it becomes the duty of the contemporary intellectuals like Peter Carey to rectify the historical (written) wrongs.

Re-writing history also focusses on "who" speaks and it serves as the basic foundation of reframing the narrative. In case of Ned Kelly, it is the British who have labelled him as an outlaw, while for the natives he is a hero who fought for social justice. The local narrative and a counter stance against the colonizer's narrative combine as tools in re-writing history. A parallel can be drawn with the case of revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh and Ernesto Che Guevara, who were held as terrorists in colonial writings of history; it was only in the counter narrative or in rewriting history that established these people as revolutionaries fighting for human justice. But in Australia, it is people of the British descent who form a dominant majority, so emphasis on tracing Kelly Gang historically was slender. Here, the role of rewriting history through fiction becomes pertinent if a marginal hero is to be introduced into the popular culture. Similar was the case with some novels such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* which provided a dynamic spark to the Civil Rights movement to abolish slavery in the

United States of America, and Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona,* that strived for the cause of the American Indians and was quite successful in restoring admiration and dignity to the civilization of the Native Indians.

Peter Carey in *True History* succeeds in re-writing history of the outlawed Bushrangers, whereby they are not portrayed as infamous dacoits but as the revoluntionaries whose truth has been manipulated through misrepresentations by the colonial historians. The narrative of the novel conveys the idea that the people who were branded as outlaws were not the people who erred, but they were the ones erred against and they fought for their dignity. Re-writing history challenges the existing narratives which are fabricated for specific ends. Carey goes back to the folklore which reveals patchy and incoherent details about the life of the protagonist, therefore the writer uses fiction to re-write history of the outlaws through Kelly Gang. Carey, through re-writing, generates sympathy in the readers as well as makes a plea for historical justice, and hence makes a hero out of an outlaw. The writer through *True History* demonstrates that re-writing history based on cultural memory helps bring out repressed story from the Other side, especially when there are no native archives to counter colonial history.

Endnotes

[1.] Bushrangers, was the term that originally referred to runaway convicts in the early years of the British settlement of Australia who used the survival skills necessary to use the Australian bush as a refuge to hide from the authorities. The term later evolved to refer to those who abandoned social rights and privileges to take up "robbery under arms" as a way of life, using the bush as their base. These bushrangers were roughly analogous to British "highwaymen" and outlaws of the American Old West, and their crimes often included robbing small-town banks or coach services.

[2.] Robin Hood is a heroic outlaw in the English folklore, and, according to legend, was a highly skilled archer and swordsman. The outlaw attained a reputation for performing humanitarian deeds, and in particular for 'robbing from the rich and giving to the poor', assisted by a group of fellow outlaws known as his 'Merry Men.'

[3.] In critical theory and post-colonialism, subaltern (coined by Antonio Gramsci) is

the social group who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Agony of the Marginal, the Other and the Migrant

Ajay Khurana

A Review of ***Dynamics of Diversity: Culture and Literature Australia and India***, Edited and Introduced by Pradeep Trikha, New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2013, pages xix + 227.

An unexpected explosion is created when two opposite currents come in contact or strike with each other, like the positive and the negative charged particles of electricity. It destroys the matter that comes under its ambit. If synthesised, the same energies emanate light, dispelling the darkness around, though here the neutral current plays an active role.

The anthology entitled *Dynamics of Diversity: Culture and Literature, Australia and India,* edited and introduced by Pradeep Trikha, presents this truth of the cultural contact through a critical analysis of literary texts of India and Australia within their respective social contexts and through a comparison of a few texts from both the countries that project similar aspects of society. There is an exploration of fictional characters in their given existential situations.

In addition to sixteen scholarly papers, it presents views of important critics and writers in one Foreword by Bill Ashcroft, another by Glen Phillips, Afterword by the eco-poet Mark-O'-Connor and two e-mail interviews, one of the novelist Brian Castro and the other of the nature-poet, John Kinsella which together make the anthology more comprehensive.

The metaphor of the positive and negative currents, and even of the neutral, is found in the multiple differences of Existence or one's identity such as, race, nationality, class, caste, age, gender, culture, migrant and religion. It can also be found in one's education, knowledge, skill and development and in nature as bio-diversity. When people with distinct identities come in contact with each other, there mostly prevails an atmosphere of anxiety and tension that is

liable to explode at a ripe moment. But pleasing surprises of it are also possible, as there is an assimilation of the *other,* enriching the *self*. The anthology, therefore, achieves a few important pointers of social dynamics that determine relationship between different groups within a society/nation and between societies/nations.

Michelle Cahill, a young budding poet and novelist from Australia, renders in her paper her experience of India, of Australia as a migrant and analyses Adiga's fiction, pointing out the social tension here and through Cunningham's novel *Bird* suggests that cultural contact can be an enriching experience. When she lived in New Delhi on a fellowship, she braved through its cold winter, the traffic jams, a variety of vendors, beggars acting dramatically, the Indian vegetarian cuisine and the specific table manners of having a light talk and taking care of the sick at the Sanskriti Kendra as she is also a doctor.

As a child of Australian migrants, she knows the agony of the migrant. She criticises her country's politics of literature; of how "the gate-keepers" of Australian consciousness, vehemently oppose and suppress others' cultural expression right in their budding stage. For instance, her own fictional project, *Riding Without Krishna,* was not approved by the Literature Board of the Australian Council in 2012. Ironically, just to prove how two different cultural experiences can be rewarding, she analysis Sophie Cunningham's *Bird,* which is set in India and Tibet. In this novel, an Australian woman comes in search of the mysterious cause of her mother's death. It offers new perspectives, images, and twists and turns of language that enrich sensibility.

Glen Philips in the paper on John Kinsella's poetry traces his growth as a poet, the development of his technique, especially his typical diction, his themes on nature *in Night Parrots and Erratum /Frame(d)* and also presents his experience of India. India is a great ancient civilisation but it became an enigma for Kinsella when he visited it and saw nothing but a hoard of Bollywood movies, madness after fashion, the poor being exploited by the organ transplant industry and transformation of its space as a great commercial site.

Joya Chakravarty's paper gives a firsthand account of a few

Indian settlers in Australia. For these people, Australia is a good country even though some Indian students were openly attacked occasionally (the sad incidents occurred in 2009 in Melbourne). Joya opines that such incidents are examples of street crime rather that an expression of racial aggression. She demands initiation of friendship from the Indians living there for a peaceful existence. We should do some patchwork on our own cultural baggage by absolving the strong emotions of "I-Me-Mine syndrome" (29). She even suggests that we Indians can do it easily as we are already a tolerant race and adjust easily anywhere. On the other hand, it gives a clear picture of the Australian spirit by documenting important facts from *The Barren Years*, which is an anthology of media articles from 1998 to 2001. It shows which Australian Prime Minister stood for a multicultural Australia and which one defended the white Australia only. In the former category comes Prime Minister Keating, especially for his reconciliation policy with the Aborigines and in the latter category stands tall Robert Menzies.

Within the context of India there are mainly three papers. Rashmi Mathur's paper juxtaposes the picaresque journeys of Balram and Ram in *The White Tiger* and *Q & A* aka *Slumdog Millionaire* respectively. It suggests that in today's India, the underdogs, underprivileged, poor and outcasts move upwards in the social ladder or towards the centre and become successful entrepreneurs and millionaires. While Balram moves upwards through fraud, cheating and murder, Ram progresses overnight through experience and memory of his marginal past life. In this movement, there is dismantling of the old India and the simultaneous creation of a new one: "Ancient Indian philosophy advocating spiritualism, asceticism, nirvana, renunciation, all seems to be becoming redundant in the light of rapid changes being ushered in by Materialism and Consumerism" (144).

Rashmi Bhatnagar's brief paper projects the positive view through a novel of Shashi Tharoor that India's diversity is its great advantage, for diversity is the only way through which totality of the human species can be expressed. To him "India is a thali" in which different dishes "complement each other in making the meal a

satisfying repast" (115).

Neelam Dasgupta's paper on Manju kapoor's *The Immigrant* presents Nina's arrival in Canada as an immigrant and eventually accepting it as her home. For her diversity is the rare opportunity whereby an individual in different circumstances can "reinvent" (202) oneself and achieve a globalised, hybrid identity.

On Australian society there are five papers. Atiqa Kelsy supports Fanon's view that "cultural resistance" is the basic creative spirit of the postcolonial era. In Australia it is carried on by the Aboriginal writer with the aim to recreate the past that has been lost and erased, thereby reclaiming the fundamental indigenous identity of the Aborigines. She founds her argument on Sally Morgan's *My Place* and then builds it on the novels of Kate Granville.

In the same vein, Nalini Ghandhi's paper analyses one of the most important Aboriginal texts on Australian contact history, Sally Morgan's *My Place*. It exposes the very act of colonisation, not alone of the land but of the Aboriginal soul. In the name of education, the English forcibly took away young Aboriginal children and shamelessly turned them into maids (Daisy, Morgan's grandmother) and servants (Arthur, Daisy's brother).These children were brainwashed into having an inferiority complex and hatred of their own culture and an admiration for the whites' ideals, which some actually aspired for. The conspiracy was to make them forget their black culture by turning them into whites. Any disobedience was severely dealt with aggression and violence, and that filled the Aborigines with fear and they deliberately denied or hid their true Aboriginal identity. Writers like Morgan faced a strong resistance to extract truth from their older family members.

Deepa S. P. Mathur's paper on two stories of Alf Taylor projects the view that dignity and hope for the Aborigines can be achieved at least through a humorous depiction of the contact history. In the real daily life, the Aboriginals as marginal do not relate to their nation as they cannot participate in its policy making. Yet they can feel powerful by mimicking how the whites behave with them.

The acceptance of bio-diversity is the subject of Attia Abid's study of Judith Wright's poetry. Initially the English settlers were dejected by the bush land that existed in Australia, as they expected it to be like another America. This land was "repulsive and inhospitable [....] There was something weird and grotesque not only about the place but also the denizens inhabiting it – the song-less, flightless emu, the pouchy, gawky kangaroo[...] there were no songs like Keats' 'Nightingale' or Shelly's 'Skylark' (146). However, gradually the land with its people was accepted and there began its appreciation and representation in poetry. Wright completely identifies with her land "with its bush, rainforests, dry dirty expanses, hills, rivers, flora and fauna" (152) and represents her experiences of the "down under" (148).

The contact also results in fusion of different ways of thinking on the same subject as is suggested by Minakashi Jain's evaluation of Granville's *The Idea of Perfection*. Here, an old wooden bridge, which is an Aboriginal marvel of engineering, instead of being replaced by the concrete and steel of the whites is made stronger by adding those elements to it. Thus, something heavier and stronger is achieved by the merging of two cultures.

Neeti Mahajan defines marginalization and its fatal consequences for the marginalised and the society. Power always belongs only to a few, while the rest live at the margins. The list of this 'rest' is very wide as it encompasses race, culture, religion, caste, linguist groups, community, physically handicapped, illiterate, the trans-sexuals as homosexuals and the lesbians, women, migrants, AIDS infected people, etc. These differences eventually form one's identity but also make one isolated as such a one cannot participate meaningfully in society. This causes unrest and tension in an individual/society. She discovers this struggle of a lesbian protagonist in Dattani's *Do the Needful*, of trans-sexuals in his *Seven Steps around the Fire* and gender issues in *Tara* and *Dance like a Man*. She also finds it in Patrick White's *The Twyborn Affair* in which the protagonist searches for his true identity in different times and countries.

The plight of the migrant is discussed mainly in two papers. Things from a distance appear charming, lucrative and promising but a closer experience often leads to disillusionment. Such experiences then shatter one's beliefs, opinions and aspirations by questioning one's real, everlasting, values or identity that can be challenged anywhere by anyone. Shabina's paper highlights national and transnational identities of various characters in Christopher Cyrill's *The Ganges and its Tributaries* and Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments* through a distance and through close experience in their home country, Bangladesh and adopted country, Australia. They struggle about their true national, cultural, religious identity as they hop between the native and adopted places, loving, admiring and hating both of them.

Amodini in her evaluation of Judith Kearns and Deanne McGifford's *Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women's Poetry* " brings in issue of gender and cultural diversity from a feminist point of view"(106). As a migrant these eleven poets present a uniform experience of comparisons and differences of culture and places, reminiscences, pain of the loss and the inability to be integrated on a foreign soil due to the imperial or central forces.

Thus the anthology offers a rich and diverse experience of the cultural contact. In India, it presents in the context of the lower caste, the poor people and the transgender and all of them move higher in the caste ladder or become rich and powerful. Within Australia, it not only explores the relationship between the whites and the Aborigines but also how the migrants from India and South-East Asia are treated with bias and prejudice.

Researches can easily extract the idea of important concepts of cultural theory, sprinkled in this or that paper. Particularly significant are the papers of Joya Chakravarty, Neeti Mahajan, Michelle Cahill and Attiya Abid. The social activist, the statesman, the culturist and the spiritual aspirant can also realise how a cultural contact emanates in a given situation. If its affect is negative or repulsive, it offers valid reasons for its denouncement, but if it turns out to be positive, as this anthology strongly projects, there are valid reasons why it needs to be encouraged, promoted and supported.

A Potpourri of Love

Kanwar Dinesh Singh

A Review of ***Poetry d'Amour 2014 : Love Poems*** *edited by* Liana Joy Christensen. WA Poets Inc, Western Australia, November 2013, pp. 146.

It would not be an exaggeration, if I say that love is the raison d'être of most poetry. In fact, the deep-seated emotion of love finds its best expression in poetic outpourings. Love has goaded many poets. Not just poetry, but a number of historical events, wars, monuments, epics and cenotaphs have been upshots of love in its diverse forms – including love for one's community, relations, nation and humanity at large, besides love for the beloved. Love is eternal, and so the best of love poems too survive the onslaught of time and are no less than monuments on the legendary worth of love.

Poetry d'Amour 2014 is an anthology of love poems selected and edited by Liana Joy Christensen from the work of invited poets from different parts of Australia performing at 'Poetry d'Amour 2014', and from entries in the '2014 Poetry d'Amour Love Poetry Competition'. The editor has very meticulously chosen and arranged the poems in eight thematic sections each illustrated by an apt and persuasive title, bearing a quote from one of the poems included in the section. Back to back these eight sections show interconnectivity and continuance in poems recounting the timeless saga of the variegated experience of love.

Section One, "The world offers a choice", as the caption states, contains poems that draw their metaphors and images from the vast landscape ranging from the mountain to the ocean and from the earth to its infinite horizons displaying sundry hues of love. Section Two, "The city of love", largely as it refers to Paris devoted to lovers, recounts the unsung tales of human love with equal intensity and fervour found in any city across the world regardless of its name. The poems in Section Three, "Love . . . maybe?" articulate the

convolutions, doubts, fears and vacillations of lovers in an engaging way. Section Four, "Love notes", comprises poems rich in the sweet cadence of spiritual unison of the two souls united by the eternal spirit of love. The poems in Section Five, "The crazy fingering thing", explore the physical dimension of love, which provides the lovers with a matrix for a realization of their spiritual unity in bodily embrace.

In Section Six, "The stricken heart", as the title signifies, there are poignant voices of heartache and compunction experienced by the lovers undergoing trials and tribulations of time. The poems in Section Seven, "This place spurns time", commemorate love's power to survive through all phases of time. And finally, Section Eight, "Ouroboros", adds some lighthearted poems, with funny and playful aspects of love, contrasting with the serious and deeper passions in preceding sections.

The present anthology, thus, comprises iridescent hues and shades of love expressed through a variety of forms and ways. The poems range from sheer carnal to deep emotional aspects of love, particularly in the socio-cultural backdrop of Australia. Each poem in this anthology has its distinctive persona, outlook and flavour, but for the sake of competition, some poems have been warily selected for prizes and commendations.

Shane McCauley's first-prize winning poem, "Early autumn at Bell's Rapids", depicts love's might for/in surviving on all "hardened grounds". The lover's words sustain a hope in the beloved's heart:

> You said: In spring I will
> come here to remember you and the new life
> you have flowered in my heart."
> (118)

The absence of the lover torments and agitates the beloved completely but optimism and longing keep the cauldron of love

burning within: "Long sleep lessens pain but not / desire."

Ross Jackson's second-prize winning poem, "Darling, let's say", puts together the sweet-sour recollections of the days shared by the lovers, thereby underlining the triumph of love's feeling over ageing in moving images:

Let's say you were dazzling
when like an idling taxi, smoking frost
I spotted you across Kings Park
your shoes springing diamonds from dewy grass.
You were scrambled eggs, perfect coffee.
You were cinnamon dusted let's say that.
. . .
Grey haired Darling, may we say that?
(120)

Debi Hamilton's short prose poem, "Geography", has been highly commended. It's noteworthy for the depth of emotion expressed well within economy of words:

up close your eyes are hot oh they are and tropical enough to fold my petals back and back I am the heart of a flower pressed flat against you

(2)

"Kafeneion Eros", another highly commended poem by Rosie Barter, underscores a sense of empathy, which resuscitates the love-relationship:

He searches my eyes
like a knife to an oyster shell
and when I do not open
he sighs
he shrugs
and brings a slice of sky
studded with pomegranate seeds
which he feeds to me
from a small silver fork

until my eyes are pearls
on his *komboloi*.
(32)

[Here the word "*komboloi*" translates from Greek as 'worry beads'.]

The rural, regional and remote WA award-winning poem, "Who knows the names of the clouds?" by Maree Dawes, marks the eternity of true love vis-à-vis temporality of clouds and constellations: "I know we will not be unmade / until we have seen them / in the rising sun" (4). Likewise, Gail Willems' "Stepping to me", winner of the Peel Region Award, carries an unforgettable line: "time crosses my palm with a touch of fear" (62), projecting a longing to cede to love and win over time.

Danny Gunzburg's poem, "To Claire", has been commended. The peeve of a heart pining for love is perceptible in this poem: "If you couldn't look my way / my heart would surely sink . . ." (66). The unreciprocated love has locked the lover-persona into a longing, which is perpetuated by hope, firmness and strength of mind: "Once again the hope in me would twirl . . ." (66). In another commended poem, "After an argument", Heather Taylor Johnson affirms that love is not "subject to time", it makes sense even with smaller gestures having genuine feeling and concern: "I say: even nests / with holes make lovely homes" (56). Surely the true feeling binds the lovers in an eternal bond.

Love has the power to narrow the world as well as to expand the horizons of being and becoming. Resounding with Donne's metaphysical conceit, Gunzburg's "Making love to Alex" beautifully states the elated feeling of the lovers when they are together. They find the entire world in their embrace. The ecstatic experience of carnal union is expressed through images drawn from across different continents:

I was making love to Alex
. . .

She kissed me and I went to Canada,
and Rome, and Egypt, and Sudan.
I went on fire to Korea, and Japan, and Holland.
Her lips took me to Paris, and Malaysia,
and Babylon.
(30)

Amy Crutchfield's "Reunion sonnet" is a free sonnet in fourteen lines having rhyme. It celebrates the feeling of the heart prevailing over the all-devastating might of time. The lovers reunited in their old age after a phase of separation find the light of love, shining as before in their eyes without a flicker: "We raise our glasses and I glimpse the truth / Your eyes still harbour my long exiled youth" (70). The past they had shared with each other is their "mutual treasure" they have cherished for long. The reunion of the two lovers reignites the fire that had been smouldering in their hearts for each other. During their separation they undergo a tough fire-test of love, as the poet puts it:

So time and fire have refined our young hearts,
Where there was difference we now find none.
(70)

Love has the power to transcend all divisions and boundaries of socio-cultural background, race, creed, age, gender, caste, community and region. It emboldens the lovers to accept and meet every challenge that comes in their way. It is never ready to accept defeat in any situation. Glen Phillips records this characteristic in his poem, "Tuo Straniero", how with the sway of love two strangers converge on a point and embrace each other for a lifetime, irrespective of the difference of "culture, age, gender or temperament":

. . . So we are all strangers, even
who are closest in a life embrace.
And shouldn't it be so? Love is
a reaching out so there must be always

a gulf or chasm to joyfully leap across.
(122)

And so says Jan Rebgetz in "The summer you missed me": "something happened / to both of us while I was away / and now . . . / your smile is mine" (28).

Rashida Murphy's poem, "Maybe", through concrete and compact images, agreeably recounts the lovers' felt-experience of pleasure and pain of meeting and departing, waiting and trysting, reminiscing and hoping, and promising and keeping the word:

I held my breath when we met…
You listened to me
You looked at the shards of my life…
I dreamed of cool forests where I could lie down beside you among the honeysuckle
Eat cherries. Wear scarlet. Wait for the ease you promised…
Wait for the future.
Wait for our lives.
Wait for tingling, nerve endings, senses, faith, poetry, love.
(p. 36)

Murphy's persona very eloquently shows that love is sustained by perseverance and mutual trust of the lovers.

Love occurs instinctively, unpredictably and without warning. When love happens between two souls, there is no room for pretensions and no material object is needed to substantiate it; nor is even a special day required to express one's hearty feeling, as Mark Tredinnick states in "Poem written too late for Valentine's Day; or, why I didn't send flowers":

What rose will I give you, my love, when every rose you love
Grows in your garden bed already? How will I even begin,
When love has us all surrounded . . .
(3)

Liana Joy Christensen's remark: "Writing love poetry is as instinctual as birdsong" is acceptable, but it's not the plain chirrup; the poems that appeal to heart are well-wrought and purposely refined with the use of poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, irony and paradox among several others, besides concrete imagery, illustration and structure as it's perceptible in the present collection. It is remarkable for both content and craft, besides presenting a wonderful variety of experience. The unique texture of each of these poems stirs an understanding heart. This collection is outstanding for its blend of poetry and love that complement each other, as Louise Carter asserts in the concluding five-line poem of this anthology, "Ouroboros":

> Poetry requires madness
> like anything worthwhile. And poetry
> is love when times are tough,
> while poetry in times of love
> is madness.
> (136)

The allusion to a mythological creature 'Ouroboros' in the title of the closing poem symbolises perpetuity of love. In Greek and Egyptian myths, it carries the image of a snake swallowing its own tail, which brings together the symbolism of the circle and the serpent, representing totality as well as immortality and the round of existence. The editor deserves kudos to have placed this poem quite thoughtfully at the close of the present anthology, thereby setting tone for more and more of such interesting collections in the years to come, as the experience of love is interminable and the voice of the poets is ceaseless.

Poetry d'Amour 2014 is, without doubt, a readworthy collection, especially for the genuineness of love-experience vis-à-vis contemporary tug-of-war like situations between the sexes amid sexist biases or feminist debates, sexual politicking, misogynist or misandrist tendencies and other gender issues in a man-woman relationship. These poems emblematize the power of love

overcoming all sorts of impediments and ruling out all differences, subsiding all oppositions and crises, combating all incursions of time and prevailing over narrowness of mind and exerting its infinite positive and benefic influence on the negative and destructive forces of the world. Adversity or dictates of time cannot obliterate true love a bit, as E. M. Forster puts it in *A Room with a View*: "You can transmute love, ignore it, muddle it, but you can never pull it out of you. I know by experience that the poets are right: love is eternal." The poems of this anthology clearly affirm it.

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