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Special Issue on **MULTICULTURALISM**

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Editorial Advisory Board

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From the Editor

One of the most urgent and compelling issues to be addressed in the contemporary times is to match political equality with social and cultural differences. Australian social structure resonates with the strands of indigeneity, colonialism and diasporic dispersals and India stands unique with a fusion of variegated religions, languages and cultures. As such, these two democratic States which exemplify a multicultural present and encapsulate the notion of multicultural nations too cannot escape this complexity. Multiculturalism thrives on social and cultural location of its people wherein variations are accommodated and there is a provision for equal rights for each individual irrespective of race and ethnicity. This brings into focus the minorities and the diversities within the nation state, and the questions about the universal and the specific. However, it brings forth the problem of the collective/ community rights versus individual ones. As such, while striving for a balance between numerous religious, ethnic and linguistic identities, there is a growing effort to define a common political identity in Australia.

Hence, the issue of "Inclusion in the National Political Space" of Australia is central to any debate. For this, investing in multiculturalism emerges as a core element that treasures cultural diversity and a societal structure is envisaged including in itself different communities (indigenous as well as migrant)with a common political identity while "retaining their cultural provenance". This special number of IJAS deliberates whether multiculturalism is a possibility in turbulent today, how a single political identity is possible or varied ideologies need to flourish in the form of 'salad bowl' or 'cultural mosaic'. The articles in this issue focus on the multicultural themes of Australia –its political establishment,current socio- economic placing and literary conflicts wherein multiculturalism is interpreted in terms of plurality too.Also, this issue has a poignant story from RashidaMurphy, which is so representative of living in a multicultural country.

The delay in bringing out this issue has been due to reasons beyond our control - please accept our apologies. The editor wishes to specially thank Dr. Supala Pandiarajan and Ms. Kesang Youdon for their valuable support in putting this number together. Also, the editor expresses gratitude for the financial support provided by Himachal Pradesh University for the publication of the journal.

Neelima Kanwar

Sholeh

Rashida Murphy

'I'm a Middle-Eastern woman living in a post 9/11 world,' she said. 'What do *you* think? Of course I'll do it. Think of the houris singing me to heaven. Oh wait, they'll be singing for you, I think. The question you should be asking is, can *you*do it?'

She bent her head forward and her hair fell across her face. A smelly New York morning filled with the exhaled breaths of furtive smokers sidestepping away from lycra-clad runners and office-going striders. Smoke also drifted from the side of her mouth. He couldn't help himself. He moved her hair away, fingers brushing the soft of her cheek.

'Well?' She stared at him, this time blowing smoke directly into his face. His hand stayed suspended as he stepped back. Her eyes were contact lense blue, and he wondered what colour that gorgeous hair really was. Would he know her again? Eyes were important, and hers were giving nothing away, apart from irritation.

There was only one response.

'I'm sorry,' he said.

Ismail Al Jazeera walked towards the mosque quickly. He was conscious of his open-at-the-neck white shirt, charcoal suit and brown brogues.The heat was intense and he knew she would notice the elaborate care he had taken with his appearance. She wouldn't care but she'd notice. He didn't know why this was so important.

There was nothing familiar about this place. It ought to have mattered that he was born here, that he had lived here for the better part of his not always pleasant life. When he left, he believed he would never return. It was better to be a second-class citizen in Australia than in Iran. In Australia he could smoke Winfields and drink Scotch and wear Armani. Under Perth's cheerful skies he had not anticipated becoming part of the global dispossessed. He had not once thought about the 'other half 'and the desperate lives they supposedly led. How had it come to this?

Especially here, in this destroyed city, where he would always be that*Arab*. An accident of ethnicity – never to be forgotten. Halfway across the empty square, he stopped and looked around.The courtyard in front of him smelled of dust and blood and gun smoke but the mosque rose crisp, blue and shiny-domed before him, as if the rubble of the city was no part of it at all.

She had not been raised to speak her mind so bluntly but these were unusual times. Keeping her head and voice lowered, as Baba had taught, would not help her with this man. She should not even be speaking to him. She should have left the instant she saw him, the minute he spoke. His people had specifically requested an ethnic Iranian and she had offered to go instead of Bijan who looked more Pakistani than Iranian. In these uncertain times no chances should be taken. Bijan had joked that their Middle-Eastern contacts from Australia were like deer, easily scared. But Ismail Al-Jazeera did not look like a small tan animal. He was sleeker and more predatory. She would have preferred deference, even nonchalance. She hoped she had been sufficiently indifferent. He would have to do. Even if he was Arab. When she was growing up, Abadan was full of Arabs and her brothers, especially after the refinery went up in smoke, had warned her, repeatedly. *They are not like us. They will go with Saddam. Be careful. Lock the doors after we go out.*

And now, here they were. No Baba, no Alireza to scold her, no Azitato look at her with an eyebrow raised, no one really. Just this stranger with a familiar name – Ismail – the name of her first love, that boy with thick glasses who had lived next door. Also an Arab. This Australian Ismail touched her with such authority, as if the right to see her soul through her eyes belonged to him alone.

'So you will help?' he asked, fingers lingering on her cheeks.

'Yes.'

'Your name – what does it mean? It's familiar, but I've forgotten.' His voice was low and he stood still for an instant, frowning into the past.

'It's just a name –like yours, Ismail. What does it mean? Apart from the

obvious Old Testament reference? Our next date will be in the city, unfortunately. Be careful. Don't try to find me. The details will be delivered to you before we meet.' She turned sideways and blew more smoke, narrowing her eyes and dismissing him.

The mosque was just as he remembered. Fluted columns and curvaceous hollows decorated with blue tiles and gold leaves. Curly writing descending on either side of the central column, the one he now leaned against. Layered red blue gold carpets as far as the eye can see. Qum silks, tribal Balouchis, dense Bijaris, faded Tabrizis. Ismail prided himself on knowing his carpets and there was a small fortune of them in this corner of the mosque. It was cool too, a smell of incense mixed with dust – the only reminder this was a city that had endured. And then she was there, quietly and instantly beside him. Three years after that Starbucks coffee date in New York. He had never stopped thinking of her; her smoky smell and her disdainful command to not try and find her. How she had turned her face sideways to blow smoke away from him then, long hair falling forward, eyes narrowed, strappy dress flapping briefly around her ankles. Now she wore a brown shroud, which was necessary, life saving.

'You have it?' he asked.

'No, I came all this way so you could look at my new outfit,' the voice was neutral, almost sweet, and it took him a few seconds to hear the flicker of sarcasm underneath. She rustled and withdrew a tiny USB from the folds of her garment and tapped his arm. Even though it was obvious they were the only ones there, he looked around before slipping it into the pocket of his recently purchased suit.

'Don't forget, no copies. It's important. Even if you have to smash your laptop afterwards.' The violence of the image mesmerised him but just as quickly as she had come, she was gone, an echo of rustling chador remaining.

Her Ismail had never asked anything of her. When they were children they sat together by the front steps of her forward-leaning

house and ate French fries in small bowls and pretended they were French. Even then his hair was tightly curled and he was starting that short sighted squint he would sport later as an adolescent with black-rimmed glasses. And in another year that adolescent would not be allowed to sit next to her on the steps with his bony legs and intense gaze. *Bloody Arab,* muttered her brothers. *Why does he want to hang around here? Doesn't he know bloody Saddam's thugs are destroying our city? Sholeh, come inside.*

The last time she had seen himhe was being led away by revolutionary guards. He stared straight ahead as his mother wept and said, *Brothers, you are making a mistake. Not my son. Not him. A mistake. Please let him go.* In reply, the tall guard spat and the short one laughed. No one saw Ismail again and his mother grew smaller and more tearful, rarely leaving her house. They heard her – *old Aminah,* as she became known, scrabbling around in her backyard, scratching, digging and dragging things, calling out *Ya Allah*and *Ismail*. After her brothers left the house, Sholeh would go towards the sagging fence between both their houses and call out to Aminah, softly.Then she would lowera basket with pomegranates, cheese and cucumbers into herwaiting hands every week. The old woman did not go to the markets anymore. She relied on what she could grow and her neighbours' charity. Sometimes Sholeh would bring bread and yoghurt andAminah would weep and call out. On a September morning, about six years later, Sholeh called for a long time before leaving the basket on the other side of the fence. The next morning the basket was still there, untouched, and Sholeh lost her only link with Ismail.

Al-Jazeera paused at the threshold of the mosque before adjusting his dark glasses, wishing he had thought to bring a hat, not so much for protection,but disguise. After Sholeh's swift departure he felt exposed. What if she had alerted someone? He didn't know her and there was that Arab/Iranian thing. There would always be that. Old suspicions ran deep. The USB had disappeared within a silk lined inner pocket of his idiotically priced suit but he imagined its outline visible to

everyone. He crossed the still empty square where a few decrepit chairs lay upturned near what must have been an outdoor café and tried not to hurry. How had she had come and gone so quickly? In the distance a motorcycle started up. Hearrived at the intersection of the street where his ride was waiting, laptop glowing. They nodded at each other, two bearded men in a devastated street. Ismail's companion inserted the small USB quickly into the waiting slot. Leaning back against the car they watched it load up, sucked their breath in when they saw the pictures, names, maps. It took a minute, perhaps two, and they snapped shut the laptop and transferred it to the back seat of the sagging car.

A motorcycle roared loud and close behind him. Ismail flattened his back against the crumbling wall, barely getting his feet out of the way as the bike went past and the pillion rider gave him a thumbs-up sign over his shoulder.His laptop companion dropped face down in the dirt beside him. Before he could think, Ismail's left ear felt the sting of a bullet burying itself in the old wall. He started running and thought he saw her ahead, still in the brown chador. The motorcycle stopped in front of him and this time the pillion rider did not miss. His last thought as he fell forwards into the pockmarked square – *Sholeh means flame.*

The woman's long hair obscured her face as she dragged her breath inwards deeply and blew it back out through her nostrils. Her companion held out his hand and she passed him the cigarette. They smoked silently and he lit another one before grinding their shared stub into the concrete. She raised an eyebrow and he sighed, picked up the stub and tossed it into the trashcanonly a few feet from where they stood.

'Well?' he asked.

'Well,' she replied.

The man smiled briefly. 'You're positive he delivered? You saw him leave?'

Her hesitation was so slight he missed it. She coughed and said, 'the Americans are waiting. And you're wasting my time.'

The tall man with black-rimmed glasses held out his hand. She

saw traces of a life she would never know in the raised welts and unhealed scars of that hand. She flipped her hair back and followed himinto Grand Central Station, easily matching his long strides.

Multi-Voices: Multiculturalism in Australian Poetry

Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry

The cultural diversity, that has become a defining feature of Australia, has shaped the discipline of Australian poetry as a platform for many voices from distant lands. Over years Australia has witnessed the incoming of people from around the globe. The political openness, as well as several schemes over the years, has encouraged people from across the world to move into the Australian land. It is interesting to see how the immigrants have taken pride in their Australian identity, yet have struggled to find a space to fit in. Esther Rajadurai, an Economist, pondered over the reasons that make Australia as the most successful multicultural society. Along with other reasons she suggests that Australia, as a nation "truly embraced multiculturalism following an approach of integration between the different ethnicities and cultural groups where the dominant and minority groups are expected to respect each other's cultures" (Rajadurai). The other reason is that the inflow of people adds to the economic growth of the nation. She suggests how the growth in the immigrants impacts Australia mainly in four key areas: population, fiscal impact, productivity and innovation, and immigrants' employment and labour market outcomes (Rajadurai, 2018). Thus, she justifies the interest of the Nation to invite migrants. With the inflow of migrants, there is an inflow of their culture as well. Therefore, the impact of such a movement of migrants, no matter for what reason, does not stay restricted to economic growth alone. Culturally, Australia has been reshaped with the incoming migrants who have, in a way, redefined Australian culture on the whole.

In order to define Australian culture in the contemporary period, it becomes mandatory to include the migrant's groups who may form the multiple minorities along with the Aboriginal population, who in the true sense are foundational in formulating the cultural history of

Australia. It may not be wrong to say that the indigenous culture provides the foundation to the native Australian cultural forms, while the White culture brought with it, complex histories of administration and dominance, whereas the varied and multifarious migrant populations tend to redefine the larger umbrella of Australian culture. This is visible in the ethnicities, cuisine, dance, music and art. Literature doesn't remain untouched by this. Even though the traces of early poetry in Australian English may have been by the White Australian writers, it was followed by ingenious representation in the late twentieth century by Indigenous writers, though only after a great struggle. The migrants also make their rich presence felt in the field of poetry. Since the emergence of the migrant writers is sporadic, it is, in a way, difficult to trace neat histories of the tradition of writings by migrant writers. Even then, the migrant poets have made their presence felt in Australian literary history. They have written about their re-defined identities, depicting their affiliations to their country or continent of origin, and also about embracing Australian identity at the same time. For example, one of the seminal volumes that emerged in 2013 titled *Contemporary Australian Asian Poetry*, an edited volume by Adam Aitken, Michelle Cahill and Kim Cheng Boey, indicates the prominence of the Asian Australian voices and their presence on the Australian land. Published by Puncher & Whattman, it is a compilation of diverse voices of migrants from Asia in Australia. Some of these writers have been from the second and third generations of the migrants who settled in Australia several years ago. At the same time, some other voices like Arab-Australian, Chinese-Australian, Sri-Lankan-Australian and Indian-Australian and many more are visible. Geoff Page opines that the Australian poetry of this century is far beyond what is called as a settled thing. He says:

> There is generally no agreed canon; various traditions contend or, increasingly, coexist. The quality of the best work of most of these traditions bears comparison with the best work in other English-speaking countries. Poets who represent, or identify

> with, minority groupings (e.g., feminists, Aborigines and migrants) are slowly being more widely represented in major anthologies. …The situation is lively and in flux and is likely to continue that way for some time. (27)

The paper studies the diversity of themes and contexts in two major migrant poets of entirely different origins: Omar Sakr, an Arab-Australian poet, and Michelle Cahill, an Indian Australian poet. It enumerates the multiplicity of themes in Australian poetry through their poems that seem to collide with the traditional patterns of poetry.

One of the prominent Arab Australian poets, Omar Sakr depicts the quandary of existence away from home in the East and the displacement he faces in the colliding crises of the East-West cultures. In his poems, the struggle to negotiate between home and Australia; between religion and community; between East and West is discreetly evident. Born to Lebanese and Turkish Muslim migrants in Australia, Omar Sakr, through his poetry, presents the various ways in which he feels displaced as well as othered. He stands out from other poets primarily in the treatment of dislocation of the self. His poems proclaim the prevailing Islamophobia around the world and also in Australia. Brought up in Western Sydney, Sakr's work, *These Wild Houses* (Cordite Books, 2017), was shortlisted for the Judith Wright Calanthe Award and the Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry. His work *The Lost Arabs* (University of Queensland Press, 2019), was also shortlisted for the Judith Wright Calanthe Award, and the John Bray Poetry Award, the NSW Premier's Multicultural Literary Award, and the Colin Roderick Award. He received the Edward Stanley Award for poetry, and Woollahra Digital Award for Poetry recently in 2020.Sakr's poem "The H Word" (2014) was a Feature poem with Judith Beveridge in the Cordite Poetry Review. Judith Beveridge is another contemporary award-winning poet who won the Prime Minister's Poetry prize and the Christopher Brennan and Philip Hodgins Memorial Medals for excellence in Literature. She remained a poetry editor for *Meanjin* from 2005 to 2016. She has also widely collaborated with Omar Sakr. She

introduces Sakr's poem as follows:

> There are many levels of identified pain in Omar Sakr's poem: deprivation, despair, violence, oppression, shame, mortality, the brutal inevitability of loss and disenfranchisement, yet the poem's interrogation of these issues is often playful and comic, tender and deftly alert to the way language, when used imaginatively, can suddenly make the bottom drop out of preconceived notions. ("Feature Poem with Judith Beveridge: The H Word")

It is interesting to note the way H-word is used metaphorically, engaging the sound with its function both as a poetic device where repetition and onomatope collaborate; and its engagement as a symbolic meaning. The repetition of the word 'hood' indicates something hidden, mainly the true faces as hood helps in masking or hiding. It also provides a sense of cover for a real person. Moreover, the phrases 'horror or homicide', 'or haemorrhage or hate. Not hope./Home.','home is haemorrhaging', hooded heart, heavy', 'humour when hunger', start with 'H' as indicated in the title. The word 'H' is multi-layered depicting the horror of existence in a modern world here hate and hunger have led to situations of hopelessness and despair. 'Home' is also not safe - it is a place where the children's minds are being conditioned against various communities; moreover, there are challenges to fulfil essential needs as it is not possible to see the humorous side of life if the family is struck by hunger that feeds on the stale bread, which needs to be eaten with sauce to gulp it down the throat:

> It's hard to see
> the humour when hunger eats away at your family,
> when all you have is stale bread. 'Put sauce on it,'
> my cousin would say. It goes down easier. ("The H Word")

The haemorrhaging image of home is suggestive of inactivity and paralysis. The word 'H' links the feeling of a tangible place like home to the feelings of despair and distraught that has resulted from the

political havoc outside home. Therefore, feelings of hopelessness, images of horror, homicide, haemorrhage and hate emerge from this. The H-word is also a powerful presentation of how language functions in communicating the expression. Returning to the smallest unit of the word, that is the alphabet, perhaps, the poet aims at collating the literal word with a sequential linkage of symbolic meanings and its impact. For example, the hooded heart that is heavy and everything around is distraught. The poet says, "I came to know the word Hell." The neighbours in the suburbs were feelingless and they had brought their children up, not as sensible human beings but like hoods (hood-lums). These people were like images than being actual human beings, as they lacked compassion and sympathy for anyone else. Their homes were identified as "pockmarked streets and bruised knuckles." ("Feature Poem with Judith Beveridge: The H Word") More than the horror, homicide, haemorrhage, hate or no hope, it is home that is "scariest" because it is letting the children into "open graves" ("The H Word"), and it is also a place where hunger prevails. In order to overcome all this, one needs to hide under the hood. The hoody cover is also suffocating, if the strings are tied tight. It gives a feeling of strangling the throat. Since one can't express its impact openly, one yearns for another H, that is help. But the poet is aware that it is a futile expectation; he predicts that he would die with a heavy heart under the hood, forsaking any expectation for change.

Moreover, in another poem, "Some facts about Kindness", Sakr highlights the true face of Australia vis-a-vis the political promises made by the leading politicians in power. His description of the "hungry and homeless" in Australia is a bold attack on the "Five prime ministers in five years" ("Some facts about Kindness") He points out at the miscalculated numbers of the increasing population of the homeless and hungry, contrasting the 90,000 empty houses in one of the major cities - Sydney - alone. He points out to the developing urban city and its wild wilderness that remains 'untameable', and to some national symbols that have become a matter of prestige for the Nation. He points out to

the fact that apologies for the genocides of aborigines may not be enough, as the word 'Sorry' cannot replace the act: “Sorry is a small word. Genocide is not,/attempted or otherwise.” (“Some facts about Kindness”) Racism still continues and there is no refuge for the refugee. The refugee is officially labelled as “detainee”; many of these detainees are raped, many die. The Prime Ministers remained insensitive to the dying. The poet writes:

> But the new PM says don't get “misty-eyed.”
> You have to be cruel to be kind sometimes—
> this is the lie being sold to a generation,
> this is what kindness looks like to a country
> built on it. (“Some facts about Kindness”)

Sakr, in this poem, displays the plight of a refugee, the past history of the White government and their treatment to the aboriginal populations of the country. He extends this to depict that similar treatment may have been rendered to all non-white populations. The condition of the refugees is deplorable as they are not acknowledged as refugees but are considered detainees. Therefore, behind the urbanised, 'white washed' and the 'developed', there are uncountable homeless refugees, who are now detained and are being constantly exploited. The poet is one of those. In the concluding stanza, he requests the people to be kind towards him:

> Which is why, when you see me
> standing on the street, please, I beg you:
> be anything but kind. (“Some facts about Kindness”)

Omar Sakr's expressions are bold and his poetry is political. He reasons out his style thus:

> My poetry is political because my body is political, my god is political, my love, my sex, my tongue, everything. If I take a shit it's political. The same is true of everybody, it's just that some people are better able to ignore it, to cloak themselves in a laughable (white) universalism. Bless them and the tininess they mistake for world. (Wood)

While Omar Sakr in involved, both with spirit and flesh, in his act of writing and depicting the truth of his existence in a politically charged environment around him in the present day, there is a marked difference in the poetry of another contemporary writer, Michelle Cahill, a Goan-Anglo-Indian. Unlike Sakr who posits the difficulty in his existence, Cahill is deeply rooted in her Indian tradition, but not without feeling the fissures and disjuncture of her migrant experience and also with an experience of existing with multiple religions. A Christian now, she hails from a Hindu ancestry. An editor of *Mascara Literary Review*, Cahill is a recipient of Val Vallis Award and the Hilary Mantel International Short Story Prize. Her collection of poems *Vishvarupa* involves images and figures from the ancient Hindu mythology. It is interesting to see how the Hindu Gods and Goddess are moved from their location and relocated in other cities in India and also in Sydney. Prithvi Varatharajan explains:

> In Vishvar pa Cahill reanimates figures from ancient Hindu mythology. Cahill takes Hindu gods and goddesses and drops them into suburban Sydney, and into various Indian cities. The poet adopts the voices of Hindu gods in the first person, in poems such as 'P rvat in Darlinghurst' and 'Laksmi Under Oath,' and writes them into poems in the third ('Hanuman,' 'Sita'). Vishvar pa is an experimental rendering of myth that is well known, in its conventional form, to Hindus, but would be relatively unknown to the Australian or Western reader; it contains a comprehensive glossary for this reason. The book draws on the Mah bh rataand the R m ya a – Hindu narrative epics – and philosophy and scriptures in the Vedas. Cahill's own background is Christian, as she tells me, although her ancestors were Hindus before India was colonised. As such, Vishvar pa is the poet's attempt to reconnect to a Hindu tradition that is in fact part of her heritage. ("Myth is not Merely Decorative")

Her poetry is an ingenuine mix of the modern literariness, the postcolonial revisitation of the present crisis, and past mysteriousness;

in which the past seems to be reassuring the crisis of the present. Moreover, it seems to be a quest for locating the self in the primordial myth. Cahill, now in Australia, tries to make sense of her past in an attempt to understand the 'way of life' of her ancestors who had converted to Christianity from Hinduism. It may not be wrong to suggest that she is not only in a quest of simply finding herself, but these poems are an attempt at relocating her identity in her roots. Perhaps, the diasporic experience has led her into such a query. She explains the purpose of this book as:

> This book is about retracing my own deracination or separation from a non-material episteme that would have been a way of life for my ancestors in an unrecorded history. Colonisation's ruptures are temporal and cultural; a conversion to a Christian and Westernised spirituality and social practice most impacted those of mixed ancestry. Conversions were inevitably for political reasons in the seventeenth century when the British were competing with the Portuguese and the Dutch for stakes in India. *Vishvar pa* is about traveling back through myth and memory to reconfigure a partially imagined and a partially real identity, from what is basically an identity crisis. As a poetic text it invites a documentary as well as an imaginative reading. ("Myth is not Merely Decorative' Cordite Poetry Review")

Her poem "Reading the Mah bh rata" invokes the history of India remembering important events around the colonial rule like mutiny or Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, a reference to the chaotic experience of partition and the violence around it. The poem provides a round-up of the various invasion earmarking the history of India and attempts to find a semblance through myth and history:

> …myth and history. Dramatic tension follows, for in myth the stakes are high: dharma, kama, moksha are synonyms for the same goal.
>
> History accrues its minor errors as finite incidents, whereas

> myth like love endures. So filial and divine love was tested at Kurukshetra (*Cordite Poetry Review*)

Her poems are intently evocative, innovative, creating a sense of suspense, not to miss the tension and the conflict of existence, at the same time, she seems to be gathering pieces together to assemble them into a playful image, often mythical. There is a sense of playing with the images and connecting with them through the word. This is beautifully described by Judith Beveridge in her launch speech of *Vishvarupa*as:

> Some of the most powerful poems in the volume are the poems, which either speak about or assume the voices of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses. There's " K l from Abroad" " P rvat in Darlinghurst, " Durg : a Self Portrait", "Gane a Resurrected ""Laksm Under Oath" to name some of them. Michelle has a great deal of fun with these destructive and capricious deities. She modernises them, flirts with them, taunts them, brings their faults and foibles to the fore. There's a strong sense of the erotic, of taking these figures off their pedestals and revealing their feet of clay. These are multi-toned gods and goddesses revivified in contemporary settings. (*Mascara Literary Review*)

The style of her writing is prosaic, similar to that of a verse novel though it cannot be categorized as a verse-novel for its shorter length. These poems acquire many forms and tackle various aspects of life and living. It seems to be encapsulating the idea of the internal and external to find a perfect balance. Sumana Roy aptly suggests that the poems seem to be moving in not one, but many time-scapes:

> So, at one moment, you are not in one time and one space, but many. You become Visvarupa. For while there are these images inside you, tearing at the seams of your retina, …. That is the other thing about Cahill's visual technology. I always had the feeling of not only watching the scenes unfold before me, but also of being watched in my watching. (238)

This 'visuality' finds space not just in her poetry but also in the city

spaces. City is a constant metaphor in her poems, she seems to be jostling between the liveliness, commotion and chaos of the city and deriving reassurance from the mythical images of Goddesses and other cult-figures. She contemplates the chaos, and seeks to settle with the chaotic in the present, with destruction and creation together evident from the phrase 'City of Divine Deliriums' used in the poem, “City of Another Home”. Describing the crude reality of city as “City of slum redevelopments”, “City of muddy shores”, “City of rags”, “City of taxis”, “City of nostalgia”, “City of dubious promises” (“City of Another Home”), she points out at the strange relationship she experiences with a place that was never her home. She equates the walls of this city to the flaky layers of a paratha: “ineffable to love a city that was never really my home, or a home whose walls are flaky as paratha” (“City of Another Home”). The semblance of the material reality to that of the inner truth and the “divine delirium” is like the coming together of various aspects of life, that have become the reality of populations in the present: “Today, I've woven your hybrid threads into a present warp” (“City of Another Home”). Cahill, in a way, distinctively draws exclusive images, more representational having permanent fixatures and offers a newness to the poetic tradition in Australian poetry.

Some other migrant Australian poets who have emerged on the field offering multiple voice include Adam Aitken, Paul Dawson, James Straut, EeTiang Hong, Ouyang Yu, Shen and Omar Musa. Their styles of writing are free from literary tradition and they offer multiple imaginations, weaving thoughts with their reality of existence away from home in a new land, defining it accordingly. The remarkable contribution of these migrant writes has an astonishing impact in Australia as well as in Australian Literature. Bronwyn Lea remarks the impact of Australia's multiculturalism as follows:

> According to a 2010 report, Australia is second only to Luxembourg as the most multicultural country in the world. Recent census figures reveal more than eight percent of Australians identify as being of Asian descent (in contrast to

> only five percent of Americans), with Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Indian being the predominant backgrounds. Of course the European roots of Anglophone poetry remain stout and deep, but the pivot in perspective from Europe to Asia is opening up new possibilities of poetic engagement in the region beyond the ubiquitous borrowing of various Asian poetic forms. (189)

Towards conclusion, it may not be wrong to suggest that the multi-cultural voices have redefined and reshaped Australian poetry adding to various trends and traditions along with the Indigenous writings and writings from the European-Australian writes. Therefore , new perspectives, and new dimensions of socio-cultural and political assertions of community and class are available in a new framework which may not be similar to each other but are definitely complementary.

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From Migrant to the Multicultural: Reading Australia's *Alien Son*

Supala Pandiarajan

> The new cultural politics of difference are neither simply oppositional in contesting the mainstream… for inclusion, nor transgressive in the avant-gardist sense of shocking conventional bourgeois audiences. Rather, they are distinct articulations of talented … contributors to culture who desire to align themselves with… people in order to empower and enable social action and, if possible, to enlist collective insurgency for the expansion of freedom, democracy, and individuality. (West 257)

There has been a significant change in the way Australian literature conceives of itself and this is evident from the classification of texts in two famous Australian Literary anthologies. The Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature, published in 1990, follows a thematic pattern in its compilation with a separate section on Migrant Writing titled, "Cultural Intersections". But the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature, published in 2009, is not thematically assorted but aligns all Australian writers - indigenous, Anglo-Celtic and multi-ethnic, in a chronological order. It is evident that contemporary "Australian national literature is redefined by non-Anglo-Celtic cultural perspectives" which "enable a move beyond an opposition between multiculturalism and Australian culture" wherein "the latter is influenced by the former" (Gunew and O Longley ix). In this sense, the Australian literary landscape is designed by intricate strands of diverse cultures.

With a 'regional-religious' identity as a Russian-Jew and a 'national-political' identity as an Australian Communist, Judah Waten is considered as the father of Australian Multicultural literary tradition. This paper attempts to analyze the short story "Mother", from Waten's

short-story collection *Alien Son*, in order to understand how immigrant writings evolve from a 'personal' to 'national' framework. Migrant writings cease to 'remain' just as voices of mourning or protest by a minority community against dominance. They evolve to 'become' voices that harmoniously blend with the experiences of the 'host' country.

Judah Waten

Judah Waten, novelist and writer of short stories, literary critic and political activist was born into a Jewish family in Odessa, Russia to a Romanian father and a Belarusian mother. The Australian Dictionary of Biography records his birth year as 1911. His family moved to Western Australia in 1914 and settled down into Melbourne in 1926. Migrating into Australia, Waten's father did not find Utopia in Australia, but had to try his luck in a drapery shop and later became a hawker. Growing up in difficult economic conditions, material marginalization is an important theme in Waten's writings. He joined the Communist Party of Australia, "with which he had a difficult relationship" throughout his life (Jose 530). Waten's mixed identity helped him to represent the voices of Jewish migrants and voices of the economically deprived Australians. His critically acclaimed work, *Alien Son*, is a collection of short stories, which uses his own experiences of growing up as an immigrant child in Australia. The thematic blend of ethnic marginalization of the Jewish migrant community in Australia, and the economical marginalization of working-class Australians makes Judah Waten a multicultural writer.

"Mother" – From Ethnic Marginalization to Economic Marginalization

"Mother" recreates Waten's mother, Nehemia, who was a profound influence on her son. The unnamed Mother in Waten's story is a forty-year old, introvert immigrant, unwilling to settle-down in a "new land in

which she would always feel a stranger" (Waten 117). A woman of limited words even among her family members, Mother had no friends and is despised by her own community members for the "unreasonableness of her opinions" (Waten 117-18). The son is in awe of the strength which his mother emanates, at the same time, feels humiliated by her unreasonable actions. Her refusal to depart with old possessions and her habit of pulling her children out from their street-games in order to read to them, make the boy burn with humiliation amidst his friends. With a critical attitude towards the 'new' land, the Mother finds a relief from reality only through reading to her children. Her attention shifts from her 'self' to her children, with setting high aims for the children's future becoming the grip over her life. This concern makes the mother decide that her children should be given musical education. But the economic condition of the family hinders affording the privilege of hiring a tutor or purchasing gramophone records to listen to good music. The unrelenting mother finds an alternative. She takes her children to music shops and plays records after records, as if come to purchase, but finally walking out of the shop without buying any, much to the disgust of shopkeepers and the embarrassment of the son. These visits become a routine, until the mother and her children are barred from entering the music shops. The story ends with the mother taking her children on a 'university trip'. Peeping into a classroom, the mother is met with the enquiring smile of a Professor, who restricts their entry saying only students were allowed into classrooms. The Professor's "condescending smile" (Waten 132) embodies the superior attitude of the 'conservative-minded' majority to the mother. But her thirteen-year old son, "knew so much more about the new country" that was his "home"; the mother could never find her way into the new culture (Waten 132). The son is able to identify himself with his friends who 'belonged' to Australia and has started to 'feel' at home in 'his country', but to the mother, people back in their homelands were culturally 'refined'. The irony is imminent in the story – the betrayal of friends in business and the reluctance of support back in

the homeland, had forced the mother and her family into 'exile'. Still, the mother clings onto her own country and her people as her 'own'. The son is able to look beyond these binaries, "I said to her that Benny… was always reading books and papers and hurrying to meetings…. They all belonged to this country and they were interested in all the things Mother talked about" (Waten 132). The story ends with the son's 'refinement' to recognize people as individuals, beyond their national, ethnic and cultural identities.

In its context of migrant writing, the story, "Mother", presents multiple themes. It reveals the pain of ethnic minorities, their sadness of having to leave native lands, their feeling of insecurity and their hopes for their children's futures in the host land. It presents the psychological impacts of 'cultural alienation' on minorities, but Waten goes beyond to look at alienation as an internal condition also. Mother feels alienated from the mainstream; she also feels alienated from the members of her own community and from her children. Waten foregrounds the essential difference that is evident in the perspectives of the first and second generation migrants towards their host land. The younger generation adapts with flexibility to the host country while the first, older generation is bound inexplicably by an affinity to the native land. Unwilling to learn English, the mother seeks the help of her son to translate herself to her society. In his role as a translator, the son 'mediates' between his mother and his 'new' country as a result of which he is able to realize the shortcomings of his mother's suspicious attitude of the culturally dominant class.

The cultural encounters between two groups are interspersed with inhibitions and prejudices. Generally, the 'gaze' of the mainstream make the ethnic minorities conscious of their 'selves', but Waten presents the 'gaze' of the mother that makes her children feel uncomfortable and guilty:

> When I was a small boy I was often morbidly conscious of Mother's intent, searching eyes fixed on me. She would gaze for minutes on end without speaking one

> word. I…would look guiltily at the ground, anxiously turning over in my mind my day's activities. (Waten 117)

The 'gaze' of the mother, which is the expression of her self-pity and inferior perception, makes the son 'cringe', ultimately creating a defining impact on his character. Immigrant mothers and fathers were suspicious of the 'corrupting influence' of the 'new' culture on their children. This resulted in their close watching-over of their children who became extremely conscious of their ways, thereby ceasing to be themselves.

Waten's Russian-Jewish identity gives a free hand to fit his works into a ready-made cultural context and brand him as the voice of migrants in Australia. But Waten himself, like the son in his story, "Mother", has moved towards the mainstream to establish himself as the voice of economically marginalized Australians also. He considers himself as an Australian with a 'different' ethnic identity. Ethnicity becomes one 'other' setting to discuss labour-issues, unemployment and economic depravity of the working class in Australia. Judah Waten's story, "Mother", reveals a potential to be read, beyond its migrant identity, as a work of an Australian writer which brings to light issues of economic marginalization in Australia and elsewhere in the world. Read in an economical context, "Mother" unfolds deeper meanings through multiple critical perspectives of Marxism and Psychoanalysis.

Read from a Sociological perspective, the story unfolds its theme of presenting the problems of the economically depressed – a universal condition of suffering prevalent in Australia, Russia and all over the world. The son, like the readers, attributes his mother's introverted nature to the shock she has received while encountering an 'alien' culture. But the epiphany strikes the readers when the son discovers his mother's past in Russia and the turbulent economic conditions in which she had survived. Being the third daughter of a cotton-hawker and a "frail and overworked" mother (Waten 120), her existence was hardly noticed by her economically constrained parents. While her elder sisters

saved themselves from this economic crisis through marriage, Mother, at the age of fifteen, was left to live out of her aunt's mercy after the death of her parents:

> Every evening her aunt would gaze at her with startled eyes as if surprised to find her (Mother) among the family. "What am I going to do with you? she would say. I've daughters of my own. If only your dear father…had left you just a tiny dowry, it would have been such a help. (Waten 120-21)

Mother escapes this embarrassing life of hers by getting a little education. She is seized by renewed hopes for a new life of opportunities:

> New worlds gradually opened before Mother…. There was another world, full of warmth and interesting things, and in it there was surely a place for her. She became obsessed with the thought that it wanted only some decisive step to go beyond her aunt's house into the life she dreamed about. (Waten 121)

Forsaking her aunt's home and taking up a job as a nurse in the hospital, Mother's dream of a "richer and happier life", just like the ones "she had read" in stories (Waten 122), shatters. She is exposed to the hardships of a working class life – odd jobs and low pays:

> …she was put to scrubbing floors and washing linen every day from morning till night until she dropped exhausted into her bed in the attic. No one looked at her, no one spoke to her but to give orders. Her one day off in the month she spent with her relatives who gave her some cast-off clothes and shoes and provided her with the books on nursing she so urgently needed.(Waten 122-23)

Witnessing acquaintances being killed in the uprising of 1905 in Russia, marriage seems to renew the lost hope in Mother for a 'richer'

and 'happier' future. But she meets with disappointment when her husband loses his 'capital' in the "unstable world of commerce and speculation" as a result of betrayal by "faithless friends." The unrelenting Mother proposes the idea of migrating to Australia, where the family could find a secure economic status. While Father hesitates to leave his native-land, Mother is sure that their distant relatives in Australia would help Father "acquire a new… way of earning." Moreover, Mother is confident that, "Australia was so different from any other country." But on the first day of landing she realizes that the new land is no different from the old in terms of providing them with the financial security. While Father "began to regard the new country as his permanent home", Mother "wanted to go back" (Waten 126).

Waten's ingenuity lies in drafting his story in such a way that only a psychological approach can make the reader understand the 'unconscious' motives of his characters. The Mother discovers that Australia too cannot give the financial progress that is much needed by the family. This unconscious realization of Australia as a 'material desert' drives the conscious actions of Mother's want to go back, for which the reality of cultural suppression becomes the fore-grounded reason. Continued economic depravity and the breaking of one hope after another become the reasons for the mother's introverted character and her strange behavior. She condones the wealthy members of her community for their habit of 'behaving like under-dogs' to the white majority and for giving-up their cultures to please the mainstream. But a psychological reading makes it evident that it is her inferior economic status that makes her conscious of being friends with the financially-settled members of her own community. This economic inferiority finds expression in the Mother's critique of the "superior air about the people she met" (Waten 126) who looked at them in a "condescending" manner. Though Mother makes it seem that she is unable to settle-down due to a cultural difference, thereby making her own community and family find her unreasonably fussy, it is a suppressed financial failure and the breaking of hopes about economic progress that makes Mother

critical of both her own and the 'others'. This continued suppression due to economical dejection makes Mother 'revolt' in her own way – she goes to music shops without money and spends hours making salesmen play records for her and finally walks out without making any purchase. A reading of the mother's psychology would interpret this act as her revenge on people who had money. When she is denied entry into the music shops, the process of 'taking-out' her stress becomes impossible. It is then that her unconscious feeling of economic inferiority becomes evident:

> "Why wouldn't they play for us? Does it cost them anything? By which other way can we hope to hear something good? Just because we are poor must we cease our striving? … If I were a rich woman, would you ask me that question?" (Waten 130)

Reading "Mother" in its migrant context limits the scope of the text and the scope of Judah Waten's writing. But Waten's story carefully traces the Russian past of Mother to present her economical struggle in her homeland. It ends with how she is pitted against a similar economic crisis in her 'new country', Australia. This plot foregrounds Waten's intention to present the common human experience of economic suppression that operates beyond national identities. He presents 'money' as a deciding factor that drives people's understanding of them 'selves' and of 'others'. It is 'wealth' that influences, to a great deal, the perceptions of cultural interactions between the majority and minority. The use of words like 'commerce', 'cost' and 'rich' in the story calls for an imminent reading of the story within an economical context.

The Mother's desire to 'go back' is generally attributed to the 'motherly concern' for her children's future in an alien culture and a fear of cultural loss in the younger generations. The father's 'masculine' engagement with the attempts to establish his business, makes him find no difference or obstacles in his new country. Waten may seem to operate within structures when he assigns typical 'masculine' and 'feminine' sensibilities to the characters of the Father and Mother. A

psychological-feminist reading would locate Waten's breaking of structures when he presents the Mother as the catalyst behind the family's migration into Australia, while the Father passively, yet unwillingly, accepts his wife's decision. A psychological probe into the mother's character would reveal her 'masculine', business-minded ambitions, thereby appreciating Waten's breaking of gender stereotypes. A sociological-feminist reading makes learners understand the text as the struggle of a labour-class woman and her economic suppression. Here, the mother's insistence to hold onto her belongings from home is not only because she attaches a cultural value to her possessions, but also because they are the only 'materials' under her 'possession' on which she can claim an 'ownership'.

Waten's short story, "Mother" has postmodern elements. The scope of the story to accommodate multiple perspectives itself makes "Mother" postmodern. The story is self-reflexive as it makes a statement about writing and reading multicultural literature both in Australia and other parts of the world. Readers/ learners must not look for migrant issues of loneliness and exile alone in Australian writing by ethnic minorities. A migrant identity to a writer often limits learners to read the writer's works for the tensions in cultural encounters. The reading of Judah Waten's "Mother" breaks the stereotypes of reading multicultural literature, not just of Australia but of any other country. We generally see immigrants as the 'other', who are defined in opposition to the mainstream. But the gradual evolution of migrants into a 'multicultural mainstream' who participate in voicing national, universal issues, is seldom discussed if not acknowledged. . "Mother" becomes the story of economically marginalized people of Jewish origin in Australia. The characters' ethnicity does not stop the economically marginalized across various nationalities, ethnicities and religions from identifying themselves to the plot and characters in the story.

The story is self-reflexive in its focus on the significance of reading/writing as an escape from reality. Reading books and the world of stories seem to be a haven for the mother from the harsh realities of

life, both in her 'old' and 'new' countries. The Father mildly protests when she pulls out the children from their games in order to 'read'. It finally becomes evident that the Mother is merely trying to 'create' another world for her children, for them to find solace from the reality of failure, which is inevitable for the economically deprived. This becomes highly self-reflexive in foregrounding Waten's own affiliation to literature and writing.

A text like "Mother" can elucidate to the Indian learner the richness of Australian writing and its 'multi'-culture - its scope for multiple themes, multiple genres, and multiple critical readings. Representing his national literature, Judah Waten's writings illustrate the maturity of Australian craft. The collection of short stories *Alien Son*, in which "Mother" appears, is "an early version of what Frank Moorhouse calls 'discontinuous narrative' – in which separate stories are loosely connected by common characters and settings…" (Jose 530). As the *Archive of Australian Judaica* records, it was Waten's style of language that make him a classic Australian writer:

> Quiet humour and warm human sympathy infuse the prose with a quality of sensitive realism born of deep understanding. The reader is impressed by the delicacy of phrase, the pathos, human warmth and subtle comedy….As an Australian writer, Waten was committed to the tradition of Henry Lawson, in bringing the written and spoken word together in the seemingly artless form of the yarn.

Judah Waten's contribution in shaping Australian literature through his creative and critical works made him win the Patrick White Award. This 'multicultural' Australian was one of the founding members of the Literature Board of Australia.

The story, "Mother", is usually considered as an autobiography for Waten's use of personal, childhood experiences of immigration. But it is autobiographical in metaphorically reflecting Waten's to contain his views on his own writings and on the potential of immigrant writings in

general. When he learns of his mother's past in Russia, the Son realizes that her unreasonable behaviour is not because of a cultural shock but because of economic failure. The son's epiphany becomes a metaphor of Waten's discovery of his own writings not just as the voice of a migrant but as the voice of economically depressed citizens both in Australia and all over the world. The shift in the thematic focus of the story from ethnic to economic marginalization emphasizes the shift from migrant to a multicultural experience.

"Mother" in a Global Multicultural Mosaic

"Mother" sets the standards of writing/ reading of multicultural literature of Australia. Sociological, Feminist, Psychological and Postmodern perspectives elaborate the theme of economical marginality and not just that of ethnic marginality in "Mother", thereby demonstrating the caliber of multicultural Australian literature. To the Indian readers, "Mother" demonstrates the dimensions of multicultural writing and its potential to be 'regional', 'national' and 'universal'.

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Motherhood, Suicide and Survival: Exploring the Canonical in Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*

Hem Raj Bansal

Canon making process ensconces those writers who aid to a dominant ideology. Instead of the authors, texts need to be canonized, thereby dissociating any national/racial markers from the written product. "Literary canon formation is itself a political act that echoes hierarchical social structures. The exclusion of certain writers and texts from established canons is thus an ideological statement that relies on descriptive and prescriptive appropriations of literary works" (Schultermandl 289). It is exactly what NuguiWaThiong'o (b. 1938) also exposes in his seminal work *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) saying that out of 57 texts of drama studied in Kenya "only one was African" (100). Canon-building and national identity go hand in hand as nationalist concerns subsume even otherwise canonical works. Ingrid Johnston also remarks that making a work the part of a canon is "a process in which texts, styles, and approaches are designated literary and perceived as worthy of attention, or are *pushed to the margins and allowed to disappear*" [emphasis mine] (42). It is from the threat of such a politics of inclusion and exclusion that canon needs to be safeguarded. Peter Shaw in "The Assault on the Canon" also writes that "absence of women and racial and ethnic minorities from the traditional canon" (258) needs to be seen afresh and reinvented to accommodate the hitherto silenced voices. "Opening the canon" (Guillory 39) for the misrepresented or not-represented attains agency with Richard Flanagan as he brings out the pain of the victims of political/religious persecution in the novel. The novelist discusses the dynamics of rape-affected motherhood and the father-daughter relation in an altogether different way and hence the novel commands a canonical status.

II

Motherhood, as it comes to light in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, carries along unfathomable pain of Maria Buloh who commits suicide due to war-trauma. A mother may take such a drastic step in the absence of her children, but when the child keeps calling the mother and the latter hushes her to sleep, the situation becomes really pathetic and telling. The moving away of Maria Buloh, the mother of three-year old Sonja Buloh, to commit suicide in a blizzard in Tasmania poses the question as to how can a mother leave her little baby. Her passing through the Butlers George (Hydro-Electric Commission Construction Camp), and the crude huts there remind her of Stalin's USSR, Kolyma, GoliOtok or Birkenau, the places associated with genocide, forced labour deaths and the holocaust carnage, indicating that as a silent victim of history's injustices, her troubles go unabated even in Tasmania which Richard Flanagan calls as a "godforsaken island" (171) in his another novel *Wanting* (2008). From forced displacement in Slovakia to hard labour in Tasmania, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1997) charts the unhappy journey of a Slovak family strewn with agonizing ordeals. Family finds itself unguarded as multiculturalism as a policy is not yet in place in 1954.

Hardships in Tasmania make Maria look aged as is shown when she pours tea for Sonja, "The hand was young oh so young, but rough, bearing already the marks of long years of harsh toil. And the voice somehow much older than the hand" (30). To Sonja's questionas to why they drink tea, Maria rues, "Because it is Tasmania not Slovenia. Because our world is upside down" (31). It is indicative of the claustrophobic world left behind due to war and the equally unpleasant one in Tasmania, where unfortunate convicts were sent to serve the term of their punishment.

Sonja finds her mother on this fateful night packing her suitcase, stashing a scarf from Slovenia and stockings from Tasmania, Sonja's handkerchief, a rope and a photograph of an old man lying in a coffin. She also puts there a pressed white flower, a mark of love that Bojan had

picked for her indicating that she does not die due to an abusive husband. Little Sonja, while burying her face in her mother's lace, senses that her mother was leaving and the latter sings a lullaby to lull her to sleep. She leaves Sonja, saying, "I must go alone", "forgive me" (177). While looking at these articles, "strange distant thoughts" contort Maria's visage but she does not share anything with her daughter. Though the extremity of her action is astonishing, the decision was never impulsive but calculated. Suicide for her becomes an act of resistance against the war crimes. It becomes for her a mode to, "win back respect, authority and justice" (Fei 45). It becomes hard for her to fight the past and overcome the traumatic memory which triggers her to commit suicide:

> It is impossible, short of death, to defend against anything that might trigger a traumatic memory, but it is equally impossible to find an acceptable way to live with that memory in the frenzied back-and-forth between two equally repellent states of being. Nothing gets interrogated, nothing gets healed, no equilibrium is found, and the dialectic becomes a potentially self-perpetuating cycle. (Coleman 4)

The pain of having been raped and subjected to witness the rapes of her mother and sister and the shooting of her grandfather overshadow her maternal instinct. Moreover, when her body is spotted as dangling from a tree, her old suitcase is found "half-buried in the snow" and "worn-out soles of two dangling shoes . . . the holes in them stuffed with newspaper" (397), indicative of the poverty of Maria Buloh in Tasmania. Suicide, of course, is an act of cowardice but here it needs to be viewed through a different lens. Her suicidal act does not come out of her own any wrong-doing or mental illness but it is a dehumanized world which forces her to put an end to her life. Even the innocent face and pleadings of the toddler fail to dissuade her from taking this step. Her suicide needs to be seen in a daring light as she deems her existence to be meaningless, torn as she is between two desperate, harsh worlds

none of which comes for her rescue. Not every individual is made up of such mettle to have forbearance to tolerate everything stoically. For Maria too, suicide becomes an act of escape from a feelingless, insensitive world which fails to accommodate differences. Her worst experiences first in Slovenia as a Jew and then as a reffoe in Tasmania keep her fate hanging in the air, as Betty Rollin writes, "Some people want to eke out every second of life—no matter how grim—and that is their right. But others do not. And that should be *their* right" (qtd. in Humphry 1). Maria's suicide has a different social and political context and therefore, needs to be viewedas a different phenomenon.For her suicide serves "as the ultimate way out of emotional, social, or economic problems that appear insoluble" (Goeschel 1).

It is not in any insane state that Maria dies, it is also not a spur of the moment or a fickleness of mind. It is the war which becomes the"breeding ground" (Fanon 182), for Maria's all psychological troubles. While the ghastly acts of rape gnaw her psyche in degrees, the present place does also not offer any solace. In Bandi's*Accusation: Forbidden Stories from Inside North Korea*(2017)a young wife suppresses her maternal instinct and eats contraceptives to kill her baby as he would have been branded a traitor for something done by his grandparents. It is an unparalleled incident of its kind where a mother destroys her foetus out of political fear. Suicide of the swagman in Banjo Patterson's (1864-1941) "Waltzing Matilda" (1895) is not considered a desperate act as he does not want to be imprisoned. Similarly, Chandra Shekhar Azad's (1906-1931) shooting of himself to die free is also revered as a heroic act. It is the defiance of authority which is built in these life-taking steps. Historian Richard Cobb calls suicide as the "most private and impenetrable of human acts" (qtd. in Goeschel 1) and in the case of Maria, the pain lacerates her unrelentingly, making thus view both motherhood and suicide as contingent upon socio-political climes.

III

Survival in any adverse circumstances always comes through a strong family or community support. The void left behind by the

sudden disappearance of Maria makes it tough for both the little Sonja and her labourer father to battle the grief. Mrs. Michnik's, the engineer's wife's taking along of Sonja for raising also turns out to be uncomfortable for the little child whofeels rudderless without"her father" (400). Sonja's situation is akin to that of Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times* (1854) who feels bewildered, hopeless and distressed when her father is nowhere to be seen as she is also a motherless child in that novel. While Sonja keeps thinking of her mother, her keeper assumes that "the girl wouldn't remember her [mother]. He [Bojan] pays well and she never speaks, that's all that matters" (83). The lady is materialistic who nurses Sonja only because she is paid off and not because of any "good Christian intentions" (400). After living for five years with the Michniks, Bojan takes her along as he does not like his daughter to be engrained in Christianity. He descends heavily on Michnik, "I don't want her near the bloody church. At the beginning I bloody tell you. And then I come here and I find you have her on her knees praying"(87). While Mrs.Michnik considers it blasphemy, and to her retort "what do you know of God?", Bonjaexposes the church: "I know what I see . . . In Slovenia when the Germans march in and the bloody church back the bloody Fascists. They were all there cheering the Domobran on, giving lists of our names to the SS. I know your God!" (88). Domobran was a Slovan Home Guard that divulged names of Slovan Jews to the SS and the church played a destructive role as it did not act to prevent the genocide and rather cheered the SS.

Bojan sees Sonja as a pinprick of light in the dark tunnel of grief, and holds on to her as if she were "a life preserver ring" (399). Though Sonja's "most heartfelt desire" (91) is to live with her father, the latter again keeps her with the Picottis as he had to labour in the mountains. Her new keeper Maya Picotti'shusband Umberto remains cold and unwelcoming. He is also money-minded as he views each coin and note, that Bojan gives him to keep his daughter, with a sensuous pleasure which generates Sonja's hatred for him. Within days Sonja resists his attempt at sliding his hand upward her thighs for which he calls her a

"disobedient little bitch" for not meekly submitting to his sexual advances. It is after this that her father takes her to Hobart to live with himin a single shed, made especially for wogs but both labour at transforming it into home.

As a nine-year old child Sonja performs household chores meticulously as Bojan likes tidiness. The author writes, "The rites of order and cleanliness were women's work and such was Sonja's role from age nine, a relentless round of housework he expected her to do entirely in accordance with his own ways and standards" (150). However, he loves her dearly and when he once finds red rashes on her arm, he writes to his mother who sends a parcel of small dried flowers. Bathing in these kamilica flowers heals her arm. Bojan now takes up the work of plaining and sanding tables and chests and simultaneously saws "the long autumn of Sonja's childhood into strange sad shapes that knew no irregularity or quirky angles" (188). He tries to fill the empty space, left unfulfilled by his absence in Sonja's life, now by smoothing not only the table but also his daughter's crumpled heart and suppressed innocence. She also works with her father as she "saw that there was another man inside him, a good man, the man she loved as her father" and during this work they find "a small measure of harmony" (190).

Bojan's care for his daughter is further seen in his stitching for her a nice pink party dress and buying for her a 24-volume set of *Encyclopedia Britannica* on instalments to learn and speak English. She feels completely moved by her father's absorption and the ultimate handiwork. Both of them see this gift as "mutually liberating" (214). The father-daughter share a tacit understanding and remain the only source of hope and sustenance for each other.

Jean Doreen, a widowed woman with whom Bojan has a relation, becomes a cause of disquiet for Sonja as she feels unsettled of "the consequences of that intimacy"(222). To her father's question, "Sonja what you think if Jean and I marry?", Sonja dismissively replies, "No. No, Artie, no . . . I don't want it. I don't want her. I want us" (224). Being already devoid of biological mother, she now does not want to lose

her father to a stepmother, sensing again a state of utter loneliness for herself.

Disapproval of his daughter of his marriage with Jean makes Bojan take to alcohol copiously. Sonja hates him for this but she "simply had to stay the course with him because she was a child" (230). After her school, she everyday goes to the working site of her father and sometimes also labours along. After the work, he keeps Sonja waiting in the car and himself goesto the pub. On her insistence "I want to go home", he descends "What home? You and I have no home . . . We have a wog flat" (232) and again resumes his drinking in the pub. He has this deep-rooted sense of not belonging, being alienated but he makes his daughter suffer, forcing Sonja to take refuge in silent sobs. With the passage of four more years, he becomes absolutely alcoholic, inviting many people to drink at his home and getting day by day violent. He sometimes wakes Sonja in the middle of the night to cook food for half a dozen European men and then forcing fifteen year old Sonja to wash and clean everything. In this inebriated state, he strikes Sonja fiercely, blood oozing out of her torn flesh. She feels trapped "like a caged, maddened bird" (272). Flanagan makes a very apt observation concerning the perilous situation of migrants who drink not to enjoy but to cope with the situation:

> They were drinking not to enjoy the present but for the more urgent reason of wanting to forget the past and to deny the future. Their destination was not pleasure but oblivion, and they wished to arrive as quickly as possible. (264-65)

Sonja now decides to not to believe it as her 'destiny' but to end it by "leaving". Bojan assumes that she hates him and cries, "I am shit. I am the wog" (279). He even imagines that he does not hit her and that it is under the influence of drink that he thinks so: "May be I drink so much that I think I hit her but haven't" (279). Sonja bears everything silently, does not even scream or shed tears as he says, "The more I hit and the harder I hit her face says nothing" (279). He further fancies that the

reason for her bruised and swollen face is her accidental fall and hurting herself and since there is no blood on the walls, he further assumes that nothing happened.

Another shock awaits Sonja when nobody comes to celebrate her sixteenth birthday, making her feel more alien and wog. Next day Sonja's overhearing of two girls disturbs her to the core, "The wog sleeps with her, the wog and her, you know what I mean"(317) and the girl reveals that everybody thinks so and that is why nobody attended her birthday. It pains her immensely as people had started to talk terrible things that further mar the otherwise pious father-daughter relation. While she leaves, he gives her a gift. When she opens it later, she finds in it a glass laden jewellery box with five notes of twenty dollars and an old photograph of Bojan and Maria holding a baby—Sonja--, and she derives hope that they were at least "happy' in that photograph. Their parting, partly caused by society and partly by Bojan's erratic, violent swings of mood, is thus summed up by Bojan: "You and me, we lived . . . worse than dogs. I am sorry. I don't expect you to come back. Believe me I never wished it, the drinking, the fighting, these wog flats, sometimes things happen in your life and, despite everything, despite your hope, you can't change them" (320). And he catches the dilemma of migrants who come "to Australia to be free" (320) but become rather encaged. He feels trapped in both the worlds as the forced movement from Slovenia continues the pain and suffering of his family which starts with the suicide of Maria and now in the departure of Sonja; and Bojan, left to his fate alone, takes refuge in endless drinking. All their hopes of staying together now come to an end in the year 1967.

As the narration jumps from 1967 to 1989, Sonja revisits her childhood placeto see her father after the lapse of twenty-two years, and to find out what had happened to them. As they meet in the Tullah pub, they do not embrace, he still reeking of the same smell of tobacco and alcohol which predicts an impossibility of reconciliation. He wanted to write a letter for her but for his bad English, "You find a language. But I lose mine. And I never had enough words to tell people what I think,

what I feel." (39). When Sonja later looks at Bojan's room, she painfully observes, "Bojan's room belonged, as did Bojan, nowhere. It was empty of aspirations, of delusions, of dreams" (53).

Sonja sees Tasmania as not a good place to live in. Moreover, for migrant workers it fails to deliver in the same way. The novelist captures the emotions, "The promise that had been made to migrant workers, the offer of a better life in Australia than in war-ruined Europe . . . had grown thin and distant" (50). They get neither peace nor prosperity and rather grow old before their time. The young men who see the old men feel frightened "of their own destiny" (27). To cope up with such hard life, many take refuge in alcohol, the grog which becomes the "necessary corollary of such wretched lives" (51).

Sonja fails to believe after so many years that her father used to hit her. William Hazlitt (1778-1830) in his essay "Why Distant Objects Please?"also says that the distance of time has a soothing effect on individuals: "Time takes out the sting of pain; our sorrows after a certain period have been so often steeped in a medium of thought and passion that they 'unmould their essence' and all that remains of our original impressions is what we would wish them to have been" (2).For Sonja there was a lot of difference between the man who hit her and her father "whose fingers so gently stuffed the mince and herbs into the sausage skins" (62), who would get emotional on watching the first saplings/buds sprout in his garden. Even now he keeps the fridge beautifully stacked for Sonja. He still seems overprotective of Sonja and warns that he will kill her lover if he does not marry her. Sonja, however, does not believe in love and considers it as something "faintly comical, strongly treacherous, and forever elusive" (63). Her short stint with Kolo Amado results in her pregnancy but she wants to abort the baby as it is she who leaves Amado as she had no faith in love and becoming a mother.

Sonja progresses in her job from a typist to a secretary to a Production Assistant in a television company. By holding the reins of life in her own hands, she moves and makes her own destiny and enjoys

many things "she had never known as a child" (76). However, she calls it just "a small triumph" and something inside vexes her persistently. Sonja's not revealing initially about her pregnancy to her fatherresults from her unsettled mental and material space:

> He wants to believe I have some serious love in my life, that I at least am happy. What's the point of telling him there is no father who wants the child, no proper home, no time I can spare from working. Not enough money. No anything. That I could offer the child anything. *That I am poor in everything and abortion is cheaper.*[emphasis added] (138)

Helvi, an old friend of Sonja, plays a crucial role in her survival. She works in the Hobart textile factory where Sonja used to work earlier after her school hours. It is Helvi who pleads with her not to leave Tasmania and abort her baby. However, when she leaves and the security officer asks her for check at the airport, the broken teapot pieces overwhelm her and she is again drawn to the memories of her parents and their broken, fragmented selves. It was her toy china tea-set which was smashed when she was taken by Mrs. Michnik with her. Though it was brought from Sonja's home by MrsMichnik "to help the girl forget" (403) what had happened, it is the same teapot now which again enlivens the past. Instead of leaving now, she decides to live with Helvi, leaving her job and flat in Sydney. Though she wants to know from Helvi as to what happened with her mother,Helvi enigmatically reveals that very bad things happened with her during the war and that "Maria was unhappy" (178). Helvi also reveals that her parents loved each other dearly but that "Love is a bridge, Sonja. And there are some weights bridges cannot bear without breaking" (179). It is the weight of cruelties, inhuman acts that both could not bear and fell apart.

Sonja's eventual disclosure through a letter to her father about her pregnancy solicits no favorable response from Bojan: "Nothing to do with me. That's her business" (84). He is simultaneously reminded of his mother who had an inkling of the bloodshed. It is from his mother that

he had learnt food recipes. He recalls painfully ten villagers being "machine gunned" in front of school children, a partisan's body kept for three days as a warning and that "people died like flies and only flies thrived at that time" (186). He had suffered interminably and had survived by camping in the fragments and eating raw turnips at night. In short, his belief in everything was shaken completely, "He had watched his world break into pieces and he had learnt that any attempt to make it whole again was hopeless" (187). The death of his wife completes the cycle of sorrows, making him rootless and that is why he temporarily does not respond to his daughter's pregnancy.

Helvi's kneading the dough and stretching and pulling it to make it softer and pliable also serves a symbolic purpose. She says to Sonja, "Show the yeast and the flour that together they can grow into something better" (242). As the dough does not become bread unless stretched, similarly her father needs to be pushed to the extremes to become a normal being again, traumatized as he remains due to war both outside and within. Eventually when she confronts her father in person, she breaks to hear what had happened with her mother. Maria's father would carry food to the partisans during the World War II, and when spotted, he is shot dead by the SS as it is a village priest who tells the Domoboran. What shocks more is that Maria was forced to not only watch the murder of her grandfather but also the rape of her mother and sister, before herself being raped and that "she was twelve years old" (255).

Bojan's taking to wooden work serves a symbolic as well therapeutic purpose. He makes wardrobes, tables, cupboards but "no longer with hate but love, a poultice for their sad wound, good solid things that would not let them down when everything else in life had failed" (334). He fills his love in all these wooden things and it is for all those who had seen very tragic days and their families killed. In his creativity, he offers solace for the distressed and tries to heal their wounds. He now also reads the same letter of his daughter again, kisses it, and touches it as if it were an embrace and cries "my Maria" (335). He

undergoes transformation miraculously, changes his bedroom to a workshop, constantly works on timber, and no longer goes to the pub. Braving storm and rain, Bojan goes to see his daughter. Both face each other awed and flabbergasted as Sonja now had no hope of his return. When others ask her "What did the wog want?", Sonja silences them, saying he is her father. Bojan then wheels in a cradle finely made of Huon pine. Again Sonja declines a drunken man'soffer of hundred bucks for the cradle, "it is not for sale" (356). He then brings in a cot and a chair, making the pub seem "full of baby furniture" (358). Sonja sees her father for the first time frightened and innocent and longs to say "I love you" (359). His innocence appears naked and visible through these humble yet love-laced wooden gifts which are meant to alleviate her pain.

Sonja feels elated for her father's being with her in those final months and his "unexpected gentleness in his dealings with her" (361). Sonja's inspection of her new rented home which she expected to be filthy, rusty, leaky and smelling of cat-piss, also turns out to be a pleasant surprise as without her knowledge, her father turns this home from "Australian squalor to modern Mediterranean" (365). Sonja uses the word 'doma' (house) for the well-cleaned and decorated home as it is suffused with her father's love.

Bojan had never seen a new born, even his own Sonja as he was not allowed in the hospital for three days when Sonja was born.Now Sonja's giving birth to a baby girl fulfils that dream, and Sonja names the girl after her mother as Maria. Bojan's not going back and staying with his daughter and granddaughter further cements the bond. The most touching of all his presents to Sonja is his seamless, immaculate repair of "bramble patterned teapot Sonja had once smashed" (416). The broken pieces of the teapot symbolize broken, shattered, fragmented lives of the father and the daughter and since the teapot is "once more complete" (416), similarly their lives also become complete "finally together in one piece" (416). The baby brings them together and heals their wounds to a great extent, making their survival become easier.

Sonja celebrates her craving for the old place by visiting the Butlers George where she spent all those turbulent years of her life. Tying ribbons on the four pegs around their old place, she imagines her mother still singing a Slovak song. Overwhelmingly transported, she reconnects with this place whenever a strong urge propels her within and wonders that she will never be able to "tell her daughter of what only those who lived it can ever know" (425). With the weight of a troubled past, Sonja now thinks of making things easier for Maria, a reflection of what she herself lacked as Maria's daughter.The child becomes the only source of the father and the daughter to face the trying times.

To conclude, the paper thus traces a trajectory of bitter experiences making the central female force in a family committing suicide, and thereby prodding the others around it to feel its reverberations throughout. War shakes the womb, foetus feels the force, and the bearer of both, i.e, the mother finds dearth of any positive energy amidst nihilism of worst kind emanating from the World War II. The father and the daughter attempt to move from suicide to survival but only after striking their heads against the odds, separating from each other, confronting each other, reuniting after years only to come to terms with their embittered lives. The arrival of the young girl child ensures the smoothening of rough edges of their lives, making them infuse hopes in her. Though the father-daughter relation remains affected due to traumatic past and unbearable present, it nevertheless shines through. Building on her own troubled relationship with her father, Linda Schierse Leonard in her book *The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship* writes that many "women suffer from a wounded relationship with their fathers, although the details may differ and the wound may hurt in myriad ways" (xviii). As a canonical text, thus, the novel poignantly captures the emotions of a father and daughter who at the end try to make their lives meaningful despite the flurry of various emotional, material, physical, and psychological concerns.

Further it is important to note that the beginning of the text

from 1954 and ending in 1989 traces the trajectory of Australia's journey from the White Australia Policy to the adoption of multiculturalism from 1970s. It is, therefore, important to note that while the arrival of the Bulohs in Tasmania is marked with countless ordeals, their movement further with the passing of years becomes stable at the end. It marks the fruitful years of multiculturalism as is evidenced through the reunion of the father and the daughter and their owning a place in Hobart.

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Reading and Telling Stories: Rediscovering Culture in Patricia Grace's *Potiki*

Daisy Verma

New Zealand is a group of Islands located in Oceania, a region centered on the islands of tropical Pacific Ocean, southeast of Australia. North Island, Campbell Island and the Antipodes Islands are the three main Islands of New Zealand. The capital of New Zealand, Wellington, is located at the south end of North Island. About five hundred years ago, in the fourteen century, a number of people sailed from the island Polynesia to New Zealand seeking a more peaceful home in the fair and just land of Aoeteara. The first inhabitants of New Zealand were the ancestors of the present day indigenous people or the M oris which literally means 'native' and 'original'. They initially migrated from Polynesia and settled in New Zealand. The M ori lived as tribal groups in accordance with eastern Polynesian social customs by locating resources, collecting mineral ores, hunting and fishing. They lived as a collection of three to four generations which is called 'whanau', a legacy of grandparents, parents and close family. M ori culture includes art, legend, tattoo, 'haka' (war dance), hospitality and language. In 1814, missionaries from The Church Missionary Society, London, arrived in New Zealand wherein a treaty (Treaty of Waitangi) was signed between the forty M ori chiefs and British crown. By 1841, the British crown managed to overpower the M oris and more power was given to Pakehas (Europeans). Before their contact with the Whites, M ori religion was based on important concepts of 'mana' (power and prestige) and ' tapu' and they practiced 'utu', exchange and reciprocity of goods or obligations which was meant to strengthen and improve relations between two tribes, families and two individuals. The white Colonization not only took their land but also robbed them of their culture, tradition, land and their way of life.

Literature has always been a powerful influence on the development of any nation - it reflectsthe society and also influences it simultaneously. The first contributors of New Zealand literature were Pakehas who claimedto possess a deep knowledge on M ori language and traditions. However, their use of 'te reo' (M ori language) was based on the belief that M oripeople were disappearing and that their tradition may soon be replaced by the settlers. Consequently, the treatment of M ori figures, by modern standards, is often patronizing and dismissive. The text written by the Pakehas echoed their own viewpoint and aimed to suppress the Maoris and make them passive subjects:

> The text were the 'invisible bullets' in the arsenal of empire. In both conquest and colonization , text and textuality played a major part… Within the complex relations of colonialism these representation were re-projected to the colonized—through formal education or general colonialist cultural relation- as authrotative pictures of themselves (qtd. in Ashcfort 91).

Pakehas represented the indigenous M oris in a literary medium alien to the M oris themselves, without M ori reciprocity. As a result, the M oris came with narratives that responded against Pakeha representations and started presenting the real picture of their life and culture. Their writings have emerged as powerful literary and political identities. M ori literature now stands out as a means through which M ori culture is re-examined, re-evaluated and re-affirmed. Their ancient use of oral tradition of transmitting messages and indigenous knowledge is one of the most powerful tool of preserving their tradition and culture, "Three forms of expression were prominent in M ori and Polynesian Oral literature, namely narrative prose, poetry and genealogical" (*M ori*29). It was in the nineteenth century that M oris started writing novels. One of the most powerful M ori voice is Patricia Grace, the writer and the story teller who echoes the M ori culture and

way of M ori life in her works.

Born to a M ori Father and a European mother, Grace identifies herself as a M ori and traces her roots to the clans of Ngnti, Ngati Raukawa and Te Ati Awa iwi. While teaching and raising seven children, she joined a writing club and began publishing her stories. Her first book, *Waiariki and Other Stories*(1975), presents a multiplicity of M ori voices, revealing much about M ori life and concerns. Her next *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps*(1978)examines a marriage between a M ori woman and a man of European descent (Pakeha).Her collection of stories, *The Dream Sleepers and Other Stories*(1980) was followed by her writings for children. Althoughher books are written in English, they are sprinkled with untranslated M ori words. In 1985, Grace was awarded the Victoria University of Wellington Writing Fellowship which she used to complete her second novel, *Potiki* (1986). This remarkable novel about M ori respect and feeling for environment won the New Zealand Award for Fiction.Grace's writing has been translated into many languages, including the notable translation of *Potiki* into M ori by Huia.Grace's works investigate M ori experiences through a diverse range of protagonists. Grace is recognized for her contribution as a pioneer in New Zealand Literature.

Potiki (meaning the last-born child), is a broken story about a broken people disabled in one way or another representing the community which is dying out. The novel is narrated by a woman named Roimata,her husband Hemi Tamihana and her adopted son, Toko who belong to a M ori tribe living on the New Zealand coastline in the early Eighties. Like all marginalized cultures, the M oris have struggled for the past two centuries to keep their identity in an ever-changing, unsympathetic world. *Potiki* is a saga of a tribe's struggle where many members of the community have lost their jobs, including Roimata's husband Hemi. Hemi decides that the family needs to go back to the land; that farming is the only way their people will survive both starvation and a culture-change. He finds that his community is threatened by a land developer who wants to purchase the community

property, move the community meeting hall, and construct many new buildings, including an 'underwater zoo.' The novel portrays the cultural differences that exist in New Zealand, and the uses and abuses of power, and its affect on people.

The novel portrays how land is a significant part of the M ori identity, as they care and nurture it and in return, the land provides for them. Hemi says, 'All we need is here'. This also shows the true definition of 'wealth'. True wealth is not in terms of monetary worth but based on the quality of life. This attitude is greatly contrasted with the Pakeha developers, who wish to exploit the M ori land and make a profit by building 'first class accommodation' and 'top restaurants.' By using Hemi to deliver the idea of land being a part of the M oriidentity, Grace gives an insight to understand the greed of the developers. The story traces the relationship between land and water and its importance to the M ori identity. Toko has a special 'knowing' which allows him to foretell future events. Patricia Grace draws strong parallels between Toko's character and the M ori demi-god, Maui. Toko was born at sea from a seemingly mythical father, which is similar to the Maui myth of 'How Maui was Born.' He also catches a 'big fish' due to his 'special knowing' which is clearly linked to 'How Maui caught his Big Fish.' By tying mythical elements into Toko's character, Grace gives an insight into the spirituality of the M ori culture. Roimata's unconditional love for Toko allows us to see that individuals must move past the value of appearance in order to achieve true happiness in life. The three characters of Hemi, Toko and Roimata deliver Patricia Grace's key messages about the M ori culture and their beliefs and values.

The novel shows the factual representation of the M ori-Pakeha conflict over rights to land and cultural integrity. It recounts in detail how a small coastal community struggles to fend off unscrupulous land developers who intend to infringe upon their ancestral land and build a resort in the vicinity. The community, however, recuperates successfully from a despondent past and engages actively in sustainable economic and educational projects that will ensure, even in times of hardship, the

survival of their cultural base in M ori tradition. After pointing to Pakeha strategies of silencing and marginalization and M ori counter-strategies of vocal defiance, Grace "having sought previously to soothe her Pakeha readers and to suppress her anger, is now ready to charge them, not with past and irremediable injustices, but with continuing injustices" (Beston 501). The novel's political conflict attempts to investigate the dialectic maneuvering of meaning within and between the two levels of *Potiki,* the factual and the spiritual, and explore the significance of empowering voices that can transcend time and place. It is a realist account of the M ori-Pakeha confrontation with the double effect that Grace both amplifies the profundity of the M ori story and draws it to the multicultural reader. In the prologue to *Potiki*, Grace introduces the rituals associated with carving and she offers us in fact the 'master narrative' that her own novel abides by: it will be "as though a child brings about the birth of a parent because that which comes from under the master's hand is older than he is, is already ancient"(Grace8). The prologue is introduced by a chant, as a story of living potential, of procreation and process as it pertains to human existence in the M ori world at large, a story of beginnings emerging from the existential realm of Te Kore (void), an original nothingness of silence and invisibility (45). This mythic story is not told in *Potiki,* but is everywhere to be found as a structuring subtext that informs and transforms the plot.Like the world itself, so a carving and any other text will have emerged from the same spiralingprocess of maturation as Grace relates about the ancestral figures in the carving of the prologue, "The previous life, the life within the tree womb, was a time of eyelessness, of waiting,swelling, hardening. It was a time of existing, already browed, tongued, shouldered, fingered,sexed, footed, toed, and of waiting to be shown as such. But eyeless" (8). Given 'eversight' and as whirling storytelling tongue by the carver, the carving will forever relate its stories to the people.

The story exemplifies M ori meaning of inherent wisdom which alludes to the temporal complexity of M ori thinking. The 'past' in M ori is called nga ra o mua, whichmeans 'the days in front' meaning

that to lose sight of what is right in may be considered the equivalent of cultural blindness.It is through the lens of the past that in the novel the shifting moments of the present close in on a view to the future and it is in particular through the communal and sacred vantage point ofToko, "[His] knowing, [his] ownknowingness, is different. It is a before, and a now, and an after knowing, and not like the knowing that other people have. It is a knowing as if everything is now" (52). Toko is both ordinary and ordained, both contemporary and timeless, , he is also one of the rare blessed ones who are already old when born and therefore his words are veiled in prophecy about events to come. A glance through Toko's stories with M ori

meaning, however, shifts the significance of his character considerably; besides his contemporary incarnation as a visionary child and the symbolic quality bestowed upon him as a savior (a Christlike figure with a mother named Mary and, possibly, a father named Joseph) Toko is reincarnated,after his tragic physical death at the hands of the Pakeha land developers, and recast as a Maui figure. Like Maui, the Polynesian trickster and culture hero, Toko comes into the world of light atthe shore, that highly ambivalent space of in-between-ness signifying both dissolution and regeneration, and like Maui, Toko also has a 'fish' story, a 'fire"'story and, ultimately, a 'death' story.

The progression of the storytelling in the novelbrings about the metamorphosis of the reader into listeners. In the process of transition, readers are taken from the outside area of the whanau into the sacred sphere of the wharenui where the terms'there and here', 'then and now' merge. It takes us to a sacred time and space, the natural habitat of myth, a space that is timeless even if it does not, however, exist outside a sense of time but ratherinside a sense of time that is qualitative and rhythmic. As Romiata comes to realize: "all time is a now-time, centred in the being [who] simply reaches out in any direction towards the outer circles … being named 'past' and 'future' only forour convenience" (39).Like Toko, whose complexity as a character is understood ultimately through the novel's intertextuality with M ori myth, the deeper significance of

the other characters should also befound in the relationship between the stories they tell and the myths, the 'given stories' of the house within which they are told. Myth mingles with history and the present moment. Grace carves out from the subjectivities of her characters a unique spiraling conception of evolution and process, of human experience and development. Her "tools, [the] mind and [the] heart"craves out her characters. What the characters represent in terms of a M ori consciousness overshadows their individual identities in the sense that diversity is distilled into unity, individual strengths into a collective power. And so, for instance, "a 'woman' tells of sky and earth, pain and love; of how she had been delivered and had 'come there, being flown on the backs of gulls to a man of the soil. In being turned away we have turned to each other, the one looking to the sky the other to the earth — the mother to the father, the father to the mother" (175). A man " tells of a long time spent looking at the soil, which is not turningone's back on the world but "a way of making the pain less … of living through. No reia, tena koutou katoa" (177).

In M ori culture, the wharenui is not simply a venue; it embodies the spirit of the land and people, it is a turangawhaewhae (a place to stand). With its human form -it has a head, backbone, ribcage and limbs and is conceived as a macrocosm of the people's founding ancestors (body) and as a microcosm of the spiritual world of the people (soul). When entering a wharenui, M ori people meet within the wooden anatomy of their ancestors and this is a personified experience as Grace informs us: "The house is a parent, and there was warmth in under the parental backbone,enclosement amongst the patterned ribs" (88). Thus, the house is a corporeal manifestation of culture in which the collective memory of the whanau functions as a pulse that keeps it alive. As this magnified M ori Person, the wharenui is endowed with sensibilities and a lyrical perceptivity which runs like a vein of creativity through the timbered parts of its body: "There was in the meeting house a wood quiet … a watching quiet … a waiting quiet … But this quiet is an outward quiet only, because within this otherness there is a sounding, a

ringing, a beating, a flowing [of] stories to tell. Stories that lace and bind the earthly matters to matters not of the earth" (87). Thus M ori stories lace and bind the stories of contemporary everyday people to stories of the stories of their ancestors. With the merging of individual titled stories and communal untitled storiesin *Potiki*, the symbolic anatomy of the wharenui and the spiritual meaning inherent in carvingsgain further significance for the interpretation of the entire novel.

Potiki, with its rhythm of expansion and contraction, of taking in and giving out,can be seen as symbolic of its social breath — as the mode of cultural respiration which ensures for the whanau of the Tamihana family that "good had followed what was not good, on the circle of[their] days" (145). It is precisely because of the interactions between matter and spirit, betweenthe empirical multicultural world of New Zealand and the sacred other world of M oritanga mademanifest in the wharenui that the cultural politics of *Potiki* become dynamic and regenerative. It would seem that the culture is carried intrinsically in its belief system and the structural manifestations of this system safeguard against stagnation. Grace's design of a narrative with two coordinated plots shows that "the duality it creates is notone of adjacent spaces but rather a dual division which intertwines and grows within the same space as the two arms of the spiral revolve outward from … a common centre point" (Hanson,"When" 84). The outer spiral represents the time and given stories and this refinement, however, is what all protagonistsin *Potiki* are searching for and what they come to accomplish through Grace who, in her own tradition, may not be the master of what eventually comes from her hands, but who surely is amaster of the skills that bring it out.Grace has crafted her text, like the artists who construct a wharenui, into the meeting place of a community's mind, well-aware that there are certain formal requirements attached to the telling of stories in such a setting.

The fusion of the political and the poetical in this novel is the fact that its beat is both outspoken and meditative, suggests that according to the conventions of M ori storytelling there is no tension between these

two modes of talking. The lack ofcontradiction, in turn, suggests that within the context of the wharenui there is no real tensionbetween the political and the traditional. The entire narrative of *Potiki* is told from within and, possibly, by the wharenui.One imagines how the recital of stories sounds through an open door into the marae ground infront of the house before it swirls into the world at large as spirals of sound and voice.

The Foreword of *Potiki* turns out to be the summing up of the story is craved upon "…the story is never 'told' rather, and more subtly, we come to understand it as we read in another's voice" (9). This novel shows that stories are more than mere memories and is a representative a M ori way of life. It is an account of their love of the land—how it essential for their survival; their sense of community and spirituality which continuously unites a spread out people; and also the hardships they endure within their families and against foreigners.The way Grace writes *Potiki* is also emblematic of the M ori emphasis on storytelling and history. It is made clear when Roimata has an epiphany discovering that all her ancestors, herself, and her children make up one single history which defines their people. There is no real past, present, or future; there is only the M ori way of life that is continuously passed on through each generation. In this way it is important that the different stories throughout the novel are not in chronological order because it proves that the M ori believe that whatever order they really happen doesn't really make any difference. They still are one people who live off the land and tell stories which are their histories. This novel is emblematic of the M ori way of life. A person's history and stories are more important to him than anything else in the world and they are worth dying for. The old carver wanted desperately to be remembered: "End is always beginning. Death is life" (68). The man knew that even though his life was over, he could never truly die because his stories would be told on through the generations. He would be remembered because of the carvings he made and be omnipresent with the past present and future generations of the M ori people. *Potiki* is a novel

through which Grace wants people to learn the M ori way of life, respect it, and realize why it is worth fighting for.

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Transnationality, Multiculturalism and 'New' Cosmopolitanism: Indo-Australian Interface in *of Sadhus and Spinners: Australian Encounters with India*

Asis De

At the beginning of the final decade of the twentieth century, the world has witnessed two very significant events shaping the politico-economic environment both in the West and in the East: the end of the Cold War (1947-1991) and the introduction of Globalization, or, in other words, 'economic liberalization'.In the post-Cold War era (following the collapse of the Soviet Union on 31 December 1991), precisely in the mid-nineties of the last century, Australia started adopting the policy of 'Look West' with a particular interest in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)—specifically with India and South Africa expecting a rapid development in the economic relationship. India complements this Australian policy by openingwindows for bilateral cooperation in the field of trade and investment, on the issue of military and political security, on collaborative educational activities and cultural exchangein the 1990s after adopting economic liberalization. On the issue of academic and cultural exchange, the formation of the *Indian Association for the Study of Australia* in the year 2000 is preciselyan important step towards making different "facets of Australian society including culture, humanities, social sciences, international studies, media and literature" (cf. *Webpage of IASA*) familiar to the people in India. The IASA and the AIC (Australia-India Council), working in close association with India's premier Universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, IGNOU in Delhi, the University of Madras in Chennai, or even Mohanlal Sukhadia University in Udaipur, have taken crucial roles in shaping the forums for the discussion of the cultural and literary interrelationship between India and Australia. So, it is undeniable that in the last twenty-five years, the Indo-Australian interface has taken a remarkably positive turn and a

new equation of collaboration between these two countries has been noticed in the Indian Ocean rim.

As a result of economic liberalization in India, transnational movement of Indian students and workers to Australia has been slumped by more than 50%, as there is a warm reciprocation of the politico-diplomatic ties between the two nations.This steady trend isquite visible from the beginning of the new millennium, though statistically, the reverse mobility of Australian students and workers coming to India is hardly noticeable. The reason is quite apparent: better job opportunities in a relatively sound economy and ease of life in the multicultural society of Australia. In her book entitled*Money, Migration, and Family: India to Australia* (2016), Supriya Singh observes: "Australia is seen as attractive because it is a high-income country like the USA, Canada and the U.K." (8).As the transnational flow of Indian people in the rather urbanized society of Australian cities increases in the last couple of decades, it has simultaneously attracted the flow of capital from India as well. The Mumbai film industry, where the economy and cultural representation go hand-in-hand, is a good example: "Australia has become part of overseas scenes in Bollywood films such as *DilChahta Hai* (2001), *Salaam Namaste* (2005), *Chak De India* (2007), *Crook* (2010), and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013)" (Singh4). From the dates of the release of these Bollywood films, it becomes clear that the transnational flow of culture and the capital has sufficiently increased after economic liberalization after the final decade of the previous century, though it is mostly a unidirectional flow from India to Australia.

While reflecting over the spirit of recognition of heterogeneity, cultural plurality and the Indo-Australian literary-cultural interface, Sanjukta Dasgupta appearsquite optimistic, though she precisely points out the importance of a "two-way flow" in the process of building up a properly "engaged" transnational relationship: "…that defining engaged spirit that can help in strengthening India's ties with Australia,

ensuring that the two-way flow will destabilize the rigid boundaries and borders of race, colour, religion, gender and location, and help in re-defining identity and community constructions" (12). It is a truism that a two-way transnationality is always preferred for a healthy and proportionate bilateral cultural relationship. However, in reality, the almost one-way transnational migration from India to Australia often shows its nightmares! The mounting number of the 'new' immigrants challenges the 'local' Australians with certain insecurities like the fear of losing jobs, economic crises and also other issues like ethno-racial hatred and distrust which ends ultimately in deadly brawls[1].Such ethno-racial strife recently noticed in several incidents with Indian immigrants in the multicultural and multi-ethnic society of Australia "is an effect of the complex transnationalnetwork of capitalist-inspired social relations that structures ourcontemporary world" (Huggan vi).The situation became so 'appalling' that while addressing the Indian Parliament on this issue, the then Indian Prime Minister,Dr. Manmohan Singh, had to say that he felt alarmed "by the senseless violence and crime, some of which are racist in nature."[2]But the Australian media is still hopeful with the situation and demands that the situation nowadays has been far better compared to the period between 2008-2013, as the South Asia correspondent of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation James Burnett reports on 7 April 2017, during the previous Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's visit to New Delhi last year: "India no longer fears racial attacks on its students in Australia" (*ABC News*: 7 April 2017). Statistical data is somewhat hopeful and the present Australian Prime Minister Scott John Morrison (24 August, 2018-), belonging to the same 'Liberal' wing, like his predecessor Turnbull, is expected to adopt India-friendly policies to remove the stains of racist allegation against Australian cultural space that often boasts of interethnic tolerance and multiculturality.

However, the Indo-Australian literary-cultural relationship, historically saying, is not just a post-Cold War phenomenon arising out of diplomatic and politico-economic needs of global collaboration and

policy making. There is an age-old literary-cultural bond between the two countries, if one keeps even out of considerationthe common history of the British rule and the shared passion for cricket! The Indo-Australian interface can be found in literary and cultural productions since the mid-19th century.Even then, it was the result of unidirectional initiatives taken by the Australian side, as the "history of Indian migration to Australia traditionally goes back to thearrival of lone males from British India in the first half of the nineteenthcentury to work as labourers, camel drivers and hawkers" (Singh 5). The second Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin visited India as far back as in the 1890s and wrote two books thereafter as a result of his visit—*Temple and Tomb in India* and *Irrigated India: An Australian View of India and Ceylon*, both of which were published in 1893. Even before this, the substantial literary reference of John Lang (1816-1864), the first Australia-born novelist and columnist— who was simultaneously a barrister and a champion of democracy, landed in India in 1842 (Calcutta, Meerut and finally, Mussoorie) and lived in this country till his death in 1864 (apart from his two short visits to England in the 1850s). John Lang is credited with the authorship of nine novels, a collection of short stories and a narrative named *Wanderings in India*(1859). While commenting on the contribution of John Lang to the Anglophone literary and cultural world and his eventual move to India till his death, John Earnshaw, in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* observes: "Through narrow social sanction Australia lost one of its most brilliant sons and its first native-born novelist".However, the name ofJohn Lang went into oblivion except for a footnote in Ifor Evans's *A Short History of English Literature* till Ruskin Bond discovered his mossed and ivy-clad grave at a Landour graveyard in Mussoorie precisely after one hundred years of Lang's death, in 1964.Lang's book*Wanderings in India*, published in London far back in 1859, reminds us of the long literary linkage between India and Australia since the second half of the nineteenth century.

Just after one hundred and fifty years of the publication of Lang's *Wanderings in India*(1859), authors and literary editors like

Bruce Bennet, Susan Cowan, Santosh K. Sareen and Asha Kanwar have prepared an anthology of short stories entitled *Of Sadhus and Spinners: Australian Encounters with India (*2009) primarily aiming at giving "further depth to a bilateral relationship which is set to thrive in the early twenty-first century" (Bennet et al. xi). A compilation of twenty-two stories, this volume traces"both literary interest and new perspectives on a changing world of which Australian-Indian relations are a vital part" (Bennet et al. xi).Among all the twenty-two stories in this collection, I concentrate only on select four to substantiate my argument on the transnational and multicultural flavour of the Indo-Australian literary productions. My selection comprises of two stories authored by Australian writers and two by diasporic Indian authors in Australia.To elaborate upon my point of 'new' cosmopolitanism in such literary works, I have selected these four stories— all of which have been published originally after the 1980s, as "Australian fiction publishing has been extremely active, especially since the 1980s" (Bird 184). Though these stories are written precisely before the policies of economic Globalization and bilateral cooperation between India and Australia were about to take off, they represent how cross-cultural encounters between the Indians and the Australians and their psycho-emotional responses towards these encounters ultimately frame a bridge of communication between the two nations. How the inter-ethnic relationship is not something hinged between the binary of an archetypal Indian inferiority and a quasi-western Australian superiority, but dependent on the possibilities of multicultural coexistence and a cosmopolitan attitude to life in a relatively new environment, is the essential point which the present article attempts to explore.

The first story of my selection in this article is the Australian author Geoffrey Bewley's "Passage from India"[3], which is set on-board a seavoyage from Madras to Malaysia.Lindsay and Sylvia, a couple from Australia, with their daughter Becky are travelling to Malaysia after a six-month stay in India along with a host of other characters: an Indian family consisting of two teenager boys, an American elderly couplewith

their daughters, a single lady named Elsa from Germany along with a crowd of people travelling to the same destination in Malaysia. Bewley has created in the ship an iconic multicultural space where people from different nationality and ethnic origins meet and interact. The author's choice of the ship on the move as the setting emphasizes the primacy of the route and simultaneously, denies the issues of ethnic roots and attachment. As the character Lindsay talks to the Indian boy and finds that the boy is asserting the supremacy of Indian values and philosophy over the Western, he does not express any annoyance, and we come to know that Lindsay has become a vegetarian[4] during the time he was staying in Delhi. While conversing with Elsa, the German lady on-board, Lindsay asks—"Oh, you didn't like India?" she tells that she finds India as a country with "the cripple, and the dying people and the dirt" (Bennet et al., 132-133). Lindsay does not pass any negative comments about India. Even the reader finds him poised despite his dislike at his wife Sylvia's recently-grown habit of reading the devotional books authored by the Indian Yogi, Sai Baba[5], whom they happened to meet during their stay in Madras. He considers the Indian religious way as substantial, but he does not understand why people are so frenzied after the name of this "Baba". As Lindsay describes their experience of meeting Sai Baba to Elsa, and how the sudden magical spell of religiosity working on his wife Sylvia, he seems quite indifferent about whether this may cause a religious conversion! Bewley's story "Passage from India" reaches its climax, as Sylvia snaps the American lady for calling Sai Baba "a total fraud" who mesmerizes the frenzied fans "with his so-called philosophy, and he does his little magic tricks for them, and then he takes them for everything he can get" (Bennet et al. 139). Lindsay feels upset realizing the seriousness of his wife's involvement with the philosophy of the Indian guru, and attempts assimilation with this new Indian religiosity in his domestic space by reading passages from a holy book of Baba: "Duty without love is deplorable. Duty with love is desirable. Love without duty is divine" (Bennet et al. 141). This sounds like a religious doctrine which leads someone from materiality to

spiritual consciousness. However, to Lindsay, this is a message of love that enables him to attain the "desirable" tolerance as he continues chanting—"You are the light" time and again at the end of the story. The story critiques the archetypal western idea of India as a country of "the cripple, and the dying people and the dirt", a country full of religious gurus and "Baba" exploiting their simple-minded disciples.At the end of Bewley's "Passage from India", one obtains a spiritual consciousness alloyed with interethnic tolerance and love.

The second story for analysis in this article is David Malouf's "A Foot in the Stream"[6], which the narrator-traveller begins by pointing out the common and conventional Western notion about the country: "The fear of India. It comes in many forms. Fear of dirt, fear of illness, fear of people; fear of the unavoidable presence of misery, fear of a phenomenon so dense and plural that it might, in its teeming inclusiveness, swamp the soul and destroy our certainty" (Bennet et al. 142). While describing the poverty-stricken, crowded and over-populated Indian cities like Bombay and Delhi with all their physical dimensions, the narrator-traveller unmistakably notices the stream-like movement of people on Indian roads all walking "with purpose, and it is this that makes these crowds so odd to the western eye" (Bennet et al. 145). The narrator utters a soliloquy-like explanation in his attempt to catch the tempo of the Indianness everywhere: "Where are they going? They suggest some important rendezvous up ahead, a circus performance it might be, or a cricket match, or political rally…. The inclusiveness of the Indian, and specifically the Hindu view, subtly blurs in the mind as in the eye our usual categories" (Bennet et al. 145).To Malouf, this collective enterprise of seemingly peaceful coexistence, of living together, of constituting the 'national' identity of India amid so much cultural diversities, disparities and even miseries, is the charm of Indian life and culture.The narrator-traveller of Malouf's "A Foot in the Stream"reflects: "We will survive here, we humans, one species among many—that is what India promises" (Bennet et al. 146). This is a unique awareness, an attempt to view India as a utopia, where millions of half-

fed people live with a "sense of freedom" (Bennet et al. 147) and "enterprise" (Bennet et al. 146).The narrator describes a six-year-old boy earning his living on polishing the shoes of the pedestrians, and finds him "indestructible": "he has such energy, such tenacity and resourcefulness, that I can also imagine him surviving as the dusty little sparrows do" (Bennet et al. 146). In conclusion, the narrator provides the reader with a deep understanding of the bond between the indomitable spirit of human nature and its interrelatedness with culture, thereby pointing out the essential truth of multiculturality of the world, and its supremacy over any narrow form of cultural ghettoization: "To step out of our own culture for a time does not relieve us of history, or of the human nature that flows from it; but it does make history relative, and leaves us surrounded for a moment by 700 million souls who are innocent of what we know because the culture, the 'human nature' that produced it, is not theirs" (Bennet et al. 148). In both these stories authored byGeoffrey Bewleyand David Malouf, the spirits of interethnic tolerance and multicultural coexistence have been celebrated to the full, though with the gentle reminder that multiculturalism is not any spatial attribute, but awareness behind human attitude to life and socio-cultural harmony. We may call it a 'new' kind of cosmopolitanism that "impliesan attitude ofopenness as opposed to closure" (Delanty 2), cultural inclusivity as opposed to a bordered space of westernized ideas to which India remains'archetypally' inferior.

After exploring the Indian scenarios, the people and culture of India through the eyes of Australian writers like Bewley and Malouf, now I turn to the third story: SatendraNandan's "The Guru"[7]. Nandan, being anAustralian writer of Indian originborn in Fiji, has his first-hand experiences of transnationality, and his story entitled "The Guru"is a reflection on theart of resourceful survival in diasporic condition: a cross-cultural investigation of the second-generation diasporic Indian minds and family life, the story mainly concentrates on the relationship of the narrator-protagonist, who, after earning a Law degree from

Tasmania has returned home and Pundit Bhondu who was once his teacher presently earning his livelihood by taking the role of a village priest. The word 'Guru' qualifies for both the roles of Pundit Bhondu. Recounting several childhood incidents and experiences of school life, when the Pundit was a teacher, the narrator also embarks upon his plight regarding the dilemma of being caught between Hinduism and Christianity. The religio-cultural identity becomes the basis of the complex interethnic experience followed by the secret marriage of the protagonist with a Christian lady and his conversion to Christianity: "Of course, I didn't have the courage to tell anyone at home that I had become a Christian in Tasmania to marry Wendy" (Bennet et al. 152). The Hindu religious ritual of the narrator's homecoming has been depicted with minute details, as it functionally becomes a counter-discourse of the interethnic marriage between two systems of faith and his religious conversion. By employing several humorous situations and sharp verbal irony, Nandan has given the message that though an interethnic marriage could be accepted in the diasporic Indian Hindu society, the issue of religious conversion is something that usually creates a dismembering from the community. The issues of interethnic relationship and multiculturalism have found expression, often contradicted with the issue of religious purity, thus adding to the comic effect of the story: "I heard Bhondu belching '*OumSoaha*', as he asked me to pour more pure New Zealand *ghee* on the mango twigs that were smouldering on the brink of an explosion" (Bennet et al. 157). The reference to "pure New Zealand *ghee* on the mango twigs" emphasizes the issue of cultural hybridity in diasporic condition. Nandan has used sufficient Sanskrit wordsand phrases in the story to elaborate upon the ritualistic details of celebrating a Hindu homecoming, and at the end of the story has provided the readers with a glossary of twenty words, which is itself a mark of the multicultural interest of the Australian readers. The apparent confusion of the narrator-protagonist at the end of the story — "'Om Soha!' I said, silently. Or was it 'Amen'?" (Bennet et al., 157), is an instance of inclusive cultural identity beyond the rigid boundary of one

system of religious faith. The 'new' cosmopolitanism in the diasporic Indian Hindu cultural space of Australian society is inspired by the ethics of multiculturalism and finds expression in this inclusivity under the garb of apparent confusion.

The fourth and final story to be explored in this article, ManikDatar's "My Sister's Mother"[8] could be read as a representation of cross-cultural developments between Indianness and diasporic experience in Australian cultural space. The setting of this story, like the earlier one authored by Nandan, is a diasporic Indian household in Australia, where two cousin-sisters are preparing some special dishes on the post-Diwali Sisters' Day to feed their cousin-brother, as they get ready to perform the ritual related to the religio-cultural event. Among the two sisters, the elderly sister has arrived in Australia for a short term, and she is mostly a believer in Indian domestic values like considering the husband as a confirmed patriarch, cooking food for the family members as per "their own cultural, personal and even whimsical taste" (Bennet et al. 185), and so on, whereas the younger sister is a diasporic Indian who had come to Australia with her parents when she was a kid of ten years only.The younger sister is now a lady with an Australian husband and a family of her own. The elder sister takes every privilege to make the younger understand that India has by now become a progressive country, where womenfolk in the domestic space use electric mixer-grinder to make the spices for daily cooking. In contrary, the younger sister, who is the narrator of the story as well, is found to keep in her "proudest possession" a "white marble mortar and pestle" (Bennet et al. 185)for getting the spices ready! The story is replete with several reflections and ruminations which could be read as a cross-cultural commentary aiming at a comparative understanding between the old and the new Indian diaspora in Australia.At the end of the story, as their brother appears to have the dinner, and the younger sister asks her Australian husband Peter to prepare the table for Arun— the brother, the elder sister finds the situation precisely heretic for dismantling the foundation of patriarchy: "My sister holds her breath and stops in mid-

track, anxiously studying Peter's expression to see if he displays anger or annoyance at this incidence of losing face in front of his in-laws. Peter reaches out for the glistening stainless steel Indian dinner service and says, 'Hm. Smells delicious'" (Bennet et al., 186).Datar's target subject in this story is precisely the traditional and normative patriarchy of Indian society or at its broadest, the idea of gender discrimination in the domestic space of Indian household. The difference between the two cousin-sisters' attitude to domesticity and precisely to the role of patriarchy within the household has been marked as generational, as the younger sister points out: "My sister's mother is a demure and loyal lady who always backs down in any difference of opinion with my sister's father. My mother is a matriarch, firm in her views" (Bennet et al. 184). Like religion or the ethnic background, gender is also taken as a marker of cultural identity, and it traditionally defines a closed space for the women in many Indian households. As "the social imaginary of cosmopolitanism can be located" (Delanty 7) in real-life experiences of people, the reader notices in this story an attempt to transcend not just the boundary of ethno-cultural space in the diasporic multicultural society of Australia, but also a movement to cross the border of normative tradition to a new kind of cosmopolitan awareness.

The spirit of this 'new' cosmopolitanism, emanating out of multicultural coexistence andcooperation, of collaboration, of inter-ethnic tolerance either in the domestic space, or in the broader socio-cultural space, either in India or in Australia, is quite hopefully visible in this twenty-first century. If practically seen, both India and Australia are multicultural countries, where the plurality of socio-cultural actors inspires the cognitive dimension of modernity, accelerating the process of social transformation and development. The issue of transnationality, whether the directional vector is from Australia to India or the reverse, broadens the scope to examine the positive dimensions of multicultural societies, by making either party "aware of the scope and limitations of their particular positionsthrough their relations with each other" (Strydom 32). The proposition made by the eminent cosmopolitan

sociologist Ulrich Beck upholds the integral relationship between transnationality and cosmopolitanism: "cosmopolitanization means *internal* globalization,globalization *from within* the national societies" (Beck, 2002: 17; original emphasis). In all these four short narratives explored in this article, the reader could notice how transnational movements, after all, inspire a migration from the rigidly defined socio-cultural space of "the national societies" of either India or Australia. The promotion of multiculturalism and a cosmopolitan spirit by the Indo-Australian literary-cultural interface includes simultaneously a variety of 'learning processes'[9]which are the basics behind the spirit of cosmopolitanism, a way of life preferred in any multicultural space over the earth. In the first two stories (authored by Geoffrey Bewley and David Malouf) analyzed in this article, one may notice a kind of civic cosmopolitanism, which is evident as the narrators—both with their experiences of travel in India learn about the inter-cultural communication necessary for an understanding of the host civil society. The following two stories (authored by Satendra Nandan and ManikDatar) explored here, talk about a kind of "*rooted* cosmopolitanism, having 'roots' and 'wings' at the same time" (Beck, 2002: 19; original emphasis) in the diasporic condition. Both multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism share a kind of *the mélange principle*, which is in no way expansionist by nature, but where "traditions interpenetrate, interconnectandintermingle"(Beck, 2006: 7) to create a happier world amid the global crises and differences.

Endnotes

1. On the other side of the coin of transnational migration to Australia, the grim reality could be found if one analyses the data of Indian students and workers being "attacked" in the last ten years: names of Indian students like Shravan Kumar (stabbed to death, May 2009), Nitin Garg (stabbed to death January 2010) or Maulin Rathod (stabbed to death 24 July 2018), and several

Indian taxi-drivers and bus-drivers stabbed or set to fire in several Australian cities like Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide only adding more to the nightmare. To quote the BBC correspondent Soutik Biswas appears relevant, as he reports: "Every other night, we have news presenters telling us over on-screen captions like "Indian Burnt In Australia" that Australia is a racist country, and that Melbourne is the most racist city of all". (12 January 2010)

2. The unprecedented interethnic brawls in the multicultural society of Australian cities earn a 'racist' dimension from the Indian point of view (as found in words used by the Indian Prime Minister: Hindustan Times, 9 June 2009), though the contemporary Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd does not find anything 'racist' in these events of ethnic strife, and he only requests the Indian protesters in Sydney and Melbourne to calm down condemning the "violence against the Indian student" (*The Guardian*, 10 June, 2009: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/10/australia-indian-students-attacked).
3. Geoffrey Bewley's '*Passage from India*' was initially published in *Westerly*, 1983, before the editors include this story in the anthology *Of Sadhus and Spinners: Australian Encounters with India* (2009).
4. Being a vegetarian is usually considered to be an archetypal Indian value, closely associated with the Hindu religious world view. In many Hindu scriptures, as well as in the Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, vegetarianism is credited with *sattvic* values, which purify both the body and the mind. Lindsay's adoption of veganism clearly defines the positive dimensions of cross-cultural exchanges.
5. The "Sai Baba" about whom Lindsay tells Elsa in '*Passage from India*', is probably the real-life South Indian Guru known as

Sathya Sai Baba (1926-2011) whose principal teaching insists on enlightenment through the realization that human beings are incarnations of divinity.

6. Before its inclusion in *Of Sadhus and Spinners: Australian Encounters with India* (2009), David Malouf's '*A Foot in the Stream*' has been extracted from the collection entitled *Hotel Asia*, originally published in 1985.
7. Satendra Nandan's short story '*The Guru*' was initially published in *Encounters*, before its inclusion in *Of Sadhus and Spinners* (2009).
8. Before its inclusion in *Of Sadhus and Spinners* (2009), ManikDatar's short story '*My Sister's Mother*' was published in *Quadrant* (2000).
9. The 'learning processes' are vital in any materially conditioned multicultural society not just for any mutual understanding of cultural diversity, but also for "inter-group, inter-cultural and inter-civilizational communication and cooperation" (Strydom 32).

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Dehumanization of Asylum Seekers and Refugees: The Politics of Fear and Paranoia in *Two Brothers*

Subhash Verma

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, as a concept and as a policy. 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. From its inception multiculturalism and its policies have been contested by many, both in Australia and overseas.

The official immigration policies of Australia become the subject of investigation and examination in *Two Brothers*, a play by Hannie Rayson, a Melbourne-based writer who is widely regarded as the most influential female playwright of the contemporary Australian Theatre. The play condemns those Australian policies which alienate individuals from their families and those government decisions which destroy lives and livelihood. In fact, all the plays of Hannie Rayson deal with controversial social issues in a realistic manner to expose social ills and to stimulate thought and discussion on the part of the audience. For her theatre is potentially the most subversive of all the art forms and unless it addresses the public agenda, it would die. Rayson firmly believes that political ideologies and politics affect a person's private life. Her plays *Life After George* (2000) and *Competitive Tenderness* (1996) clearly show how politics affects person's political and family life. *Life After George* offers a re-envisioning of the sixties and argues for the need to recapture belief in compassion and the need for class-based rebellion, and to incorporate these ideas into positive future movement.

The present paper is an attempt to analyse Hannie Rayson's *Two Brothers* as a political play which directly criticizes Australian immigration policies and questions their validity. Australia has pursued a racially based policy of restricted immigration and it has a history of the exclusion of the original inhabitants from its collective identity. Australian government's dehumanizing treatment of the refugees seeking asylum is central to the play. The state policies in a different sphere become the subject of examination and questioning in *Two Brothers* which was first produced by Sydney Theatre Company and Melbourne Theatre Company on 13 April, 2005. The play was an instant success, as Rayson informs, "It caused an intense media storm. It was discussed in the newspapers for 13 days in a row, as news items, opinion pieces, letters to the editor and so on. It touched a very raw nerve regarding immigration, border policies, asylum seekers. The play ran for 4 months to packed houses" (IJAS 18). In her conversation with Hilary Glow, Rayson recounts, "I supposed I don't think there's ever been an Australian play that's been discussed so much. Eighteen months after the first production, if I Google the news and myself there is always something in the news, something that talks about *Two Brothers*" (10). Not only the play directly dealt with a political issue, the response to the play was also highly political with opinions sharply divided.

Inspired by a real boat tragedy, it builds around a terrible human tragedy – the death of hundreds of refugees by drowning – that tears apart a family that has previously been able to accommodate its political and emotional differences. As the title 'Two Brothers' suggests, this play is about two brothers who find themselves on different sides of political fence. It is an explicitly political play as the play centres on the conflicts between two siblings over government policies. James "Eggs" Benedict is the Minister for Home Security in Australian Conservative Government, and is striving to become Prime Minister, while his brother Tom Benedict is a lawyer and CEO of the Lawson Foundation, a refugee welfare and advocacy group. Eggs is a high profile career conservative politician while Tom is a well known vocal left wing

activist. Eggs is portrayed as an anti-hero and he remains a villain throughout the play. Eggs is married to Fiona, who is stuck with sorrow due to the death of their elder son Marty due to drug addiction. Their younger son, Lachaln, is an officer in Australian Navy and currently engaged in protecting Australian borders from the illegal asylum seekers. Tom is married to Ange. She is a high school teacher. Their son Harry is an unemployed architect.

Two Brothers draws from the lives of public figures to explore a contemporary social problem. The play is openly based on the Costello brothers, Peter and Tim. Peter Costello was Deputy Prime Minister in Howard Government. Liberal politician Howard was Prime Minister of Australia from 1996 to 2007. The Howard Government's treatment of asylum seekers was praised by some as a necessary punishment for breaching Australia's borders, and an effective tool to discourage asylum seekers, and condemned by others as inhuman and cruel. Peter Costello was known for his hard line stance on asylum seekers. His aspirations for leadership were widely known, however, he never became Prime Minister. After the Howard Government's defeat in 2007, Peter left politics to work in the private sector. His brother Tim Costello is a Baptist Minister and CEO of a charitable organisation, World Vision, which is focused on social justice, poverty and human rights. In the play, they are transformed into Eggs Benedict, the wicked Liberal Minister for Home Security, and Tom Benedict, the bleeding heart liberal lawyer, an activist defending the rights of asylum seekers. Rayson admits that after watching *Two Brothers* Costello brothers came into the mind but "The play opens on a dark and stormy night with a cabinet minister stabbing a man to death in self-defence. That clearly signals to an audience that we have leapt into fiction" (Rayson 21).

In the play Eggs gives orders to a navy boat to refuse assistance to a sinking refugee boat Kelepasan. His brother Tom becomes the lawyer and protector of one of the survivors from the boat, Hazem-al-Ayad. The design of the play is spelt out so lucidly by Katharine Brisbane: "*Two Brothers* is a thriller which, within the parameters of dramatic

entertainment, poses some moral questions: when power is in your hands, how far will ideology and personal ambition drive you? Does the end ever justify the means?" (vii)

Hannie Rayson uses *Two Brothers* to examine the tragic consequences of a consuming lust for power and Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. At the heart of the play is a story of overpowering ambition and its consequences within a family and also a moral question that comes up from the government's response to the sinking boat. Rayson's argument in *Two Brothers* can be seen as, "If this is what power does to their families, how can we trust them to run the country?". So the play beautifully juxtaposes the personal ambitions with national politics. "In this play Rayson explores the mindset of a politician who not only catalyses a tragedy through deliberate inaction, but sees his own personal mission to become Prime Minister as reason enough to rationalize the gross moral turpitude of his behavior" (Glow 149).

Some critics declared the play a 'Left-wing propaganda'. *Herald Sun* Columnist Andrew Bolt described *Two Brothers* as "a vomit of smug hate" (21) in his April 13 article "Shameful Saga of Hate". In another article "Hannie Evil Brew" that appeared in *Herald Sun* on April 15, 2005 he pronounced, "It seems that Rayson, this student of humanity, doesn't actually know or understand anyone who isn't of the left" (23). Tom Hayland, a political commentator for *The Age* on April 16 added, "Instead of examining those complex moral issues [Rayson had] produced a piece of propaganda that deals in stereotypes, preaches to the converted and ponders to prejudice" (16). In response to these adverse remarks Rayson asserted in the April 19 edition of *The Age*:

> We are living in times when debate is not encouraged. Now is not the time for timidity in our drama. Nine hundred people see this play every night. They are not required to fill in a questionnaire before they are permitted entry. Others say this is anti-liberal party propaganda – as if the theatre is no place for

> interrogating the government of the day about its fundamental values. (21)

She candidly responded to the attacks on the play:

> I've also been struck over the past few weeks with comments that my play is brave. But all I'm doing is what any decent playwright, artist or social commentator is obliged to do – to speak out on the most essential questions and hold up the government of the day to some scrutiny. This is what I've traditionally done in all my work. The fact that people consider it brave to raise these questions indicates that what was once considered orthodoxy is now in the minority. (Phillips 4)

Two Brothers fictionalizes a number of real events that happened in 2001. Partly it was inspired by Howard government's brutal treatment of asylum seekers, the ongoing SIEVX tragedy, the Tampa Crisis, the terrorist attacks on the United States and the Children Overboard Affair. Rayson merges elements of these incidents into one single event. These incidents provide the play its political, cultural and social setting. "My fellow Australians," Eggs says in his news conference at the end of the play, "We are engaged in a mighty battle for civilization itself… In this time of global unrest, I will not flinch from a Prime Minister's most sacred duty – to defend the security of our homeland and to protect her people" (81-82). In saying this, Eggs frames his political leadership in terms of public anxiety about security, in particular about the threat from Islamic extremists.

Large bulk of the play is inspired by the SIEV-X tragedy and politicians' brutal treatment of asylum seekers. Three hundred and fifty-three asylum seekers' lives were lost on October 19, 2001 when a fishing boat, later known as SIEV-X foundered. SIEV-X stands for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X. This code is used by the surveillance authority for any boat that has entered Australian waters without prior permission and X stands for a designation where a tracking number is not assigned

in accordance with Australian Government orders. The overcrowded SIEV-X was carrying approximately four hundred twenty one passengers from Sumatra and Indonesia. It overturned and sank in the ocean between Indonesia and Australia's Christmas Island.

The boat passengers were from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Algeria. Most of the drowned were children and women, attempting to rejoin their husbands and fathers on Temporary Protection Visa in Australia but legally denied family reunion rights. Forty- four survivors were left in the ocean, without help from the Australia Government for twenty-one hours until they were rescued by an Indonesian fishing boat and the boat took them to Jakarta. A forty-fifth survivor was rescued about twelve hours later by another boat. The survivors clung to life vests or pieces of wood.

Powerful circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the drownings were the direct result of deliberate political decisions taken by Prime Minister John Howard and his government. Till today the disaster remains uninvestigated and surrounded in a fog of suspicion. After a short inquiry, it becomes clear that the Australian Government may have been directly implicated in the deaths of these asylum seekers, as a result of its anti-refugee campaign aimed at winning general elections. *Two Brothers* is an angry, provocative and powerful work revisiting the tragedy:

> I was driven by a sense of moral outrage and frustration over the SIEV-X cover-up, the government's treatment of asylum seekers. Like many others, I knew that the SIEV-X issue really smelt. I'd read all the Senate Papers on the issue but no amount of scouring revealed what really happened. In fact, whole sections of these papers are blacked out. (Phillips 1)

When the first reports emerged – three days after the event – that the SIEV-X had sunk and that there had been no Australian rescue operation, Howard and his ministers insisted that they knew nothing about the boat. That was a lie. The government wanted to keep the issue

out of the public eye and did not want to provoke serious public discussion. Howard and senior naval commanders argued that Australian authorities had no clear information about the boat and the victims drowned in Indonesian territorial waters and regarded it as an unfortunate accident. Later on some evidences directly contradicted these claims. Actually Howard wanted to focus on an anti-refugee campaign to increase his chances of winning upcoming federal elections. Australian Navy had been directed to conduct surveillance of the international waters between Australia's Northwest Coat and Indonesia in order to intercept the refugee boats trying to reach Australian territory. Moreover, Australian Navy had received the reports about the boat's movements, sent by a large number of paid informers in Indonesia who had infiltrated the people smuggling industry operating out of Indonesia. For some unexplained reasons there was no attempt made to disrupt SIEV-X's journey.

Now the significant questions are why were these intelligent reports apparently ignored? Why did the navy not intercept this boat, like every other refugee boat sailing from Indonesia to Christmas Island at the time? An Egyptian Abu Qussey was arrested as the people smuggler but charged only with document fraud. None of the media questioned Howard government and it was described as an unfortunate accident. Amal Basry from Iraq was the first person rescued after twenty-one hours in water. She died in Melbourne in 2010, aged 53, after a three years' battle with cancer. But she fought to the end of her life for an official investigation into the SIEV-X disaster.

According to survivors, two large ships passed them during the night, shining flood-lights on to the terrible scene. Aircrafts were seen and heard flying above. But none of them stopped or mounted a rescue. On December 19, 2001, Keysar Trad, Vice President of the Sydney Lebanese Muslim Association stated, “Three weeks ago I heard very serious allegations made by survivors of the drowning tragedy, one spoke of two large ships, which he says came by the survivors after the capsize of the boat and did nothing to rescue them. If these allegations are

proved to be true they are of course extremely serious and I call on Australian government to investigate them immediately" (Hutton n.pag.).

The Howard government, the Labor opposition and the media all conspired to bury the facts as quickly as possible. So successful have they been that most people know little or nothing about it. *Two Brothers,* which was mounted by one of the most popular and best known Theatre Companies in Australia, brings the issue to the surface. Rayson wanted to start political discussion about this cruel act and wanted to ask why victims had not been rescued by Australian Naval Vessels patrolling the area? Like many other artists Rayson was also deeply angered about SIEV-X tragedy and Australian government's brutal treatment of asylum seekers and wanted to ignite a discussion about it. As she explained to the newspaper *The Age* on April 19, 2005:

> Why 353 people drowned when the boat went down in a heavily watched area of ocean is not at all transparent. The dimensions of this tragedy – and the unnerving sense that we are not being told the whole truth – is compounded by our cruel treatment of asylum seekers, by the inhumanity of the 'Pacific Solution' and by mandatory detention. To me there aren't too many shades of grey in these events. The suffering that we have inflicted on these people is wrong. And that cruelty needs to be named… We are living in times when debate is not encouraged… I do hope that [*Two Brothers*] energises the audience to ask questions about the real world. Three-and-a-half years after Tampa, 54 people are still incarcerated on Nauru. The misery and human damage our policies have inflicted on some people will never be undone. The future must be different. My play is a vision of what that future may be like if people of goodwill – whatever their politics – do not win today. (21)

Mandatory detention policies in Australia also serve as a background to the play. In order to distinguish between those who have submitted themselves to offshore entry process prior to arrival and those who have not, mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia was established by the Keating Labor Government in 1992. Since 1992 asylum seekers in Australia have been held in detention centres while their claims to be refugees are processed. When the High Court deemed it unconstitutional, it rushed legislation through Parliament to establish it into law. This policy was proposed in response to the arrival of the first wave of the boats carrying people seeking asylum in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Controls over unauthorized arrivals were tightened under the Howard Government, which introduced Pacific Solution Policy. Pacific Solution was an Australian government policy between 2001 and 2007 of transporting asylum seekers, (who reach Australian Territory) to Pacific nations such as Nauru and Manus Island for detention. Howard policies were often controversial, and were criticized by some human rights groups and were the subject of protest both within and without detention centres. Some commentators argue that it helped John Howard to win the 2001 election. It contributed to a sharp decline in boat arrivals and, consequently, to the number of people detained. The Pacific Solution was dismantled by the Rudd Government and partly restored under the Gillard Government in response to the increase in boat arrivals and reported deaths at sea.

The event that has now become known as the 'Tampa Incident' was a defining moment in the shift in policies about asylum seekers in Australia. On 26 August, 2001 a Norwegian freighter called MV Tampa rescued four hundred thirty-eight asylum seekers from a fishing boat in distress in international waters off Christmas Island. The Captain of the Tampa was told he was not permitted to enter Australia waters. When he attempted to bring the Tampa to Christmas Island, Prime Minister Howard ordered members of Australian Special Forces to board the boat and take control of it. The Australian government tried to convince

Indonesia to accept the asylum seekers. Indonesia refused. The asylum seekers, a number of whom were ill, were transported by a navy vessel to Nauru as part of the Howard Government's new Pacific Solution. The 'Tampa Incident' was broadcasted around the world. It caused a diplomatic dispute between Australia and Norway and frosty relations with Indonesia. Many countries accused Australia of evading its human rights responsibilities.

Children Overboard Allegations also find mention in the play. On October 7, 2001, a boat carrying Iraqi asylum seekers was intercepted off Christmas Island by an Australian Navy Vessel. Immigration Minister, Phillip Ruddock made the statement that these asylum seekers, desperate to force Australia to accept them into the country, had thrown the children overboard. He argued that these were not the types of people they wanted in Australia. A later Senate Committee, composed mainly of non-government senators, concluded that no children were actually thrown overboard.

It is these policies of the Australian government and its callous response to asylum seekers and its total indifference to human rights and human values that provoked Rayson to write *Two Brothers* which opens a debate on these issues. She herself claims, "In writing this play, I was fuelled by deep anger. I wanted to write a critique of our cruel treatment of asylum seekers and the inhumanity of government policies inflicting such misery on people who had already suffered horrifically. I wanted to shame the Australian people for their indifference and shame the government" (IJAS 19). So the play is a courageous contribution to a broader political discussion. Some critics regard it a political thriller. It explores the malevolent political psychology of Australia and the personal motives of some of those responsible for their implementation. As Hilary Glow points out in her article *In the Eye of a Storm*, "This play, with its savage critique of the government's asylum seeker policies, is an exemplar of Rayson's long-standing commitment to writing politically engaged plays tackling controversial subjects for mainstream audiences" (9).

In the play a boat, Kelepasan, full of refugees (like SIEV-X) goes down in international waters on Christmas Day. The sole survivor, Hazem saw an Australian naval vessel nearby, which instead of rescuing the drowning passengers, turned and abandoned them. And at the family Christmas dinner, the wicked Eggs gives the order to 'take no action'. Egg's son Lachaln happened to be on that very ship. He rings his father in distress and reports him about the sinking boat and that urgent assistance is required. The wicked father orders him and his company not to provide any assistance and slams down the phone on his upset son, not allowing him to talk to his mother. The moving account of the loss of Hazem's daughter and wife, in fact, represents the suffering and helplessness of asylum seekers all over the world. Hazem narrates his predicament and his suffering to Tom:

> HAZEM. God spared me for a reason. But every day and every night I search for that reason. In my heart I believe I should not live. When I see my daughter floating dead, I say to God, 'This is because of me'.
>
> TOM. Perhaps God spared you, so you could tell the world what happened.
>
> HAZEM. I did this. I bring my family to their death… When I escaped from Iraq – my brother Mohammed was killed. So I took my family to Iran. But they do not let my children into school. They do not let me rent property. Official order. No rent to foreigners. No employ Afghanis or Iraqis. You are educated people. You can see. What choice did I have? (15)

As Hilary Glow observes, "It is clearly reminiscent of the factual event of the capsizing of the SIEV-X. The government's handling of the SIEV-X issue, and the Tampa crisis two months earlier were critical elements in the election campaign fought at the end of 2001, which saw the return of the Howard government" (148-9).

Jamie Savage, Egg's senior advisor tells him the history of Hazem that he was on a temporary protection visa and his wife decided

to come with their two daughters. So Hazem flew to Indonesia to come back with her on the boat. Hazem is allowed to work in Australia on temporary visa but his family is not allowed to enter the country. Rayson, here questions the relevance of those Australian policies which do not allow family reunion. In the play Rayson beautifully juxtaposes human tragedy with these callous policies and their brutal implementation.

While a particular boat tragedy and government's response to it constitute the immediate action in the play, it gains deeper human significance as it depicts how personal lives can get doomed for ever or can be seriously affected by political developments at home and in the place they turn to, to seek a shelter. To know the pain and predicament of the refugees Rayson actually interacted with the survivors of SIEV X and included some of their speeches in the play. As Harbant Gill informs, "To understand what it would be like to be an Iraqi refugee, she worked at the asylum seekers' resource centres in Thornbury and West Melbourne" (50).

Two Brothers centres on the conflict between two siblings over government policies. The play commences with the murder of an Iraqi asylum seeker, Hazem Al-Ayad. Eggs stabs him as he finds him in his beach house. The prologue of the play is full of melodrama and Eggs loses credibility as a character. Tom wants to give voice to human rights while Eggs is analyzing his prospects to become the Prime Minister. The second act deals with the political consequences of the murder of Hazem and the unbridgeable difference between the two brothers and their wives as Eggs moves forward with ruthless determination to become Prime Minister.

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 completely altered foreign relations. Australia, as a United States ally, chose to commit to waging a war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside the United States and Britain. These attacks created an atmosphere where it became very easy for Anglo-Australians to imagine that all Muslims were terrorists. As a result it became so easy

for people like Jamie and Eggs to label illegal asylum seekers as terrorists. As Hilary Glow says, "By tracing the strategy by which Eggs manipulates both the Kelepasan disaster and the murder of Hazem for his own political ends, Rayson demonstrates her interest in understanding how the powerful rationalize their power" (150).

To Tom it is simply murder of an innocent man. To hide the murder of Hazem by Eggs, Jamie even threatens to put Tom in jail suggesting he has rendered help to a Muslim terrorist. She intimidates him by saying that the government would stop the funding of his Lawson Foundation. Eggs also justifies the murder of Hazem by saying that he is the "Minister for Home Security. It's my job to keep Australia safe" (62). Though in his address Tom mentions the government's role in the disaster and demands an enquiry he does not disclose his brother's role in it. Personal relationships sometimes stand in the way of public responsibility. "After a great deal of family conflict and political chicanery, Eggs wins when he blackmails Tom into giving up his struggle. The right-wing media support Eggs, and the politics of fear and paranoia win out over compassion and justice" (McCallum 339). Eggs manipulates personal relationships for political gains.

Rayson seems to be asking the question why is it that an unprincipled person is rewarded? And if this is what that power does to their families, how can one trust them to rule the country? Another question remains in mind, why is it that Tom fails even when his life is dedicated to the welfare of humanity, justice, to the human rights of all people. He invites Hazem and other refugees into his home and befriends him. He takes personal interest in the case of other refugees his organization supports. He talks to Lachlan and Marty about the things they can't talk to their own father. Tom often feels caught between his personal ties and larger issues of justice for all humanity. He does not disclose Eggs' name publically because he is his brother. He also hopes that he will be able to persuade Eggs to give residency to Hazem because Eggs is his brother. Tom also suffers due to the ruthless political ambition of his brother when he fixes a deal for Tom's silence by offering

his son's escape from prison in drug dealing. Political differences can have far reaching effects even in personal relationships.

A major part of the play explores the collision between the public and the private. Through this play Rayson examines how oppositional political ideologies can occur within one family. The two brothers exhibit a contrast to each other as one presents the capitalism of the nineties while the other the idealism of the sixties. Eggs represents the ideology of capitalism – callousness, ruthless, profit-making at every cost, while Tom represents compassion, human values and the idealistic/humanistic force of the sixties. Rayson herself explains in this context, "I'm interested in looking at the things that help to shape someone's political loyalty, and as always I'm taken up with the intersection of the public and the private" (Glow 153).

Eggs and Jamie's attitude towards the asylum seekers is reflected in some of the characters in another play *These People* (2003) by Ben Ellis. However, in *These People* while The Father and The Daughter are full of contempt for asylum seekers, the family in general is unmoved by the struggle and suffering of the asylum seekers and in fact blames them for their plight they are in. By contrast *Two Brothers* evokes great sympathy and concern for the asylum seekers, most of all through the character of Tom.

Two Brothers is a powerful political play which explicitly criticises Australian policies and government's treatment of the refuge seekers. Through this story of overreaching ambition of one man, Rayson throws a chillingly cold light on Australia's arguably shocking reticence in the face of the refugee crisis. She explains, "the misery and human damage our policies have inflicted on some people will never be undone. The future must be different. My play is a vision of what that future may be like if people of good will – whatever their politics – do not win the day" (*Age* 21). Thus, the play springs from Rayson's concern for her country in particular and for humanity at large. She boldly critiques the government for its utter lack of basic human values.

Rayson feels that the play achieved its political purpose of

raising certain crucial issues through the play, "One of the great things about the media controversy with *Two Brothers* was that it pushed the debate into the broad mainstream and of that I'm really proud. Of course, how this translates into action is not clear. But I hope that it encourages more and more people to make a stand on these and other important issues" (Phillips 3). And as Helen Thomson observes, "Rayson has skillfully condensed and dramatized a national narrative into a family drama, making the political intensely personal" (14).

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Imperially Controlled Settlement and Multicultural Policy: Reading Loss in Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*

Kuldeep Raj Sharma

Since 1788, Australia has been an immigrant society established by the British as a convict colony. The British envisioned an imperially controlled 'Australian Settlement Policy' foreseeing the expected role of Australia as its junior partner that was required to be strengthened as a 'bastion of Empire', '"White" Outpost', of British Imperialism in the Pacific. R. Dixon, Assistant Secretary, Communist Party of Australia, in his essay "Immigration and the White Australian Policy" quotes the statement by Senator Staniford in the Parliament debate on White Australia in 1900, "Speaking from the imperial point of view, nothing could tend to solidify and strengthen the Empire so much as that we should build up in these southern lands a British race". The concept of 'British race' centered thought of building Australia and of 'strengthening the British empire' has been the essence of 'White Australia' that influenced the subsequent governments in charting the policies from 'assimilation' to 'multiculturalism'. In 1903, forecasting the prejudicial vision of newly formed Australian government towards future of Australia, the Prime Minister Alfred Deakin stated that, " the White Australian Policy goes down to the roots of our national existence, the roots from which the British social system has sprung" (Dixon). Dixon also quotes a statement made by Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce, on June 23, 1928 published in the newspaper *The Age*, Melbourne, on 25 June 1928, where he describes the 'White Australia Policy' as "Fundamental and vital" , to "… maintain the British character of the Australian people. Australia was 98% British and was determined to remain so" ("Immigration and the White Australian Policy").

The debate on the process of immigration to Australia rests on

the argument of Manning Clark: "What the British or European observed in the Australians was their Britishness" (184). The entire process of Australian settlement, before and after its federation as nation in 1901, was focused on establishing British culture's roots in Australia and to manifest the Anglo-Celtic identity of newly developed nation determining the myth of purity of the white race. In order to practice the racially theorized concept of Australian settlement, the Australian government not only discontinued the entry of the Asians and other non-whites in Australia, for some time, but also evicted the Aboriginals from their right to culture and land. The white race was historicized with the colonial narratives neglecting the prolonged existence of the Aboriginals. The White Australia Policy, which was the implied racially based Australian identity, was officially ended in mid 1960s and a policy of assimilation was adopted. In 1973,'Multiculturalism' in Australia, where British culture has been dominating since the beginning of White settlement, was introduced, "as a response to crisis of identity in the settler society which for a variety of reasons could no longer sustain a national identity depend on the myth of British origin" (Starton and Ang 22).

This paper analyzes Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* that illustrates imperially envisioned settlement of Australia particularly in terms of racial dominance that not only evicted the Aboriginal people from their culture and land rights but also prejudiced the subsequent policies of immigration, assimilation or multiculturalism, etc. Since 'Past' has been a hotly contested domain in Peter Carey's fictions, *Oscar and Lucinda*, published in 1988, on the bicentenary of Australia, recommends strong re-evaluation of the history of its 'Christian heritage' and European's behavior with the Indigenous peoples. The novel brings out a staunch critique of the colonial myths of peaceful history, imperial expansion of racial culture in the continent and the mid-nineteenth century missionary objectives of converting the Indigenous people into Christianity by establishing the 'Anglican Church'. It revives those early days of imperial explorations of new

places, systematic encroachment of Indigenous land resources, their conspired assassinations and the imposition of White culture on one of the world's oldest Indigenous cultures. In this sense, the narrative unravels the entire process of transplantation of European culture in Australian land dreamed by the imperial policy of the British: "What was first established in Australia was a transplantation of British culture. The culture of course, evolved away from its British source but the primary identification remained with 'British' culture" (Stratton and Ang 147-148).

Besides the tragic love affair of Oscar and Lucinda, the novel visualizes Australia of 1850s and 60s as a part of a group of new, transplanted, predominantly 'Anglo Saxon' emigrant societies. It focuses on the family history of the two families in Australia that remind the European settlement of mid-nineteenth century in Australia as "the Anglo Celtic race" which was supposed to be "a new product of the multiplying British stock, the race which in the heyday of British imperialism, saw itself as superior of all other races and therefore 'as possessing the duty and destiny to populate and civilize the rest of the world" (Stratton and Ang, 148). The novel reveals the fateful meeting of Oscar and Lucinda on the ship 'Leviathan' which sailed from Portsmouth Port to Sydney in the nineteenth century. Lucinda, an Australian-English girl, is the heiress of her parent's property, which she strongly feels belongs to the Aboriginal people. Oscar is a son of a famous clergyman, born and brought up in England. On the 'Leviathan', the two characters fatefully meet and debate on the topic whether or not gambling is a sin. In Sydney, they meet again and often gamble. Oscar loses his job and money in gambling. Lucinda provides him shelter and both fall in love. In Sydney, he plans to build a Church at Bellingen, which is a territory of the Aboriginal people, and wants to dedicate it to Lucinda. Their love story ends in a break-up and Lucinda disappears from the story. However, both characters deconstruct the colonial version of history confessing that Aboriginal people have been misrepresented in the colonial version of Australian history. The story

equally deals with the eviction and annihilation of the Aboriginal people from their culture and land rights. It also integrates colonizers' relations with the Aboriginal people and exposes their historical position through the narration of the native character, Kumbaingiri. The paper primarily focuses only on the Aboriginal people's issues discussed by Carey in the novel, since the novel portrays, "the mid –century evolution of Australia, with its greedy exploitation of the land, its brutal dispossession of the Aborigines and its erasure of their mythologies"(Hassall 124).

The novel has 110 chapters that exclusively review the social enterprise of mid nineteenth century white settlement in Australia. In each chapter, Victorian culture appears holistically transplanted into the Settlement in terms of religion, 'Church', industrialization, technology, property disputes, gambling, exploration of new places and so on. Ray Willbanks has remarked that the book dramatizes "the four great Victorian interests: science religion, technology, exploitation" (quoted by Hassall 123) The concept of 'Social Darwinism' has equally permeated into the Settlement in context of the domination and survival of white culture with science technology, religion, materialism and arms over the innocent, environmental-friendly and nature-based life style of the Aboriginal peoples. The text reveals the process of strategically established British culture and identity in the Australian soil but this fact has been manipulatively hidden by the propagators of the 'official history' of Australian settlement. In this context, Richard White has argued that, "there was no strong evidence of a distinctively Australian identity: Australians saw themselves, and were seen by others as part of a group of new, transplanted, predominantly Anglo-Saxon emigrant society" (43).

The novel deconstructs myths created by mainstream history viz., the myths of peaceful settlement, Australia as a 'lucky country' where Christianity entered to 'save' the 'heathen Blacks' and idea that the British 'opened up' the Country for settlement and 'civilization'. Deconstruction of these myths appears in the narration of Oscar in the first chapter titled 'Church' when he starts to re-write his family history.

He confesses: "I learned long ago to distrust local history" (2). 'Distrusting' and discarding 'local history' was the colonial strategy of making Australian identity on the premises of British culture. In the same chapter he reveals the politics of changing the names of local places giving them English ones like' Barkiest Point' and 'Darkwood,' pushing "an entire tribe of Aboriginal men and women and children off the edge" (2). Thus, defying the colonial conception of history the novel proves that the history of the Indigenous people has purposely been interpolated.

The novel depicts pre-federal Australia where colonial strategy of imagining Australia as Anglo Celtic nation appears to be strengthened with the displacement of the Aboriginals by snatching their complete rights on their own land. Louise Chappell, John Chesterman and Lisa Hill in *Politics of Human Rights in Australia* (2009) mention that the Aboriginal people were completely denied of Rights till their struggle in 1960s and, "each colony – and after federation, each state – had its own Aboriginal affairs regime and each had its own way of restricting the rights of Indigenous people" (119). In the novel, characters like Mrs. Burrows and Mr. Jeffris claim that the Blacks should be hanged and disposed off the land. Mrs. Burrows reprimands Lucinda when she comments on the defense of the Indigenous people: "She talked of calling out the army, of a final all- out war against the blacks" (172). Mr. Jeffris proves to be the image of white colonizers: "These blacks, he said were the most murderous of all, having been dispossessed of their lands and driven into dense, tumbled country of the 'Falls' (172). Mr. Jeffris is full of colonial attitude and take it for granted that the 'Blacks' should be ridden away from their land. In his descriptions, he makes maps of new places, renames them (which were already named, existed and belonged to the Aboriginal people) in order to give them the identity of colonial empire or white settlement. Lucinda's mother Elizabeth, who is on the death bed, does not like her husband's behavior towards the Aboriginal people. She hates him and his favors to her: "how could a man who could kill a black with his rifle make such a stupid, romantic bed?"(92).

The novel strongly opposes the logic of non-Indigenous Australian national identity drew upon the concept of "terra nullius"- the assumption that the land of Australia was unoccupied and empty to be shaped in the image of a British people. Terra nullius does not preclude the acknowledgment of the Indigenous peoples' occupation of Australia, but it refutes the status of Indigenous peoples as owners and shapers of the land and community. "Indigenous peoples were imagined and positioned as either a 'nuisance' or a paternalist obligation for the newly arrived British. So immigration policies were accompanied by policies that controlled and policed Indigenous peoples' lives" (Elder 98). In the narrative, the British are assumed as spirits, but for readers, they appear to be most destructive for the centuries-old set up of life in the island continent: "They climbed hills and chopped down trees… They cut these trees so they could a make a map. They were surveying with chains … but we did not understand what they were doing (468).

Oscar and Lucinda addresses the paradoxically propounded truth of the need of Christianity in Australia to 'save' the 'heathen black' and the idea that British opened up the country for civilization. The established concept of 'Christianity' and 'civilization' in imperial version of Australian history appears challenged through the characterization and the events where narration is directly offered to the Aboriginal people. Oscar and Lucinda's constant addiction of gambling and Oscar's idea of a 'Glass Church' at Bellingen River, for winning Lucinda's love, is the misuse of Christianity. In Christianity, 'gambling' is a sin but in the novel the entire process of the imperial settlement of Australia symbolizes a historical account of gambling. In this sense, Christianity itself appears colonized in the novel. The imperial use of Christianity and the idea of 'civilization' portrayed in the novel goes other way round when it is interpreted with respect to Kumbaingiri Billy's narration. The 'Glass Cuts' episode of the novel details the imperially endorsed idea of bringing 'civilization' in the Aboriginal peoples' land through 'Christianity'. Kumbaingiri Billy, an indigenous narrator, describes the entry of colonizers in Mount Darling, the

habitation of the Narcoo tribe:

> The white men came out of the clouds of Mount Darling. Our people had not seen white men before. We thought they were spirits. They came through the a-trees, dragging their boxes and shouting. The birds set up chatter. What a noise they all made. Like twenty goannas had come at once to raid their nests. (468)

Reverend Mr. Hopkins continuously tells the story of Christianity to Narcoo people while going to Bellingen. He tells Narcoo people of the importance of the Church at Bellingen. Kubaingiri Billy narrates the fact of how Mr. Reverend Hopkins, grandfather of Oscar, visits his tribe and tells them the stories of Jesus Christ: "It was in these camps the young fellows learned about Jesus. They were told the story of Jesus nailed to the cross" (469). Billy remembers how Oscar's grandfather the Reverend Mr. Hopkins had come to Australia as a missionary to preach Christianity in order to civilize the Aboriginals: "The Reverend Mr. Hopkins told the Narcoo men the story of St. Barnabas eaten by lion. He told them the story of St Catherine killed with a wheel. He told them the story of St Sebastian killed with spears" (469). The 'Christian missionaries' appear failed to perceive and retrospect the centuries old Aboriginals' culture and their prolonged spiritual connectivity with land. The imperial propagators of Christianity in Aboriginal peoples' land, like Mr. Hopkins who accredits himself to preface the Christian stories in the physical and mental space of the Aboriginal people for making them civilized, prove paradoxically destructive for the Narcoo tribe in the story. Under the disguise of the Church Mr. Jefferis traces the maps of newly discovered rivers, mountains and places so that the British Empire could be expanded more in Australia:

> Mr. Jeffris did not like the church but he was certainly not without a sense of history. Each pane of glass, he thought, would travel through country where glass had never existed before, not once, in all time. These sheets would cut a new path in history. They would slice the

> white dust –covers of geography and reveal a map beneath, with rivers, mountains, and names, the streets of his birth place, Bromley, married to the rivers of savage Australia. (441)

Mr. Jeffris names the places (which were already named) of uncharted territory, which demonstrate the parallel between colonization and 'Christianization' of the natives - their minds as well as their land resources. Moreover, the transportation of glass in the form of Church's material also realizes the entry of technological industrialization in the disguise of Christianity in Australia. This absolute material-based western concept of culture, in the form of Christianity and industry, "had replaced 40,000 years of Aboriginal culture in order to take its place and now its turn had come to be wiped out. This made him feel nostalgic" (Carey's Interview Quoted by Fazilleau 18). Billy narrates the killing of a Narcoo man who stops the White men to cross Mount Dawson, A sacred place for the Aboriginal people:

> When the white men wanted to cross Mount Dawson, the Narcoo men did not wish them to, Mount Dawson was sacred. The young men were forbidden to got here. It was against their law. Then the leader of the white men shot one of the Narcoo men with his pistol. (469-470)

Then another Narcoo man, Odalberee takes the white men down towards the Bellingen Valley. In this night all the Narcoo people realize that there are strangers in their country. The text unravels how these strangers became the owner of the country defining and offering rights to the real owners of the land:

> But on the last night, when they were almost there, the Kumbaingiri knew there were strangers in the country. The Kumbaingiri came with torches at night. They walked through the bush to talk to the strangers. But the strangers got frightened. Odalberee got frightened too.

> The Kumbaingiri men did not understand him. Then there was a lot shooting. (470)

The contradictory nature of glass has been demonstrated critically when Prince Rupert drops the glass - this signifies the transient nature of glass that that could be broken apart. The journey of the glass Church to the Bellinger River contradicts European mission of civilization. The symbol of the Glass Church can be conceptualized better when the Aboriginal people interpret it in glass song titled 'Glass Cuts':

> We never saw it before.
> Now it is here amongst us.
> It sacred to the strangers.
> Glass cuts.
> Glass cuts Kangaroo.
> Glass cuts bandicoot.
> Glass cuts the trees and grasses.
> Hurry on, strangers.
> Hurry on to the Kumbaingiri.
> Leave us good spirit, go, go. (470)

This Glass Song represents the paradox of colonial history, the paradox of the distinction between Christianity and the 'material' and between rhetoric and practice. The paradoxical significance of the exaggeratedly established civilization is also visible in the Aboriginal peoples' Glass Song: “It came up the river, its walls like ice emanating light, as fine and elegant as civilization itself” (490). “The story of Oscar's glass church sailing up the Bellinger River”, states Bill Ashcroft, “is a prophetic vision of the past because it reveals that the myth of civilized progress of 'development' as a continuous mode of being, though it continues into the postcolonial present, is an illusion” (21). The colonial 'discourses' do not illustrate these obliterations caused by the colonizers pretending to make the Aboriginal people 'civilized'. On this point, the imperially

manipulated history and narrations appear uncomfortable for the skeptics of multiculturalism that "denies the specifically different situation of Indigenous Australians, namely their position as the original inhabitants, their history of dispossession and genocide" (Curthoys 30). Before finalizing any national policy, the historical truth of discarding the Aboriginal people from history and land rights is required to be put at the centre. Peter Carey accepts that Australia was rich with stories of human experiences which have largely been replaced by the Anglo-Celtic culture: "Two hundred years ago Australia was a landscape filled with Aboriginal stories, and all of those people, that whole tribe of people, just do not exist anymore. None of their stories exist anymore" (Meyer).

Academic historians may have left the Aboriginal history out of their narratives of nation, but descriptions of this past continue to circulate within the public domain through literature. The Aboriginal as well as some white Australian literary writers have shaped popular understanding about the Aboriginal past, present and future from the late nineteenth century to the first decades of twenty first century. *Oscar and Lucinda,* which is the result of continued debates on the Aboriginal peoples' cultural past and land rights - which started in 1960s and 70s and reached the global attention in 1980s - represents a significant and neglected aspect of Australia's past.

In the last decades of twentieth century, the colonial occupation of Australia and the legacy of dispossession of the Aboriginal population were debated in the context of the multicultural policy of the then Government. On the one side were the proponents and celebrants of what has been achieved by Australia in the last couple of centuries as a Nation; on the other side were the 'black armband' demonstrations, sympathetic to the plight and predicaments of the Aboriginal people. John Coakley quotes the then Prime Minister John Howard who sided strongly with the smooth and heroic telling of the journey of Australia as a nation:

> This black armband view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. I take a very different view. I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more a nation of which we can proud than of which we should be ashamed. (94)

In this point *Oscar and Lucinda*, realizes the postcolonial significance of 'writing back' where historical narrative of Carey discards the nationalistic stance of Prime Minister Howard who justifies the colonial encroaching of the Aboriginals' homeland arguing "that the presentation of history should reinforce a positive self image of the nation" (Coakley 94). The multicultural policy propagated by the Labor Party in 1974 as the social justice agenda of the Government, desiring to cultivate a multicultural society with equal rights to all, has the similar political dynamics of making 'a positive self image of the nation' .

In *Oscar and Lucinda ,* "Carey has reinvented nineteenth century Australia in an attempt to create not costume drama but a narrative explaining the present" (Hassall 143). The text expounds racial foundation of the Australian settlement and suggests that the policy of multiculturalism requires to be analyzed through the prism of Aboriginal narratives which, in the forms of art and literature, chronicle the imperial past of the Aboriginal people. Ann Curthoys prefers to look at the issue of multiculturalism the other way round: "rather than" incorporating "the Indigenous within the multicultural, it might be better to understand the multicultural within the Indigenous, or more precisely, to understand migration holistically as a process occurring within the framework of colonization and de-colonization (Quoted by Ommundsen 283). *Oscar and Lucinda,* in this context, is the holistic documentation of the immigration that records alternative and profoundly discomforting narrations of imperialism, invasion, dispossession, exploitation, institutionalization and attempted

genocide. Today in multicultural Australia, the Aboriginal people make up "approximately 2.5 percent of the total population of Australia" (Census 2011) that counts as minority group. Multicultural policy, of course, offers them autonomy to be developed with their own culture and ways but how is it possible with Anglo Australian majority in highest bodies of policy framing? Jupps comments on the Anglo-Celtic multicultural Australia where, "social, intellectual, business and political elites are still overwhelmingly of British origin; three-quarters of its people speak only English; and a similar proportion subscribe, however nominally, to Christian denominations".

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Critiquing Cultural Constructs and Articulating the Self: A Reading of a Mother-daughter duo's Memoir

Aditya Singh Dulta

The term 'aboriginal' comes from the Latin *ab origine* (meaning 'from the beginning'). It is meant to denote the original inhabitants of a particular geographical area, just like certain ethnic tribes in central India, Native Americans and the Maori people of New Zealand among others. Of late, the term has been particularly used for the indigenous natives of Australia and is spelt with a capital 'A' to denote the much deserved and long-awaited respect it has earned over the years (Broome 6).Modern scientific techniques like rock-dating have revealed that the Australian Aboriginals have inhabited the continent since more than 40,000 to 60,000 years.

However, the sovereignty of numerous Aboriginal tribes over the Australian continent was severely challenged two hundred and thirty-two years ago, that is, in 1788. The British government, in 1786, prompted an expedition of a small fleet of eleven ships, carrying officers, marines and 736 convicts to begin a penal settlement, remote from main centers of Eastern and Western civilization, at Botany Bay, in Eastern part of Australia (Webby 6). The invading contingent hoisted the Union jack on the foreign land on 26 January 1788. The British Crown assumed that those vast acres of land belonged to no and could be annexed to the expanding empire. Since then, there was no stopping the colonizing mission.

The colonizing power, in order to maintain the hegemony, weaved a web of lies, distortions and disseminated it through literature: political, social, and cultural. Arnold Krupat rightly defines literature as "culture defined in letters" (177). This all-encompassing and all-pervasive media called 'literature' is the new battleground in the contemporary times and information and knowledge are its all-potent

weapons. Edward Said testifies to the mighty concoction of 'knowledge' and 'power' in his seminal discourse *Orientalism* (qtd. in Ashcroft et. al. 1). The doctrine of 'postcolonialism' serves as a fitting lens through which the onerous task of exposing and contesting the lies manufactured and propagated by the colonizers is undertaken.

The mainstream or dominant literary discourse has always been the fiefdom of the majority, privileged, white, male, and from a Euro-centric perspective. But of late, the stories of "the failures, to whose lot neither fortunes nor stirring adventures fell" (Bennet and Strauss 1) have generated tremendous interest among the intelligentsia and general readers.One of the predominant genres or forms of Aboriginal literature today is the autobiography and biography, and women hold sway here due to their ability to share pent-up emotions like agony and grief, unlike many men who annihilate themselves with ego and rage.

The present paper is a reading of one such memoir by Aboriginal women, Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (1994). Rita Huggins' memoir*Auntie Rita* has been written in collaboration with her daughter, Jackie Huggins. There is a distinct separation of voices as the narrative is in italics wherever Jackie steps in. Rita and her family were removed from the bush by white authorities and transported to a mission in a cattle truck. The 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes' were confined to separate reserves. Rita's parents were considered half-castes as they both had white parents. They were made to give up their traditional ways of living and were made to conform to the European ways. Those who put up resistance were butchered. Life on the reserve was hard, movement restricted and the inmates were reduced to bonded-slaves living at the mercy and whims of the callous white masters. Rita was transferred to a boarding school on the mission in the name of civilizing. Racism, paternal control and surveillance were rampant there. Wages of the toil in the fields were to be deposited with the station-master. She gave birth to two children before marriage because of her exploitation in the white households. White men seldom accepted children from Aboriginal girls. Rita married Jack Huggins in

1951 and had five children in all. Jack participated in World War I as an Australian soldier. However, his services were not acknowledged and awarded at par with his fellow white soldiers, owing to his ethnicity. He died early in 1958 as the horrific experiences of the war left a permanent scar on his psyche. In cities, intolerance and racial discrimination by white neighbours, landlords and even doctors were the order of the day. Rita realized the need of good education, housing and employment for Aboriginals to live with dignity. She worked as the director of 'One People of Australia League' (OPAL) for 20 years and remained an activist throughout her life. Like an activist, she worked for the uplift of her community besides actively contesting various myths fabricated by the whites. She was almost an Aboriginal diplomat and her house-OPAL's unofficial office.

To commence with and vindicate the project of colonization, 'cultural constructs' were fabricated about the inferiority of the indigenous people, including Australian Aboriginal indigenes.It was done by the dominant white colonizers who portrayed Aboriginals as "ignoble savages and barbarous heathens" (Hemming 24). The invading forces believed the indigenous people to be remnants of a "stone age inevitably doomed to extinction" (Bourke 1). The colonizers claimed peaceful settlement as the land was desert and uninhabited or at the most inhabited by a few nomadic tribes always on the move and without any settled laws, customs and real ownership of land. Contesting this construct of peaceful settlement, Rita Huggins recalls an incident from her childhood and exposes the state-sponsored attack on Aboriginals and their families being taken away in a cattle truck like animals with brown stains on the floor and hardly any room to move. The 'full blood' family members were disembarked on the Woorabinda Aboriginal Settlement and the fair-skinned to Cherbourg. Huggins says, "Our tribe was torn away-finished" (10).Jenny Burden, an eminent critic,too opines,

> As settlement spread … conflict developed. Aboriginal resistance in defence of land, lifestyle and society was

> seen by authorities and settlers alike as deviant hostility, to be put down with the strongest possible force. Punitive expeditions of Europeans formed genocidal bands, moving along the ever-widening frontier in bloody retribution for perceived villainies and imagined wrongs. Systematic killings took place, sometimes under military leadership…. Settler justice ruled the frontier. (194)

Further, the new masters poisoned the waterholes, buried black fellows alive in sand and tied them to trees for use in shooting practice. She wonders as to who were the real barbarians.

Another cultural construct, on the basis of which the colonizers attempted to legitimize their appropriation of foreign land, is the lie of civilizing the barbarous heathens of the third-world nations, a privilege bestowed upon them by none other than Almighty himself. The English colonizers peremptorily believed in their superiority- cultural, racial and linguistic. However, in the name of civilizing, the colonizers brutalized, enslaved, subjugated and exploited the natives.The Aboriginals put up their best resistance against their subjugation but could not succeed before the economically, politically and technologically superior English people with England's backing. As a result, thousands got slaughtered in the large-scale killings. The natives also fell victims to the new and peculiar diseases to which they had no immunity against. Moreover, the displacement and dispossession of the land, which had been central to their very existence, extinguished the little hope of a bright future.

Due to the cruel policies and racial politics, the Aboriginals suffered at every front. In the name of protection and welfare they were subjected to all kinds of atrocities. The Commonwealth government further divided and segregated the natives on the basis of the degree of blackness of their skins. The 'full blood' Aborigines were considered to be the real natives and left to fend for themselves, as the colonizers believed them to be a degenerate race, being swept aside by the march of

civilization. The 'half-castes' or light skinned indigenes — the children of exploited indigenous women, were allowed to be taken by the State to assimilate them into the white culture. The callous colonizers tore apart these children from their mother's breasts, segregated and confined them in orphanages, to be raised to work on the fields and as domestic helps in the English houses, apart from being mentally, emotionally, psychologically, physically and sexually exploited. Rita Huggins herself gave birth to two children from anonymous men before she married Jake. Many of these children, ranging from few months old to teenagers, could never see their families or loved ones again after their removal. The scars lasted for a whole life time. Moreover, they faced existential dilemma or a crisis of identity as they had been brought up in institutions disparaging Aboriginals and Aboriginality.As Colin Bourke and Helen Cox report:

> Under the rhetoric of protection, children were removed from parents, the right to marry was limited, freedom of movement was restricted and special laws regulated Aboriginal employment. Aborigines were forced to live in reserves, settlements and missions...The law also provided that the Director of Native Affairs and not the parents shall be the guardians of every Aboriginal child in the State while such a child is under the age of twenty-one years... Even wages were not paid in full. (61-62)

Rita Huggins shares that dark-skinned and light-skinned children were separated in school and the darker ones were not sent for excursionsThe callous task of removing children was entitled to a government agency, ironically called the 'Welfare Department' or the 'Aborigines Protection Board'. Carmel Bird exposes the real motive of the Welfare Department behind institutionalizing the native children:

> By seizing children of mixed descent, institutionalizing them, teaching them to despise their Aboriginal inheritance and sending them out to work as station

> hands or domestic servants, authorities wanted to sever the cultural connection between the children of mixed descent and their aboriginal families and communities and to prepare them for a place in the lower strata of European society. (144)

Rita Huggins particularly recalls the history classes where it was taught how Captain James Cook discovered Australia, thus brushing under the carpet the pre-contact, post-invasion and history of colonization. Rita Huggins says that the consequences of herding people into concentration camps were monumental. The inmates suffered acute isolation, they were made to conform to European ways, made dependents, denied languages, religious beliefs and were always under surveillance. It was nothing short of subversion of the basic human rights. Rita Huggins was herself snooped upon by the state for full thirty-two years, the first entry in her file was made in 1942 and the last in 1974. If this were not bizarre enough, the more ironical and painful episode is recounted by Rita Huggins herself when her daughter Jackie Huggins went to the authorities much later in order to access information on her mother for writing their book. The information was denied to her.However, the same records were readily available to the whites who were supposed to be "credentialed researchers" (5).

Another prevalent lie, part of the cultural construct, contested and exposed time and again is that of the successful assimilation of the Aboriginals in the dominant white culture. The truth being, that the Aboriginals are still on the fringes of Australian society, everyday facing racial bias, discrimination and inequality. Jackie Huggins speaks about the intolerance for Aboriginals and their ways by the dominant and majority white community. She shares that because of white landlords and neighbours, the Aboriginals have to change houses twice or thrice a year. Lending a helping hand to homeless or travelling relations and friends by providing temporary accommodation is frowned upon by the white neighbours. They expect the indigenes to conform to their ways of nuclear families besides respect for privacy and individualism. (74)

Rita Huggins herself testifies that not much has changed over the period of time. Still, the Aboriginals are looked down upon by real estate agents, taxi drivers and even lawyers and doctors. She particularly recalls an incident when she took her son Johnny to the doctor in the 1960s. Before examining the child, the doctor enquired of her if she were aboriginal. Rita says, "I wasn't sure if it was a question or a statement" (74). Without examining the child, the doctor diagnosed him with scabies and prescribed a lotion for the entire family besides emphasizing cleanliness and personal hygiene.

The fabricated cultural construct of successful assimilation constructed by the white government is exposed when on 26January 1972, Australia Day; the Aboriginals planted a small beach umbrella outside the Parliament House with the caption "Aboriginal Embassy," (77) thus conveying the Aboriginal angst at their utter neglect and how they are treated like foreigners in their own country. It was a desperate attempt to draw attention of the government towards their plight but what followed was a barbaric crack down of the police on the agitators, "It was most unexpected that the police would begin to belt up the women. They punched them, knocked them to the ground and then jumped on their guts… All this was taking place right outside Parliament House..." (79).

Another cultural construct, which the European colonizers proudly proclaimed was about their own cultural, racial and linguistic superiority.English language was deliberately imposed on the natives to destroy their own language, as language is one of the key assets and means to connect with the culture and heritage of one's ancestors. In contrast to one English language of the Europeans, the Aboriginals had more than 250 languages with further dialects in the pre-invasion era, which slowly started dying out as the stolen children lost their language. The 'stolen generations' refers to the light-skinned children produced out of the forced violation of native women by the white masters. These children of exploited indigenous women were abducted by the State to assimilate them into the white culture. The masters believed that they

had more chances of becoming an asset to the Australian economy as factory-hands and domestic helps than their dark ancestors.For these stolen generations, losing the language also meant they lost their culture and were confused about their identity. Whether these children were in government run 'homes' or in the white families, whom they served, they were told to hate their culture as it was inferior. Rita Huggins shares that native language was prohibited in the state-run orphanages and the English language imposed. Even names were usurped. Rita Huggins' parents, Albert and Rose, were given new names by their station owners. The children were also told lies about their parents that they were alcoholic, illiterate and irresponsible, and so the State had removed them from their families.

Howard Groome draws our attention to the fact that even after the post-1967 reforms, the Aboriginals still continue to languish on the fringes of mainstream society. Even now, Aboriginal children are victims of institutional racial bias at the hands of both peers and teachers at school. Many such children lag behind in studies; have low attendance rates, and approximately only a third of all indigenous students continue on to year 12. The discrimination they are subjected to stifles the motivation to improve, achieve or even participate because sooner or later they realize that their culture, language, heritage and family values have no place or respect in the dominant order. He says,

> They have to learn to handle the shame of being invisible as an individual person and yet highly visible racially. They have to cope with the negativity they meet because of their racial identity and also their comparatively lower level of performance. Some face the dilemma that if they improve their academic level they may face rejection by their Indigenous peer group. (179)

The activist authors like Rita and Jackie Huggins fiercely contest the widespread cultural construct created by the colonizers that Aboriginals were godless and without customs, laws and traditions. The

fact is 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. That code of life was known as The Dreaming or The Dreamtime, 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 the mouth. It exists in multifarious facets like song, 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.

Rita Huggins in the course of her memoir talks about the huge rocks, caves which were engraved with paintings besides handmade weapons and tools. She proudly claims that the caves in which she and her ancestors resided were naturally cool in summer and warm in winters. Hence, they were naturally temperature controlled unlike modern inventions and their high environmental cost. The food provided by the white government was of little nutritional value, namely sugar, salt, flour, tea, offal, etc. It was totally opposite to the natural and fibre rich diet which the indigenes extracted from nature. Commenting on the intra-family bond and cohesion, Rita vividly remembers people commenting on her mother, "There goes Rosie and her ducklings" (19). Faith in the institution of family and kinship besides reverence for the land of their ancestors and love for the flora and fauna are the hallmarks of the Aboriginal culture. The Aboriginal life and lifestyle resemble that of a child: pure, transparent, without affectation, greed and hypocrisy. Colin Tatzcontests the European notion of civilization which is usually employed as a touchstone for the rest of humanity, and says,

> Civilization means neither clothes, nor houses, nor industries, nor science, nor culture, nor taste, nor literature, nor art… they stand outside the essential idea of civilization: they belong to it "materially", not "formally" (intrinsically). A primitive people needing no clothes and no houses, eating the things which

> nature provides for them, without literature or art or industries, would possess a perfect civilization, provided they agreed to live at peace with each other and induce consideration for each other's rights and liberties. (89)

Therefore, through these expressions of the self and community in the form of biographies and autobiographies, the Aboriginals contest and subvert the various fabricated cultural constructsborne and propagated by the whites about them. Through these writings, they put forth their side of the story, the misery and oppression they underwent, and the truth about their culture, language and history. In the process, they connect with their follow indigenes, sharing the pain and grief. It has contributed towards the emancipation, assertion, resistance and true representation of the Aboriginals and their culture. Such writings engender intercultural understanding cutting across races and geographies.These narratives make the individuals and the plight of the community visible not only to fellow citizens but to the world at large, and hence these move from the personal and local to the national and international.

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Aboriginal Suicide in Multicultural Australia: Reading Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise*

Ruchi Sharma

In Australia, Multiculturalism has been seen as a concept competing for official acceptance and dominance. There is meaning and desirability of multiculturalism in the nation— Australia is to be examined within the unfolding social and political responses to settler colonisation, race, identity politics, and the present context of changes in social class and the nation's political agendas. The development of multiculturalism is, thus, derivative of political and cultural influence witnessed by Australia and its people. European politicians and intellectuals have been working on the policies of multiculturalism to find new ways to control citizens of settler nations. These policies have been specifically designed to control the original inhabitants - the aboriginal people, who have suffered the most in the nation and have been unable to claim their rights.

This paper is unique in linking the study of increasing suicides in the aboriginal community at a time when indigenous rights are of critical importance to national debates over racism and multiculturalism. These debates also incorporate race and identity politics when a response is sought towards policies of migration, community relations, and racism that affect wider international economic and social trends of the nation. As a multicultural population, the issues of building alliances against racist political groups to form anti-racist policies and practices have become an integral part of the political landscape of the Nation. The cross-cutting issues of politics of identity, recognition, and racial discrimination including the stress caused because of acculturation and assimilation within the aboriginal community provides a significant representation even in literary writings.

Thus, studying how multicultural context significantly becomes a variable for increased suicidal behaviour and pattern of help-seeking found in aboriginal people provides an area of research for a culturally sensitive reading of texts written by the indigenous authors. These writings and readings of texts capture eroding sense of community within aboriginal people in the multicultural nation as they still find themselves economically and socially disadvantaged with policies of settler nation. As one studies literary representations of the aboriginal community in the new multicultural nation – Australia, one finds aboriginal people in greater concentrations of poverty, fewer opportunities for education, employment, and social mobility. The penetrating sense of hopelessness, alienation, and violence further heightens the aftermaths of ethnic discrimination.

Australian aboriginal health has been a point of contention in settler Australia. The aboriginal population has suffered tremendously since the invasion of colonial power on the land that was called 'terra nullius' by the British invaders.The history of aboriginal child removal has been an atrocious step taken by the settler government to establish their hegemony in a new Australia. Its impact has affected not only aboriginal physical health but also their psychological health. Colonization, displacement, dispossession, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and racial discrimination are some of the major factors that have induced grief-cycles in the lives of the aboriginal people.

Ramifications of the past have only complicated future claims for the compensation of past injustices. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in custody (RCIADIC, 1991) had reported that a large number of suicides were noted as a consequence of the history of forcible separation of the aboriginal children from their families. In 2010, the study was done by Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice observed a distinct feature of these suicides occurring in areas of proximity within a particular community and region. This phenomenon was called 'suicide clustering.' Australian Bureau of

Statistics (ABS) data on aboriginal suicides has been showing a substantial increase in its rate. Interestingly, most of the records and reports do not mention aboriginal suicides before 1960 on the statistical maps. It is rather in 2002 in a report *Acting on What We Know*(AOWWK 2002) that scholars began to question suicides as an aftermath of colonisation in Australia. This included social habits of substance abuse, the establishment of mining, appropriation, and excess control on people of the first nations. In his book, Colin Tatz says, "To understand Aboriginal suicide, one has to understand Aboriginal history: their way of life has been destroyed, resulting in a loss of structure, cohesion and meaning" (xxii).

The contextual study of literary works produced by the aboriginal writers has represented various causes of the inevitable increase in aboriginal suicides. Acknowledging aboriginal problems in literary writings has thus become a developing strategy of aboriginal authors to confront the challenges faced by their community. This social context of aboriginal writings provides a key area of research. Most researchers have extrapolated that substance abuse has been a perennial problem leading to an increased rate of suicide in records.

In 2007, activist and writer Alexis Wright wrote a work of fiction entitled *Plains of Promise* to retrieve aboriginal stories of anxiety, fear, family violence, glue-sniffing abuse, dejection, and substance abuse.In this first novel,the author presentsa dire situation about the increasing aboriginal suicides in the communities.This paper looks at *Plains of Promise* as a novel reminding readers about the aboriginal history of suicide and their concerns. The important questions raised in the study include questions such as these: If the mention of the indigenous suicides in literary writings is essential, can it be perceived as a consequence of the colonization? Have indigenous authors and activists approached the problem of aboriginal suicide as a discourse of intergenerational trauma for the family and community history in their writings? Whether this mention has called for a national critical response from the readers?

This research paper aims to recognize literary writings as an inclusive approach towards cultural healing for the aboriginal communities. This study is relevant more in present times when suicides are seen as an act of sin in religion; as madness and a criminal act in legal fiction; and as an illness caused by the sadness in medical terms.

Wright portrays a grim picture of aboriginal suicides within the social and political context of a period of imposed segregation. She captures the deterioration in the daily conditions of aboriginal life. Setting the novel during the time-period from 1990-91, when Australia had the world's fourth-highest rate of youth suicide, she brings forth the challenges faced by aboriginal advancement organisations in the 1960s. This was the time when the aboriginals were not given control over their affairs. The novel corresponds to the report *Bringing Them Home* (HREOC 1997). Wright shows irritation and anger against the harm caused by reconciliation. By the very act of writing, she makes a conscious effort of giving hope to her people as her writings legitimately claim recognition in the literature of the nation.

Most aboriginal researchers, writers, and suicide specialists have theorised that there seems to be a need to speculate what is mentioned in the official records as the record becomes the data of history which is eventually regarded as inviolable facts. Wright, among a few other aboriginal writers, has discussed the perpetual problem of the increase in aboriginal suicide statistics while in the larger framework of the narrative she asserts that sets of officials are not representative of verifiable 'truth', to say the least.

The novel also deals at length with coronial facts and their unreliable recording and investigation of aboriginal deaths. She carefully weaves the narration of aboriginal characters in ways that seek out depression or mental illness prevailing in the aboriginal community after colonisation. She uses interviews with relatives and friends, co-workers, and medical employees in different cultural settings in various chapters that discuss how everyone was talking about the crazy woman from another country who killed herself during the night. The movers

and shakers of the mission had a lot to say about her. "If you knew so much, what was her name then? No one knew for sure" (7).

This death was the first of a series of aboriginal suicides that has been mentioned in the novel which occurred in the community, when women could no longer live with the pain of their children taken away from them. The suicides mostly had women as victims of rape, domestic violence, or suffering mothers of stolen children. The magnitude of the suicide rate increased after the third death after the death of Ivy's mother. The limits of time between these deaths in reference to the geographical space of St. Dominic's mission should have placed the aboriginal deaths in the category of an epidemic. The author notes, "these victims suffered horrendous burns, long and agonising pain while death crawled its way through to them" (22).

The aboriginal women victims were all mothers who committed suicide by burning themselves to death. This choice of embracing death was the legacy of Ivy's mother. A seminal work to understand aboriginal suicide is Colin Tatz's *Study of Aboriginal Suicide*. He asserts, "Female suicide is relatively neglected. The numbers and the rates aremuch lower, but there is evidence that attempted suicide is much morefrequent in females than males among Aborigines…" (76). He establishes a direct correlation between suicide and mental health to understand how aboriginal suicide is different.

Wright interweaves the narrative of four generations by giving an account of the nameless mother of Ivy Koopundi who commits suicide, Ivy's resilience, Mary Doolan's enterprise and activism, and hope in Jessie Doolan's reunion with her aboriginal family. The novel draws on the contours of individual sadness of characters who are being forcibly removed from their families. These mothers were all vulnerable individuals with lost identity and negative self-esteem. Since their children belonged to the stolen generation the personalities of the children staying at the mission and reserves were also marked by an inability to develop intimacy in interpersonal relationships since childhood. Ivy's disability to showcase her emotions is a result of

disconnection with the traditional aboriginal customs.

Most aboriginal women did not find satisfaction in family relationships because of the violence faced by the subaltern and doubly marginalised women in colonised Australia. Aboriginal women share history of violence through exclusionary practices, domestic violence, rape, and entrenched attitudes of discrimination based on colour and class. These women have been trying to come to terms with the violent colonial past by evaluationg their position in the settler nation. They often find themselves caught in the mansculinist discourse on nationalism and their maternal role in society towards reconciliation.

The pattern of the colonisation further forced them to feel the lack of civilisation and religious faith. Colonisers need to civilize them expected these women to replace their traditional customs and faith with Christianity that was to become the new normal for the aboriginal people. The old *waragu* or old woman in the novel becomes the mouthpiece of the author and questions this practice of replacing traditional aboriginal spirituality with Christianity. She comments on the process of acculturation and asks of what is to be told to a grieving mother of stolen generation: "Sure you did. What did you tell her? 'God is going to look after you', did you? God's people take her child away and leave her there crying out like an animal for days afterwards. Only us here had to listen to her all day and half the night. Did whiteman's God hear that?" (9).

Eroll Jipp was the whiteman who showed aboriginal people the virtues of acquiring Christian faith. He assured that when these women who committed suicide were buried, a young banana plant was planted at the head of the grave. The banana plantation was also a cemetery symbolically representing the idea, "Where there is death, there will always be life" (32). Although aboriginal people are inclined to internalize feelings, their connection with nature kept their emotional well-being strengthened. Yet the aftermath of colonisation led to the formation of an aboriginal society that had negated or abolished its ancient and precious aboriginal epistemology.

Not all aboriginal women were able to communicate with family members and many times they were not able to directly express their feelings in the situations of conflict. Aboriginal people who previously had ordered lives after colonisation had disordered lives. The certain apparent indicators of despair were evident in the choice of alcohol and drug abuse that drew the attention of the police. Wright attempts to explain the causes of aboriginal problems, and the outward manifestations of these disorders. She describes the characteristics and behaviours of aboriginal men and women that should be read as reflecting poorly on people who have been struggling for survival.

In this battle for survival men also committed suicide as mentioned in the novel:

> Three weeks after the first woman had died, a married man with children and a good, decent wife who did everything for him, a man who was leading light of Church, a man with a navy suit, hanged himself from the rafters in a foul-smelling toilet.(71)

His wife blamed the Church and called it evil which led to murmurs amongst the converted. Christians but none withdrew from the Church fearing the wrath of the White god. The novel shows the danger of cultural appropriation posed by the sensation-seeking spread of Christianity and the establishment of missions with the white missionaries who denied aboriginal culture, claims, and history. The idea was to reinforce the aboriginal stereotypes of the indigenous being inferior people.

Harrowing accounts of the protagonist - Ivy's suffering, both physical and psychological - answer questions of natives turning to suicide as a way to deal with an intolerable situation. Wright displays her concern in her essay 'Question of Fear':

> Tens of thousands of Aboriginal people became more deeply hurt, continued to be hurt, and many defenceless people died from deliberately imposed injury to selfworth in the forms of suicide or murder that were so inexplicable and at such a rapid

> rate that most of our people have yet to understand what happened to them, or how we might even survive in the future. (133)

The suicide epidemic, as explained in the novel and other non-fictional writings by Wright, makes one study circumstances that contributed to a large number of suicides. In the novel, the familial relationship is marked by constant fighting and tension. Parents quarreled constantly and the relationship between man and woman deteriorated to the point where men had given into substance abuse. Violent reactions, smouldering quarrels resulted in withdrawal, isolation, and loss of self-worth in most individuals. The limit of time and magnitude of suicides committed by women in the given geographical space placed the deaths in the category of an epidemic.

Wright creates an institutionalised setting in the narrative where the pattern of aboriginal parenting is carried across three generations. Furthermore, it reflects that the family and community are forever robbed of the aboriginal identity that is incorporated within the aboriginal belief system. Thus, the theme of a broken family as the source of anxiety of displaced children is fuelled by the loss of land and shame. Intra-familial abuse, suicides in the family, racism, and discrimination faced in childhood generate collective distress for protagonist Ivy.

Ivy found herself in a vulnerable state where the inevitable loss of her mother deepened feelings of distress and of being deserted. The process of acculturation made some characters like Ivy and Gloria look upto white culture as she found herself drawn to the lifestyle of white society. Discussion about Gloria's going out with white fella Kevin Shunassy soon made her sink into the realization that she was unwelcomed in the white society and had no place there.

A closer look at the narrative of the novel also reflects that colonial encounters with the indigenous peoples revealed that aboriginal lives hardly matter to the colonial masters. The impact of colonial authority was such that in 1839, Charles Darwin noted, “Wherever the

European has trod, death seems to pursue the aboriginal. . . .The varieties of man seem to act on each other; in the same way as different species of animals, the stronger always extirpating the weaker" (Nicholas & Nicholas).

Subsequent instances of indigenous massacres of the aboriginals and the rise of racial discrimination within a nation following imperial ideology rendered aboriginals as savage beings. The process of ethnic cleansing had its effect and presence in Australia as well as in many other colonies. This however did not mean that the colonisers took responsibility for the anticipated disappearance of the indigenous peoples. Though there was an obvious connection between colonization and the reduced indigenous population yet repressive government policies continued to eliminate aboriginal people not only from history but also from their nation. This instance can also be witnessed at the widow's camp where the first woman goes missing after she wishes to establish an isolated camp elsewhere. A charred corpse was all they found when they went looking for her and this death was also called another suicide by Jipp, Protector of Aboriginal Affairs to assure that fear entered window's camp.

This research paper calls for a rethinking of major indigenous issues and their literary representations that include the social, cultural, and medical approaches to suicide; the concept of aboriginality for children of stolen generation; the need to acknowledge spiritual aspects of aboriginal life in settler society of multicultural nation; and the strategies to provide aboriginals support in the nation to assure de-conditioning of aboriginal people who readily regard suicide as inevitable.

Wright's novel focuses on the humanitarian crisis. Today's crisis of increasing statistics of aboriginal suicide in Aboriginal societies is, indeed, calling out for aboriginal self-determination as aboriginals have a right to life. The sustainability of the commonly understood right to life includes a healthy and happy life of longevity which should be assisted by all in the environment and in a multicultural society that

facilitate that span. In such times, writings produced by indigenous women writers give immense strength, courage, and hope to women. The novel *Plains of Promise* has also received a significant response from the non-aboriginal readers.

The fact that many aboriginal people prefer death to life implies a rejection of what the broader multicultural Australian society and we humans have to offer to fellow beings. It becomes significant in current times to understand the causes of the aboriginal catastrophe by reading the narratives produced by the aboriginal writers. It makes more sense in finding literary representation of the crisis faced by the aboriginals in the novel set in a colonial context where traumatic events have affected aboriginals adversely leading them to suicidal thinking. The written narratives help readers and academicians understand layers of physical, psychological, and emotional hurt, affecting the individual and collective aboriginal community and its effect on generations with unresolved issues and negative coping mechanisms of substance abuse.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Many Houses of Multiculturalism

Tony Simoes da Silva

The House of Youssef (2019), Yumna Kassab's first book, is published by Western Sydney-based Giramondo. A collection of short stories, it was longlisted for the 2020 Stella Prize, an award open to women and non-binary Australian authors and short-listed for both the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award. Kassab herself was born in Western Sydney of Lebanese parents, and grew up in Australia, apart from two years in Lebanon. She currently works as a teacher.

Perhaps unsurprisingly - and I stress that 'perhaps' - the collection's main themes address the migrant experience and intergenerational interaction dominated by a need to negotiate different value systems. It offers a rich and nuanced meditation on migration and identity, loss and being adrift, home and homelessness and so on. It is concerned with the meaning of home and self, family and place, past and future. And yet it is also a lot more than stories of, and about Lebanese Australians. Its contribution to Australian writing deserves to see it read not merely as another tile in a broad multicultural mosaic where the stories of Muslim Australians remain largely invisible. While it has become almost impossible to write about migration and dislocation with any degree of originality and insight, Kassab's book does so with considerable verve and sophistication precisely because the themes she explores might be described as universal, much as I am conscious of the ideological baggage the term carries.

The book consists of four separate sections: 'Motherland,' 'The House of Youssef,' 'Homing' and 'Darkness, Speak.' In its paperback version it adds up to 84 pages, a small book by any measure, but *The*

House of Youssef impresses for the weighty maturity of its writing as much as for the breadth and ambition of its themes. Reviewers have noted the fragmentary structure of the work, as the stories in the first half often are very brief. Yet, though the links between stories and characters are not explicit, the return to the same narrators and characters in a number of different stories, a consistent pattern of familial relations, and of cultural and social parameters endow *The House of Youssef* with a clear sense of internal cohesion. It would be far-fetched to speak of it as a novella, but much of the poignancy of the writing resides in the way the family dynamics, notably between mother and daughter, allows readers to follow the sad story of a family in distress.

Focused largely on a family of four, Kassab reveals a unique ability to seek out the extraordinary in the ordinary lives of people dealing first-hand with the friction of cultural clashes within and outside the family unit, with familial collapse and social discrimination. As much as these are stories of dislocation and loss, of alienation and nostalgia, they are also about the more mundane irritants of family life. The bulk of the stories detail the difficult relationship between mother and daughter, a product of the mother's belief that in Australia she must ensure the family 'keep to the old ways' of life in Lebanon and of Lebanese culture. Central to the migrant's ability to craft a sense of authenticity in the new country, the old ways can and often lead to conflict and trauma. In this context *The House of Youssef* reminded me of recent works by American writers such as Ocean Vuong in *One Earth We Are Briefly Wondrous* (2019) or Angie Cruz in *Dominicana* (2020). The host country accounts for much of the trauma experienced by the new arrivals and it is tempting to see the mental breakdown of certain characters as an objective correlative for their experiences as migrants in Australia.

Key to it is a carefully controlled use of language, a spare quality in the writing that works especially well to convey the psychological violence that can mark family life. While much of the pain and suffering endured by the family is connected to their place in Australian

society—socially and economically marginalised and ethnically classed—it is also inextricable from their cultural identities as Lebanese or Muslim. They happen to be in Australia, but the family dynamics would have been the same wherever they lived. It is hard not to see the mother's unrelenting attacks on a daughter whom she believes lacks the modesty expected in Lebanese culture as at least partly responsible for the mental breakdown both will experience, in the daughter's case with particularly dire consequences. The daughter herself repeatedly rehearses how others in the Lebanese Australian community see her: "Is she smiling just right? Is she striking a balance that says modest virgin and not cheap whore?" In Kassab's worldview, family can be nurturing and stifling, oppressive and destructive. For migrant families, this often is complicated by the persistent clash between multiple worldviews and cultural regimes.The tension and anxiety that dominates their interactions are not unfamiliar to migrants and their children, particularly when, as in this case, the generations were born in different countries and cultures. For the mother, the reliance on social networks of fellow Lebanese Australians demands a clear awareness of the ways in which the ways of the old country continue to inflect life in Australia. Kassab's stories show how expectations are uniquely harsh on women, and even more so on young women. Modest behaviour, defined by norms that might be out of place and time even in contemporary Lebanon, is both expected and imposed, and transgressors ostracised by family and community. The expectation that the young will marry within the community, perhaps even travel back to the Old Country to find an 'authentically Lebanese' partner is common in many other migrant communities, but as the stories show it can be brutally disempowering. Indeed, the heartbreak experienced by the family is all the more tragic because so much of it is self-imposed, as the mother seeks to ensure her Lebanese Australian children remain within the walls of an imagined Lebanon she, and those of her generation, carry in their minds and hearts.

Western Sydney emerges here as a setting for difficult lives

deeply inflected by their ethnic or socio-economic parameters, but simultaneously a place where complex and rich lives take place. To put it differently, the stories suggest that the pained and mutually abusive conditions that characterise family life here are not endemic to migrant life as such. The stories are and are not representative of the lives of all migrants.Rather, they rehearse some of the many ways of being Lebanese Muslim in Australia, including the acute racism and discrimination experienced by young men post 9/11. Ultimately, however, *The House of Youssef* is a vivid and memorable portrait of family life at a juncture where human behaviour, religion, social mores and economic conditions merge.

BOOK REVIEW

Home and Beyond: Reading *Sunita D' Souza Goes to Sydney*

Supala Pandiarajan

Sunita D' Souza Goes To Sydney (2018) - the Asian avatar of its Australian version, *The Permanent Resident* – is a collection of sixteen brilliantly crafted short-stories by Roanna Gonsalves. Gonsalves is an Indian-Australian author with a Doctoral Degree, behind her pen, in Creative Writing from the University of New South Wales. Hailing from Mumbai and moving into Australia in 1998, Gonsalves' work won the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award Multicultural Prize, and was shortlisted for the prestigious Dobbie Awards. The sixteen stories in *Sunita D' Souza Goes to Sydney* are not mere sites of cultural intersection but foreground the changing dimensions of diasporic writing in today's transnational literary framework. It is an epoch-making contribution to the multicultural literary traditions of both Australia and India.

Generally, the words 'alienation' and 'displacement' are associated to larger frameworks of 'diaspora', 'gender', 'class', 'race' or 'religion', but there are occasions when people feel out-of-place even within the secure spaces of their homes or feel 'othered' from their own selves. The characters and situations in *Sunita D'Souza Goes to Sydney* drive home this theme of a dystopian struggle for existence and the quest for exhilaration as an inescapable human condition - both external and internal.

Sunita D' Souza Goes To Sydney is a collage of diverse experiences of people who have crossed geo-political borders; they permeate through - and many times break - spatial, cultural, and psychological boundaries to embrace new identities. In the process of getting rooted into their host land, they take a discreet peep into the secrets of the 'self' and the 'others', thereby unraveling the intentions behind people's actions.

Hence at one level, the stories move beyond their feminist and multicultural tags, and present the struggle of human beings to survive in a cosmopolitan world. An economically empowered woman with a perfect made-up appearance believes that she has become 'Australian'; a domestically-abused beautician struggles to root herself economically; a writer tells the story of her estranged mother and in the process reconciles with her; an Indian student turns her back on a friend when he is racially attacked; a young couple fail to realize the emergency of a miscarriage that leaves them childless for years; a woman steps out of her religious family and challenges the Church for the "unoriginal sins" committed by some Priests on children; a woman who fails to save her child from drowning comes to terms with her guilt; a wife realizes her husband's irresponsibility to shoulder familial responsibilities; a woman realizes that an Indian tag on people is not license for trust. Thus, *Sunita D'Souza Goes To Sydney* is a bundle of engrossing stories that, "play with language to chronicle the lives of those not often represented in Australian literature" (Royo-Grasa, Pilar).

A connecting chord runs through all the sixteen narratives, thereby making each story seem like an episode in a novel. Every story brings in a new dimension of Bombay's Goan-Catholic community in Sydney wherein situations of love, loss, betrayal, admiration, friendship, guilt, exploitation and fear are interspersed. The reader realizes that the characters and events of different stories can harmoniously synchronize into a single narrative. The narratives develop, breaking the expectations of readers for stereotyped situations and characters. What could go-on as casual day-to-day incidents become jerky memories – both to the characters and the readers! On the other hand, there are stories that progress in tranquility, still bringing in epiphany for its protagonists and readers. As the reader brims with joy of having got hold of the crux of the story, Gonasalves proceeds - with every word; with every phrase; with every sentence – challenging the readers' claims to have cracked the meaning of the story.

Roanna Gonsalves creates rhythmic patterns and visual effects

through her choicest vocabulary, colourful comparisons and ingeniously sculpted lines. Her architecturally designed phrases and sentences convey a plethora of constructed meanings within her stories. In "Easter 2016", a teacher-turned homemaker hunts for Szhechwan peppercorns in Sydney's Asian market. Though she decides to try the Szechwan peppercorns to satisfy her husband's craving for 'Khung Pa Khao Chicken', she is bonded to the Indian black pepper which "smells of maternity" – a striking phrase that brims with cultural and maternal significance. In "The Teller in the Tale", Rita, a former Air-India employee has to give-up her passionate profession of flying to forgo the "unaffordable" childcare expenses in Australia. A creative writing student now, Rita's eyes longingly look into the sky and trail behind an Air-India flight that vanishes into the clouds hanging over Sydney. At the backdrop of this graphic moment, Rita's Australian friend tells her that Rita is "lucky" to be doing a Doctoral degree in Creative Writing. In the story "CIA (Australia)", the loudspeakers at the Sydney Central Station blare into Candice's ears warning people of the approaching train: "Please stand behind the yellow line". This warning comes at a time when Candice is innocently smiling at a stranger, "an Indian man" at the Station, who attempts to misuse her camaraderie for a fellow Indian migrant to make an illicit proposal. The narratives are strewn with such verbal and visual metaphors and meanings lie embedded within these metaphoric expressions. From seeing "a meadow of daffodils… beside the lake, beneath the trees", to defining a radical woman as a "modern-day female Shiva, destroying… to renew with splendor", Gonsalves' inter-textuality ranges far and beyond. References to Wordsworth, Eliot, A.K Ramanujam, Eunice D' Souza, Salman Rushdie, Enid Blyton and Baudelaire in the stories make Gonsalves dazzle as a master of literatures from across the world.

The narratives in *Sunita D' Souza Goes To Sydney* develop through non-chronological timeframes. The narrators foretell moments to give a glimpse of the future or flash back to disclose the past. This temporal disorder of the narrative, especially when the consequence of a

present action is prophesied, sends chills down the spines of the readers. The narratives unfold in unexpected ways and the events that go into the narrative framework are diverse and unconventional. In "The Curry Muncher 2.0", an Indian student, who turns away to ignore racist attacks on a fellow Bombayite, starts her narrative with a childhood experience wherein she learns to "mind" her "own business" from her Chemistry teacher. The narratives stretch far and beyond in weaving memories into thoughts and actions of the characters.

The short stories in this Collection, *Sunita D' Souza Goes To Sydney*, project the essence of transnational relationships as the texts blend into the literary mosaic of both India and Australia. In a global commercial-consumer relationship, national boundaries have blurred and national cultures including food, literature and films have become global commodities. As cultures fuse within human beings, the demarcation between what can be identified as 'Australian' and 'Indian' become complicated. The "Bambaiya" and "Delhiite" Hindi with its "*Haanji*", "*Bas*", "*Kya Baat Hain*" and "*Hindi aati hai aapko*" sit comfortably along with the Australian English phrases like "no worries" and "It is my shout". To have a sentence like, "Sab tho teek hain na auntyji?" or an English sentence that follows a Punjabi or Hindi syntax in an Australian literary work demonstrates the literary interface of two completely different cultures.

The stories present the futility of trying to belong, or the meaninglessness of a forging a singular identity in a hybridized world. Some first-person narrators go unnamed and some lose their names within their stories. Sunita D' Souza – a household name among Goan-Catholics, is a character in the title story. But Sunita embodies determination and female power that defines all of Gonsalves' protagonists. The naming patterns in the narratives ground the idea of fluid, elusive identities in a fractured world.

Gonsalves presents the frivolousness of stereotyping people and cultures. Vincent is no "Curry Muncher" as acidity keeps him away even from the Butter Chicken gravy he cooks in the Indian restaurant

where he works. A plain 'dal-eater', he is abused of being a 'curry-muncher' when he is racially and physically attacked one night in Sydney. Gonsalves ponders into such intricate stereotyping of Indians as curry-munchers in Australia. In "Easter 2016", an unnamed narrator who goes looking for Szechwan Peppercorns, is taken for granted as a butter-chicken eater. But "a Goan brought up on sorpotel and vindaloo, with a palate pickled with homemade vinegar with bootaon chillies… butter chicken would be like water off oilskin…too fake, full of northern lights." Gonsalves breaks the categorizations of the 'self' and the 'other'; her Indian characters find genuine friendships in white Australians while being let down by fellow Indians.

On a positive note, Gonsalves' works have been compared to that of Jhumpa Lahiri's. Beyond such comparisons, *Sunita D' Souza Goes To Sydney* showcases Gonsalves' unique style of verbal and cultural experimentation in writing.

The voices of migrant writers contribute immensely to the imaging of a multicultural nationhood in the Australian literary landscape. Intricately weaving their experience into literary texts, multi-ethnic writers bring-in their not-much noticed experiences to the mainstream literary tradition. Roanna Gonsalves foregrounds the voices of Indians in the Australian literary landscape through the microcosm of Bombay's Goan-Catholic community in Sydney. Doctors, engineers, software professionals and copy-editors who have been migrating into Australia long before creative writers, become 'visible' and are 'heard' through Gonsalves' pen.

Sunita D'Souza Goes to Sydney is a meticulous work - streamlined and researched - that etches the experiences of Indian communities in multicultural Australia. It is a must-read work that indicates the richness of Australian literature beyond the canonical works of Patrick White and Peter Carey.

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Articles are invited on any aspect of Australia or New Zealand - their history, culture, politics, ethnicity, economy, environment, literature, etc. for the general issue of 2020

Articles of 3000 to 5000 words should reach the Editor by 15th July, 2020

Notes for Contributors

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