

Ruminations: The Andrean Journal of Literature

Editors :

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ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE

St. Dominic Road, Bandra, Mumbai 400 050

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Vol. 2

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St. Dominic Road, Bandra, Mumbai 400 050

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Published: August 2013
St. Andrew's College
Bandra, Mumbai 400 050

Printed by J. Rose Enterprises
27 Surve Service Premises, Sonawala X Road,
Goregaon (E), Mumbai 400 063.

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Myth and Cult in Literature

Marie Fernandes

The journal essays focus on exploring the different dimensions which myths take in literature. The articles are broadly classed under nine heads. These include: Greek Mythology in Literature, Indian Mythology in Literature, Native American Myth, Comparative Mythology, Myth and Cult in Christianity, Myth and Cult in Literary Criticism, Psychodynamics of the Myth in Life and Literature, Paradox of Life and Death and Modern Myth Making Process.

The first essay titled, “The Myth of India in History, the American Classroom, and Indian-American Fiction” by Dorothy Figueira examines how the present is shaped by competing pasts and in doing so it not only remakes the present, but creates a new past and redefines identity through an act of memory. In such instances, history may be elevated to myth, when the needs of the present are read into the past and an image of the past is imposed on the present. She discusses how Indian diasporic identity can be studied as a myth. She focuses on the initial myth of Indian identity, the discourse concerning Aryans which gave historical value to ancient Indian history, contributing to identity politics during the colonial and nationalist periods. She examines the work of several Indian diasporic authors to see how a postmodern Indian identity is fashioned in this body of work.

Shireen Vakil’s essay on “Seamus Heaney” illustrates how Heaney shuns the Yeatsian use of Celtic myth, in favour of a more secular or disruptive myth to express the predicament of his country. One of the ways in which he approaches the subject is through the use of Nordic myths of Jutland that gives him an analogy with the violence of the North. Heaney was influenced by P.V. Glob’s book, *The Bog People*, which described the findings of Iron Age ritual killings in Denmark. It was evident that many of the corpses that were unearthed had a violent death, a fact that resonated with Heaney’s larger concerns of the socio-political situation in Northern Ireland. Her article examines some of the Bog poems from *North*, to show Heaney’s reworking of the myth of the motherland, one that speaks not of ‘a terrible beauty’ being born, but of a more active militancy that challenges and questions the status quo.

Greek Mythology in English Literature

Shreya Chatterji’s essay, “The Fictionalised Life of Alexander the Great in the Novels of Valerio Massimo Manfredi” while dealing with the life of the great hero also endorses

the view that myths and legends bring about the resurrection of hopes and values in the context of culture. They impart invaluable life lessons and provide an iconic figure to emulate and look up to. She believes that we can trace it, in the modern context, to the neuro-linguistic, psychological models. The feelings that ensue are awe and admiration, and the need for confrontation with basic human truths. Such myths and their retellings afford elevated thoughts, learning and perhaps even an application in everyday life.

Sugandha Indulkar's, "Harry Potter's Greek Connection", traces J.K. Rowling's popular Harry Potter series of books to ancient Greek mythology to decode its success, value and appeal. She quotes from cultural historian Jacques Barzun to endorse her point of view that, "What links myth with literature is the imagination."

Indian Mythology in Literature

Ambreen Safder Kharbe's essay, "Mythological Exploration in *The Thousand Faces Of Night, Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *A Matter Of Time*" argues that mythological themes in Indian literature first bear its most influential and destiny defying traces in the two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The protagonist Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* recalls the qualities of Lord Rama's wife Sita in the *Ramayana* and is given an emblematic stance, for patiently bearing and partaking all her suffering in life. *A Matter of Time* reflects myths from *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* and *Katha Upanishad*. Deshpande in this novel rewrites myth. The three sections of the novel deal with three different Indian myths. The paper further explores the relationship of the protagonist with the great epics *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* and the *Upanishads*, in the current context, by decoding myth.

Lakshmi Muthukumar's essay, "Problematizing R.K.Narayan's Use of Myth in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*" seeks to show how Narayan uses a re-telling of the Bhasmasura myth in modern terms in order to scrutinize the social practice of gender, especially masculinity, in middle class upper caste Southern India. Narayan's location as an upper caste South Indian Brahmin is itself problematic and immediately makes him vulnerable to allegations of being classist and exclusionist as a novelist.

Muktaja Mathkari's essay, "Stereotypical Laxmanrekha and Rama Mehata's *Inside the Haveli*", explores the symbol of the Laxmanrekha, to indicate that it is a symbol of patriarchal control over female movement and how retribution must follow if there is transgression on the part of a woman. She shows how deep uprooted it is in the

racial unconscious of the Indian Patriarchal society and how it is reflected not only in this novel but also in other Indian texts.

Shyaonti Talwar's, "Mythicising Women who Make a Choice: A Prerogative of the Indian Collective Unconscious to Demarcate Modesty and Right Conduct for Women" discusses the Indian woman's predicament. She argues that whenever she displays the power to make a human choice, she is either mythicized and turned into a supernatural being or glorified and put on a pedestal to be worshipped so that there is a sense of separateness or a distance between her and the multitudes she represents. These women include: Sati, Radha, Kunti, Draupadi, Shakuntala and others. This sends a strong message forbidding the Indian woman to replicate their acts and through this inherent paradox and duplicity, the rules for a woman's conduct in Indian society are established.

Sushila Vijaykumar's , " Mythic Reworkings in Girish Karnad's *Yayati* and *The Fire and the Rain*" examines the Yayati myth in the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* and deals with the father-son exchange of ages and the theme of responsibility. The second part returns to the Yavakri myth and the parallel Vritra myth in the *Vanaparva*, the third book of the *Mahabharata* to explore Brahmin power-struggles and fratricidal anxieties.

Titiksha Dhruv's essay, "Being Draupadi – Three Takes" focuses on Draupadi, the powerful female character of the epic *The Mahabharata* . She has shown how the Draupadi myth has been revived and explored by three contemporary women novelists, these include - Dr Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* and Kajal Oza Vaidya's *Draupadi*. In all these stories Draupadi remains a multifaceted personality who could be fiery and angry when the situation called for and also exhibit a compassionate nature. She becomes a role model and encourages people to face life with the same inner strength that she did.

Uddhav Ashturkar's essay, "Arun Kolatkar's 'Yeshwant Rao': A Stylistic View of the Mythical Text" examines one of the notable representative mythical poems. He uses the theory of linguistic criticism to establish that the text has got its own universe and the meaning lies in the same universe. Moreover the linguistic theory claims to be comprehensive because it offers a complete account of the structure of language at all levels, that is, phonology, lexis, graphology, syntax and semantics. Besides, the terminology of linguistics is systematic since language itself is a system of systems.

Native American Myth

Priya Joseph's essay, "The Reworking of the Hero Myth in *The Lost Steps*", traces the journey of the narrator, into the South American jungles in search of musical instruments used by the indigenous people. The journey into the primordial jungle releases him from the bondage of time and offers up alternate routes. The mode of magic realism and the use of literary references ranging across the Bible and European literature across ages necessitate the integration of myths from across the seas with native born myths into the weave of the narrative. The narrator's journey reworks the story of the classic questing hero, told many times over in different histories and which has resonated in the trials and triumphs of humanity.

Sindhu Sara Thomas' essay "Recovering Black Women's Subjectivity Through Reconstructed Myths in Toni Morrison's Fiction", focuses on Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby*, two novels in which she undermines Western and African American myths that disempower and devalue Black womanhood. It also examines Morrison's retrieval of the myth of flight from its western formulation and its reconstruction in order to recover the subjectivity of women signifying identity, community and survival.

Comparative Mythology

Kaustav Kundu's essay, "Mythical Cycles & Postcolonial Dreams: Contextualizing the Kaleidoscope of Ben Okri's Magical Realism" focuses on Ben Okri's use of dreams, as a central part of his magical realist technique in *The Famished Road* and its sequel *Songs of Enchantment*, and what purpose they serve in his viewpoint of postcolonial Nigeria. At one level, these dreams link the traditional, the mythical, and the modern. At another level, however, these dreams can be linked to a broader understanding of culture and society, to further the concept of magical realism and dreams in a transcultural context. He tries to ascertain that the noisy congruence of disparate cultural forces, usually taken as characteristic of cosmopolitan narrative, in Okri's works become a conduit into the more bizarre conjunctions of a feverishly visionary Africa.

Shalini R Sinha's essay, "Resurgence of Myths and Legends in Contemporary Literature of Indian English in an Emergent India", explores the resurgence of interest in Indian mythology today and shows that it coincides with the economic development of the nation and thus expresses the self-confidence of its people. The use of mythology by a few management gurus to provide guidance and direction in the fiercely competitive modern world is also explored. The works of popular

writers like Amish, Ashwin Sanghi and Devdutt Pattanaik are examined, to understand their appeal in the present age, to come to terms with the day to day challenges of life.

Myth and Cult in Christianity

Nazua Idris' essay, "Damsel in Shining Armour and Knights in Distress – Role Reversal of Mythical Gender Archetypes in Shakespearean Comedies" discusses how William Shakespeare reverses the mythical notion of "Damsel in Distress" and "Knight in Shining Armour" in his comedies. The paper focuses upon two of Shakespeare's most beloved comedies, *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It* where we see a reversal of this long-held patriarchal view regarding gender role in society. Portia and Rosalind, the female protagonists of these comedies, not only come out of their own distress but also help the hero and other characters to come out of their crises. She shows how these two women transgress their socially defined role as "Damsel in Distress" and translocate themselves as the "Damsel in Shining Armour" capable of becoming the "saviour" of men and mankind.

Raj K. Dhar's essay, "The Rival Religion of Ted Hughes" explore Hughes' disillusionment with Christianity mainly for its suppression of the sexual impulse which he believed led to the disintegration of man's personality. The powerfulness of priests and their self-importance he observed were at variance with the egalitarianism Christianity professes. Hughes seeks the fulfilment of his spiritual aspirations in eastern mythologies. In the process he creates a mythology of his own and a personal religion too. Hughes's inclination towards Hinduism becomes evident in his later poetical works like *Gaudete*, *Crow*, *Cave Birds* and *River*.

Myth and Cult in Literary Criticism

Kamala Gopalan's essay, "Lost Eden – Springboard to Tell the Story of Another Fall?" describes the loss of an idyllic society, of a people, close to nature, innocent of the wiles and corruption of the Western way of life, and the fall from grace experienced by the protagonists along with their communities. There is a loss of identity and dignity that they experience soon after their encounter with the West. This ambivalence is often compounded by accompanying guilt, again reminiscent of Adam's position after the Fall. The postcolonial moment serves as a springboard to examine the pain and trauma of the colonial encounter itself in these texts.

Kirti Y. Nakhare's essay, "Myths Then and Today: An Analysis of the (Re)creation of the Mahabharata by Women Writers" discusses the view that myths hold an important position in human psychology and society, as it is through them that we can delve into the past and they hold a key to our future. She refers to Carl Jung who expressed his belief that all human societies go through the same stages of intellectual and cultural development and that nature and psyche are the same in all human beings. He thus considered the psychological processes to be manifested in the same way in our expressive behaviour across ages, through our myths. That is why she maintains that we probably have similar birth, evolution myths across cultures. She has examined the works of writers like Shashi Deshpande, Mahasweta Devi, Pratibha Roy and Irawati Karve who have reviewed myths and have creatively interpreted to suit current times.

Psychodynamics of Myth in Life and Literature

Dr. Avinash Desousa's essay, "The Need for an Integrative Model of Myth Making" brings in a viewpoint from a Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist to demonstrate that myth offers a "novel environmental stimuli" which provides participants with a degree of ontological security within their cognizant environment and offer templates for organizing life, assisting during life crises and self-discovery. They may deliver psychological healing and directs human consciousness through various life stages, and for mitigating the potential for psychological fragmentation. Myth narratives play a part in arousing sub-cortical levels in the brain's limbic areas which coordinate affective states. In this sense, myth serves as a neural model for its motor expression ritual.

Shaweta Nanda's paper, "Listening the Unheeded: Women Appropriating and Re telling Myths of Maddened Cassandra and Murderous Medea", explores the possible reasons for and multiple ways in which contemporary women writers engage with classical myths in their works. According to J. Fetterley, myths no longer seem sacrosanct as women writers become "resisting readers" who seek to appropriate, re-vise, re-tell, re-write these "grand" patriarchal narratives from the feminist / 'womanist' point of view. In doing so they radically "novelize" the myths by making them "dialogic" in nature by inserting polyphonic voices and accounts that intend to disrupt hierarchy of the Greek male narrative.

Shilpagauri Ganpule's essay, "Myths of the Origin of Language in World Mythologies" discusses the varied myths relating to the origin of language in different civilizations

and people of all the continents and substantiates how these myths decipher the mystification and perplexity involved in the inscrutable secret of the origin of language.

Paradox of Life and Death

Simi Doley's essay, "Dr. Brian Weiss' *Many Live Many Masters* and *Only Love is Real*" explores the reincarnation myth in these two texts which were based on the author's clinical records. It expounds reincarnation as based on the creative / spiritual evolution of the soul through numerous lifetimes. The mythopoetic descriptions of the author's communications with the highly evolved spirit entities called the Masters provide a subtext for the speculation on the deepest human experiences, needs and aspirations.

Modern Myth Making Process

Abdul Hameed in his essay, "Nathuram Godse in Perspective: The Cult of an Assassin in Indian English Writing" discusses the figure of the assassin whose victim was Mahatma Gandhi. He argues that the assassination of Gandhi, for historical reasons, is linked with the partition of India, for, it was because the partition was there that the Indian government had to share the Reserve Bank balance and it was because Gandhi compelled government to hand over to Pakistan its due of the 55 crores through his fast unto death, that Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte decided to assassinate him for they believed that Gandhi was delivering "His paternal duty not to India but to Pakistan" Through a reading of selected fictional and nonfictional texts from Indian English Writings and contextualizing them in the historical context, the paper attempts to explore the representation of Nathuram Godse in the said literary corpus.

Biju M.A's essay, "Myths and Legends from Netherworld in Mamang Dai's Novel *The Legends of Pensam*", focuses on the myths and legends of the Adi tribe. He shows how their different beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and shamanism give meaning to their lives in the face of their sense of fear and awe before the great mystery of being. The novel he maintains is powerful enough to evoke a mythical consciousness of the pristine and primeval bond of human beings with nature in the wake of the disturbing human condition of scepticism and the consequent absence of myth in this age.

Sucharita Sarkar's essay, "Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the Internet: The Myth of Transformation and the Cult of Personality in Blogs", uses Ovid's *Metamorphosis* as a base to deal with the issue of transformation and shows how in the present century, internet-writing offers the most interesting, diverse and startling workings-

out of the myth of transformation. She argues that our online identity is like a re-imagination of the self. Through Facebook profiles and Twitter tweets, Online Chat rooms and Gaming portals one assumes online personas that partially or completely transforms the real self.

Suchetana Banerjee's essay, "*The Bacchae of Euripides*, A Communion Rite: Bi o s'enia, imale o si : If humanity were not, the gods would not be" deals with the dramatic text of Soyinka'. The focus of this analysis is on Soyinka's attempt to translate rituals between cultures and investigate certain political and mythic elements, of the Yoruba as well as the Greek tradition. She also discusses Wole Soyinka's tendency of appropriating his cyclical view of history derived from the Yoruba belief and demonstrates how these myths lead him to the formation of his play world and how ritual enables him to transfer this into drama.

Together the essays here remind us how important myths are to us. In trying to understand them we discover ourselves. Joseph Campbell captures the essence when he says, that myth addresses the deepest psychological needs and motivations of the human race and this is why myth is so similar throughout the world. The story in a particular myth addresses themes that are part of the common needs of all human beings and thus reflect the experience of all human beings across a large segment of time and the planet.

The Myth of India in History, the American Classroom, and Indian-American Fiction

Dorothy M. Figueira

The present is fractured, it consists of competing pasts. By positing the past as a special case of the present, one not only remakes the present, but creates a new past and redefines identity through an act of memory. The past thus possesses socio-political instrumentality when perceptions of past “history” are made relevant to the present. Conflicts concerning the past are, in fact, struggles suggesting the proper shape that the present should take. In such instances, history may be elevated to myth, when the needs of the present are read into the past and an image of the past is imposed on the present. History, once transformed into myth, becomes an instrument to construct social forms. It shapes the present through an evocation of the past and specific groups that inhabit it.

In this essay, I will discuss how Indian diasporic identity can be studied as a myth. By the term “myth,” I specifically mean a form of discourse which can be employed in the construction or deconstruction of society. I begin by focusing on the initial myth of Indian identity, the discourse concerning Aryans which gave historical value to ancient Indian history, contributing to identitarian politics during the colonial and nationalist periods. The Aryan myth also served ideological interests in the West. The history of India could be appropriated as a means of expressing nineteenth and twentieth-century Western concern with origins. It is my belief that a variation of the Aryan myth has resurfaced in recent years in the form of postcolonial criticism and Indian literary theories of ideal readership and spokespersonship. To examine this supposition I will first investigate how India is constructed today in global academe and how it resonates in current-day “liberatory” theories and pedagogies. I maintain that the current academic construction of India is supported by a diasporic fiction that often provides the key source of documentation available to the American public. We cannot discount the influence of this literature on American readers in general. Nor can we minimize how even the high-brow culture of the university mistakes such diaspora fiction for a true picture of the Indian reality. Understanding any ideology regarding Indian identity, therefore, necessitates a comparative evaluation of this literature. In my conclusion, I will examine the work of several Indian diasporic authors to see how a postmodern Indian identity is fashioned in this body of work.

Myths of Indian Identity

I do not think it is too much of an exaggeration to claim that caste Hindus have always had a high opinion of themselves. While much has been made of colonial mimicry and postcolonial angst, the fact is that under colonialism and certainly during the nationalist period, Indian elites were continuously seeking to reconnect with what they believed to be their idealized Aryan past. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this valorization of Indian identity was text-based. Indians were constructing a vision of themselves based on their reading of Sanskrit canonical sources. One has only to think of a reformer such as Rammohan Roy, whose translations of the Upanishads were composed with the expressed aim of reconnecting Indians to their glorious philosophical past. The Brahmo Samaj was established to enable Indians to access a purified form of Hinduism that had supposedly suffered decay under the accumulation of superstitious accretions. While it also sought to reinvigorate Indian religious life with positive values adopted from other religious traditions, the cultural and religious reform of the Brahmo Samaj was primarily grounded in the Indian tradition. It was only a matter of reintroducing to the body politic those Aryan values latent in it that had fallen away. A similar desire to retrieve the ideal Aryan past animated the work of Dayanand Saraswati. With the formation of the Arya Samaj, Dayanand sought to rearyanize India by identifying with superior qualities previously attributable to the West but now rediscovered in a fictive Aryan past and derived from his reading of the Vedas. Dayanand's agenda led other reformers, such as Justice Ranade and Lokmanya Tilak, also to allocate lost Aryan strength to the Indian colonial present. What is particularly striking about these stagings of the past is their literary aspect, specifically, their modernism.

In reading Rammohan Roy, Dayanand, Ranade, and Tilak, one is reminded of certain short stories by Jorge Luis Borges, where history is presented as inevitably limited and parochial in focus. Facts are only interpreted according to the ideology of their time, just as memory is activated by conventional scholarly wisdom. History and memory are potentially radically different phenomena than they appear to be. What is remembered or recorded is paltry in comparison to what actually is thought to have taken place. These Indian reformers all believed that the great Aryan race existed, but had been lost or forgotten. Outside recorded history, there was once a Golden Age with mythic Aryan forbears who accomplished astounding feats. The central insight of this mythic reading of the past is that truth is ever elusive and open to reconfiguration. Most importantly, however, myth is seen to hold greater truth value than history. As opposed to history, myth absorbs contradictions into its own system. Myth is thus permitted

to ignore details, since it contains the true spirit of the past and its essential legacy. In other words, the truth of myth is not to be discovered in words, but rather in the lacunae, the message that had been lost through decay, inaccessibility, and the loss of the ability to read correctly. Any analysis of Indian historical or political literature of the nineteenth or twentieth century supports the argument that myth has always influenced India's narratives of identity. The Aryan myth was, perhaps, the most significant myth and it was fully entrenched in the Indian psyche. It bespoke of a glorious past of world-conquering heroes who brought civilization to populations they encountered in their conquests. The Aryans brought to the world a sophisticated culture and laid down the foundations of religion and philosophy.

Our Mother Ground: Seamus Heaney's use of Myth in *Wintering Out* and *North*

Shireen Vakil

Seamus Heaney, the Northern Irish Catholic poet, has spoken eloquently both in prose and in verse, of the political problems in Northern Ireland. The political turmoil of the 1960s and 70s was exacerbated by England's persistent colonial hold, and the violent reaction of the IRA to this regime created a situation that saw changes and upheavals across the country. The Catholics in Northern Ireland were particularly affected, as, being in a minority in a predominantly Protestant state, they were at the receiving end of England's oppressive measures to control this area.

Heaney approaches the problems of his time obliquely, by using what Kearney calls 'utopian myth', i.e., that which challenges and transforms the status quo, as opposed to 'ideological myth', which maintains the status quo. In doing this, Heaney shuns the Yeatsian use of Celtic myth, which looked to traditional and sacred myth as a story of continuity which history denied the present. Other modern writers like Samuel Beckett and James Joyce had also disagreed with Yeats's mythologizing, and sought a more secular, or disruptive myth to express the predicament of their times. All these gave voice to the emergence of a different kind of philosophy in the twentieth century, one that opposes sacred myth, and tries to demythologise western culture.

Different as their expressions of strife may be, the common idiom that emerges from these writers is the myth of the motherland. The concept of the motherland in Ireland would include the mother church of the Catholic revival, the motherland of the national revival, and the mother tongue of the Gaelic revival. These ideas were strengthened by the 1916 Rising, particularly after the signatories were executed. Before the colonization of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the perennial significance of the mother goddess rested on her intimate connection with the pivotal institution in ancient Irish society, that of sacral kingship. The king, on whom the moral condition of the land depended, must be ritually sacralized. This took the form of a sacred marriage with the goddess who represented both the abstract sovereignty and the physical substance of his kingdom. After the advent of Christianity in Ireland, the actual rite was purged of its blatantly physical aspects, but the sexual element remains deeply ingrained in tales and poems, which provide endless variations on this basic theme of king and goddess.

With the colonization of Ireland, however, the idealized myth of Irish womanhood was reinforced in the late nineteenth century by a cult of the Virgin Mary in the Irish

Catholic church. Ireland came to be identified as a virginal motherland which could best be served by safeguarding a native purity against the evil influences of alien cultures. To quote Kearney in "Myth and Motherland", "The more dispossessed the people became in reality the more they sought to repossess a sense of identity in the realm of ideality (76).

The most important factor in the development of the myths of the motherland is the political colonization of Ireland. After the "plantations" or colonization of the seventeenth century, when protestant England established its dominion over Catholic Ireland, the latter became more frequently identified with a vulnerable virgin ravished by the aggressive masculine invader from England, the *Sasannach*. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the passive daughter seems to assume the more militant guise of a mother goddess summoning her faithful sons to rise up against the invader. Through the sacrificial shedding of their blood, the goddess might be redeemed from colonial violation and become free and pure again, that is, restored to her pristine virginity of language, land and liturgy.

Heaney's use of myth, and his portrayal of mythical women have the characterization of both the pre-colonial past, and the colonial present. For the poet, the term "myth" included all the ways in which he can "interpret the present by bringing it into significant relationship with the past..." ("Feeling Into Words," *P* 60). Besides traditional stories from Greek or Irish mythology, Heaney's mythopoeia includes Catholic ritual, pre-Christian history, and Irish history both ancient and modern. For the purpose of this paper, I will be focussing on the pre-Christian myths, with their excavations and bog motifs which are central to Heaney's poetry of the 1970s.

After the Civil Rights Movement, and the confrontation between Catholics and Protestants in 1969, Heaney felt that his poetry had to make a definite statement: "From that moment the problems of poetry moved from being simply a matter of achieving the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament" (*P* 56). It was at this time that Heaney came across P.V. Glob's *The Bog People* (1969), with its account of propitiatory Iron Age ritual killings in Jutland. Glob speaks of finding victims of sacrifice to the Mother Goddess to ensure the renewal and fertility of the land. These bog people offered the poet an imaginative parallel to the Irish situation, with its brutalities and killings in a tense political situation. Most importantly, the bog could be associated with the woman figure, and could be imaged as Earth Mother or Ireland, as the Voice of History (local, national and personal), the storehouse of racial memory, and as sacrificial victim

It is the goddess Nerthus who dominates Heaney's poetry for the next few years. Nerthus was a fertility goddess to whom some of the Iron Age people in Jutland were

ritual sacrifices. They were murdered in winter and their bodies disposed of in bogs sacred to the goddess, so as to ensure the fertility of the land the following spring. Nerthus is glossed as “Earth Mother” (Terra Mater) by Tacitus, and the name may be of Celtic origin, Welsh *nerth* and Irish *neart* both denoting strength or power. In the poem “Nerthus”, the grains of the ash-fork are described as “gathering to the gouged split.” This is reminiscent of a photograph in Glob’s book of the representation of the goddess as a long, slim wooden branch with a heavy incision, symbolic of the female sexual organ. The sexual imagery of the poem takes on greater emphasis as Heaney extends the goddess out of ancient Jutland to modern day Northern Ireland. The landscape she stands in is defined in terms of the Northern dialect; “Kesh” is causeway (the Long Kesh of internment camps), and “Loaning” is an uncultivated space between fields. Heaney is suggesting that Northern Ireland is, at present, a barren land, which needs its symbolic, ritual sacrifice to Nerthus, so as to ensure a new beginning.

“The Tollund Man” is the first of the bog poems that connects the bog with ritual sacrifice. In the poem, Heaney is responding to a photograph in Glob’s book of an Iron Age sacrificial victim, unearthed from the bog thousands of years later. The ritual killing in Jutland is seen as a marriage between the man and the goddess. He is “Bridegroom to the goddess” who “tightened her torc on him / And opened her fen” (WO 47). This overtly sexual image of the goddess is carried through the poem, connecting past and present in a fertility ritual; it is also extended to the poet himself, who is a victim of violent upheavals that punctuate Irish history. When the poet asks the Tollund man to “make germinate // The scattered, ambushed / Flesh of labourers...,” (WO 48), it is as though Heaney, the modern man and Druid-poet, merges with the pre-Christian ethos, presupposing a belief in a fertility ritual that will bring alive the four young Catholic brothers who were massacred by Protestant para-military forces. The poem also introduces the poet as voyeur, one who is both outside the poem as observer, and inside as one who participates in the historical life of the country.

The female figure is further explored in the bog poems in *North*. Here, too, the bog is imaged as the Earth Mother demanding her sacrificial victims – though the fertility ritual does not always result in fructification or growth; on the contrary, the poems end in primal feelings of revenge or pessimism. In “Punishment”, Heaney expresses a politically ambiguous sentiment, as he imagines the Windeby bog girl of Glob’s account, possibly punished for adultery, as the “sister” of those Catholic girls tarred and feathered in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s as a punishment for going out with British soldiers. The poem, with its voyeuristic, love-like sentiments and its compassionate feelings for the punished girl, ends with:

I who stood dumb
 When your betraying sisters,
 cauled in tar
 wept by the railings,
 who would connive
 in civilised outrage
 yet understand the exact
 and tribal, intimate revenge. (*N* 38)

These lines have given rise to much critical debate about Heaney's position in relation to IRA tactics. Some critics have felt that the word "understand" implies Heaney's condoning of the crime. Others, like Neil Corcoran, have pointed out that the poet's silence before the tarred and feathered "sisters" is "itself implicitly criticized by the poem's biblical allusions which bring a third religion, Christianity, into the reckoning, along with the Iron Age territorial religion and the religion of Irish Republicanism" (116-117). Christ tells the crowd gathered to stone the woman taken in adultery, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." No one does, but Heaney, like all the others, remains dumb and casts the equally blameworthy "stones of silence"; at this point, neither "connivance" nor understanding" can excuse the poet's silence.

The self rebuke is carried on in "Strange Fruit," where the girl's blank eyes and "leathery beauty" chide the poet for trying to make a myth out of her:

Murdered, forgotten, nameless, terrible
 Beheaded girl, outstaring axe
 And beatification, outstaring
 What had begun to feel like reverence. (*N* 39).

Heaney has said that "the fury of Irish republicanism is associated with a religion" like that of the Iron Age in Europe, a religion that has the same fervour and commitment to a cause as has an established one like Roman Catholicism. Indeed, several scholars have spoken about the vital connection between the ancient goddess of Druidism and the Virgin Mary, and of the connection between Mary, the Holy Virgin, and the older fertility goddesses like Ceres or Demeter. If the Great Goddess was nurturing, yet demanding, possessive and bloodthirsty, then Mary in her pagan, more primitive form must be so as well. If Mary in her primitive form is the presiding deity of Irish Republicanism, she too demands sacrifices from her devotees, so that the blood of the faithful can germinate a new order in Ireland. Though Heaney sees the connection between Irish Republicanism and mariolatry, he has an ironic vision of the violence it perpetrates, of "how the goddess swallows/our love and terror" (*N* 45).

For Heaney, then, Woman, as the Voice of History connects the past and the present, time and space. She belongs to a primitive past as well as to an equally primitive present; she spans the geographical spaces in ancient Jutland, as she does in modern Ireland. More importantly, she fills the spaces in the poet's mythic imagination. She is the womb that holds and gives birth to individuals and to historical cycles, but she is also the death-dealer, as seen in her depiction as the rapacious goddess. In this respect, within the figure of the woman lies the womb-tomb dialectic that forms the basis of all cyclical views of history and philosophy. The woman or the land gives birth, and it is to her that all things return when they die or decay. As Eliade has said in *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*:

...when the Earth becomes the goddess of Death, it is simply because she is felt to be the universal womb, the inexhaustible source of all creation... The frightening aspect of the Earth-Mother, as the Goddess of Death, is explained by the cosmic necessity of sacrifice, which alone makes the passage from one mode of being to another and also ensures the uninterrupted circulation of life. (188-9).

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Abbreviations Used

- N* *North*
WO *Wintering Out*
P *Preoccupations*

The Fictionalised Life of Alexander the Great in the Novels of Valerio Massimo Manfredi

Shreya Chatterji

“History sometimes reproduces, at a distance of many years, the same combinations of circumstances that generate great achievements. But nothing ever repeats itself in exactly the same way.” - Valerio Massimo Manfredi

Manfredi’s Alexander trilogy contributes significantly to the body of legends known as the *Alexander Romance*. They are a set of stories retold with varying emphasis and the trilogy works upon establishing Alexander the Great not merely as a conqueror but a man of godly proportions. In keeping with the tradition of this genre, magic and marvels are interwoven with the historical details of Alexander’s life. The books divide Alexander’s life into three stages:

- A prodigal child and a dreamer in the first book *Child of a Dream*(2001)
- An ambitious youth on the colossal expedition of world conquest in the book *The Sands of Ammon*(2001)
- A conqueror scaling *The Ends of the Earth*(2001)

The narrative builds upon the popular legend by asking the question: Who would have been born to conquer the world other than a God? But, what is more fascinating about Manfredi’s retelling of an ancient biography is that it models itself upon the Aristotelian model of popular drama. In every way, it establishes the credentials of the Alexander story as a very commercial plot with the protagonist as resplendent as a demi-god, who suffers the tragic flaw of consuming desires and insatiable hunger for victory and ultimately dies a premature death.

Manfredi’s version of Alexander’s life, though not as authentic as the version by Mary Renault, does lace tedious history with myth and creates a wondrous picture of the “in-between” times.

In the first book of the trilogy, *Child of a Dream*, Manfredi traces Alexander’s parentage. He was born to the great King Philip II of Macedon and his queen Olympias, the erstwhile princess of Molossia. The depiction of King Philip is that of a savagely motivated man and a borderline alcoholic, whose wounds do not sway him from his lofty ambitions of world conquest. He hands down his aspirations as the greatest legacy to his son. On the other hand, Olympias, who hailed from the Molossian tribe, tries to exert her will in political matters. Macedonia being a male dominated unit, spurns her

political ambitions. In her son Alexander, she finds a vent to exercise her will, control and unleash her latent talents.

The young Alexander is portrayed as privileged right from birth, and prevailed upon by ambitious parents. On one hand, his mother instigates all conspiracies and intrigues, paving the way for his ultimate ascension to the throne, and on the other hand, Philip, coaxes and challenges Alexander natural faculties to inculcate wisdom in military matters. Philip, as a ready idol, is a great warrior and leader of his people. His penultimate ambition is to unite all Greek nations and establish supremacy as far as the distant Asia.

Many oracles foretell stories of Alexander's intended greatness and that, like his ancestor Achilles, he is but to live a short but glorious life.

“...What is the meaning of my dream?” Olympias asked the priests of the sanctuary. They sat in a circle on stone seats, in the middle of a green meadow dotted with daisies and buttercups, and they listened to the wind through the leaves of the oaks. They seemed rapt in thought. Then one of them said, ‘it means that the child you will bear will be the offspring of Zeus and a mortal man. It means that in your womb, the blood of a god has mixed with the blood of a man. The child you will bear will shine with a wondrous energy, but just as the flame that burns most brightly, consumes the walls of the lamp and uses up more quickly the oil that feeds it, his soul may burn up the heart that houses it. Remember, my Queen, the story of Achilles, ancestor of your great family, he was given the choice of a brief but glorious life or a long and dull one. He chose the former, he sacrificed his life for a moment of blinding light...” (*Child of a Dream*, p7-8)

Manfredi's account could have been just a historical document, but he fleshes it out with great dexterity by narrating it as a tale, than mere documentary. It positions itself upon the Aristotelian adage “Probable impossibilities are to be preferred to improbable possibilities”. Some of the myths that Manfredi introduces in *Child of a Dream* are to begin with omens of Alexander's birth. They are swiftly followed by the “myth of the serpent”. The serpent tale divorces Philip from the fathering of Alexander and establishes Alexander as a demi-god, born out of Olympias' involuntary but consensual coupling with a serpent, an incarnation of Zeus. It would be interesting to note here that Olympias was believed to be aligned with the Dionysian cult and the serpent could very well be a Freudian construct.

Alexander's destiny is greatness, and for this purpose, right from his boyhood, the prince is trained by stalwarts such as Leonidas and Aristotle to attain extraordinary

strength of body, mind and spirit. He is told stories of his descent from great heroes, such as Achilles (on his mother's side) and Heracles/Hercules (on his father's side). He is shown carrying a copy of the great poem *Iliad* with him always, which was a treasure trove of the legendary deeds of Achilles, the Trojan hero.

The other legend that anticipates his greatness is the story of his training the wild steed, Bucephalus, who was otherwise wild and untamable, thus, a clear indication is made of taming the Persians and other such barbaric nations.

Alexander aims to surpass his ancestors' heroism and honour, and chooses his companions such as the lifelong friend Hephastion, who are worthy of sharing his god-like fate. His rare bond of companionship with Hephastion strikes a familiar chord of a similar relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, Trojan warriors, mates and lovers.

Before we continue upon the quest of tracing the labyrinth of myth in Manfredi's next novel, it would be apt to quote from an article from *the New York Times* by Elisabetta Povoledo:

"...Manfredi has been challenged on his propensity to blur fact and fiction. 'We all know that Cyclops or Mermaids or Scylla do not exist, but we would be infinitely poorer without *The Odyssey*, which forms a contextual base for western thought,' he said, apologising for the 'highfalutin' comparison to Homer's classic poem.

Manfredi added that he "uncovers his cards" in his authors notes at the ends of his books: 'the reader knows what is based on historical sources and what is my imagination. The key thing is accuracy, because you don't want to break the spell and risk splitting into the unwittingly comic. What makes the difference is pathos', he said, 'the ability to express larger than life emotions that let readers transcend their day to day life...'

In his own words, Manfredi defends his stance by elucidating in one of his interviews on historical fiction:

"...Only god, if he exists, could write a novel that is not historical since he is supposed to have existed before history, all alone. But if you mean by 'historical', a story that is set in a considerably remote time, well the answer is why not? The first written text of western civilisation is a couple of historical novels in verses called *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and would you define Homer as an author of genre or *War and Peace* by Tolstoy a book of genre?

As we can see, it is only a question of quality, intensity, visionary capacity, and not a question of 'subject'. What really matters when we write a novel is the capacity and possibility to give the reader an alternative life in which he can be anybody and live anywhere and anytime. Our real life is not sufficient compared to our capacity of imagination: that is why we need other fictional lives in which we are allowed to experience emotions, adventures, feelings that our real life has denied us." (Pan Macmillan, 2012)

The second book in this trilogy is *The Sands of Ammon*. Herein, Manfredi doesn't really establish Alexander as a legendary warrior on his venturesome expedition of world conquest. To a certain extent, it portrays the realisation of his father's far reaching aspiration of the Asian invasion and the battles of Granicus and Issus. The central theme of this novel is the pitting of Alexander against a formidable enemy, Memnon, a Greek mercenary fighting on behalf of the Persians. Much like the Homeric Hector, of the Trojan War, Memnon is a brave and admirable enemy. It is a literary device akin to Homer's that Manfredi employs to portray Memnon, not only as a great enemy, but a greater hero. His formidability doubly affirms Alexander's greatness and godliness. Memnon is not only a striking war strategist whom Alexander finds indomitable, but is also, a loving man at home with a wife called Barsine. He is a man much attached to his two half-Greek, half-Persian sons for whom he incessantly worries. He wagers whether they would align themselves with the Greek or with the Persians. Manfredi really sculpts Memnon's character altogether because history offers only the peripheral outlines. Manfredi endows Memnon with a richer character and real human concerns. Like Hector, Memnon worries about the fate of his wife in the circumstance of his death, knowing that he is to lead an army against the invincible and infallible Alexander, the descendant of Achilles. The ultimate irony remains that Alexander does not kill Memnon to persuade us of his virtuosity, but Memnon dies of sickness and disease and Alexander seeks comfort in the arms of Memnon's much loved wife, Barsine.

This novel in its dramatic form, however, reads more as a Shakespearean hybrid of a tragi-comedy rather than the typical Aristotelian mode. In spite of its intensity of tone and profundity of sadness, plenty of light moments intervene the grave tenor of the novel. There is relief in the form of lighter moments, jocularities amidst friends and romantic interludes among lovers. The jokes incorporated in the text, in order to maintain the ancient texture, are barely comprehensible to the modern reader. One could also glean, perhaps, a deliberate attempt on Manfredi's part to approach the style of humour found in the comedies of Aristophanes.

Characterisation becomes the main strength of this novel which is otherwise slender in terms of historical truth. Alexander finds the Persian army insurmountable, with a

10:1 ratio and a formidable enemy in Memnon. Alexander, himself, though talked of as an invincible god, bleeds like a man when a javelin helms him. Nevertheless, he attains greater glories by being declared as the Pharaoh of Egypt. He also goes on to establish the city of Alexandria, and towards the end of the novel, in his pursuit of truth and knowledge of his destiny, goes to the oracle of Siwa.

Manfredi's attempt throughout the novel remains not to portray a historically perfect Alexander, but to provide an interesting story finely interlaced with myths, for readers who are enthralled more by the legend of Alexander than by historical facts of his life. He does include all necessary and accepted history of Alexander, but it is richly enmeshed with far more ancient histories and the unique flavour of his own narrative.

The third novel in the trilogy is *The Ends of the Earth*. The novel depicts finally the decline and fall of Alexander, the Great. When the oracle of Ammon informs Alexander that he is after all the son of Zeus, his tragic flaw of over-vaulting ambition is so fuelled that he commands his army to cross the Tigris and the Euphrates to reach Babylon. He turns to his darker side and like a plunderer, he marauds the beautiful palace of Persepolis and burns it down to ashes. He is no longer the benevolent, golden haired Alexander, but the havoc-wreaking demi-god who marks the end of Darius III's Persian empire. Alexander's portfolio of a Macedonian king, the Pharaoh of Egypt and the great king of Persia is further enhanced with the addition of the new dominion of the Pan-Hellenic league. His hunger for further domination is not satiated though. He adds to his imperialistic aspirations nations as far as India and Arabia. Irony strikes when his army begins to doubt his ideals. They seemed to have drifted far from the Macedonian vision, and Alexander's army is swarming with sceptics, who suspect his adaptations to Persian customs. His companions disapprove of Alexander's choices. Omens foretelling tragedy manifest themselves in quick succession. He loses his war trophy wife Barsine, his loved horse Bucephalus, his best friend and companion Hephastion and even his tutor Leonidas to utter brutal forces. Alexander is surrounded by conspirators who plan twice to kill him. He executes the warriors guilty of plotting against him and sentences his own friends to death who fail to keep him informed of such impending death assaults. Alexander morphs into devil's own messenger, from God to Mephistopheles. In this novel, he dons a cruel, grimacing and unforgiving mask.

His mental agues and demons torment him. He seeks refuge in his favourite *Iliad* for inspiration and faith. He stops eating and falls ill. His dream of world victory is resuscitated again by the adventure of falling in love again. He falls in love with Queen Roxane, who gives him the great gift of fatherhood by giving birth to his son, who is named after him, Alexander.

He goes on relentlessly to wage war against India but his warriors are homesick and war repulses them. He is forced to march backwards to Macedonia, a heartbroken and war-sick man, stretched beyond human capability. The last days of his life are that of a battle-wounded, sick and incapacitated man who is unable even to walk, a far picture from a heroic, lustrous king.

Alexander in the example of his life had defied all limits that God had set for mortals. His passion had helped him lead great armies and overwhelm cities. He had united a vast empire that had begun with his father's military campaigns and he had proved himself as the true heir of Achilles and Hercules. He aspired for a unified world, no longer distinguished and divided between victors and the vanquished. For such a larger cause, he sacrificed all that he possessed, his love Barsine, his beloved horse Bucephalus, his loyal hound Peritas and most tragically, his companion Hephestion. He comes to the realisation that he is as much a mortal as all his loved ones. When his army begins to doubt both his godliness and his invincibility, he is that much closer to a hitherto unknown enemy, called 'fear'.

In one of the interplay of dialogues between Alexander and his friend Ptolemy, Alexander acknowledges his morbid fear of his own mortality:

"...When Alexander turned, his friend looked firmly and deeply into his eyes and asked him, "so do you still love Philip, your father, now that you have become a God?"

Alexander sighed, "if you weren't here before me now, I would say that this question had come from Callisthenes, or Cleitus, the Black...give me a sword".

Ptolemy looked at him in surprise, but he did not dare to reply. He simply unsheathed his sword and held it out.

Alexander took the weapon and cut the skin on his arm with the sharp metal point so that a bright red rivulet started trickling down.

"What is this Ptolemy, if it is not blood?"

"It is indeed blood".

"Quiet. It is not the ichor which is said to run through the veins of the celestial gods," he continued reciting from Homer. "Therefore, my friend, try to understand me, and if you love me, then put an end to these pointless jibes..."(The Ends of the Earth, p2)

Thus, Alexander the Great, in Manfredi's trilogy, culminates into a true Aristotelian tragic hero. His life undergoes a change of fortune, not from bad to good, but inversely

from good to bad. He is presented to us as a virtuous man, who is morally blameless. Alexander, though eminently good and just, is a victim of misfortune, not due to vice or depravity, but due to error, frailty, and overvaulting ambition. In keeping with the Sophoclean manifest *Oedipus* which is the prescription for the *Poetics*, Alexander is also highly renowned and prosperous.

The Alexander trilogy is an enthralling narrative of the life of one of the world's greatest conquerors. The interplay of historical fact, educated opinion and the author's own vivid imagination renders it an epic of Alexander's heroic life, enlivened with compelling realism.

The series is remarkable primarily because the narrative is infused with several references of historical events and practices and yet is far from an uninspired, prosaic historic representation. The reader is absolutely convinced of the plausibility and veracity of all historical content that marks the growth of this bildungsroman. Dr. Manfredi is a renowned historian and archaeologist, and he dexterously paints his canvas with the closest simulation of ancient world and culture.

This series helps the mythical rendition of history which makes it so engaging a read. The question that needs to be asked at this juncture is, what purpose does this aesthetic telling of history serve? Is it merely a source of entertainment? The apparent answer in the negative also recognises the need for an idol and a hero. Myths and legends bring about the resurrection of hopes and values in the context of culture. They impart invaluable life lessons and provide an iconic figure to emulate and look up to. In the modern context, we can trace it to the neuro-linguistic, psychological models. The feelings that ensue are awe and admiration, and the need for confrontation with basic human truths. Such myths and their retellings afford elevated thought, learning and perhaps even an application in everyday life. Manfredi closely adheres to the Horatian precept that stories need to instruct and delight.

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Greek Mythology in English Literature

Harry Potter's Greek Connection

A Study of the Influence of Greek Mythology in J K Rowling's
Harry Potter Series of Books

Sugandha Indulkar

Ancient Greeks were people of exceptional wisdom and foresight so much so that thousands of years later too, in an age of computers, mobile phones and space travel we can see the impact of their mythology on various phenomena from daily life. Their influence on fiction and creative writing seems to be endless. J K Rowling's popular Harry Potter series of books draws immensely from ancient Greek mythology in characterisation, plot, theme, animals or imaginary creatures and various other aspects. This paper strives to trace as many parallels as possible in an attempt to decode the success value and appeal ancient Greek mythology holds for the present day reader.

Myth and Mythology

To begin with one needs to discuss what is myth and mythology. In classical Greek, 'mythos' signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its central modern significance however, a myth is one story in a mythology - a system of stories of ancient origin which aimed to determine why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Most myths are related to social rituals - set forms and procedures in sacred ceremonies but anthropologists disagree whether rituals generated myths or myths generated rituals. A number of modern writers have also asserted that an integrative mythology, whether inherited or invented, is essential to literature. James Joyce in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, T S Eliot in *The Wasteland*, Eugene O' Neill in *Mourning becomes Electra*, and many other writers have deliberately woven their modern materials on the pattern of ancient myths.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, 'myth' became a prominent term in literary analysis. A large group of writers, the myth critics - including Robert Graves, Francis Fergusson, Maud Bodkin, Richard Chase and (the most influential) Northrop Frye - viewed the genres and individual plot-patterns of many works of literature, including what on surface are highly sophisticated and realistic works, as recurrences of basic mythic formulas. As Northrop Frye put it, "the typical forms of myth become the conventions and genres of literature." According to Frye's theory there are four main narrative genres—comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony (satire) - and these are

‘displaced’ modes of the four forms of myth that are associated with the seasonal cycle of spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

This forms the theoretical base of the discussion this paper purports to advance. Mythology, in itself, was a form of literature in ancient civilizations. However, the ideas in mythology proved to be a lot more enigmatic than a typical storybook. The ideas and elements that were created by mythology have exerted a strong influence over much of our modern day literature. In similar ways, mythology continues to affect modern literature with its view of heroism, like in the tales of Hercules and Perseus.

Mythology and Literature

Myths sprung up before religion. Every religion’s stories are retellings of universal mythic themes. The Creation of the World, the first Man and Woman, Heaven and Earth, a great flood, stories of heroes and heroines and dragons and serpents. A culture’s mythos is the storied foundation of the culture. Ancient Greek mythology forms the foundation of literature across the world. Aren’t we still fascinated by the truths of these mythic stories and by ancient peoples’ need for magic in their untamed world? And don’t we still cry out for magic in our (apparently) rational world? Don’t we seem to crave mystery more and more to counter our apparent understanding and mastery of the world? Are we meant to be totally rational, are we meant to be machines?

A culture’s mythology is a powerful tool for psychology, casting light on the culture’s *shared unconscious*. There is no better way to understand a culture deeply than to know and appreciate its mythos, its stories, its dreams. Indeed, many of the symbols in our dreams are universal (Jung’s archetypes), or at least culture-wide, symbols whose meaning is invested in the mythic stories that they inhabit. And there are those who believe that these symbols and these stories are encoded in the very cells of our species’ DNA.

The cultural historian Jacques Barzun has said: ‘What links myth with literature is ... the imagination.’ In northern Europe, the effect of Greek mythology was quite obvious on literature. Both Latin and Greek classical texts were translated, so that stories of mythology became available. In England, Chaucer, the Elizabethans and John Milton were among those influenced by Greek myths; nearly all the major English poets from Shakespeare to Robert Bridges turned for inspiration to Greek mythology. Jean Racine in France and Goethe in Germany revived Greek drama. Racine reworked the ancient myths — including those of *Phaidra*, *Andromache*, *Oedipus* and *Iphigeneia* — to new purpose.

The Harry Potter series of books revolves largely around a world that is exclusively mythical. Although it is not in itself an ancient myth, it embodies the many qualities of myths, with creatures borrowed from the mythical world such as griffins, and characters like wizards with arcane magic, similar to the heroes from the courts of King Arthur. Harry Potter may

not be directly advocating the various mythologies it derives its ideas from, but it provides to the reader the rich vast mythical world that is largely similar to that of its origins. However, in ways perhaps less enigmatic than in that of Tolkien, many authors, such as the famous William Shakespeare, also adopted the creatures of mythology. In his play “A Midsummer’s Night Dream”, many creatures such as nymphs make their appearance in a dreamy and mythical setting. These nymphs originate largely from Greek mythology, and its use by Shakespeare ensures that it continues to be propagated through other mediums of literature, continuing to exert its influence around the world through the changing times.

Intrinsic concepts

Many of us are familiar with concepts such as luck and fate. These have been accepted in society today, but what many people fail to see is how these concepts are derived from mythology. For sure, mythology did not construct these ideas, but it did give them physical embodiments.

The actual word ‘Fate’ in the English language is derived from the Greek goddesses, the fates. They were Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. Clotho spun the thread of life, whilst Lachesis took the thread and assigned it destiny and luck, and Atropos would cut the threads at any time. The Fates were powerful goddesses, feared even by Zeus himself. The ancient Greeks used to pray to these goddesses especially at weddings, for a bright future. Other Greek creatures include the Hours, which is the divine embodiment of time. There was also Justice, who provided justice and fairness all around. There was Death, who took the life of people. There were Sleep and Dreams, goddesses that graced the night world. Ideas such as love are also cherished very much in mythology. The most famous character would be from Roman mythology, that of Cupid, the winged boy who shot arrows of love. The Greek equivalent of Cupid was Eros, who performed similar tasks. The inheritance of these concepts from mythology has led us, more often than not, to talk not of hoping to be lucky, but rather, to be praying for Luck, to be in Love, rather than be loving each other; to be afraid of Death, rather than be afraid of dying.

Harry Potter’s Greek connection

The prophecy

Apart from the obvious parallels in nomenclature, themes, characters and creatures from the Harry Potter series of books, which draw inspiration from Greek Mythology, there’s an intrinsic truth which manifests itself through the seven Harry Potter books put together and that is the fact that the Harry Potter stories are not fatalistic as they may superficially seem. The story primarily begins with a prophecy where the antagonist Lord Voldemort believes in the prophecy that the son of Lily and James Potter born on July 31 would kill him. The

actual prophecy states: “Neither can live while the other survives.” Now the most interesting fact is that this whole story which goes on in seven books revolves around the important fact that both Harry the protagonist and Lord Voldemort, the antagonist believe in this prophecy and therefore unknowingly facilitate it to come true.

Had they not believed in it, it would probably not have come true. Lord Voldemort’s killing Harry’s parents was also a result of his firm belief in this prophecy: had he not believed in it in the first place he would perhaps have not killed Harry’s parents and thereby there would have been no need for Harry to take revenge. The story highlights the massive impact of myth and how a crafty and talented writer can use it as an intrinsic truth to weave a tale seven books long, and one which sells over one hundred thousand copies, making her a millionaire in less than a decade!

Mythical origin

The English word “prophecy” (noun) in the sense of “function of a prophet” appeared in Europe from about 1225 from Old French *profecie* (12th century), and from Late Latin *Prophetia*, Greek *prophetia*, “gift of interpreting the will of the gods”, from Greek *prophetes*. The related meaning “thing spoken or written by a prophet” is from c. 1300, while the verb “to prophesy” is recorded by 1377. The word prophecy comes from the Greek verb *prophemi* which means “to say beforehand, foretell.”

Characterisation

Harry: Many characters from Greek mythology have personality traits like Harry’s. In one way one can compare Harry to Achilles, the bravest of the Greek warriors. Harry’s mother made him invincible by her love like Achilles was made invincible by his mother when she plunged him into the river Styx. Harry Potter has a lot of hero stereotypes and because of that you can compare him to almost any hero of Greek mythologies.

Hermione: Hermione, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of Helen of Troy (the face that launched a 1000 ships) and Menelaus, king of Sparta. Although she was betrothed to Orestes, king of Mycenae, after the Trojan War Hermione married Neoptolemus, the son of the Greek hero Achilles. Orestes later killed Neoptolemus and became Hermione’s second husband. Although this may seem far-fetched, maybe Hermione Granger has two men fighting over her Viktor Krum and Ron Weasley. Though there are no killings happening over Hermione in Harry Potter books, the existence of two contenders for her is good enough to draw the parallels.

Minerva McGonagall: There is a Roman goddess named Minerva and her Greek counterpart Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Both were both fierce goddesses

of battle but also brought important knowledge to men. That fits Minerva McGonagall in our story. She is also the one that brings knowledge to the students (transfiguration is often described as the toughest of all subjects) but can also be fierce and merciless in punishing them if they do wrong.

Hogwarts: Hogwarts has similarities to the Greek mountain Olympus where the gods and goddesses lived. It was a high mountain that could not be reached by the human world. Hogwarts also cannot be reached by humans and is inhabited by the wizards who are also not human like the gods.

Hagrid: The Titans in Greek mythology are creatures of enormous size and strength and are older than the gods (Zeus the first god was a son of the Titans and defeated them in a battle and locked them away under the earth). It is said that the Titans spread chaos and destruction all over the world. They were very close to nature and drew power from it (Zeus could only defeat his father Chronos after he lifted him off the ground. After that Chronos wasn't invincible anymore). The Titans weren't that bright. Hagrid has some similarities with those creatures in his character. He is also of enormous size and strength and is very close to nature ... and not too clever sometimes.

Fluffy: The dog Cerberus in Greek mythology had fifty heads and was guarding the entrance of Hades, the underworld. In book one, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Fluffy is guarding the trapdoor and also has several heads. Like Cerberus he is a monstrous and voracious watchdog. There is also the story of Orpheus who tried to rescue his wife from the underworld after she got killed by a snake. He was a great singer and lured Cerberus into sleep with a lullaby played on his harp,. This way he could sneak past the giant dog just like Harry does in the final showdown. I think Rowling took her ideas of the appearance of Fluffy from this part of Greek mythology.

Luna Lovegood: Luna is one of the new, yet important characters. She was introduced in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Her name 'Luna' means 'the Moon'. And it is also the Latin name for the Greek goddess Selene, who was basically the Moon. Just as the Moon gives light in darkness, Luna also shines in the later books when darkness i.e. evil prevails.

Cassandra Trelawney: She was Sibyl Trelawney's ancestor. J K Rowling has chosen these names with great care. Cassandra, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy. The god Apollo, who loved Cassandra, granted her the gift of prophecy, but when she refused to return his love, Apollo made the gift useless by decreeing that no one would believe her predictions. Sibyl, in Greek mythology, was any

woman inspired with prophetic power by the god Apollo. The sibyls prophesied in a frenzied trance. Whenever Sibyl Trelavney makes a true prophecy she goes into a weird trance.

Severus Snape: This character is similar to Perseus Evans from Greek mythology. Perseus was a famous Greek who killed the Gorgon Medusa. Medusa was a Gorgon who had snakes for hair and anyone who looked into her eyes turned to stone. In *Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets* there's a giant snake, which can kill people when they look at its eyes and can petrify ('turn to stone') people when they see it through a reflection. Medusa could be the inspiration for Basilisk. Incidentally Perseus was the great-grandfather of Heracles or Hercules. Perseus's granddaughter was Alcmena, the mother of Heracles. One can think of Harry as an equal to Heracles. Heracles was the savior of the Immortals, as Harry is the savior of the wizarding world. However, Snape is not all that old to be Harry's great-grandfather; he was as old as his parents, nor is he his half-brother or anything of the sort. But this leads one to think that perhaps Snape had something to do with Lily and Harry closely, which is quite true.

Magical creatures from Harry Potter series and their mythological connection

Sphinx: Many people think that the Sphinx comes from Egypt. That's true, but the Sphinx, in Greek mythology, is a monster with the head and middle upper body of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird. Her name means "throttler". This is just a reference to the many influences of Greek mythology in the books. The animal was a symbol of strength, power and nobility. It was also believed that sphinxes guarded treasure, and that's just what they do in Harry Potter books, standing watch over Gringotts Wizarding Bank.

Werewolves: Werewolves run amok in Harry Potter books, and the series depicts good and evil werewolves, most of whom turn up in folktales. One of the first references comes from Greek mythology, when King Lycaeon served a platter of raw human meat to the king of the gods, Zeus. Infuriated, Zeus turned Lycaeon into a wolf.

Griffins: Griffin mythology also originated in Greece. The fearsome creature had the front legs, wings and head of a giant eagle and the body and hind legs of a lion, and served as Zeus' watchdog. The Greeks believed that griffins originated in Asia and India, where they found gold in the high mountaintops and built nests atop the treasure. In medieval times, images of griffins decorated valuable objects that needed to be guarded, such as jewelry boxes and caskets; the creatures play a similar role in Harry Potter's world.

Unicorns: In Harry Potter's world, the unicorn is a magical horse whose single horn is used in potions and whose blood can revive someone who is "an inch from death." Ancient Greek scholars also believed that a crushed unicorn horn could cure many illnesses, although the unicorns they imagined were not just stark white, but also red and black. The myth of the

unicorn resurfaced in European medieval tales, stating that drinking from the horn would protect one from poison.

Chimera: Another creature from Greek mythology, the chimera, was described in “The Iliad” as “a thing of immortal make, not human, lion-fronted and snake behind, a goat in the middle and snorting out the breath of the terrible flame of bright fire. The Greeks believed that this nasty beast spawned from an active, destructive volcano in Lycia, Asia A-Minor. The chimera is depicted as a monster who terrorized the Lycian countryside until she was killed by iron arrows shot by the Greek hero Bellerophon.

Centaurs: Living in the Forbidden Forest near Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, centaurs have the four-legged body of a horse but the upper body and head of a human. Centaurs are prominent in Grecian art and have also been depicted on ancient sculptured stones found in Scotland. There is a theory that the centaur stems from confused onlookers seeing men riding horses for the first time.

Phoenix: As Albus Dumbledore’s magical defender, Fawkes the phoenix looks very similar to earlier portrayals of the everlasting bird. Legend says that the scarlet-, amber- and gold-feathered phoenix can live for 1,000 years, at which point it bursts into flame and is reborn from the ashes. The phoenix represents the immortality of the soul and is present in Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, Christian and Native American mythology.

Mythological names in Harry Potter books Professors and school personnel

Argus Filch: In mythology, Argus was a creature covered in one hundred pairs of eyes. He was used by Hera to spy on Zeus, but was killed by Hermes. Hera then turned him into a peacock. Argus Filch always seems to know where the troublemakers are, almost as if he had a few extra pairs of eyes.

Remus Lupin: Remus was a son of Ares and twin to Romulus. They are the legendary founders of Rome. The twins were raised by wolves, which is fitting seeing that Remus is a werewolf. Romulus killed Remus in a dispute over the naming of Rome. In Deathly-Hallows, Remus goes by the name “Romulus” during the Potterwatch segment.

Minerva McGonagall: In Roman mythology, Minerva was the goddess of wisdom, peace, needlework, and defensive war.

Pomona Sprout: Pomona was a minor Roman goddess of fruit trees, which is fitting because she teaches Herbology.

Aurora Sinistra: Professor Sinistra is the Astronomy Professor. In Roman mythology, Aurora was the Roman goddess of the dawn.

Sibyll Trelawney: In ancient Greek times, a sibyl was a prophet who under the influence of Apollo, prophesized without being consulted. It is interesting to note that Trelawney's famous great-great grandmother was named Cassandra - the seer who no one believed.

Other characters:

Alecto and Amycus Carrow: Amycus was a son of Poseidon and a nymph. He was a skilled boxer and king of Bebryces. Alecto was one of the three Furies who punished people in Hades. Her name literally means "unceasing in anger."

Mcrope Gaunt: In mythology, Merope was one of the Pleiades, or the Seven Sisters who were nymphs that attended Artemis. They all married gods, except for Merope who married a mortal. When the }' were put in the sky, Merope was shamed for not having married a god.

Dedalus Diggle: Dedalus was an inventor who created the labyrinth on Crete. King Minos later imprisoned him and his son Icarus. In order to escape, Dedalus made wings out of wax for himself and his son. However, while they were escaping, Icarus flew too close to the sun and his wings melted.

Hestia Jones: In Greek mythology, Hestia was the goddess of the hearth. She gave up her seat at Mount Olympus for Dionysus. She featured more prominently in Roman mythology under the name of Vesta.

Phineus Nigellus Black: Phineus was a king of Thrace and a prophet. However, his predictions were too close to accurate. For this, Zeus blinded him and set the Harpies on him.

Andromeda Tonks: Andromeda was the daughter of Cassiopeia. Cassiopeia bragged too much about Andromeda, and Poseidon sent floods and a monster to punish her. Andromeda was sacrificed to the monster, but was saved at the last minute by Perseus, who she later married.

Narcissa Malfoy: The name Narcissa is the female version of Narcissus. In mythology, Narcissus was a beautiful man who was very cruel. As punishment, the gods made him catch a glimpse of himself in the water and he fell in love with his reflection.

Draco Malfoy: There are many myths with differing stories about Draco. In any case, Draco was a dragon who was put into the sky.

Sirius Black: In mythology, Sirius was the faithful canine companion to Orion, the hunter.

Bellatrix Lestrange: Bellatrix is also another word for an Amazon, a member of the tribe of fierce warrior women in Greek mythology.

Alecto Carrow: Alecto, or Allecto in Greek mythology, was one of the three Erinyes, more commonly known by their Roman names, the Furies. The Furies were three infernal deities born from Uranus' blood, spilled when Saturn (Cronus in Greek) overthrew him and became the next king of the gods. The Furies did not acknowledge the Pantheon's power, and therefore were not required to comply with the gods' wishes and laws. The Furies are described as winged deities with snakes for hair who carry torches or whips and who often torture and kill people (fleeing is impossible from the Furies).

Even the description of the Furies resemble that of the Death Eaters and therefore Alecto; although the Death Eaters do not actually have snakes for hair, they have a unique relationship with the snake. Most Death Eaters are from the Slytherin house at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, whose founder could speak to serpents and whose mascot was a snake.

Merope Gaunt: Merope Gaunt was a member of a prejudiced Pureblood family, the daughter of Marvolo Gaunt, and a direct descendant of Salazar Slytherin. Her son grew up to become Lord Voldemort, the lead antagonist in the Harry Potter series. Merope in Greek mythology was a member of the seven sisters named the Pleiades, huntresses and followers of Artemis and the daughters of Atlas. Merope, as a divine being, was expected to marry another divine being, a person of the same status (just like Merope in Harry Potter was expected to marry within the Pureblood line). Instead, Merope married a mere mortal, the mythological equivalent of a muggle.

Draco Malfoy: The name shares its root with the word 'Draconian', which has come to mean harsh, receiving its meaning from the name of an Ancient Greek lawmaker, Draco: Details of his legislation are not now known, but the laws were notoriously harsh (hence the adjective Draconian') with nearly all offences punishable by death.

Conclusion

One can sum up from the above analysis that Greek mythology has had a considerable influence on the shaping of the plot in all the seven Harry Potter books. It has helped the author to develop various human and non-human characters in these novels, and therefore has been able to strike a chord with the discerning reader. Allusions to mythological characters and instances have been more than a tool towards effective writing - they have actually been instrumental in developing the storyline, and have played a considerable role in the novels becoming immensely popular world over

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Mythological Exploration in *the Thousand Faces of Night, Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *A Matter of Time*

Ambreen Safder Kharbe

The word Myth is derived from the Greek word *mythos* which means “Story” or “Word”. Myth is symbolic tales of the distant past. Mythology is the study of myths. Mythology in Indian context is perhaps the most utilized and most admired for every generation and genre. India is the cradle of civilization with great tradition and heritage. The ethnicity of this country is prolific with a lot of myths. It has produced great epics of the world, i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata which invariably preach the principles of life to the people. Indian English writers are influenced by the myths carried on from ancient time thus trying to preserve the cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

Githa Hariharan *The Thousand Faces of Night* revolves around three women Characters—Devi, the central character; Sita, her mother and Mayamma, the care taker cum cook. Githa Hariharan, being brought up in a traditional Hindu family is well acquainted with all the myths and she perfectly blends the myth and reality in the modern Indian life. Githa Hariharan deftly explores the prescription of the gender relations by means of Indian mythology. The stories of Gandhari, Amba, Damayanthi and others reflect on the life of these characters in the novel.

The central theme of the novel is categorized as the quest for identity, penance, female bonding, marriage, chaos and dilemma by the rebellious protagonist Devi. Devi has failed to establish her identity in the framework of a male dominated Indian society as a wife in an arranged marriage, or as a rebellious lover. She ultimately comes back to her mother, Sita. The novel opens with Devi going to the USA for her higher studies. There she falls in love with Dann but leaves him for the sake of cultural difference and returns back to India on the request of her mother Sita. The novel established the relationships which originate out of the emotional needs of human beings coming in to contact with one another around them. As a young girl, Devi was inquisitive and learns the mystery of life through several stories told to her by her grandmother. Every one gains knowledge as Sigmund Freud says: “Widely different sources, from fairy tales and myths, jokes and witticisms, from folklore . . . sayings and songs of different people and from poetic and colloquial usage of language”.¹

Indian mothers train, protect and guide their daughters in all their endeavors. With their mother's guidance and emotional support, they internalize their femininity. Having arrived in India, she realised that her mother was going to arrange her marriage through swayamvara. The mother "weaves a cocoon a secure womb" (13)². At this point Devi recollects her grandmother's story of Damayanthi that was taken from the **Mahabharata**. Nala, the king of Nishad was brave, handsome and virtuous. Damayanthi's father decided to hold a swayamvara. Damayanthi was brave and determined to marry Nala. So she threw the garland around his neck and married him amidst all the intrigues made even by the gods. Her grandmother concludes the story with a moral, "A woman gets her heart's desire by great cunning" (20)³. The story of Nala- Damayanthi fascinated her. From this story Devi established the concept of Swayamvara.

The next story narrated by her grandma is about Gandhari who plays a significant part in the **Mahabharata**. Gandhari was married to a very rich prince, whose Palace was "twice as big twice as magnificent as her parents Palace" (28)⁴. On meeting her husband for the first time in such a rich palace, she was taken aback for "The White eyes the pupils glazed and useless" (29)⁵. Gandhari in anger vowed never to see the world again; so she bound her eyes with the help of a veil. Summing up the story Devi's grandmother says: "she embraced her destiny— a blind husband with a self sacrifice worthy of her royal blood" (29)⁶. Through this story Devi learnt life through her grandmother's choice of Gandhari and acclaims:

"The lesson brought me five steps close to adulthood. I saw for the first time that my parents too were afflicted by a kind of blindness. In their blinkered world they would always be, one leading the other, one hand always in the grasp of another" (29)⁷.

Gandhari's story reflects the life of Sita, Devi's mother. Before marriage her parents taught her to play the veena. She entered her husband's house with a veena as part of her dowry. After completing the household affairs, which was considered as the foremost duty of the house-wives, she used to play the veena. One day her father-in-law called her to do some work before puja in the morning. She could not hear, as she was playing the veena, so he scolded her. "Put the veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law" (30)⁸. In a momentary anger and frustration, she pulled out the strings of the veena and vowed not to play the veena again and replied in a whisper: "Yes, I am a wife and a daughter-in-law" (30)⁹.

Another significant story told her by her grandma deals with a beautiful girl who married a snake. Although Devi's immature mind cannot decode the real purpose

underlying the story, it left an indelible mark on her. A childless couple prays to God for a child and in return a snake is born to them. When the snake grew up, the parents planned a marriage. He walked to the distant lands in search of a bride. When the host learnt that he was in search of a girl for his venom-tongued son who was a snake, he readily offered his gorgeous daughter. The girl on seeing the snake as her husband, she whole-heartedly accepted her lot, saying “A girl is given only once in Marriage” (33)¹⁰. One night the serpent came into her room and spent a night with her. Next morning when she woke up, surprisingly she found a handsome young man on her bed. The story delineates the Hindu concept of rebirth. Devi co-relates the story with the lot of the servant maid, Gauri.

As the grandmother grew older, stories also took a new shape. “The grandmother’s stories became sharper with more precarious tone of dangerous possibilities” (35)¹¹. This time the grandmother dwells upon Mahabharata for a story and she talks about Amba. Prince Bheesma goes to a swayamvara of three beautiful princesses. Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Amba the eldest chose King Salwa and garlanded him. But suddenly Bheeshma kidnapped all the three princesses and took them to his step-mother. When they came to know that Amba had already married, they let her go to King Salwa. Unfortunately Salwa refused to accept her and insulted her. Do you think I feast on Left over’s? I am a king. I do not touch what another man won in battle. Go to Bheeshma. He won you when his arrow struck my Eager hard on your luckless garland. He is your husband. What have you to do with me? (37)¹². Insulted Amba goes back to Bheeshma, who also refused to accept her thereby she changed her attitude towards life and vowed to avenge Bheeshma. She went to the forest and did penance towards Lord Shiva. Having been pleased with her penance, Lord Shiva gave her a garland and promised her: “Who so ever wears this garland will surely kill Bheeshma” (39)¹³. This story reared a brave attitude in Devi. “She day-dreamed more and more about female avengers” (40)¹⁴. These lessons indelibly imprint themselves in her mind. She confesses: “I lived a secret life of my own; I became a woman Warriors, a heroine, I was Devi. I rode a tiger and cut off the evil magical demons heads” (41)¹⁵.

The most interesting story which has a message of motherhood is about Ganga and Shantanu. She says “Motherhood is more than the pretty picture you see of a tender woman bent over the baby she is feeding at her breast” (88)¹⁶. On walking along the bank of Ganges, King Shantanu happened to meet a beautiful damsel. He fell in love with her and in turn she had promised to marry him, provided he did not intercept her in her actions. However difficult, he accepted it. No sooner did she give birth to a child than she killed it drowning in river Ganges. She killed seven children. Shantanu could not approve of such conduct, but he remained silent for holding up the vow. Upon the birth of the eighth child, he could not refrain protesting her from drowning

the child. The lady goes back to her normal form—river Ganges, saying: “Then take him be the father and mother to him” (88)¹⁷. She plunged into the river. There is a belief in the Hindu mythology that the water of Ganges purifies us of our sins for it flows from heaven. The lady plunged into the river to wash away her sins. After many years Devi could interpret the story and concludes: “To be a goodmother, to be a mother at all . . . you have to renew your wifely vows everyday” (88)¹⁸.

After marrying Mahesh, Devi meets her father-in-law, Baba and the caretaker-cum-cook in that home, Mayamma. The emotional and mental incompatibility with Mahesh brings her close to Baba. Her relationship with Baba becomes stronger. He was a Sanskrit professor, an intellectual man. Baba talks about Manu, who is the creator of Hindu code of conduct. He teaches Devi what Brahminhood is. He tells Devi quoting from Manu, “A Brahmin . . . shrinks from honors as from poison; humility he covets as if it is nectar” (52)¹⁹. Baba dwells deep on the Vedas and Sanskrit hymns. Devi feels glad to be a disciple of such an intellectual man. Baba used to hear the Carnatic music. He talks about the Ragas and Kriti with Devi. He narrates the life history of Muthswamy Dhikshidhar, one of the greatest composers of carnatic music. Baba also narrates about Jeyadeva who brought out **Gita Govinda** a composition on “Krishna’s all encompassing love” (65)²⁰. He also talked about his resolution to lead a simple and austere life. Purandara Dasa was a memorable composer of Karnataka. Baba through his stories and incidents from the history of India reiterates: “Non-Violence, truthfulness, honesty, Purity, control of the senses—this in brief is the dharma of all the four castes” (66)²¹.

Githa Hariharan selected the less prominent figures from the Indian epics and Puranas. She talks about Gandhari, Amba who are less known to the contemporary learners instead of talking about Sita and Savithri. She talks about Indian myths which are forgotten by many of us in the era of globalization and liberalization.

Mayamma, the old caretaker of Mahesh’s house was married into a large family at the early age of twelve. On the contrary her husband was a useless gambler who never understood the meaning of the vows he had made before the ceremonial fire. But Mayamma belonged to the generation of women who quietly bore to death their liabilities and never rebelled even if they wanted to, because it was considered outrageous for a woman to shirk away her familial bindings even if she was crushed underneath it. Devi’s grandmother also belonged to the same generation as Mayamma. But her stories were full of women of valour who avenged their offenders with an iron hand.

Sita (Devi's mother) – the protagonist of the second generation, bridges the gap in the evolution of women from the generation of Mayamma to that of Devi. Sita is a cool, self-confident, poised, middle-aged mother. She is a woman who always knew what she wanted and got it; this achievement of Sita can be felt in everything around her – her home, her garden, her husband's fame and her daughter's education and wedding. Parvatiamma (Devi's mother-in-law) too is of the second generation. She is also a link that bridges the gap of generations. She was a loving, gentle and feminine lady whose generosity led her outward, away from herself. Parvatiamma's privation found a new diversion and it drew her firmly into devotion. The urge to implement the messages conveyed in the bhajans and kritis sung by her, grew stronger within her day by day. Parvatiamma was an ambitious woman; she had like a "man in a self-absorbed search for God" (64)²² stripped herself of the life allotted to her as a householder and left her house in search of salvation.

Devi, the protagonist is a representative of the third generation of women. She leaves America with a heavy heart on account of her parting with Dan, her black boyfriend. Devi's marital life with Mahesh lacks the colours and excitement that she had expected. The stories, which Devi had grown up with, had developed within her a mechanism of self defense against any onslaught from the other side. Mahesh had everything a lady could hope for, but his cold and indifferent attitude was more than she could suffer. She feels cheated like Gandhari and slighted like Amba. Her penance takes multiple forms of response from self-pity to revenge and from self-infliction to a strong sense of injustice. Childlessness, she feels was the price she had to pay as a penance for her marriage with Mahesh. In such a situation of loneliness and deprivation, Gopal, the neighbour who is a classical singer, seems a place of comfort for her. His melodious music strikes an intimate chord in her. She hopes to "soar high on the crest of Gopal's wave of ragas" (95)²³. Githa Hariharan's Devi, in spite of the continuous exposure to the mythical stories told by her grandmother from childhood, and then after marriage the stories she hears from the father-in-law and the real stories of Sita, Uma, Gauri and Mayamma does not help her to be a submissive wife to Mahesh. Like how her mother-in-law revolted by leaving the family in search of God, Devi's elopement with Gopal, is also a revolt against her husband Mahesh, who merely wants her to keep waiting for his arrival as a submissive wife.

The Thousand Faces of Night creates a new paradigm for the recreation of a woman's identity. Hariharan's idea behind making and naming the protagonist 'Devi' is to reinforce in a woman the realization about her inherent powers. The mythological meaning of the word 'Devi' is 'mother goddess' on whom all the gods and goddesses are dependent for their powers. Devi's grandmother interweaves the tales of ordinary women, Sita, Uma, Gauri and Devi – with mythological heroines, to form a familiar

pattern of heroism and suffering. These stories work as a bridge between the past and the present. Hence, Devi not only symbolizes fury, sublimity and power but also independence. Therefore, survival is of paramount importance for every woman. The three main characters of the novel manage to survive by walking a tight rope. They do not succumb to despair or sorrow, instead they prove their strength of womanhood in their struggle for survival. Thus *The Thousand Faces of Night* moves through a number of voices, predominantly that of women and evolves through a concentric framework of storytelling, containing stories embedded within stories, the real and the mythical colliding and colluding, reflecting, replicating and intersecting with each other²⁴.

Anita Desai's "*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*" sounds like a 'symbolic query'. It clearly shows the doubt and the scheme the protagonist has about her future. It clearly shows the lack of precision of life. The central character Sita in this novel '*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*' feels the frustration of the suffocative four walls of the city life. Sita is seen taking refuge from her marriage at the 'Utopian land' which was her home once. An island blend with magical showground as she believed. Pregnant with her fifth child, Sita desperately takes refuge from the mundane realities of her marriage towards the island, which happens to be the homestead of her deceased father. Sita feels lonely and dejected by all the busy members of the family. The fact, that she is pregnant for the fifth time, causes irritations and life becomes a burden to her. She makes an attempt to shut down emotionally and isolate herself from the daily chores. It is then, that she feels the dire need to fade far away and dissolve to the 'Utopian land', which is illustrated here as the island and the dwelling place of her dead father. Her father was considered to be a saint and villagers at Manori strongly believed in him. He was also capable of several miracles for the folk in need. That pathos that Sita feels that there was nobody to care for her and this became a continuous fret for Sita.

The name 'Sita' is itself a mythological name. It can be brought in comparison with Goddess Sita, wife of Lord Rama, in the epic 'Ramayana', who faces trials and tribulations. The protagonist Sita can also be given an emblematic stance, for patiently bearing and partaking all her suffering in life. Her long wait, symbolizes several things. First, she is waiting for something magical to happen in her life. The central characters 'Sita' and 'Rama', bearing archetypal names, are far from the reincarnation of mythical figures. Though their names are related to the mythical figures, Raman was a rough and tough guy. He found her unbearable in her distress, the drama of her distress. Sita's search for space from her irritated mind remains one of the primary concerns. One of the powerful devices by Anita Desai is the evocation of the sense of time.

Part One of the novel begins with the arrival of Sita and her two children Karan and Menaka to the island. She occupies the house in Manori. The reason for her coming to Manori is to achieve the miracle of keeping her baby unborn. The reasons which led her to her leaving the city are discussed. She is much agitated over even ordinary events of life. Her morbid fear of the people in the city and the emotional alienation from her husband led her to the island. She considers the world wicked and full of destructions and does not want to give birth to her baby in this cruel world.

Part two of the novel describes her life before marriage in the island. She spent her childhood with her father in a big house in Manori. As her father was a freedom fighter, he did not remain in one place and at last when freedom was achieved, they settled down in Manori. Everybody in the island had great respects for him. He set an ashram in his house and many followed his ideals and principles. He was considered to be a legend in Manori with his new ideas and magic cures. The people of Manori had immense faith on Sita's father and approached him for all their problems. As Sita's mother had deserted them, it is her father took care of Sita, her sister Rekha and brother Jeevan. The children lived in the midst of the crowd, as their house would be always crowded by men and women who come to their father for medicines.

Part Three of the novel is a continuation of the first one. Her initial enthusiasm that the island will work miracles on her is slowly waning. Her children, who lived in the city comfortably, could not adjust with the life in the island, accuse Sita and regard life on the island as madness. They want to escape from that island to their 'beloved' city. So, Menaka without the knowledge of Sita writes a letter to Raman to come and take them home. When Raman arrives, Sita is reluctant in leaving the island and after much conflict, Sita, goes back to Bombay to live with her children and husband. Her expectation of a miracle in the island did not happen and she joined her family in the city. Sita and Raman are the two different poles where there is no attraction but repulsion always. Raman is an ordinary man who has a practical commonsense approach to life but Sita is a woman who gets disturbed easily and fails to adjust with her family and society.

Sita is highly sensitive, emotional and touchy whereas Raman is sane, rational and passive. He ignores Sita. Desai's protagonists are "tormented souls who, in their death-in-life aspire towards life-in-death"²⁵. Sita's state is representative of the alienation of a woman, a wife and a mother. She is also oppressed and depressed with loveless wedlock with Raman. So, she takes a holy pilgrimage to Manori, an island and it is a journey for spiritual purification, a search for identity. S.P. Swain and P.M. Nayak emphatically comment that "Sita is an uprooted woman who wants to regain her primitive self". Ironically her pilgrimage with its promise of renewal and regeneration

is the result of her social alienation”²⁶. At last, she gets physical and mental courage in the island. The island forms the core of Sita’s conscious existence. There comes a change in Sita’s identity. She has four children and now reluctant to deliver or to abort the fifth one. In fact, she goes to Manori to retain the baby in her womb.

Sita is a symbol of nature and so she is unable to adjust the mechanical life. She feels difficult to survive in the destructive urban world. She has not been able to identify herself with the urban milieu and she feels alienation when she has seen the incidents of violence in the urban life. Her sons are fighting violently, the cook and the ayah quarrel with each other loudly, her daughter Menaka carelessly crushing a sheaf of new buds of a small plant. She is mentally affected by all those incidents. Now, she expects some miracle should be happen. N.R. Shastri says that Sita’s pilgrimage to Manori is both, “an escape and a return: an escape from the destructive forces of the urban milieu and a return to the magic island”²⁷. Her sense of alienation is because of her emotional imbalances. She is neither a Sati Savitri nor a Mohini; she has never worshipped her Ram in the traditional sense, nor has she even been faithless. Desai rewrites the mythical Sita’s role by restructuring and giving a new dimension. In the epic Sita is cast as the stereotype mother role. But in the novel, for new Sita children are only the means of anxiety and creates pessimism in life. The myth of the all sacrificing, noble, sweet mother, and the myth of motherhood is dismantled by Desai by projecting diversity of women’s maternal feelings.

Sita’s escape to Manori seems to be a flight from the constraints of traditional womanhood. She becomes acutely aware of her Oedipal relations. She is convinced, more or less, that the traditional family infantilizes women and they never achieve adult ego. Finally at the end of the novel Sita neither dies nor kills her baby in the womb but she compromises with her destiny. Here she is projected like Sita in Ramayana following the footsteps of her husband Raman an icon for Lord Ram. She lowered her head and searched out his footprints so that she could place her feet in them (136)²⁸.

Set in present day Karnataka, rich with south Indian culture, landscape, folk tales and history, Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter Of Time* is a story encompassing three generations of women coming to terms with their life in an all female world. The relation women characters share with their men is hovered with either silence, absence or indifference. The family saga opens up when one evening Sumi’s world is torpedoed as her husband Gopal walks out on her and their three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema without any explanation. Sumi too doesn’t ask for one. Her indifference unsettles her three daughters as much as it disturbs a reader. The pain of the disintegration of the family troubles Aru who considers herself responsible for her father’s action and sets out to undo it.

Sumi along with her daughters return to their ancestral house where her mother Kalyani had been living in an oppressive and strange silence, striving to make sense of her relation with her husband who hasn't spoken to her for 35 years. It is in this stifling atmosphere the characters evolve and come to a newer understanding of their lives. Kalyani gives vent to her long suppressed feelings as her relation with her daughter and grand daughters develop, opening up the gates of her memories through which the family legacy pours out. Sumi finds solace in taking up her dream career, Aru starts making sense of her mother's indifference and her father's desertion.

Very Indian in its foundation, the core of the book is built around the question of what a man does when he is disenchanted with the material world. One of the paths such people could take was paved ages ago - nobody knows when actually - when sage Yajnavalkya told his wife, "Maitreyi, verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder)" - as told in the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad is the opening of the first section of the novel. Such going forth has nothing to do with the wife, her beauty, her youth, or any similar quality of her wifeliness. It also has nothing to do with Vishwas, trust (or the lack of it) a husband/wife has in the other. The need springs from the inside, from recognising the effervescence of the world around oneself. According to the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad, Maitriyi on hearing that declaration of her husband, discussed with him the reasons for his going away, and argued with him whether that path was also not hers to take. The Maitreyi of Brihadarnyaka Upanishad was free to renounce the world, and to go on a spiritual quest of her own. That special moment of Maitreyi's life forms the ground on which Shashi Deshpande builds her book.

The novel moves around the character Gopal, he walks out on his wife Sumi and three daughters. Sumi reacts very normally. She doesn't shout, scream or create scenes. She is proud and defiant. It is very clear that she doesn't need any body's pity or sympathy. She, for that matter, understands, that life must go on, and for the sake of her three teenaged daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema. She must be strong and steady. Gopal's desertion makes her experience the trauma of a deserted wife and the anguish of an isolated partner. At the age of forty, she stands alone and helpless. A woman in such a condition seems to be totally shattered, but Sumi is not emotionally broken. Like any responsible mother, she helps her children to get on with their lives as earlier.

Gopal's abandonment creates a vacuum in Sumi's life. She tries to trace out eventually the clues in the past acts and utterances of Gopal. He had once said that, Sa-Hriday, is for those who accept the traditional Hindu view of marriage, where God unites both the hearts; and believe that the husband and wife are described as two halves of one total being. But some how he realizes that he was utterly failing the idealistic expectations of the institution of marriage. He could not feel himself a Sa-Hriday with Sumi and was getting out of step with her.

Premi, Sumi's sister is furious and is quite angry at the carelessness shown by Sumi and Gopal towards their lives- "...In throwing away what they had, uncaring, it seems to her, of the value of what they have discarded"(136)²⁹. Poor Kalyani be moans the repetition of history – "My father died worrying about me, my mother couldn't die in peace, she held on to life though she was suffering, she suffered terribly-because of me, she didn't want to leave me and go" (47)³⁰.

Sumi knows why Gopal left her and his daughters, because he had the fear of Commitment and family ties and responsibilities. She knew that Gopal believed that –" Marriage is not for every one. The demand it makes a life time of commitment— is not possible for all of us." (69)³¹. Sumi never questions Gopal, and he is grateful to Sumi for not asking questions and saved him from embarrassment and positively mortification of voicing half-truths. Sumi hates to discretion Gopal's dissection with any body. "... What do I say, ...that my husband has left me and I don't know why and may be he doesn't really know, either? And that I'm angry and humiliated and confused...Let that be, we won't go into it now"(107)³². Sumi looks at the desertion as 'Sanyasa', but the word 'Sanyasa' cannot be equated to the Vedic renunciation. Sumi casual makes a remark. When, one studies Gopal's childhood to know the reason for his desertion, we see that Gopal's childhood was not a normal one. He painfully remembers that this father had married his own brother's wisdom, and he was born out of that marriage.

His insecure childhood, lack of understanding the true concept of happiness and ignorance of true quality of joy, has led Gopal to renounce his Grihast-ashrama in search of eternal bliss. Gopal is still to search a solution to his loneliness and achieve peace. Gopal could not convince any one, the reason for his desertion, at least not to his daughter Aru. She, like the 'Yaksha', questions him and decides irresponsibility. To her - "...Not just a tragedy, it is both a shame and a disgrace"(13)³³.

Sumi never likes to unlock her heart and lay bare her emotions to Gopal. Her pride prevents her, nor she requests him to come back to her. She controls all her feelings and has a composed expression to the outside world. She feels, that, it is important for women, like her, to retain her feelings as she says "...The picture she presents to the world is one of grace and courage, to be admired rather than pitied. Unchanged, except for a feeling-which only those who know her well are aware of-of something missing in her"(172) ³⁴.

Even today, the fate of a woman is measured only through their marital status. A woman in a society gets respect only if she has her husband, irrespective of the number of wives or mistress he has, there in compatibility, his cruel treatment of or his dead

silence with his wife. It is more than enough if they live together under one roof because, “What is a woman without a husband “ (167)?³⁵

Sumi is a Karma Yogi, who believes in action. As a mother she performs her duties successfully. Her reaction is calm. There is a differences in attitude and reaction due to the generation gap and altered perceptions. Aru therefore discards the notion of marriage to be the ultimate aim in a woman’s life. Her compact, protected happy life is shattered by the sudden decision of her father. She wants, her mother to rebel against her father’s actions and to demand for an explanation. She, the eldest of the three sisters takes on the cultural role of a son. The role reversal underlines the new cultural possibility that suggests empowerment of the female child.

The second section of the novel begins with another quotation from the Brhadaranayaka Upanishad:

Whatever wrong has been done by him,
his son frees him from it all;
therefore he is called a son. By his
son a father stands firm in this world

The lines focuses the importance of a son. But ironically, the section deals with daughters only: Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. Mother-daughter bonding, in Indian mythology, has never been seriously emphasized except the relation of Prithvi and Sita. The old tradition of blessing a married women *Putravati Bhava* emphasizes the concept of patriarchal society. In the novel, *A Matter Of Time*, Deshpande Deshpande insists that it is only a matter of time when Kalyani and Sumi, mothers of daughters only, would be accepted as begetters of sons.

The last section of the novel begins with the lines from *Katha Upanishad*: “...Of Nachiketa (pray) ask not about death”. The section also bears subtitle “The River”. The river of time flows spontaneously without any interruption. The literal death of Sumi and her father Shripati and Gopal’s metaphorical death remains a mystery. The motif, of the quest, of the journey for Nachiketa, Gopal, Sumi, Aru, Kalyani and the readers becomes a transformative experience.

Thus the above novels reveals the use of myth by the writers to transfer their aesthetic and emotional experiences to the reader. They further try to reconstruct the old myth and beliefs and transform it to suit the current context and age. Any myth placed in new context gives birth to a new myth. In the present context as life is changing with a rapid tableau, the decoding of the myth implies a deconstruction, reconstruction and extension of old myth in to a new one.

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Problematizing R.K.Narayan's Use of Myth in *the Man-Eater of Malgudi*

Lakshmi Muthukumar

This paper attempts to scrutinize R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* as a novel that presents a fictional vivification and problematization of Robert Connell's theoretical framework that studies the interconnections between masculinities woven into a recasting of the Bhasmasura myth. Interesting insights into the social organization of masculinities in middle class upper caste Southern India are offered by the novel nesting as it does within a fictive and mythic context. Before getting into an analysis of the novel itself, it is important to clearly outline the theoretical framework that will be employed to study the novel.

Twenty first century critical practice classifies masculinities studies under the broad umbrella of gender studies. It has become common parlance to talk in terms of femininity and masculinity not as unitary fields of enquiry but as plural, and therefore the terms 'femininities' and 'masculinities'. Connell's work in the area of masculinities' studies is seminal in that his theoretical paradigms offer vivid and often imagistic models that clarify and facilitate our understanding of gender as "social practice" in the present times. He classifies the complex relations within masculinities under the following heads: "Hegemony, Subordination, Complicity and Marginalization" (5). Before moving on to his classification of the nuanced relationships within masculinities, it is important to look at how he defines the term 'masculinity'. As a concept, it assumes "a belief in individual difference and personal agency" and rests on "the conception of individuality that developed in early-modern Europe with the growth of colonial empires and capitalist economic relations" (1).

Connell accedes that the term is conceptually and "inherently relational" (1) in that it is always looked at in opposition to 'femininity'. Just as disenabling as the other crucial binary of the private and the public as separate spheres, such a conception relies heavily on arbitrary norms that prescribe what masculinity is, should be and ought to be. The term 'masculinity' has been defined by Connell briefly as "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (3). What is noteworthy here is that the definition looks at masculinity as a patriarchal creation that has been intentionally projected as a pedestal worthy of aspiration. Patriarchal forces have been continually re-inventing ways and means of projecting it as a seat of power which can allow man access to the "patriarchal dividend" (7).

This paper seeks to show how Narayan uses a re-telling of the Bhasmasura myth in modern terms in order to scrutinize the social practice of gender, especially masculinity, in middle class upper caste Southern India. Narayan's location as an upper caste South Indian Brahmin is itself problematic and immediately makes him vulnerable to allegations of being classist and exclusionist as a novelist. The novel indeed offers enough evidence that shows that his central protagonist, Nataraj, the printer, is petty, domineering, patriarchal and chauvinistic to the core. As a husband, he does not hesitate to dominate his wife and cows her protests down when she expresses her disapproval at his interactions with the local temple dancer, Rangi. He is quite brazen about looking leeringly at the women who visit Vasu, his so-called tenant, who practices the trade of taxidermy in the attic of Nataraj's printing press. While he does not hesitate to castigate Vasu for encouraging such visits by "loose women", he has no qualms at indulging in bouts of fantasy over them himself. With the few people in the novel over whom he can exercise his power, he is quite aggressive and pushy. Indeed Narayan seeks to show that this is hardly desirable as a model of masculinity through instances like the one involving the waste paper buyer or the *raddiwalla*. The *raddiwalla* is a poor Muslim who is harassed by Nataraj and kept waiting for hours on end at the end of which he strikes a hard bargain.

I called up a waste-paper buyer, who was crying for customers in the streets, and sent him up the rickety staircase to make a survey and tell me his offer. He was an old Moslem who carried a sack on his back and cried, "Old paper, empty bottles," tramping the streets all afternoon. "Be careful," I told him as I sent him up the stairs to estimate. "There may be snakes and scorpions up there. No human being has set foot in the attic for years." Later, when I heard his steps come down, I prepared myself for the haggling to follow by stiffening my countenance and assuming a grave voice. He parted the curtain, entered my parlour and stood respectfully pressing his back close to the wall and awaiting my question.

"Well, have you examined the lot?"

"Yes, sir. Most of the paper is too old and is completely brown."

"Surely you didn't expect me to buy the latest editions for your benefit, or did you think I would buy white paper by the ream and sell it to you by weight?" I spoke with heavy cynicism, and he was softened enough to say, "I didn't say so..." Then he made his offer. I ignored it completely as not being worth a man's notice.

At this point, if he had really found my attitude unacceptable, he should have gone away, but he stayed, and that was a good sign. I was looking through the

proofs of a cinema programme and I suddenly left him in order to attend to some item of work inside the press. I came out nearly an hour later, and he was still there. He had set his gunny sack down and was sitting on the door-step. "Still here!" I cried, feigning astonishment. "By all means rest here if you like, but don't expect me to waste any more time talking to you. I don't have to sell that paper at all. I can keep it as I have kept it for years". (Narayan 23-24)

So much for his much touted non-materialistic attitude! It is through the behaviour of the powerful towards the powerless in the novel that Narayan allows his readers to form their attitudes towards the main characters who represent oppositional attitudes to life. In the second chapter, Nataraj very grandly declares, "I welcome friends rather than customers. I'm not a fellow who cares for money". (22)

The Bhasmasura myth is retold in modern terms in order to draw a parallel between Vasu, the taxidermist and the *rakshasha* Bhasmasura, and Nataraj (Shiva's namesake) the printer and Shiva who makes the mistake of being misplaced in his altruism. Shiva in the original myth commits the error of being benevolent and generous to Bhasmasura because he flatters him with his penance, little realizing that by granting a boon that empowers Bhasmasura with the power to turn anyone he lays his right hand on to ashes, he is not only putting the lives of the other devas at risk but also his own! Alarmed at the prospect of a Bhasmasura who threatens to lay his hand on Shiva's head, Shiva runs to Vishnu for help. Vishnu takes the form of a beautiful danseuse, Mohini who lures and entices Bhasmasura into placing his fatal hand on his own head thus destroying himself! Mohini's role is played by Rangi, the temple dancer in the novel, who is indirectly responsible for Vasu's death. Vasu had threatened to kill the temple elephant Kumar for its skin and carcass and Rangi planned to sedate Vasu by poisoning him using his favourite *pulav*. However, Vasu refuses to eat the food she brings. Instead, he instructs Rangi to fan him while he sleeps to ward off the mosquitoes that irritate him no end. Rangi falls asleep on the job, thus indirectly causing a mosquito to bite Vasu on his forehead. Vasu, who prides himself on an iron fist, is angered by the mosquito bite, and brings his hand on his own forehead forcibly to swat the mosquito thus causing his own death.

What makes the novel an interesting re-telling of the Bhasmasura myth is the fact that the competing characters of Nataraj and Vasu present two extremes of the masculinities spectrum that are both, one would like to think, undesirable and avoidable as socially practicable models of masculinity. Nataraj plays the role of the complicitly masculine but is inconsistent, petty and imbalanced in his approach to life. Vasu plays the role of the hegemonic model who is clearly an embodiment of all that is undesirable and unwelcome. What is also interesting is that while Nataraj is portrayed in communitarian

and relational terms, Vasu is portrayed as being individualistic and insulated as a personality. Tabish Khair's analysis of the action of Narayan's novels can be illuminating. Khair writes:

The action in Narayan's novels adopts the following course:

1. The character lives in a largely traditional, middle-class, respectable-caste set-up, and also shows evidences of alienation (mostly 'existential' and bourgeois) which leave him/her open to influence by stronger characters.
2. This set-up is disturbed by the introduction of a stranger who captivates the character.
3. The status quo is restored in the end, with or without a perceptible change in the character's existential status. (236)

Khair's analysis fits *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* perfectly. Nataraj belongs to an upper-caste family which is essentially a middle-class, conventional one and is certainly meek enough to be cowed down by a character like Vasu whose arrival disturbs his otherwise placid life. However, there is no change in Nataraj's character even by the end of the novel. He remains a rather ineffectual character with a thoroughly misplaced sense of priorities. Vasu as the stranger who unsettles Nataraj's humdrum, routine existence rankles because he poses "a challenge to the settled middle-class (mostly Brahmin) ethos of Malgudi" (Khair 238).

The critic M.K. Naik writes, "*The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is at once a re-creation of the old Hindu myth of Bhasmasura in modern form and a presentation of two diametrically opposed attitudes to life" (142). As a novel where character and plot are closely interwoven, the work embodies a conflict between the insulated personality and the open and the vulnerable one. The characters of Nataraj and Vasu present interesting foils into which traces of Robert Connell's categorization of the hegemonic and the complicit masculinities can be read. Hegemonic masculinity has been viewed as the embodiment of a strategy that is currently accepted by a dominant group that seeks access to the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell). This can be seen embodied in Vasu's character, however it has been problematized by Narayan by using the mythic parallel.

Vasu comes across as the quintessential *rakshasa*. He has all the requisite qualities of one. He demonstrates an overweening pride, wrath, harshness of speech, insatiable desire and cruelty. Additionally, as Naik puts it he is endowed with "... superhuman strength" and is "ugly and ferocious in appearance with cannibalistic propensities, incapable of affection, gratitude, sympathy or regard for others." (143). He is "a creature of the jungle, full of mystery, dirty and unclean in habits and a completely amoral

being, obeying no laws – of God or man.” “He has a ‘bull-neck’, a ‘tanned face’, ‘a hammer fist’, ‘large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows’, ‘a large forehead’, ‘a shock of unkempt hair like a black halo’, loud and gaudy clothes (red checked bush shirt and field grey trousers). He drives the jeep at breakneck speed and Nataraj describes him as ‘the prince of darkness’.” (143-144) Also like the *rakshasasin* Hindu mythology, Vasu is not an ignorant monster. He is also a learned taxidermist.

Complicit masculinity also realizes the patriarchal dividend without running the risk of being ‘the frontline troops of patriarchy’. Men like Nataraj who respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, and bring home the family wage. Nataraj’s character however can be problematized in that it does not fit neatly into this category. He comes across as modest, un-selfconfident, timid and nervous. While he is apparently loyal and devoted to his wife he progressively proves himself to be patriarchal and domineering. He pretends to be benevolent but actually demonstrates a strong business acumen. His gesture of welcoming any passerby into the parlour of his printing press is also not devoid of selfish intent as one can see in the very first chapter of the novel. “Anyone who found his feet aching as he passed down Market Road was welcome to rest in my parlour on any seat that happened to be vacant. While they rested there, people got ideas for bill forms, visiting cards, or wedding invitations which they had asked me to print...(Narayan 1-2).” He projects an impression of not being money minded but is quite petty at times. He is rather spineless in comparison with Vasu but shows complicity with patriarchy.

In conclusion, one could say that while Narayan cleverly uses the Bhasmasura myth and the contrasting personalities of Nataraj and Vasu to drive home the point that misplaced and imbalanced altruism will only lead to disaster, the novel ends up being an example of *babu fiction* that is prejudiced to say the least. The phrase is borrowed from Tabish Khair’s work which looks at the *babu* as “an urban, westernized, English-educated person” (9). Both Narayan himself and his characters fall into this category. Khair maintains that such a location influences the literature produced.

...I do not wish to imply that the mere fact of belonging to a social class precludes the possibility of transcending the boundaries of that class or that material economic factors directly and solemnly determine cultural representations. But I definitely wish to investigate how these boundaries are expanded and defined, and how the fact of belonging to a privileged class in a highly class and caste conscious society impinges upon the literature created.
(22)

One cannot help but agree with Khair that

It is in these tensions and cross-tensions, in these silences and enunciations that Narayan's art not only constitutes itself but also reveals Narayan's dual position as a subaltern and Babu, as Western and Indian. In his depicted world of Malgudi he has broken the fetters of a colonized Indian English imagination and brilliantly given speech to a silenced aspect of ordinary Indian life. On the other hand, this very speech is often predicated on the continued silencing of certain other aspects of India – even to the extent that the discourses that Narayan employs (whether Hindu-Brahminical, Babu-secular or existential) often serve to obscure the intensity and activity of alienation across socio-economic lines. (240)

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The Archetypal LaxmanRekha in Rama Mehta's 'Inside the Haveli'

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An archetype can be called a universally understood symbol, term or pattern of behaviour upon which others are copied, patterned or emulated.

Carl Jung, early in the 20th century, stated the existence of countless forms which are universal and which channel experiences and emotions. These forms result in the recognizable and typical patterns of behaviour with certain probable results. Jung discussed the use of archetypes and the resultant illumination of personality and literature. Archetypes, according to him, have been present in folk lore and literature for thousand years, which include prehistoric art work also. Archetypes are thought to be important to both ancient mythology and modern narrative.

An archetype is the product of the 'collective unconscious' and is inherited from our ancestors. Certain behavioural patterns have become established as more or less archetypal. The archetypal idea has always been present and diffused in human consciousness. Jung stated four main archetypes and one of them is 'The Anima—the feminine image in man's psyche'.

The Ramayana, the great Indian epic has Sita, Ram's wife as one of the major women characters and she exhibits a pattern of behaviour which has percolated in Indian literature since ancient times. Sita crossed the rekha, a line of restraint, clearly drawn by Laxman, her brother-in-law. As a result of that, she had to suffer and was, in a way, punished and her life became a series of rejections. This behavioural pattern, crossing the LaxmanRekha, the line of restraint, can be perceived as an archetype. It expresses Jung's idea of typical pattern of behaviour with certain outcome and this LaxmanRekha is deeply ingrained in human consciousness. This type of behavior on the part of the 'feminine' and its expected results express 'The Anima', that is the feminine image in a man's psyche. So, according to the researcher, LaxmanRekha can be interpreted as an archetype in itself.

Rama Mehta's **Inside the Haveli** deals with the quest for identity of two women, Geeta and Laxmi. The permitted and expected space for women is inside the Haveli. Geeta's movement is within the confines of the patriarchally defined space but Laxmi transgresses the laxmanrekha and is resultantly , punished.

Therefore, this paper aims at bringing out how the archetypical laxmanrekha in the great Indian mythology, **Ramayana** is still quite operative in **Inside the Haveli** and how it exposes the malpractices involved in patriarchy since women are made to move within the patriarchally defined space for them or otherwise, punishment is inflicted upon them.

The conclusions are: One, in **Inside the Haveli**, Rama Mehta maintains the existence of the stereotypical laxmanrekha; Two, Geeta who does not break away from the laxmanrekha her domestic space, is honoured but Laxmi who interrogates the controlling power of laxmanrekha and crosses it, is punished yet she is able to assert herself as an individual though she has to rebel against it.

In the initial part of the novel, Geeta fits in the description of passive, virtuous protagonist of a fairy tale. J. Usher describes the qualities of such a heroine as “a beautiful girl’s modesty and virtue are without bounds, her kindness and sensitivity are matched only by her fairness of face. Eventually, her patience, passivity and tolerance are rewarded.”

Geeta conforms to the patriarchal norms initially but tries to search for her independent identity in the later part of the novel by ‘moving’ within her traditionally specified confines and as a result of this, she becomes determined to bring about change with a clear understanding of the possibilities in the future, her belief in her self-reliance, her capacity to take risk and to master the situation. The question arises whether she will retreat or proceed determinedly to face reality and be determined to change her immediate environment. Geeta certainly proves her determination to change her present with her clear knowledge of the possibilities about the future after having thoroughly understood the traditional and the modern elements. Geeta’s straying from the path of femininity demythologizes as J. Usher would put it “the traditional solutions like self sacrifice and romance”. In the face of difficulty Geeta submits to the authority of her in-laws, of course, with her own conditions and disobeys the law of patriarchy and therefore, rejects the fairy tale image and escapes the legacy of Cinderella and Snowwhite. But the author imposes a retreat upon Geeta since “the patriarchal gaze on women is one dimensional because it aims, both to obscure their depth and to deny their potential for mobility.

Thus Geeta’s movement is a way to resist her confinement and calls for an examination of social and female spaces. The author, thus domesticates the feminist dimension of her rebellion and invests her stability with moral values:- ‘the still woman is good and the wandering woman like Laxmi is evil. Geeta’s attempt at transgressing the space allocated to her, both physically and mentally leads to an interrogation of social and

sexual boundaries. Of course, the author seems to add a streak of ignorance and immaturity to Geeta's rebellion by creating the hope in the novel that as she grows she will benefit herself in the societal framework.'

So ,from the beginning of the novel itself, the process of muting and subjugating Geeta seems to have started. Silence seems to be the traditionally proven strategy to win people. However, in the latter part of the novel ,Geeta uses silence as a strategy to silence others.

The people of Udaipur see Geeta's marriage to Ajay as a 'risk' because she is an outsider according to them (p15) it seems any society has a closeknit structure and their does not seem to be any readiness to accept a so-called 'outsider'. So,Geeta is perceived as an outsider because she is from Bombay and also because she is educated. Of course ,the process of 'taming' or 'colonizing' her begins immediately after Geeta's arrival in Udaipur :- Pari, one of the servants, says, 'where do you come from that you show your face to the world? And covers Geeta's face with the veil.Pari also adds 'I know you are an outsider but its time you learned our ways .Daughters in law of his haveli do not behave like this ,they do not enter the men's apartments' (p.17). There is a clear distinction between female space and male space indicated by the definite plan of the haveli.

Besides this perception are Geeta's fears of 'making mistakes' her yearning to talk with someone who could tell her what was happening in the world and her embarrassment by Ajay's occasional visits to her followed by the maids laughter since 'man was allowed to see his wife only in the night' (p.18). And therefore, in the initial part of the novel and also later on, Dhapu, Geeta's maid becomes her only support without whom Geeta thinks that she 'would have insisted on going back to her parents.She could not have taken the taunts about her upbringing with proper meekness' and thereby ,to become an 'angel' in the eyes of the in-laws (p.19).

Surprisingly Geeta 'comes to love the veil that hid her face and she discovers that through her sari she could see everyone and 'yet not be seen by them' Parda has been subverted by Geeta as a strategy to create her own space. Another strategy to have a room of her own for Geeta is the twenty days seclusion when she delivers her first child because she enjoys 'the peace and quiet' of these days. She also tries to take comfort in the hope that her stay in Udaipur is 'temporary'. The thought to leaving Udaipur overcomes her depression in this phase of her life.

However, Geeta's education, the admiration and constant reassurance from her husband' (p.25) do not make her feel comfortable and even after two years in the haveli, she is nervous because the societal gaze and remarks like 'she will never adjust. She is not

one of us', certainly alienate and annihilate her. This leads to her loss of confidence which is again a result of the process of colonization by the patriarchal members of her family as well as Udaipur. There is a conscious attempt at 'moulding' and 'fixing' Geeta :- 'I want to show the people of Udaipur that even an educated girl can be moulded' (p.28), says her mother-in-law.

However, Geeta's retaliation is discernible when she says to Dhapu, 'I am fed up with all the pretence that goes on here. I hate all this meaningless fuss' (p.27). Geeta's previous belief in love changes to her not at all being 'sure about herself' (p.28). She undergoes a change within two years of her marriage and yet she is 'unable fully to control either her words or her feelings'. She feels on the one hand, like a heavy 'log of wood that had mobility' because her actions become mechanized but on the other, with the help of Dhapu, she transgresses her confined female space by going 'through a dark passage of the narrow stairs to the men's apartments 'to see the celebrations without being observed by anybody. Thus, Geeta's movement is from the 'angel' to the 'wandering woman' and this movement from angel to evil woman and from the evil one to the angel is recurrent in the novel. For example, she forgets her irritation and feels proud to be the young mistress of the haveli and values the great traditions of the family.

As said earlier 'neglect' and 'silence' are used as strategies for survival by Geeta as exemplified by her purchases of various things like books. She turns 'a deaf year to her mother-in-law's advice. However, her silence seems to be a burden to her because it chokes her. Recurrently in the novel, in the situations of depression, her husband's consoling words help her overcome her depression and they direct her to some new strategy also. Ajay says, 'help me to try and see what you could do in this atmosphere' (p.44). His words, on the one hand, are consoling but on the other, they are his expectations projected upon Geeta regarding her possible movement. Further Ajay's assertion of his stay in Udaipur only because of Geeta's adjustment to the haveli is also a marker of her fixation in the image of an 'angel'.

Once Geeta knows that she will have to lead her life in the haveli since Ajay negates all the chances of his going to Delhi, she feels relieved and tries to find out new strategies for her life ahead. For a possibly temporary phase, being an angel and 'speaking the language which the men want women to speak and wishing what men expect women to wish' as A. Loomba says is easy for Geeta but later on it becomes difficult.

After five years Geeta feels 'more at ease' though she accepts the discipline without protest and there are 'many times' also when she feels the crushing weight of the walls that shut off the outside world'. Hers is not a blind acceptance, knowingly, she moves from negation to assertion and again back to negation.

The author confirms the change that comes over Geeta by stating ‘the room seemed to suffocate her. She felt trapped in the haveli with its traditions and its unchanging patterns. She was filled with rebellion and she was determined not to be crushed by the haveli (p.81)’. It must be noted that regarding trivial customs, Geeta is ready to surrender but certain things pose a challenge before her and she becomes a crusader. Regarding Seeta’s schooling, Geeta seeks her father-in-law’s support instead of that of her mother-in-law’s since she knows that the women are very much rooted in patriarchy and that forces of patriarchy are unleashed not only by men but women also. This is also supported by Dhapu who advises her not to ‘get into argument with the women in the haveli since they are mean and the men are generous and understanding’.

Consequently, the author imposes a retreat on Geeta by bringing out Geeta’s nullification of her own decision after having heard pari’s grievances. Regarding Seeta. She says, ‘I should not have interfered in Seeta’s life (p.85)’. Finally Seeta is sent to school with Geeta’s father-in-law’s support. It marks Geeta’s victory and the acceptance of her new ideas in the haveli. Yet Geeta shows readiness to withdraw Seeta from school when she gets a better understanding of servants’ conditions. This readiness on her part makes Geeta sound ambiguous at times but the author portrays Geeta’s perception as being sharpened as she pays visits to relatives and sees women who ‘look alike’ and understands their loss of identity.

Geeta’s training continues with her mother-in-law’s recurrent comments and advice like ‘in order to become one with the family, one must first learn to listen to one’s elders’. As a result of this training in to silence, it becomes easy for Geeta to conceal her feelings. Geeta is shown to develop through her exposure to life. This is noticeable when she talks to Ajay regarding Seeta’s education and the change in the haveli, ‘the change won’t come as quickly as you think. You don’t know the women here. They are all rooted in ignorance and superstitions (p.112)’. In the later half of the novel, the readers see Geeta’s mother-in-law and all the servants accepting and appreciating Geeta’s decision about Seeta’s schooling and nullifying their misconception about education; ‘education has not done Seeta any harm (p.118)’, says Geeta’s mother-in-law. A major confrontation that Geeta has to face is when she starts a school in the haveli for servants’ children and maids. This school is perceived as ‘bringing a bad name to the haveli’. But the conflict between Geeta and her mother-in-law ends with her father-in-law’s support to Geeta: ‘I am proud of Binniji. Tell her to let me know if she needs any help. (p.128)’. As a result of this Geeta undergoes a change. She loves ‘the large empty rooms of the haveli, they no longer look unfriendly and haunted’ (p.130). Once Geeta’s classes are supported by her father-in-law, her mother-in-law also becomes a staunch supporter of the same.

Thus, Geeta heads towards empowerment in the haveli. Geeta's exposure to the society and its various strata improve her understanding of life and her social sense which are revealed by her statement when Maji, a relative opposes her classes for the poor maids : 'how dare she say that these classes were an excuse for women to shirk work. And what if they were, why should the young girls help the haveli just because their mothers were servants of the haveli' (p.135). Geeta, in this way, fights against the capitalist mode of life.

Having grown in such a way Geeta does not 'need anyone to fight on her behalf or give her moral support' (p.136). This is a signifier of Geeta's growth. Geeta becomes grateful towards her mother-in-law for her co-operation and she also becomes one with the haveli : 'how dare anyone say a word against the haveli and for the sake of it ,she would even discontinue her classes'. The haveli becomes the heaven for her : 'I don't want to leave Udaipur now. It has made me a willing prisoner within its walls. How stupid I was not to see all that it holds. Geeta , thus assimilates with the traditions of the haveli and internalizes its ways willingly. This is Geeta's new identity. She no longer feels 'trapped in the haveli'. She finds that she too had changed'. Of course, she does not like the rigidity with which the women held onto old customs. She could not become one with the haveli women nor did she want to' (p.142) .Geeta has grown into in an adaptable, fluid, intelligent and a wise woman who resents the rigidity of the heveli but also moves within the Laxmanrekha,that is within the haveli.

Yet Geeta appreciates the freedom that her in- laws have given her ' within the haveli to keep her occupied in the manner that satisfied her'. Geeta , thus ,makes her movement possible within her limited space and brings about a change in her immediate environment and also in her Self which is appreciated by the haveli. The author emphasizes that change is possible even in a limited space if one adjusts like Geeta and does not cross the line of restraint, the archetypal Laxmanrekha .

Geeta, the daughter-in-law who had the lowest status in the family is able to acquire equal status to the male members of the family. She is 'now allowed to sit in Bhagwatsingji's presence and even talk to him directly which was previously not allowed'.

All the servants who are grateful to Geeta express their feelings through Pari's statement: 'Binniji has changed the lives to these girls (maids) most of them can read and write. They can get work. They don't have to depend on havelis.'

The last confrontation between Geeta and haveli is when a proposal for marriage is brought for Vijay, Geeta's daughter who is twelve years old. Geeta's first reaction is ;-

‘Vijay can’t get engaged at this age’. Secondly, she thinks that she is being ‘trapped and sees no escape this time’ and therefore, she tells Ajay ‘I have put up with enough in your family and I am not prepared to bend any more’. Geeta by now, really knows the haveli. At the end of the novel, the author shows Geeta coming to terms with her Self and establishing her own space in the haveli and also seeking a position of power there.

Therefore, it may be stated that Rama Mehta, by showing Geeta’s rebellion and at times, her immediate retreat tries to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, of course, she domesticates the feminist dimension of her rebellion and invests her stability with moral values: the still woman is good and wandering woman like Laxmi is evil. She creates her own space within the haveli and gains a higher status. Geeta creates her own space within her own limited confines yet she is able to bring about a positive change in her immediate environment.

Geeta seems to present an ambiguous character but she can also be interpreted as a synthesis between tradition and modernity. The author seems to be in favour of such a synthesis and for her, it seems to be a certain possibility.

Daphne, in her article ‘Women’s space: Inside the Haveli: incarceration or insurrection’ stated that ‘space is a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, a power-geometry of difference’.

A feminist reading of *Inside the Haveli*, brings out the unreleased energy of Rama Mehta’s female characters, namely, Geeta and Lakshmi. The researcher proposes to bring out Mehta’s attitude to female space and a female rebellion with specific reference to Lakshmi, a maid in the haveli. It is aimed to bring out how patriarchal thought endorses on women the possibility of movement only to control it by investing women’s stability with moral values.

Lakshmi, a married maid, aged fifteen conforms to the patriarchal norms initially but tries to search for her independent identity in the latter part of the novel by ‘moving away’ from the traditionally specified confines and as a result of this, with a clear understanding of her Self and her belief in her capacity to take risk and master the situation, poses a threat to the ‘patriarchal norms’ represented by the haveli. Lakshmi’s deviation from the path of femininity demythologizes as J. Usher would put it, ‘the traditional solutions like self- sacrifice and romance’. It is even in the face of difficulty that Lakshmi disobeys the law of patriarchy and therefore, rejects the fairytale images of women and escapes the legacy of Cindrella and Snowwhite. However, Mehta who

shows Lakshmi in a pathetic light, seems to disapprove of a rebellion like that of Lakshmi's since it is a bit of conspicuous and seemingly immature one.

Inside the Haveli is not only a story of Geeta, a modern girl who represents a rebel and also a conformist, but it is also a story of Lakshmi who has to face internal as well as interpersonal problems. However, Lakshmi does not 'care what anyone said' but has to marry Gangaram, a servant in the haveli since it is decided by BhagwatSinghji's wife, the mistress of the haveli. Lakshmi finds 'everything wrong with Gangaram' and complains 'about his temper and tattered clothes' and 'blames the mistress for marrying her to him'.

Other older servants like Pari or Dhapu comfort Lakshmi but 'nothing convinces her that she was fortunate in having Gangaram as a husband' and therefore, she 'goes her own way, doing work when told to, otherwise sitting around day-dreaming'. Lakshmi also thinks of a strategy to subvert the system which confers upon woman some status when she becomes a mother and otherwise, oppresses her. Lakshmi says, 'I will have a child every year. This is the only way to get rest and comfort ... if only women were considered unclean for longer what fun it would be'.

According to another maids, Lakshmi is 'impossible to please'. Being aware of her right, Lakshmi is annoyed when she does not get her massage on time even when she pays for it. A gift of an old sari from the haveli enrages her because she can not be fooled easily as the sari 'won't stand even to washes'.

Being thus a restless soul, Lakshmi certainly has a potential for rebellion, movement and defiance. There comes a turning point in her life in the form of a present from Heeralal, a driver. She perceives it as an insult to her. Nevertheless, she is 'misunderstood and mistaken' which is the result of the patriarchal interpretation of women. The incident results into Lakshmi's husband losing his temper and calling her 'a rotten woman, a woman worse than a street woman'. He catches her by her neck as according to him, 'she is dirty'.

Lakshmi who is just like Eliza in *Pygmalion*, is led to react very defiantly and is not to bear any insult this time. At night, she 'hears her husband's accusing voice, 'you are a street woman. I never want to see your face again. You are a street woman'. As a result of this, 'her lips tighten and her body burns with rage. She smiles defiantly and leaves the haveli', leaving her child there only.

In the latter part of the novel, one sees the recurrent attempts on the part of the patriarchal haveli to bring Lakshmi back, the major aim being saving the fame of the haveli and the pretext is that her child needs Lakshmi. But Lakshmi does not give in once she has

broken away from her confined existence. She is defamed, rumours regarding her stay with various men are heard. Yet Lakshmi boldly refuses to 'retreat'. She tells Pari, 'I will not come back. Never! I will starve but never return to the haveli... I will show my husband that I am not a street woman either... Heeralal is a thief, a rascal... I know you all. For the rest of my life you will poke your fingers at me and say, 'that bad charactered woman. She enticed Heeralal to give her gifts. She would do anything for a sari'. I know your sweet words now don't mean any thing... I will never, never return to the haveli to be taunted and jeered at...'

Lakshmi's deserting the child in the haveli also can be interpreted as her strategy to teach a lesson to her husband who according to her 'should control his long, poisonous tongue'.

Lakshmi story does not end here. She has to lead a loveless and lonely life and even after a period of fifteen years she is not invited for her daughter's wedding as according to the master of the haveli, her presence will spoil her daughter's future. So, Lakshmi becomes an agonizing mother who can only give a 'shagun to her daughter without revealing her identity'.

To conclude, it may be said that Lakshmi has courage to be different and her movement is not at all a fake one. She leads a self supporting life, she does not elope with a man and does not at all seek the support of any man. So, her movement is not from one patriarchal plane to another but she creates her own space indigenously as she knows very much that patriarchal ideology blames not men but a woman and as a wandering woman that she is, she is to be labeled as 'evil' and not an 'angel'. She is not at all bothered about any label as she has asserted her Self.

Thus, the author seems to inflict a sort of punishment upon Lakshmi, since she has flouted the rules of womanhood, wifehood and motherhood in a patriarchal frame of reference. Lakshmi's movement is not at all justified or there is no glorification at all of her search for identity which she completes indigenously. She is shown in a pathetic light only to warn against the consequences of such a loud rebellion as hers. Geeta's rebellion, which is glorified, is a strategic one as she conforms to the patriarchal norms and yet moves within the space confined to her by patriarchy. But Lakshmi being illiterate, reacts, retaliates and rebels instinctively and not as strategically as Geeta. Geeta's is a slow rebellion but Lakshmi's is like an explosion which makes her suffer. So, Mehta approves of movement but only within the space designated to women by patriarchy and not at all beyond that.

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Mythicising Women who make a Choice: A Prerogative of the Indian Collective Unconscious to Demarcate Modesty and Right Conduct for Women

Shyaonti Talwar

I. Introduction: Indian Myths And Central Archetypes

Myth has been variously defined, understood and interpreted in numerous texts including the Encyclopaedia Britannica which describes it as a sacred narrative or a traditional story typically involving supernatural characters endorsed by priests or people with religious authority. India has had a long tradition of myths and some central archetypes. Central amongst its myths are the fight between good and evil or dharma and adharma manifested in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the quest myth again seen in the epics, the myth of exile and renouncement which manifests itself frequently in the major epics (the agyatvaas of the Pandavas, the vanvaas in Ramayana) and also the minor stories: in Savitri's voluntary exile with her husband Satyavan in the story of Savitri Satyavan, the forced exile of Nala and Damayanti, the flood myth and the fire myth.

One of the objectives of myths has been understood to teach model behaviour and talk about ideal experiences. However there seems to be another ulterior purpose too: to preserve and reinforce the socio-cultural aspect of the male-female dichotomy and ensure the uninterrupted and undisturbed running of the patriarchal setup if one were to consider the recurring female archetype of the chaste and the virtuous women in Indian mythology. Although there is anthropological evidence that tells us that some prehistoric primitive societies were matrilineal and matriarchal, they are lost in time and it is difficult to understand what is exactly matriarchal in today's context since its meaning and implications are heavily contextualised in the light of 'patriarchal'. We do have matrilineal societies even today but they are not in essence matriarchal; at their best they are egalitarian.

II. Female Archetypes in Indian Mythology

A. Goddess Figures

In order to substantiate what has been said so far, let's take a look at some of the prominent women in Indian mythology and the roles they play: Gayatri, the personification of the

most potent of all mantras is the feminine form of gayatra a sanskrit word meaning a song or a hymn thus presupposing and following the existence of a male counterpart. The Vedas and the Puranas, both glorify Aditya as the cosmic mother who is also called devamatri with more than seven to eight sons including Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha and Amsa apart from being the mother of the great god Indra and thus attaining the stature of the mother of kings. The prominent goddesses Saraswati, Parvati, Lakshmi and Prithvi are first and foremost wives of the prominent Gods Brahma, Mahesh and Vishnu respectively and only then divinities in their own right and finally Shakti, the supreme figure among female divinities or the Universal Mother.

B. Archetype of Chastity in Indian Mythology

From goddesses to humans, we see the enduring female archetype of the female complementing the aura and the existence of the male; though this is not true conversely. In humans, this archetype, with her functional and derived existence, is further endowed with attributes that project her as the chaste, sacrificing, singularly devoted, extraordinarily beautiful wife who will go to the ends of the earth and endure perils, humiliation and even trial by fire for the sake of her husband. The retelling of the mythic tales in different religious and mythological texts or the epics has always ensured that these qualities in a woman be given paramount importance.

III. Recurring Archetypes of Chastity

A. Sita

Sita is the ultimate symbol of a chaste woman. But as Wendy Doniger says, 'in the Valmiki text there is evidence that Sita is sexually vulnerable' (1999: 12). She desires Marica, the asura, disguised as the golden deer, and falls prey to his fatal attraction and lusts for him. She sends first Rama and then Laxmana to capture Marica and her vulnerability increases when she is unable to recognize the difference between Marica and Rama's cry for help. Her assertion in first demanding Marica and then her choice of stepping out of the laxmanrekha (the line that is drawn by a male who acts as her protector and marks her confinement to protect her modesty) lead to her subsequent abduction and captivity. This could be read as the consequences a woman has to face if she dares to step out of her predefined confines or is weak enough to fall prey to an external source of attraction. Sita is eventually rescued; nevertheless she has to endure much and face the trial by fire or agnipareeksha before she's taken back by her husband.

Sita is glorified and worshipped to this day for her eternal faithfulness and her lasting devotion to her husband. This quality or aspect of her overrides the other mortal and

‘lesser’ qualities which make her more human. Clearly, the fact that she is renounced by her divine husband which eventually leads to a voluntary dissolution of her being is conveniently omitted in many texts. The Mahabharat, the Harivamsa and the Vishnu Purana leave out Sita’s ordeal and therefore her image crystallizes in our collective unconscious as the ideal woman who lives on: a dutybound woman who keeps her family together. Sita enters our households as a deity with her husband Rama and brother-in-law Laxmana by her side and the devoted Hanuman at her feet, the virtuous mistress of any Indian household who keeps the family together and is benevolent towards those who serve her.

Her final act of giving up her physical being is read as the great sacrifice of a virtuous woman who ceases to ‘be’ for a greater good and gives up her claims in the interest of the state. Her silence is read as ready acceptance of what is dealt out to her, not mute resistance. Interestingly the part of the Ramayana in which these incidents occur is known as the Uttar Kand which was added much later to the original epic.

It is also interesting to note that there is a parallel myth of the shadow Sita or the illusory Sita in Adhyatma Ramayan who goes into the fire and is reborn as Draupadi with a potentially sexual future. (Doniger, p.13.)

In the section entitled ‘Sita’s Former Life’, Doniger mentions a beautiful maiden named Vedavati who was granted the wish to marry Vishnu in her next life. “She went into the mountains to meditate but was attacked by Ravana who attempted to rape her. She being a good woman paralysed him with her angry gaze. He became unable to move his hands and feet.” Then by the power of yoga, this woman dies and was reborn as Sita. Some texts claim that Ravana actually raped her as a consequence of which she cursed him and renounced her life. (p.13)

B. Ahilya

Next, we have the instance of Ahilya, the epitome of impeccable beauty and youth married to the old ascetic Gautam Rishi. The allure of the unknown in the form of the celestial god Indra is hard to resist and she finds herself succumbing to his advances despite seeing through his disguise. The Brahmanas(a) (9th to 6th centuries BCE) are the earliest scriptures to hint at her relationship with Indra. In the Skanda Purana, “Ahalya smells Indra’s celestial fragrance” (pp. 96–7, 321–2). In Kampan’s 12th-century Tamil adaptation of the Ramayana, the Ramavataram, narrates that Ahilya realises that her lover is an imposter but continues to enjoy the dalliance. The Kathasaritasagara (11th century CE) is also one of the few texts that mirrors the Bala

Kanda's Ahilya and says that Ahilya makes a conscious choice of copulating with Indra. (Ramanujan 1991, pp. 28-32).

Punishment awaits her and she is turned to stone by her husband. Ahilya has to pay the price for stepping out of the confines of wedlock.

Later retellings however mythicise her and make her the symbol of the eternally chaste. She is silenced, petrified and thus objectified by a male (by the curse of Gautam Rishi, her husband) and can be redeemed ironically only through the divine touch of another male. Like Sita, she too is symbolically set free by the same male rescuer, Rama. Again, in the retellings of her tale, the qualities that are eternalized and make her memorable and a part of the Indian collective unconscious are her patience, her ready resignation to the punishment given to her by her enraged husband and her years of passivity and penance and ultimate redemption at the hands of Rama.

Ahilya is a passive receptacle of these actions and turn of events. She is only active and when she unites with Indra. However, this choice of hers is best left undiscussed. It is interesting to note that although the Bala Kanda mentions that Ahilya consciously commits adultery (Bhattacharya March-April 2004, pp.4-7), the Uttar Kanda of the Ramayana and the Puranas (compiled between the 4th and 16th centuries CE) '...absolve her of all guilt and declare her a passive victim who falls prey to Indra's passion and manipulation.' (Ray, 2007. pp. 25-6). To acquit her further and in order to emphasise her objectified and pure status the Uttar Kanda recasts the tale as Ahilya's rape by Indra. (Doniger, 1999. pp. 89-90, 321-2). Subsequent retellings of her story glorify her as a woman epitomizing chastity so much so that she is the first amongst the five virgins or panchakanya to be worshipped by orthodox Hindus. (Bhattacharya, March-April 2004. pp. 4-7).

C. Sati

In the section The Shadow Sati, Doniger (p.17) discusses the story of Sati disguised as Sita who meets Rama to test him. Rama sees through her disguise. However, Sati comes back and lies to her husband Shiva, the consequences of which she has to

Footnote:

a. Rambhadracharya 2006, p. 36: (mahâbhâgâC – decompose it as mahâ abhâgâm, she is an extremely unfortunate lady – mahat abhâgaC yasyâ% sâ, whose misfortune is very extreme ...) Rambhadracharya (Swami) (30 March 2006) (in Hindi). Ahalyoddhâra [The Liberation of Ahalya]. Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Handicapped University.

suffer later when Shiva renounces her and promises to himself: 'I will not touch Sati in the body she wears now.' There are parallels in the way these model mythological heroes or gods Shiva and Rama treat their wives. Both renounce their wives because they refuse to conform to societal rules which clearly govern individual choices. Rama wants to be the model king in order to set an example for his subjects whereas Shiva believes that if he treats Sati as his wife 'the faith that he follows will be lost.' However, popular retellings of these incidents do not emphasize these instances of male condescension and mythicise and glorify Sati and Sita as faithful wives who made mountainous sacrifices for the reputation and honour of their husbands while projecting Shiva and Rama as supremely devoted husbands.

D. Draupadi

Chastity seems like an overrated virtue and one can almost sense a preoccupation with preserving the chastity of women, or more obsessively labeling them as chaste in Vedic society. 'The Mahabharata contains instances of various kinds of kinship structure and various styles of marriage', reflects Indrani Singh Rai in her article entitled 'Mahashweta Devi's Draupadi: a discourse of the Dispossessed' (p.101). 'It is Draupadi who provides the only example of polyandry, not a common system of marriage in India.' However, it is said that on every occasion that Draupadi unites with one of the Pandavas, she passes through fire to regain her virginity for the next Pandava (Pattanaik, 2010. p.115). The definite hierarchy of the mind over the body is unmistakable. The body needs to undergo a purification process regardless of the mental association with another man. So, despite being married to five men Draupadi epitomizes purity as she is able to regain her virginity every time she puts her body to the test.

IV. The Mythicising Ritual

It is evident that the feminine body is the site of exploitation and needs to be punished and put to trial for any kind of offence. Thus we see Vedavati giving up her physical being after being violated by Ravana, Sita facing the agnipariksha or walking through fire, Draupadi emerging from the fire (she was born of fire) and purifying herself by passing through fire time and again, the sinning or the sinned against Ahilya's body being turned to stone, Shiva expressing his inability to love Sati in the 'body' she 'now wears'. Once the body has undergone the trial and suffered, the ritual of purification is complete and the woman attains a glorified status and is subsequently mythicised.

Where physical suffering determines the glorified status of some women there are

others who are first mythicised and then glorified by being compellingly associated with the divine. For instance, we have Kunti whose children are born out of wedlock through union with other men but though Kunti is human, the boon she is blessed with (for rendering 'services' to Rishi Durvasa) is divine and the men she unites with are celestial. Thus acquitted, Kunti is a part of mainstream society and royal politics. Radha, a married village, woman is universally and eternally accepted as the consort of Krishna for her association with divinity himself. For the same reason, Rukmini's elopement too, is not immoral.

Menaka has a child out of wedlock and so does Shakuntala her daughter but as Menaka is a nymph and Shakuntala is only half human, their deeds have divine sanction and are justified. In fact, there are accounts of other celestial nymphs too, who freely engage in lovemaking and copulation, and don't have to suffer any consequences for their actions. There is an instance of Urvashi the celestial nymph approaching Arjuna the Pandava prince and proposing physical union with him. Arjuna turns down this proposal as Urvashi has been the wife of his ancestor Pururava and this will amount to incest as she is a mother figure to him. An enraged Urvashi curses Arjuna with the loss of his manhood. (p170). Clearly nymphs are separate from humans, and their values and moral codes differ. Hence these women needn't suffer the consequences of their liberal moves and actions as they are already distanced from mainstream society.

Some women are glorified for their indulgence while others are punished. Probably the community they belong to plays a role in demarcating them, and determines the criticism or the judgement they might receive for their conduct. Looking at the social order, it is apparent that rishi patnis suffer extreme admonishment possibly because of the demand to lead idealized lifestyles and exemplary lives as wives of ascetics. Their male counterparts on the other hand, like the rishis Vishwamitra or Durvasa, needn't be as stringent or as austere. The offence could be as trivial as rishipatni Renuka's voyeuristic indulgence in the gandharva Chitrartha or graver like Ahilya's promiscuity. Regardless of the gravity or the extent of the 'sin', the punishment is extreme. Renuka is slain at the behest of her husband Jamadagni who directs their own son Parshuram to behead her, and Ahilya is turned to stone, an inanimate, rigid, feelingless thing symbolically objectified and petrified.

The females who belong to the community of mortals like Kunti, Draupadi, Radha and Rukmini are separated by a metaphysical distance from common women folk. Their experiences are idealized because of their compelling and convincing association with the divine. Moral behaviour is at times loosely imposed and flexible. The

immaculate Sita and the sexually potent Draupadi, are both epitomized; the trivial 'sinners' Sati and Renuka and the grave 'sinner' Ahilya are both chastised; the sinned against Vedavati has to perish. Is it possible that Shakuntala, Menaka, Kunti, Radha, Rukmini and Draupadi are acquitted because they have the dual sanction of the male and the divine in their choices or acts?

V. Conclusion

In his dissertation in progress on the creation of myths and their patterns of thought, Stefan Stennud tell us how archetypes function like 'symbolic keys' by unlocking experiences, rituals and beliefs stored in our collective unconscious (as Jung called it) or in Freudian terms our 'Archaic heritage' (Psychoanalysis of Myth: Freud and Jung's theories on myth and its origin). Archetypes are responsible for creating myths, religions, ideologies and philosophies, and Mythology comes to be looked upon as a projection of our collective unconscious.

India has had a long and ancient tradition of glorifying and mythicising its women and endowing them with divine attributes so that they symbolise something vastly larger than life and incredibly supreme. What we see is an extremely complex depiction of women and chastity as it is understood and projected in Indian mythology which doesn't set any common moral ground or ideal code of conduct when seen as isolated cases. What strings these women together is their mythicised and therefore, metaphysically aloof status. Or is it that the Indian woman's predicament is that whenever she displays the power to choose and step out of the predefined outline that a patriarchal society has drawn for her, she is either mythicised and turned into a supernatural being or glorified and put on a pedestal so that there remains a separateness or a distance between her and the multitudes of her gender. How important is it that she remains a distant figure who can be revered for her decisions and actions with unquestioning faith or read about and marveled at but never followed as a role model as this could result in destabilizing the arrangement of our society?

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Mythic reworkings in Girish Karnad's *Yayati and The Fire and the Rain*

Sushila Vijaykumar

Introduction Postindependent Indian drama/theatre saw the rise of four major playwrights who were pre-occupied with crafting a national identity as well as handling modernity. For the purposes of this paper, suffice it to say that whereas modernity refers to the impact of Enlightenment ideals, the rise of democratic nation-states and individualism, modern sensibility means an urban¹ sensibility. Although it is realized that the debates are intense, a brief understanding of the term myth is provided by Northrop Frye who claims that myth “is a certain type of story ... like the folktales it is an abstract story-pattern. The characters can do what they like, which means what the story-teller likes” (1974: 163-164). Reiterating the tradition of Indian theatre based on myth, Karnad proclaims that “Most myths have a strong emotional significance for our audiences. I like to play on that too ... The audience already has a set of responses to the particular situation I’m dealing with” (*Enact*, 1971). It emerges that a key feature of myth is the ‘confrontation’ between the familiar world/s or sensibilities of the author and the audience.

Based on a close textual analysis of the plays, the first part of the paper will examine *Yayati* (2007- English) which visits the Yayati myth in the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* and deals with the father-son exchange of ages and the theme of responsibility. The second part will examine *The Fire and the Rain* (1998-English commissioned by the Guthrie theatre) which returns to the Yavakri myth and the parallel Vritra myth in the *Vanaparva*, the third book of the *Mahabharata* to explore Brahmin power-struggles and fratricidal anxieties. It is necessary to clarify that this paper refers to C. Rajagopalachari’s version² of the *Mahabharata*, comprising of 107 stories.

A.K. Ramanujan aptly observes that the *Mahabharata* is “not a text but a tradition” and that substories reinforce “repetitions” which “are a part of a total world-view” (1999: 161, 178). For instance, the Yayati story, told as a model and precedent when Bhishma gave up his sexual and political life so that his father could remarry, is retold in the *Ramayana* by Rama when he was exiled by his father. A brief recapitulation of the story evoking the classical, collective Indian (Hindu) world-view of a devoted son is apt. Yayati, for a moral transgression he has committed, is cursed to senility. Wanting to prolong his pleasures, he asks each of his five sons to transfer their youth to him and the elder sons refuse. Pooru who accepts his father’s curse, receives great honour, inherits Yayati’s kingdom and becomes well-known as a wise ruler.

In the light of the above, while attending to Karnad's reworkings, notwithstanding the numerous alterations, the father-son exchange of ages is theatrically appealing and made more poignant through two crucial changes - Yayati's adulterous union with Sharmishtha and Pooru's acceptance of his father's curse – take place on the eve of the arrival of the new couple (crown Prince Pooru and his wife Chitrlekha) on their nuptial night. In contrast to Rajagopalachari's version, wherein Pooru's wife is not mentioned, these twists engender a subversive reading in tune with modern sensibilities i.e. the overthrow of an aggressive father. The Sutradhara's direct address to the audience in the Prologue and at the play's end helps in framing the story.

The father-son (Yayati-Pooru) conflict echoes the conflict between tradition and modernity. Yayati is proud of his Aryan lineage, believes in hierarchy and rituals, indulges in wars and is keen on fulfilling his duties as a householder and King. In contrast, Pooru reconciles himself to his hybrid lineage, interrogates irrational rituals (*Swayamvara* and waiting for an auspicious moment to enter the palace), feels burdened by dynastic expectations and resents the duties of a King and householder. Expecting his subjects to be like (sacrificing) soldiers, Yayati promises glory to anyone who accepted his old age while Pooru, representing the democratic citizens, points out that the people paid taxes and preferred death. Spurred by excessive lust and patriarchal aggression instead of parental obligations, Yayati chooses to retain his youth and rejects old age; Pooru prefers self-sacrifice (self-glorification?) over his conjugal duties and chooses to give up his political and sexual potency. The resultant crisis in the lives of Pooru and Chitrlekha hints at the generational conflict and draws audience-attention to the demands made by the elders as also the consequences results of (unrestrained) patriarchal power.

In particular, Rajagopalachari describes Pooru's sacrifice as "moved by filial love" and enumerates that "As soon as he touched his son, Yayati became a youth. Puru, who accepted the old age of his father, ruled the kingdom and acquired great renown" and after many years, Puru was "made king by Yayati who retired to the forest"(1999: 31, 32). In contrast, Karnad questions this unnatural reversal of the cosmic order; Yayati does not ask Pooru but Pooru accepts the curse "to emphasize Puru's personal choice of self-sacrifice, rather than as atonement for his father's sin"(Crowe, 1996: 138). Apparently, in giving more stage-space to elaborating the exchange of ages, the play questions the conflict-free end of the Yayati story, wherein Yayati realizes that there is no end to *kama* (desire) after a long life of pleasure.

For the audience, it is Chitrlekha's onstage death which emphasizes the grave implications of Yayati's self-centredness and Pooru's filial devotion bringing home the crucial insight that "Puru's old age is a sudden transformation and not the eventuality

of life. It brings no wisdom and no self-realization. It is a senseless punishment for an act he has not committed”(Karnad, *Notes on Tughlaq, Hayavadana and Naga-Mandala*, 2011:303). Yayati is led on the path of self-realization, aptly captured in his soliloquy, after witnessing the tragic death (sacrifice? or murder?) of his young daughter-in-law Chitrlekha. Yayati returns Pooru’s youth and retires to the forest with Sharmishta. Pooru’s agonized cry on seeing his wife dead is made more ironic with the return of the Sutradhara who reinforces that Pooru was a wise ruler and subverts traditions and provokes the spirit of questioning. In other words, the Yayati myth has been reinterpreted to challenge the perpetuation of its inherent power-structures i.e. the power of the aggressive patriarch over a submissive son and foreground contemporary (individual) concerns³.

In the second part, I will examine how the Yavakri and Vrita myths have been reworked. Lomasha tells Yavakrida’s story to the Pandavas who reach Raibhya’s hermitage on the banks of the Ganga, and Lomasha remarks that “Indra⁵ was cleansed of the sin of killing Vritra unfairly by these waters.” Interestingly begins the story thus: “Yavakrida, the son of a sage met with destruction in this very place”(Rajagoapalachari, 1999:144). Karnad depicts Bharadwaja and Raibhya as brothers rather than friends, reworks Arvasu’s character to symbolize ritual/theatre and the presence of Arvasu, Nittilai, Parvasu, the people and the invisible brahmarakshasa in the precincts of the fire-sacrifice in the prologue and the epilogue is crucial for reinforcing *rta* ⁶. In contrast to being a famed scholar officiating at the fire-sacrifice with Parvasu, Arvasu is a simpleton, a passionate actor who does not act in deference to Parvasu’s advice, and who loves a tribal girl Nittilai. In the Prologue, he is permitted to act in a play titled *The Triumph of Lord Indra* during the seven-year long fire-sacrifice to procure rains; in the epilogue, he debates with Indra and the brahmarakshasa on love, duty, and the natural order of time.

In Act I, Yavakri returns after 10 years and through Andhaka (the blind grandfather of Sudra caste) the story of his penance (tapasya) to acquire Vedic knowledge directly from Indra is retold; however, through Nittilai, Karnad interrogates if there were any witnesses and Yavakri himself admits to Vishaka the hardships faced in the forest and his own self-realization as to what could not be achieved. Yavakri wants Vedic knowledge without a guru or hard work and misuses his powers by challenging Raibhya and Parvasu, however, Vishaka, the Chief Priest Parvasu’s wife (who is depicted as Yavakri’s former lover), is not molested but yields to him. On her return, she is beaten and kicked by her father-in-law Raibhya. Both Arvasu and Vishaka witness Raibhya invoking a ghost (brahmarakshasa) to kill Yavakri. Vishaka rushes to Yavakri, learns of his challenge and pours out the water. Yavakri rushes to his father’s hermitage, is stopped by Andhaka and meets his end at the hands of the brahmarakshasa. A quick

look at further deletions⁴ is vital. Bharadwaja is dead; Arvasu, conditioned by his brahminical upbringing, finds Yavakri and Andhaka dead and performs their last rites. As a consequence, he reaches the tribal council late to find that Nittilai's father has given her hand to her cousin.

In Act II, Parvasu who wants to meet Indra as an equal and bring rains through yagna, returns home after six years, intentionally kills his jealous father and knowingly corrupts the yagna but instructs Arvasu to perform the expiatory rites. Arvasu witnesses the familial (brahminical) power-struggles and acts in accordance to the wishes of his elders. Arvasu chooses to resolve differences with Yavakri and performs his death rites; despite Vishaka's warning, he chooses to perform the expiatory rites for his father Raibhya. The parallels drawn between Parvasu-Arvasu and Indra-Vritra are of significance. When Twastha's son Vishwarupa is killed by Indra, Twastha invokes Vritra who is also killed by Indra through deceit. Likewise, Parvasu falsely accuses Arvasu of brahminicide and patricide and has him thrown out half-dead. In Act III, a near-dead Arvasu is rescued by the Actor-Manager and nursed back to health by Nittilai who has run away from her husband. Through her, the play calls for a stop to the cycle of vengeance.

In the epilogue, Arvasu, with the Vritra mask, loses control, chases Indra (the actor-manager) and questions the deceit. Parvasu sees the enactment of the fratricidal theme and remorsefully walks into the fire. Arvasu is pulled back by Nittilai who throws off the mask but is killed by her husband and brother. Grief-stricken, Arvasu enters the fire with Nittilai's body but Indra, pleased with Arvasu's acting skills, appears and grants him a boon. In contrast to Arvasu performing penance to please Indra who grants Arvasu's wish to revive dead relatives, the audience is witness to the ethical choices confronted by Arvasu. Indra reiterates that the wheels of time can either roll back bringing back to life all the dead or move forward to release the brahmarakshasa, who incidentally pinpoints to Arvasu that Nittilai would have wanted his release. Arvasu initially maintains that the experience would make everyone wiser and disregards Indra's warning that history would repeat itself; however, through the brahmarakshasa who pinpoints that the compassionate Nittilai would be unhappy, Arvasu is made to introspect. He then asks Indra for the release of the brahmarakshasa from his intermittent state between life and death and procures rains in tune with the natural order. The play thus subverts traditions, reiterates the irreversibility of death, and brings home the significance of compassion and human-welfare. As Erin Mee observes, the play does not espouse "Brahmin ideals" but "exposes the hypocrisy and brutality of Brahmin priests and the failure of religion"; demonstrates how jealousy can lead to familial violence and "breaks the cycle of vengeance and revenge and brings release from anger"(2001:5).

This paper began with the claim that Karnad has reworked ancient myths to suit modern sensibilities. As already demonstrated, the audience can discern that the mythic alterations and reinterpretation of the mythical characters in the two plays depict their reworkings in the manner in which they question traditions - for instance, Pooru's (blind) filial devotion or Arvasu's (blind) familial affiliations; likewise, Nittilai's questioning spirit and humane gestures are counterpoised with (brahminical) power-struggles among Raibhya, Paravasu and Yavakri. The plays bring home the injustice inherent in the demand made by elders that the young generation should sacrifice their lives, and highlights the message that actions guided by sentiments of human welfare are superior to those guided by self-interests, and reaffirms the efficacy of sacrifice (not blind but rational) in the larger interests of humanity.

Notes

1. B.V. Karanth, a modern playwright and director enumerates that "modern Indian sensibility ... is an urban sensibility - a sensibility that connects one region with another in this culturally diverse country because it has had exposure to the west, to the Independence movement, to industrialization"(qtd in Subramanyam, 2002:14).
2. Karnad has mentioned in the *Notes on The Fire and the Rain* that he read Rajagopalachari's version during his college days.
3. Karnad maintains, "Whatever modernity the play has might have been due to my young age and the influence of the European modernists whom I had read. I would like to discover my own state of mind in his character. I had secured a Rhodes Scholarship and I was to leave for England for higher studies. My parents were happy but ... began to put certain conditions—that I should return to India soon after my studies and then marry a girl from my own community, etc. I did not like their meddling in my affairs. I thought that I was the master of my destiny"(Contemporary Indian Theatre, 1989).
4. Bharadwaja finds Yavakri dead, curses Raibhya that he would be killed by one of his sons, regrets his anger, cremates Yavakri's body and throws himself into the funeral pyre.
5. M. Hiriyanna explains that Rta means "cosmic order" meaning "preserving the world from physical disorder and moral chaos" and willing the right ; second, ritualism referring to sacrifices forcing gods to do what the sacrifice wanted to be done; third, "sacrificial correctness" similar to "natural law and moral rectitude"(2005:12, 23).
6. M. Hiriyanna observes that the deity Indra represents both valour and force but also as vain and boastful and called as "thunder-god" and "the liberator of the waters by slaying the demon of drought"(2005:11).

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Being Draupadi - Three Takes ...

Titiksha Urman Dhruv

Introduction

The anthropology of religion claims that religions of pre-industrial peoples, or cultures in development, are called “myths”. The term “myth” at times also used in a derogatory sense by both religious and non-religious people. By defining another person’s religious stories and beliefs as mythology, it is meant that they are less real or true than one’s own religious stories and beliefs. Sociology, on the other hand, attributes a non-pejorative meaning to the term myth. It defines myth as a story that is important for the group unmindful of it being objectively or provably true. But from a mythological outlook, whether or not the event actually occurred is unimportant. Instead, the symbolism it carries is most significant. It remains a metaphor for the spiritual potentiality in the human being. Religious believers may or may not accept such symbolic interpretations. As per the current interpretations, a myth can be explained as a traditional story of historical events believed to have supposedly taken place in past. The story element serves to unfold contemporary society, perspectives of a people or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomenon. The character/s around whom the story has been weaved, then continues to embody certain ideology, practice or fate they represent.

An Indian has grown up on the stories of the great and grand epics of the land, *The Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata*. His parents and grand-parents must have preferred to present him in simplified and convincing tone. The supplementary reading books, the retold versions of these epics read in school days and the live characters shown on TV serials made on these stories make us believe them to be the real ones. But today the questions like – “Can these stories be real? Can such human beings with exceptional qualities and such extraordinary state of affairs exist? Is it possible to find out historic evidences?” - compel us to go back to them with newer rationale and renewed insight for them. Sita and Draupadi are the two of the strongest women in Indian mythology. Sita is the epitome of the traditionalism, whereas Draupadi is mutinous, for whom asking questions or raising doubts has been her second nature.

The recent rise observed in mythological fiction has provided the young generation with a generous and thoughtful literary creations. Many authors have been successful in handling mythological stories from various, more generous points of view and perspectives of a particular character. Among them are the immensely popular novels by three contemporary women novelists. They are:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, Dr Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*, and Kajal Oza Vaidya's *Draupadi*. All of them are the first person narratives of the dark, fire born enigmatic princess with flashing eyes – Draupadi. This character has been able to conjure contrasting emotions. The readers as well as the people around her are overwhelmed by her beauty. At times, they are almost shaken about her fate for having five husbands and they also spontaneously cry for her when she is insulted in the Kuru palace. Draupadi, the daughter in law of the Kuru clan and the wife of the great Pandavas can be called a distinguished personality, both for her loveliness and her granite will. Being volcanic, she becomes instrumental in reducing her enemies to the ashes and at the same time she is compassionate and generous. The story of this fiery princess bent on vengeance, is a saga of suffering. It is hard to judge her. She makes us raise our eyebrows as she unabashedly wanted the Kuru war. Hers is the character that possesses magnanimity of divine characters combined with ordinary human feelings and extra-ordinary suffering.

Being Draupadi

What is being Draupadi? Krishnaa, Panchali, Yajnasaini, Mahabharati, Sairandhari are the different names that she is known with. She is the 'emerged' daughter of King Drupada of Panchala and the wife of the five husbands, Kuru princes – the Pandavas. When Yudhisthira becomes the king of Hastinapura at the end of the war, Draupadi again becomes the queen of Indraprastha. She is the mother of five sons, Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Srutakirti, Satanika, and Srutakarma; one by each of her five husbands. The epic *The Mahabharata* presents her as an extraordinarily beautiful-undefeated by any woman of her time in terms of beauty; a woman of tremendous self-respect, a girl who is inquisitive unlike the young girls of her age, a lady who feels the wrong and has complaints for being wronged by others and her near and dear ones alike. Her asset is her best friend – Sakha Krishna, the complete and the most sought after man of Aryavarta. She is one of the Panch-Kanya (the five Virgins) of ancient Hindu Mythology along with her mother in law Kunti who too was gifted with the boon of virginity. She is born as an instrument to take revenge and to reestablish the rule of Dharma. She has guts to demand her rights in a male-dominated society, and fight injustice any which way she could. Draupadi is unabashedly and prominently a queen, with a woman's pride, a sharp intellect and a strong will.

There are seven facets of Draupadi's personae. The reality of her life and the essence of her existence rest on seven pillars:

1. Her birth is tragic and doomed for devastation. She is born unasked for from the sacrificial fire to bring about destruction.
2. She is forced into a polyandrous marriage by her in laws.
3. In spite of being a wife of five husbands, she is bereft of support from her husbands when she is dragged and re-robed in Kuru assembly.

4. She vows retaliation to the Kauravas.
5. She is devoted to Lord Krishna and her devotion borders love for him.
6. She nurtures soft corner for Arjuna who won her in the swayamvara.
7. She is forced to give priority to her dharma as a wife which resultantly overshadows her as a mother.

A. Born to destroy

Draupadi's birth, in form of an emergence, is an accidental bonus for Drupada who performed the rite for obtaining a son to avenge Drona. A heavenly announcement follows her birth that the lovely, dark lady would be the reason for the bloodiest wars in history, that the princess Draupadi will destroy all Kshatriyas. She is born, therefore, not to fulfill Drupada's purpose but that of the gods in response to the Earth's distressed prayer to lighten her burden of oppressive Kshatriyas. The gods further had meant her to marry the Pandavas and destroy the Kauravas.

B. Polyandrous Marriage

Princess Panchali, under the influence of Krishna, accepts the Brahmin youth who succeeds in the swayamvara test as her husband and also immediately follows him and his brothers to the forest where they lived with their mother. The wedding ceremony has been fixed after the meeting with the mother. As a result of Yudhisthira's comment of their 'bringing a rare jewel' and the mother's rejoinder to it 'to distribute equally among five brothers' result into a polyandrous situation by which she is expected to marry five men. The young princess, with the dreams of happy married life, though not in the palace, and no clarity whether the man is archer Arjuna, is confronted with the major issue of following the dharma. If she refuses the polyandry, then she defies her duty. For her, therefore, the assent remains the only alternative which is insulting and disgraceful. Draupadi's polyandrous marriage becomes an issue of concern for her and as the future course of action suggests a matter of derision for others.

Owing to her marriage to five husbands, Draupadi had to live with each one of them turn-by-turn for one year each. She had the boon to be born virgin every year, and is therefore called an eternal Kanya (a virgin).

Although polygamy was common among men of higher social ranks, in Indo-Aryan society, polyandry was not regarded without censure. Her marriage to five men was controversial. However, when questioned by Kunti to give an example of polyandry, Yudhisthira cites Gautam-clan Jatila (married to seven Saptarishis) and Hiranyaksha's sister Pracheti (married to ten brothers).

It has been a historic event and the author of the Mahabharata provides several reasons in its justification. In one of her previous births, as Nalayani, she had prayed to God for a husband with fourteen distinctive qualities. The God therefore managed for these qualities in five men (the Pandavas).

C. The Disrobing in the Assembly

The disrobing of the daughter-in-law of the Kuru clan in the assembly by her brothers-in-law and that too in presence of elder members of the family is the most unfortunate event of the Mahabharata. After losing the property and their individual selves in the game of dice when Yudhishthira pawns Draupadi and even loses that game, she is dragged into the court by Dushashana. Draupadi is ridiculed for being a wife of five men and Duryodhan orders to disrobe her in public. To Draupadi's question of what right do her husbands have to put at stake her after losing themselves in the game, the elders are devoid of proper reply. Neglecting the warnings of Gandhari, when Draupadi is actually disrobed, her husbands are helplessly seated with their heads down. So remain the other elders. Draupadi's earnest prayers are answered by her Sakha Krishna and she is saved of public disgrace. The incident leaves a scar in her heart and she vows revenge.

D. Burning Passion for Retaliation

The incident of dragging Draupadi clad in one piece of attire grabbing her hair turns out to be a key incident and is often considered to mark a definitive moment in the story of Mahâbhârata. It is one of the driving reasons that ultimately led to the Mahâbhârata war, though it cannot be considered the central or the most important one. The constant spiteful, unkind and upsetting comments, not only from the Kaurav princes, their wives and even from Karna, the constant lascivious moves of Duryodhana, the attempt of abduction by Jayadratha and the pinnacle of disgrace in form of the attempt of public disrobing – all made a righteous and a lady with self-respect a rebellious and vindictive personality surviving with the sole aim of revenge. The hate and revenge fuel Draupadi to such a great extent that she unabashedly wants retribution and nothing less than the Kuru war.

While Dushasana unwraps layers after layers of Draupadi's sari, her sari keeps getting extended. Out of the five Pandavas it is only Bhima who gets furious at Dushasana. He vows to tear open Dushasana's chest and drink his blood. The bitterness that festered at an insult and loss overpowers Draupadi so much that she realises nothing but revenge can satisfy her. She even takes an oath of keeping her hair untied till she has decorated it with the blood of Dushasana. Accordingly when Bheema kills Dushasana he brings a handful of Dushasana's blood and colours Draupadi's hair with it.

E. The Sakhi-Sakha relationship

The most exceptional feature of the Mahabharata, the saga of relationships is the association shared by Draupadi and Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna considers her his sakhi (friend) and for her, He is her sakha- always at her beck and call. As per the announcement made at the time of her birth that the most beautiful Draupadi will be won in marriage by the most worthy man of Aryavart, Draupadi begins dreaming for Krishna. It is Krishna who explains her that Arjuna being a portion of his entity, is meant for her. He further establishes the magnanimity of the unique relationship that he shares with her which is beyond the earthly and societal norms. Draupadi's liking for Arjuna can be explained as his being the replica of Krishna. The story of the Mahabharata is replete with incidents where Draupadi, in testing times, just remembers her sakha and Shri Krishna appears in person to guide or help her, whether it is the dilemma of preserving Dharma in the case of polyandry or the public disrobing in the forum.

Draupadi is an exemplification of Bhakti, and she experienced God's divine presence constantly in her life. Before the attempt of pact between Pandavas and Kauravas when she questioned Krishna about everything that had happened to her, He reassures her: "Soon wilt thou, O Draupadi, behold the ladies of Bharata's race weep as thou dost. Even they, O timid one, will weep like thee, their kinsmen and friends being slain...Stop thy tears, I swear to thee, O Draupadi, soon wilt thou see thy husbands, with their enemies slain, and with prosperity crowning them."

F. Partiality for Arjuna

Once, though reluctantly, Draupadi accepts polyandry, she remains faithful to the Pandavas and loved her five husbands alike, from the depth of her heart. The fact, although even she accepts, is her partiality for Arjuna in whom she could find Shri Krishna and also that it is he who has outperformed everyone to win her hand in the swayamvara. She does not cry out in protest for him even though he did so as a poor Brahmin. She does not turn him away as she does in case of Karna. Though being a princess, and ignorant of their real identity as the Pandavas, she even goes with the five brothers on foot to their humble hut. The independent, brave and outspoken Draupadi does not argue in the name of Dharma and marries the five brothers, the sons of Kunti who could not disobey their mother's words. During their final journey to heaven, Draupadi is the first to fall on the way. The reason for the fall of Draupadi is quoted as she being more partial towards Arjuna than the rest of her husbands.

G. Draupadi- a woman and her Dharma

History records that the war of Kurukshetra, the clash of the mighty Kauravas and invincible Pandavas takes place because of a woman named Draupadi. She has never been just an

ornamental wife to the five brothers. A princess by bearing and birth, she proves herself to be an ideal wife and a woman who takes it upon her the hardships and tribulations that come with her place in the Kuru clan. Immediately after the swayamvara she steps out on foot with her husband and his five brothers. Every time in exile and during the state of disguise, she faces ordeals in various forms without a single complaint. None of Draupadi's children survive at the end of the epic. Duryodhana sent his men during the great battle at Kurukshetra to torch the camping tents of the Pandavas at night. But his men got confused with the Upapandavas (sons of Draupadi and pandavas) as they looked very similar to their fathers. So instead of torching the camps of the Pandavas, the men end up torching the camps of Draupadi's children. Parikshita, grandson of Subhadra and Arjuna, is the sole Pandava descendent who survives. Till the end, her role as a wife goes on getting priority over that of a mother.

THREE NOVELS

The woman character of the epic the Mahabharata, 'Draupadi' has attracted all the womanist writers to judge it with a new approach and a new angle. All the three novels delineate a male-centric story with their focus turned around. They are the stories of the central female protagonist Draupadi living in a man's world, around whom magical tales of love and passion, honour and humiliation, power and weaknesses are weaved.

A. Palace of Illusions

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, aka Chitralkha Banerjee is an Indian English writer, whose works represent an immense amount of understanding and sympathy for South Asian women. 'The Palace of Illusions' published in 2008, speaks of the great Indian epic, Mahabharata, through the eyes of Draupadi. The Mahabharata tells us of the war that was caused by an insult to one woman and her thirsting need for revenge. What remains untold is what went through Draupadi's mind during all these moments and events that altered history. The Palace of Illusions explores all facets of Draupadi's life, including her part in her husbands' quest to regain their birth right, her complex friendship with Krishna, and her mysterious attraction towards Karna. Unlike other typical females, she is interested in the art of war and the intricacies of ruling a kingdom. Divakaruni's Draupadi has many weaknesses. She is haughty, short tempered and at times manipulative. The character of Draupadi has been commonly viewed as a vampish character that remains the cause of the Great War. But Divakaruni weaves her plot and words in a masterly fashion that the readers are forced to empathize with her protagonist Draupadi and offer her their compassion. The Draupadi that she presents is a strong-willed person with a never-say-die attitude. She always seemed to have a plan for everything and possess a willingness to take upon all roles that came her way; be it forcing her father to let her study with her brother, living in

the exile, serving as a maid to another queen, trying to be the only wife to her five husbands, maintaining a cordial relationship with her mother-in-law Kunti or trying to rebuild the city of Hastinapur after the war. Divakaruni chooses to use the selected incidents from the great epic and only glosses over them from her perspective. The book is more about what Draupadi feels than details of what happens in the Mahabharata. Draupadi's voice is clear, poignant and heart-wrenching at the same time. The novel describes Draupadi's relations and concerns for four Ks – Kiriti (Arjuna), Krishna, Kunti and Karna.

In case of Kiriti (Arjun), Draupadi is not able to fulfill even the routine conjugal bliss and satisfaction from life that any common woman longs for and enjoys. He is the one who wins the princess Panchali in the swayamvar. As a result Draupadi's soft feeling for him is understood; though the original story of Mahabharat suggests his several marriages wherever he went. The relationship between Kunti and Draupadi is quite peculiar. The image of Kunti presented by Divakaruni is that of a mother who is careful about the fact that she has not to lose her sons to a wife. The unity among her five sons is essentially inevitable to fight against the unjust Kauravas. At the same time her cautiousness is seen in her so called innocent asking for 'dividing the alms equally among five brothers' and thus forcing Draupadi into polyandry, so that her daughter-in-law cannot raise any query regarding the births of her sons in form of boons. Every move that is made, from the statement that causes Draupadi to be wife to five to the tough circumstances Kunti faces and triumphs, shows that they hated each other's guts and character. With Krishna, Draupadi is more at a receiving end; voluntarily and also due to the awe and admiration that his personality has always demanded. Krishna remains her guide and mentor in the complete course of her life. The most striking feature of the novel, the take that is taken by Divakaruni is Draupadi's attraction for Karna. This is not clearly found in Vyasa's rendition. On the occasion of swayamvara, under the influence of Krishna and her dear brother Dri – Dhrustadhyumna, Draupadi rejects Karna. She insults and disqualifies him for being the son of a charioteer. Later, when she realizes his ability and credential, she feels guilty about it and unknowingly develops silent attraction for him. She again harbors guilt for the fact that Karna is her husbands' most dangerous enemy. This causes her to live with regret. Eventually the knowledge that vindictiveness of Karna is because of her rejection at the swayamvara where she found her husband, constantly torments her.

In an interview Divakaruni confesses that for her, Draupadi 'is the epitome of a timeless woman. I spent quite a lot of time thinking about her; I tried to get in to her mind.' In reply to a question regarding the novel exploring a complex relationship between Draupadi and Karna, Divakaruni explains, 'Vyasa himself hints about the existence of such an attraction. It is clear that Karna is attracted to her, after all he wanted to marry her earlier in the epic. In fact the original talks about a scene where Kunti invites Karna over to her place and tells him to switch sides, she then tells him that he could marry Draupadi as well, if he did cross

over to the Pandavas. What I did was talk about it from Draupadi's perspective. I imagined that she would feel strongly about this. I have gotten pretty good feedback and I am really appreciative of that.'

B. Yajnaseni – The Story of Draupadi

Pratibha Ray has a great passion for revealing the underlying mysteries of the society. Her romanticism lies in realistic angle of life. Her novel Yajnaseni –The Story of Draupadi won her Bhartiya Jananapith's prestigious ninth Moortidevi award. Ray has an innate ability to examine and present women consciousness through the protagonist in a very natural way. Her women consciousness is intense but decisively not so aggressive. She would observe keenly from all different sources, feel the burning of the coal herself, and the age-old burning problems of women would erupt with realistic imagination in her novels.

Yajnaseni -The Story of Draupadi is Pratibha Ray's version of Mahabharata in the perspective of Draupadi presented with a feminist attitude where the author tries to justify her actions by covering up all her burdens. She makes a determined effort for portraying the epic character in order to bring to the surface the broader and deeper aspects of Draupadi's mind that have been laid inundated in the majestic surge of the marvelous Mahabharata. The novel is written in the flashback technique where the fallen Draupadi thinks of Krishna and drops a letter for him to read. It is in form of a complaint on the justice denied by the world. Draupadi not only remains anchored in the epic but also rises out of its pages to become contemporary and extremely relevant modern womanist figure of our time. There are several instances where Draupadi argues in feministic fashion. The best example is that of her swayamvara. She feels herself to be an object of display. She feels profoundly ashamed to be the target of so many lustful eyes. While appearing before the invited warriors she thinks, "I would be on display before all. My beauty and radiance would spur the competitors on." (Y-39). She is unable to bear silently the agony by burning up within. She has already been silently affianced and betrothed with Arjuna-the third Pandava, being 'a portion of Krishna himself'. But she feels insecure thinking, "If someone other than Arjuna succeeds in the test due to her father's relaxations, how can I taint my soul by wedding that person?" (Y-33) When a Brahmin youth, on Krishna's recommendation, succeeds the swayamvara test, she is made to accept him in the name of her father's dharma that a daughter has to follow. At that time she decides that whosoever the Brahmin youth may be, for her he would be her Arjuna. The same Draupadi feels annoyed when she is termed as 'a priceless thing'. When after marriage she reaches the potter's hut in the Ekchakra forest with her husband and his four brothers, Yudhisthira the eldest brother announces to their mother that they have brought a priceless object and as reply to it their mother advises 'to divide amongst the five equally'. Now the dharma of a wife compels her to a polyandrous

marriage. (Y-55, 56) Draupadi's mind rebels, but she remains silent thinking the man who has proved his ability in the swayamvara would protest. Instead the words- "We shall all enjoy the princess equally, she will be the wife according to dharma, of us all" (Y-57) ignite Draupadi but again she burns in inner anguish. Even Krishna's argument of polyandry being an access to unity among brothers makes her ask, "Was this truth or self-deception". (Y-69) Although she accepts to be a wife of five husbands, the realization that as an ideal Indian wife, it is only her duty to take care of all but there is no one to take care of her, torments her a lot. Once when she is unwell and longs for the healing touch of her husbands, she is handed over to the treatment of the royal physician. Draupadi, at that time, reflects that with considerable faith in the royal physician, she has lost faith in herself and her husbands. The novel suggests Arjuna's frustration getting manifested in a different way. When she is with Yudhishthira, Arjuna deliberately enters the palace with the pretext of getting his weapons. As per the settlement among the five brothers, when Draupadi is with one, the others are not expected to visit the couple's palace. Arjuna, thus as an outrage, invites the punishment of twelve years of distance from Draupadi. For a wife constantly awaiting togetherness with the man of her love it is more than being doomed. Thus this relation is not devoid of the grey shade.

C. Draupadi

Kajai Oza Vaidya is a well-known Gujarati novelist of intent emotions. She has presented her interpretations of both the protagonists of Mahabharata in form of novels, the male protagonist Krishna, as the story of the Deity who lived the life of a human being and also the female protagonist Draupadi, as the story of a woman in quest of her identity. Her Draupadi, along with possessing an illuminating and finely faceted, rare, gemlike personality, is inherently a woman with tender and warm emotions. She is highly intelligent nurturing in her the burning fiery passion for revenge and at the same time a gentle lady allowing her heart to dominate her mind. The life of Draupadi, as depicted in the Mahabharata has been challenging and stranger than fiction. Born unasked for from the sacrificial fire, in which her father invokes a son to help him defeat his archenemy Drona, she is named Krishnaa, or the 'dark-skinned one'. The very first complaint that she has is that because she has been an unwanted gift, her parents have not been enthusiastic even in naming her. Her twin brother is given a fine name-Dristadyumna whereas she is named as Draupadi (Drupad's daughter) or Panchali (daughter of the king of Panchal).

Vaidya establishes the fact that it is the rule of this world that in order to keep her distinct and inborn traits intact, any intellectual, beautiful and talented female has to struggle with her own near and dear ones as well as the strangers. In any age, society has never allowed freedom to any lady to interrogate and inquire; and even if she dares to do then her strife and the resultant suffering has been of the worst type. Draupadi's sensitivity and sensibility

are the outcome of her suffering. A woman is an incarnation of endurance. She is, by nature, faithful and tolerant as these two qualities of hers give her security and satisfaction. When she is tortured and anguished beyond herself, she grows rebellious. The defiance of a chaste woman forces change in the society.

Vaidya's Draupadi is confronting her own 'Question Bank– Prashnopanishada'. Questions coercing judicious replies involuntarily arise in her mind adding to her troubles. Her being interrogative becomes a matter of constant annoyance for the persons around her but she just cannot resist. Being born a fully developed woman, she has very little notion of 'childhood' and 'innocence', and her naive concepts are soon shattered when she is thrown headlong into the brewing political brawl between the Drupads and the Kurus. Vaidya writes, "The ideal time for a person is his childhood. Passions and love rule then. Simplicity, laughter and tears are the qualities of childhood. Forgiveness, friendship and compassion are its assets. But I am born young. Why only am I kept devoid of the bliss of girlhood? Those innocent games of dolls and puppets, those swings and flowing laughter – unfortunately I never got to experience anything." (D – 18-19) (Translation)

Draupadi's life, like her birth, was pre-ordained to move in one direction only i.e. the destruction of the Kurus. This is further reiterated numerous times, by Draupadi herself and by those around her. Draupadi therefore, develops into a fatalist individual, and often she has a question, "Why is it that Fate always mock at me while I enjoy the fleeting moments of happiness and even at times I tend to forget about the destiny...". To this Dwaipayan Ved Vyas replies, "O loving daughter you are born ahead of time. The forthcoming centuries will talk about you and remember you for long. You will get the best Destiny can ever offer but you won't be able to enjoy it. You will be tried every moment. I am sure you will come out successfully from all the testing times but at the same time you will never be able to forget the scars, they will permanently torment you". (D – 45) (Translation)

While being dragged in the court by Dushasana, the Draupadi, who, in the name of Dharma continues to serve her five husbands with utmost devotion and that too without asking any question, displays her grit and asks whether her husbands lost themselves first of her and if they lost themselves first then what right do they have to put their wife to stake? It is her firmness of mind and spirit, her unyielding courage in the face of hardship and danger that provide her mettle to pose a question before the elders of the clan. She further has a query that when her mother-in-law, a woman herself, orders polyandry for her then how could they tolerate the address of 'a prostitute' by Karna in the assembly? Why anyone didn't come to her rescue?

Conclusion

Draupadi's story is known to almost everyone born in India or who has read the great epic – the Mahabharata. What is not familiar is how she felt about the various choices that were made for her; by her father, her brother, her mother-in-law, her husbands, even by Lord Krishna, who she was devoted to. Draupadi remains a symbol of Indian woman. A character culturalized to represent chastity, a role-model created by male chauvinism to showcase how they want their women to be; pure, law-abiding, beholder of their honor, personification of beauty and sacrifice. Draupadi has been a multifaceted personality: she could be fiery and angry when the situation called for it, but she still had a compassionate nature. She encouraged people to face life with the same inner strength that she did. After the war, Draupadi looks after Gandhari with respect and affection, even though Gandhari's sons had wronged her in all possible ways. She possesses all the potentials of the mythical character that very much like the boon (?) going with character repeatedly regains virginity and enables creative writers to work upon various aspects.

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Arun Kolatkar's *Yeshwant Rao*: A Stylistic View of the Mythical Text

Uddhav A. Ashturkar

This paper is a stylistic reading of a mythical text from Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri*. It tries to show how the linguistic approach to the analysis of a text helps us in understanding a piece of literature. The theory of linguistic criticism holds that a text has got its own universe and the meaning lies in the same universe. Moreover, the linguistic theory claims to be comprehensive because it offers a complete account of the structure of language at all levels e.g. phonology, lexis, graphology, syntax, semantics etc. Moreover, the terminology of linguistics is systematic since language itself is a system of systems. The assumption here is that whatever a literary artist does, he/she does in language. Consequently, a linguistic analysis of a text can reveal what a writer 'does' through his language. Furthermore, a linguistic approach to the text tries to achieve considerable objectivity of analysis in comparison with the other methods where impressionistic judgements are passed about the text.

The poem *Yeshwant Rao*, which has been taken here as a text, is one of the notable representative mythical poems of Arun Kolatkar. The linguistic analysis of the same reveals that no criticism goes beyond its linguistics. The paper also tries to avoid over-reading of the text.

Yeshwant Rao

Are you looking for a god?
I know a good one.
His name is Yeshwant Rao
and he's one of the best.
Look him up
when you are in Jejuri next.

Of course he's only a second class god
and his place is just outside the main temple.
Outside even of the outer wall.
As if he belonged
among the tradesmen and the lepers.

I've known gods
 prettier faced
 or straighter laced.
 Gods who soak you for your gold.
 Gods who soak you for your soul.
 Gods who make you walk
 on a bed of burning coal.
 Gods who put a child inside your wife.
 Or a knife inside your enemy.
 Gods who tell you how to live your life,
 double your money
 or triple your land holdings.
 Gods who can barely suppress a smile
 as you crawl a mile for them.
 Gods who will see you drown
 if you won't buy them a new crown.
 And although I'm sure they're all to be praised,
 they're wither too symmetrical
 or too theatrical for my taste.

Yeshwat Rao,
 mass of basalt,
 bright as any post box,
 the shape of protoplasm
 or a king size lava pie
 thrown against the wall,
 without an arm, a leg
 or even a single head.

Yeshwant Rao.
 He's the god you've got to meet.
 If you're short of a limb,
 Yeshwant Rao will lend you a hand
 and get you back on your feet.
 Yeshwant Rao
 does nothing spectacular.
 He doesn't promise you the earth
 or book your seat on the next rocket to the heaven.
 But if any bones are broken,
 you know he'll mend them.

He'll make you whole in your body
 and hope your spirit will look after itself.
 He is merely a kind of bone setter.
 The only thing is,
 as he himself has no heads, hands and feet,
 he happens to understand you a little better.

General Interpretation:

This poem is one of the sections of 'Jejuri' and it expresses with cutting irony the protagonist's skepticism. Yeshwant Rao is a god of secondary importance which gets even more space than the chief god Malhari Martand. The narrator's tone is however aloof and creates an ambivalent attitude. The poem is perhaps the ironical piece in the anthology and in this poem the narrator assumes the tone of the tourist guide and involving the readers in his reaction, urges them to pay attention to Yeshwant Rao. The narrator sees this god outside the outer wall of the main temple.

The first stanza takes the reader into confidence and suggests that one should not forget to visit Yeshwant Rao at least on his next visit to Jejuri.

In the second stanza, Yeshwant Rao has been considered a second class god and that is why his place is just outside the main temple.

The third stanza tells about the various types of gods who perform many miracles in the life of the devotees.

The fourth stanza describes the outer appearance of Yeshwant Rao who is nothing but a mass of basalt which is the most common and basic form of rock in Maharashtra.

The fifth stanza tells about the miracles which are performed by Yeshwant Rao. One is required to meet such god because if one is short of a limb he will get a hand or feet from this god.

The last stanza tells that he does not do anything spectacular. Yeshwant Rao is a god of modest powers, he is a god of mundane matters rather than a god who will take care of your spiritual matters. As he himself suffers loss of limbs he can understand the similar loss in the devotee. Yeshwant Rao thus seems to be more humane and compassionate god than other gods on the hill.

Lexis:**Repetition:**

The poem is full of repetition of words. The chart makes it clear:

Words**Lines**

Yeshwant Rao (five times)	3, 31, 39, 42, 44
god/s (eleven times)	1, 7, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26, 40
outside (twice)	8, 9
wall (twice)	9, 36
hand/s (twice)	42, 54
head/s (twice)	38, 54
feet (twice)	43, 54
you (seventeen times)	1, 6, 15, 16, 17, 21, 25, 26, 27, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49, 50, 55
your (ten times)	15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 43, 50, 51
he (ten times)	4, 7, 10, 40, 46, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55
his (twice)	3, 8
they (twice)	28, 29
I (thrice)	2, 12, 28
who (seven times)	15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26
inside (twice)	19, 20
know (twice)	2, 49
only (twice)	7, 53
bone/s (twice)	18, 52

Lexical groupings:

One path of semantic connection runs through the words Yeshwant Rao, god, Jejuri, temple, soul, crown, spirit, heaven. The second group consists of the words related to the area of modern science – basalt, post box, protoplasm, lava, symmetrical, rocket. The third group is related to the physical self of human beings – arm, leg, head, limb, hand, feet, bones, body. The fourth group suggests the commercial world – tradesmen, gold, money, land holdings, new crown, lend.

Semantico-syntactic deviations:

Are you looking for a god?

I know a good one.

His name is

in Jejuri next.

The poem begins with a 'yes/no-type' question as if the question is asked by a priest or a guide at the temple-town. But even before the beginning of the poem, something has been happening. Somebody is looking for a god and the question is an inquiry. The speaker wants to get confirmed whether that 'somebody' is interested in god. If it is so, he wants to show him the one he knows well. The god is not only god but one of the best. The speaker takes the reader into confidence and tells that he should not forget to visit Yeshwant Rao at least on his next visit to the temple-town. The adjectives in these lines attract our attention. There are two adjectives 'good' and 'best'. One is positive and the other is superlative. He immediately exaggerates the god as if the god is his closed friend. The conversational tone adds meaning to the lines. He is speaking as if of a friend rather than a god. Actually, a god is only god. There are no qualities or classes of gods. There is no 'good' god or the 'best' god and 'first class' god or a 'second class' god. But at Jejuri everybody looks for a 'first class' god. This type of god fulfils all the desires (good and evil, both. See: stanza 3) of the devotees. So the devotees at Jejuri always search for such gods. Hence, the speaker recommends to visit Yeshwant Rao.

*Of course he's only a second class god
and his place
..... tradesmen and the lepers.*

The first line of this stanza is foregrounded. The word 'second class' has a collocative clash with 'god'. There can be a second class hotel, a railway coach or a cinema ticket etc. but not a god. The line suggests an admission of the god's inferior status. He is placed outside the main temple – outside even the outer wall as if he is an untouchable god. The cutting irony in the line is notable. The tradesmen and the lepers are measured by the same parameter. Gods are commodities for sale, and the poet, a salesman. A customer can choose the one he likes. But the salesman has a preference for Yeshwant Rao. Cutting sarcasm on Indian multiplicity of gods.

*I've known gods
prettier faced
or straighter laced.
Gods who
..... for my taste.*

In this stanza, the speaker speaks about those gods he is well-conversant with. He changes his tone as he gives us the list of various kinds of gods. The commentary is full of sarcasm and goes near contemptuous attitude. There are gods whose faces are not only pretty but prettier ones. Others are well-dressed gods. The expression 'straighter

laced' suggests that the idols are neatly dressed by the artists who make them. But Yeshwant Rao does not come under this type of gods. There are gods who extract gold from the devotees. Sometimes they extract even the soul. Here, the words 'gold' and 'soul' stand for the two worlds – material and the spiritual. The gods make the devotees prosperous neither materially nor spiritually. They are like exploiters. Actually, this comment is not on gods but on the priests and the rest of the paraphernalia who cheat pilgrims. These elements are responsible for the commercialization of religion.

There are gods who compel the sde your wife
Or a knife inside your enemy

suggests that the gods can be benign or malign.

Their sole interest seems to receive various kinds of offerings from the devotees. In these lines a benevolent is followed by an act that should shock moral sensibility of any decent human being. The moral indifference of the gods has been put in such a way as to create nausea about such gods in the mind of the readers.

Syntactically, these lines are a Zeugma in which a single word ('put') stands in the same grammatical relation to two or more other words, but with an obvious shift in its significance. There are also philosopher gods who preach something about how to live life. These gods are entirely money-minded since they double the money and triple the land holdings. Even the gods also amuse themselves by the way the devotees undertake a penance which includes physical torturer – crawl a mile. Line 24 is ambiguous. Another meaning of the line is that the speaker expresses his dislike for the gods who take delight in the suffering of the devotees. The same sense-unit has been extended in lines 26 and 27. The gods become angry if they are not offered a new golden or silver crown and further, they let the devotees drown into the deep waters. This description of gods reinforces the speaker's point of view that these gods at Jejuri are just haughty egoists who do not really love the devotees. In spite of this all of them are to be praised. They are either carefully made by expert artists or they are worshipped in their natural form in which case they are misshapen, often grotesque. Line 30 suggests that there is an air of unreality and exaggeration about their physical appearance.

The feature of this stanza is that it is full of parallel constructions like

1. God who soak you for your gold.
2. Gods who soak you for your soul.
3. Gods who make you walk on a bed of burning coal.

4. Gods who put a child inside you wife.
5. (Gods who put) a knife inside your enemy.
6. Gods who tell you how to live your life.
7. (Gods who) double your money.
8. (Gods who) triple land holdings.
9. Gods who can barely suppress a smile.
10. Gods who will see you drown.
11. they are all to be praised.
12. they are either too symmetrical.
13. (they are) too theatrical for my taste.

The overall rhythmic movement of the poem and particularly this stanza is an imitation of the traditional songs sung at Jejuri. The imitation has been modified by the speaker's own tone and idiom. If we remove the relative pronoun 'who' from all the above sentences, almost all of them would be active sentences in which the noun 'Gods' will be the actor there. But we have to see whether the speaker really wants to speak about the Gods or he wants to say about something else. All the abovementioned sentences are, in a way, foregrounded because literally, the 'Gods' do not soak our gold or soul. This stanza is irony on the commercialized religion. Not the gods but the priests and other concerned people exploit the devotees in every respect. The comments are passed on the men who make use of religion for their own benefit.

*Yeshwant Rao,
Mass of basalt,
Bright.....
.....a single head.*

Here, the speaker moves to the god Yeshwant Rao who is in front of him. Apart from this one, all the stanzas that follow, begin with the name of god 'Yeshwant Rao'. The thread imitating the traditional songs at Jejuri has been extended in these stanzas too. Yeshwant Rao is nothing but a mass of basalt. Basalt is the most common and basic form of rock in Maharashtra. In a way, Yeshwant Rao is a *swayambhu* (not made by any other hand) god and being a mass of basalt, he is a native god in the true sense of the word. The speaker finds similarity between the god and a post box because both are painted red. The image has emerged from his urbanized atmosphere where red post boxes are a common sight. Protoplasm is also called plasma which is a colourless substance like jelly from which old plants and animals have evolved. This word has been used here to suggest shapelessness of the god. The speaker is reminded of a lava pie. Lava is the hot liquid material flowing from a volcano. It formed a hard rock when it had cooled down. A large part of the deccan trap is made of such solidified lava. This god is a part of this rock formation.

This shapeless god who does not have even a single head or other anthropomorphic features is thrown against the wall. The idol is neglected because it is a mere rock. The expression in line 38 mocks at the gods and draws our attention to the multi-headed gods in India. This god is so poor that he does not have even a single head.

There is only one verb in this stanza. An idol of god is placed in temples by performing rituals and much respect is paid to the idol. But Yeshwant Rao did not enjoy this respect. He is simply 'thrown' against the wall and suffers from a deplorable condition. The first conjunction 'or' suggests the god's grotesqueness. The speaker cannot fix his opinion whether the god looks like a post box, or protoplasm, or a king size lava pie.

*Yeshwant Rao.
He's the god.....
.....on your feet.*

The speaker says whatever the god be, we have to meet him. Though a second class god, he is powerful enough to grant your wishes. The expression 'got to meet' indicates a compulsion of some sort. There is a witty use of the colloquial idioms like 'lends a hand', 'get you back on your feet' etc. being a really 'useful god', Yeshwant Rao carries a considerable value. The verb 'lend' suggests the commercialization of the place. Even in religion, 'give and take' policy works.

*Yeshwant Rao
Does.....
..... You a little better.*

Yeshwant Rao does nothing spectacular because no legend depicting miraculous prowess has been associated with this god as there are many legends with Khandoba, the chief god at Jejuri. Even Yeshwant Rao has a history behind him. In medieval times a man, whole in limb (normally from Matang community) was sacrificed (rather he offered himself to be buried alive) before the construction work of a fort, bridges or dams etc. It was believed that the success of such constructions was fully depended on such sacrifice. Yeshwant Rao is such a sacrificed man who was deified posthumously. Now he has been called 'Yeshwant Rao' – the giver of success. As he was flawless in physique he received miraculous powers of bone setting and making the broken limbs whole. The idea of booking a seat on the next rocket to heaven is a novel one. The speaker makes fun of the devotees' belief by converting the traditional promise of heaven into a jet age package tour. The god does not take care of metaphysical matters but he is totally concerned with all the physical or mundane matters. He is just like a

doctor of the body and not of the spirit. In line 53, the expression suggests that the speaker takes a more favourable view of the god than any other god on the hill of Jejuri.

This god is capable of understanding the devotees a little better because he himself suffers loss of limbs. The god, thus, is coloured by humane qualities.

Grammar:

There are six stanzas in the poem. All of them have different structure. There are fifty five lines which are uniquely divided into each stanza. Let us see the following chart:

<u>Stanzas</u>	<u>Lines</u>
1	6
2	5
3	19
4	8
5	5
6	12

The poem consists of twentyseven sentences. One of them is an interrogative. All other sentences end with full-stops and end with the end of the lines. No sentence ends half way through the lines. Apart from one question mark and twentysix full-stops, there are eleven commas and thirteen apostrophes. Most of the apostrophes are used for contractions in the 'pronoun+auxiliary' constructions like he's, I've etc.

The amount of apostrophes gives the poem a direct narrative tone. Moreover, the overall structure of the poem is that of a song. This feature establishes its relation with the atmosphere at Jejuri.

The question in the first line is like a double-edged sword. On one hand, it is an inquiry made by a devotee, and on the other hand, it is a question asked by a sceptic who does not believe in the concept of god. Further, this attitude of the speaker has been continued with an ironical tone throughout the poem. Even though he tells that he knows 'one good god' and goes on describing him, his inner self is against the commercialized religion.

The poet has dispensed with the convention of beginning each new line with a capital letter. This can be considered an informal air.

All the lines are of unequal length. The minimum number of words in the lines is two and the maximum is ten. It is observed that the lines containing 5, 6 and 7 words occur dominantly. The indefinite article dominantly occurs in the poem.

There are many lines beginning with the coordinating conjunctions 'or' and 'and'. This adds to the speed of the poem and its musical effect.

Pronouns:

There is a remarkable amount of pronouns in the poem (see: the repetition chart). Particularly, the second person pronoun 'you', its possessive form 'your', the third person singular pronoun 'he' and the relative pronoun 'who' occur dominantly in the poem. There is an indefinite use of pronouns 'you' which, sometimes, is used with indefinite generic reference to people. 'You' is the informal equivalent of 'one' e.g.

- a) One never knows what may happen.
- b) You never know what may happen.

In the indefinite use of 'you' the speaker also is included as the sharer of the experience. The same is the case with the speaker in the poem, too. For instance, when he says that 'Yeshwant Rao does not 'promise you the earth', it means that Yeshwant Rao has not promised the earth to the speaker, too.

The Degree:

Notably, the adjectives with their degrees are found in the poem as follows:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
good (line 2)	better (line 55) outer (line 9) prettier (line 13) straighter (line 14)	best (line 4)

Tense:

The poet has made many experiments with the tense. In all, the poem is in the present tense, but there are other forms of the tenses as follows:

- a) Are you looking for a god? (present continuous)
- b) I've known gods (present perfect)
- c) Gods who will see you (simple future)

- d) Yeshwant Rao will lend you (simple future)
- e) he'll mend them (simple future)
- f) He'll make you (simple future)
- g) Spirit will look after (simple future)

Most of the simple future constructions have a conditional clause beginning with 'if'. So the selection restriction rule has compelled the simple future to exist.

The fourth stanza does not indicate any tense, but it can be included under the head of simple present. The ellipsis of the tense (is) has been created with the help of a comma after the name 'Yeshwant Rao'. The past participle 'thrown' functions more like an adjective than a verb.

The simple present is considered 'timeless' present. This form of the tense contributes to the unity of the poem.

Phonetics:

The nasals /m/, /n/ and /K/ dominantly occur in the poem. Almost all the lines have at least one of the nasals. Only the following lines do not have any of the nasals:

Line Nos. 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21.

Some sounds are kept in proximity with each other as follows:

Voiced bilabial plosive /b/

bed of burning	line 18
basalt bright as any post box	lines 32-33
bones are broken	line 48

Voiceless velar plosive /k/

make you walk	line 17
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Lateral sound /l/

live your life	line 21
triple your land holding	line 23
barely suppress a smile	line 24
crawl a mile	line 25
symmetrical or too theatrical	lines 29-30
will lend you	line 42

The diphthong /au/

Outside even the outer	line 9
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The last two lines have alliteration of the glottal fricative /h/

he himself had no heads, hands and feet,
he happens.....

As the poem has been written in free verse, there is no specially arranged rhyme scheme. However, some rhyming has been arranged to give the poem a musical effect. Let us see the rhyming words as follows:

<u>Words</u>	<u>Lines</u>
best – next	4, 6
faced – laced	13, 14
soul – coal	16, 18
wife – life	19, 21
enemy – money	20, 22
drown – crown	26, 27
meet – feet	40, 43

There is no perfect rhyming in the pairs like ‘best – next’ or ‘enemy – money’. Only their last sounds rhyme with each other. Apart from these, there are some internal rhymes which fall somewhere around the definition of the term. They are as follows:

<u>Words</u>	<u>Lines</u>
wife – knife	19, 20
smile – mile	24, 25
symmetrical – theatrical	29, 30

The following assonances are found in the poem:

<u>Vowel</u>	<u>Lines</u>	<u>Words</u>
/Yu/	15, 16	soak, gold, soak, soul
/ai/	19, 20, 21	child, inside, wife, knife, inside, life
/Ō/	54, 55	has, hand, and, happens, understand

Lines 15 and 16 are a notable pair for its syllables and musicality. A good reader of poetry will definitely stress the content words like Gods, soak, gold etc. Even the number of letters in both the lines is the same.

All the elements of language, thus, contribute to the meaning of the poem.

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The Reworking of the Hero Myth in the Lost Steps

Priya Joseph

Humankind has moved away from the great myths that informed the public, personal and social spheres of life. Globalization has ironically further driven individuals into solitudes, more impenetrable and demanding of means for negotiation. Societies have moved away from a communal to a more individualistic manner of living. In the process, we have lost the meanings of rituals and mythic practices which bound communities together. Myths which offered pointers for the conscious into the unconscious, for society and hence for the individual, have been found empty by the modern man. Hence when the character-narrator of *The Lost Steps* bemoans, “I am Empty. Empty! Empty!”[1], the reader identifies the *doppelganger* he represents not only for Alejo Carpentier, but also for the modern man.

The Lost Steps (*Los Pasos Perdidos*, 1953) is mostly set in the jungles of Latin America by the banks of the river Orinoco. The author refuses to spatialise the initial chapters, before the character sets out on his journey, as they “do not call for any specific location”; probably because the character at least metaphorically occupies a space dwelt in by much of humanity, irrespective of geography, race or religion. *The Lost Steps* traces the journey of the unnamed character narrator in search of musical instruments, used by the aboriginal tribes still in existence in the primordial jungles of South America. The character, battling demons of a meaningless marriage, and doubled over beneath the Sisyphean boulder of routine and buried dreams, undertakes the trip reluctantly. The journey takes on mythical proportions and traces the pattern of the hero quest told many times over across cultures and histories.

The paper attempts to explore the manner in which the quest is traced by Carpentier in the novel, utilizing the diving board of the heterogeneity of Latin American culture and mythology, thus bringing together strands of belief systems which vitalized worlds which were historically sundered beyond unification, in the pre-Columbian era. The novel brings together Christian, European, African and Native American stories which fuse together into the South American. It offers a unique possibility and manner of storytelling impelled by a reality which is non-linear and strange to the uninitiated. The cultural admixture and colonial violence have rewritten and shaped a reality which offers up different stories to be told. The truth that can be gleaned bears testimony to what Joseph Campbell stated as the need of the times, the need for myths of the planet, not myths of a nation or a society or a religion, but myths which can take one out of the confines prescribed by one’s religion or societal mores.

All the elements of what Joseph Campbell terms the monomyth can be traced in *The Lost Steps*. The “call to adventure”[2] comes to the character by way of the curator of the Museum of Organography, into whom the character bumps while he aimlessly wanders the streets, metaphorically shackled to time. The curator assigns him with the task of journeying into the jungles of South America in search of instruments used by certain tribes, which imitate the sound of birds. The discovery of the instruments would prove the character’s “theory of *mimetism-magic-rhythm*” [3], as the origin of music. The curator comes across as a benign God-figure, anticipating his needs and bestowing timely redemption signifying the summons of destiny, to uproot the hero from his zone of comfort to unimaginable trials and impossible triumphs. Tied down to the daily necessities of the world that he lived in, the character refuses to answer the call just as King Minos refused to slaughter the bull, or the infantile ego refuses to break free of parental security. The tentacles of time offer a sense of false permanence to the temporal.

The hero myths mostly feature a man. In the structure of the monomyth, however, women occupy critical spots in advancing or negating the hero’s quest for truth. The hero’s heroism is realized and sustained by the woman figure in the form of a mother or lover. She may also figure as a temptress whose seductive powers the hero endures and overcomes. Woman occupies the role of the teacher and guide probably because as bearer of life, life has bestowed on her an intuitive understanding of it. Hence it is Ariadne’s thread that leads Theseus out of the labyrinth, and it is Virgin Mary who bears Christ and whose agony equals that of Christ on the cross.

Joseph Campbell in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* positions woman in mythology thus:

“Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters. And if he can match her import, the two, the knower and the known, will be released from every limitation.”[4]

Hence it is to Rosario that he clings in his hour of trial and it is she who points out to him that Mouche does not fit into the picture of his life that was unfolding as he advanced on his journey. The temptress in the figure of Mouche who is blind to the significations implied in the quest, ironically eggs the character on to the journey which has been foretold by a set of stars whose directions she is illiterate to. It was her idea that the instruments could be tailor made at the neighbourhood shop which artlessly mimicked art in any shape.

The character narrator, as pointed out by Timothy Brennan in the *Introduction* to the novel, is “a version of Carpentier himself—at least some doppelgänger that Carpentier in his own mind, feared he might become”[5]. On reaching the South American continent he passes the first threshold. The function Campbell assigns in the hero quest to the threshold is akin to that assigned by Homi Bhabha to the occupation of threshold spaces. Both hold the potential of creation and the recognition of new identities.

The character’s Latin American identity which he had unconsciously tried to subdue and which had chased Carpentier futilely to Europe come vigorously alive, much like “the roots (that) took advantage of songs and siestas to arch backs, putting an end in twenty days to Le Corbusier’s best functional designs”[6]. The journey of crossing the threshold is a form of self-annihilation, which leads him inward into the discovery of lost or unfound sights and smells. In the Book of Jonah, in the Bible, Jonah undertakes a journey of similar proportions into the belly of the whale, where he spent three days and three nights whence he was transformed enough to pray and to rejoice[7]. Carpentier, much like the other Latin American intellectuals of the time was enamoured by Surrealism and the promise held out by Europe, as a world to get back to only to be disillusioned by both. The character in ‘fleeing’ his roots attempts also to subconsciously live his father’s dream of recovering Europe. The character attains atonement with the father, one of the boons granted the hero, when he rediscovers home in the “hemisphere without history” [8].

The hero is well on his journey along perilous paths for meeting with moments of truth. His journey into the dream landscape of the Latin American jungle is a metaphorical one indicating his journey into his own depths of being. Carpentier creates the magical realist jungle, “the dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms” [9]. The primordial jungle of trials, when set off against the world left behind, sets up contrasting views of two worlds, a modern European one shackled to time and a folk one timeless in thrilling with magic and enchantment. What Jung calls the visionary mode of artistic creation maybe read as a trope for the jungle which figures as the road of trials for the character. In his essay ‘Psychology and Literature’, Jung says,

“It is a primordial experience which passes man’s understanding, and to which his is therefore in danger of succumbing. The value and the force of experience are given by its enormity. It arises from timeless depths; it is foreign and cold, many-sided, demonic and grotesque” [10].

Hence the journey into the mythical forest functions to rip open one’s idea of the world as it is and offers a glimpse into the unfathomed. Northrop Frye’s use of the antithesis of light and darkness corresponds to Jungian thought. Frye in his essay ‘The Archetypes of Literature’ recognizes the central myth of literature as the quest myth and posits the light world as

subjecting man to frustration and weakness and the darkness of nature as the sphere in which the 'libido' or the hero self awakes [11].

The character meets the aids on his way to revelation in the form of the company led by Adelentado who alone knew the paths which opened into a microcosm of the world, "sort of like Noah's ark, where all the animals of the earth could fit, but with only one small door"[12]. Having left the Land of Man behind, the character travels through the Land of the Horse, by the aid of which animal, man conquered and controlled great stretches of the world. In the pathless world, in the city bordering the jungle, the Land of the Dog is reached, wherein man and dog must have originally complemented each other in powers, forming a pact of survival. He advances into the Land of the Birds. The bird in most mythologies symbolizes freedom of the spirit from the bondage to the earth and accompanying power. The Indians placed their culture under the sign of the bird as signified in the tiaras of their emperors. There is no escaping the relevance of the aeroplane as the modern bird that weans the character back into the modern world. The transcendental function represented by the animals and birds in relation to man comes alive while the hero traverses these lands.

The character's union with Rosario, the woman, the goddess, is the ultimate boon granted the hero. Campbell states, "The meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love (charity: *amor fati*), which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity"[13]. It negates the fragmentation felt by the modern man and unleashes love and charity. The result is the unleashing of his creativity. Parallel myths of the union of man and woman find resonance in the cosmogonic myths of the world.

It is but necessary to complete the cycle of the monomyth that the hero re-emerges from the land of trials into the world, with secrets unknown to the men left behind, like the Buddha or Christ. The character narrator becomes a parable for the modern man enslaved to time and blinded by concerns which take him away from discovering the self. Timothy Brennan in the *Introduction* identifies the novel as Carpentier's way of purging his own past, for "its eloquence comes from the terrified recognition of what he might have been"[14], the composition of which saved him the fate. Having penetrated the puzzle of life, he cannot forever stay embedded in a primordial state of being," because the only human race to which it is forbidden to sever the bonds of time is the race of those who create art"[15]. Hence he must not only move out of yesterday but must also have memories of the future.

Claude Levi Strauss, in *Myth and Meaning* states that "myths get thought in man unbeknownst to him" [16], which has resonance in Jungian archetypes and Platonic ideas.

It is probably that part of man which goes some distance toward explaining the elemental commonality of the hero myth across cultures and civilizations, and archetypes that make up the myths of the world. The story of the great flood and Noah's ark, appears in the novel, the pigeon and the olive branch suitably transformed into a rat and an ear of corn thus, fitting snugly into a different clime. The orality and essential similarity of mythical narrative and the manners of preservation is evidenced in the passage in which Fray Pedro is seen taking down the fragments of a partly forgotten epic poem from the Headman of the Indians who is in a state of intoxicated lucidity. One witnesses the formulation of postcolonial hybridity and multiplicity of identities subsumed in the episode. The choice of quotations used from the Book of Deuteronomy and the Book of Psalms from The Bible, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and *Popol Vuh*, offer structure to the novel, and their repeated use lends orality and substantiates the essential mythological archetypes running through the novel. That literature is informed by "pre-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folk tale" as Northrop Frye's essay 'The Archetypes of Criticism' shows, is illustrated[17].

The reference to the myth of the robot in *Popol Vuh*, *The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiche Maya*, is probably the original cosmogony to anticipate the menace of Frankenstein. It drives home the intensity of wisdom contained in the myths of yore and its applicability in the personal, public and societal life of modern man and of the implications his actions could have on his surroundings. Borges' aphorism on Cervantes and *Don Quixote* could well be applied to Carpentier and *The Lost Steps*. "For in the beginning of literature there is myth, as there is also in the end of it"[18].

In the age of self determinism that we live in, it is not the society that is about to offer guidance; it becomes imperative for every individual to shake off the limitations imposed on him from without, and to seek out much like the character narrator, the road toward destiny which will enlarge to include much more than merely the individual.

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Recovering Black Women's Subjectivity Through Reconstructed Myths in Toni Morrison's Fiction

Sindhu Sara Thomas

Joseph Campbell in his book *The Power of Myth* (1988) defined myth as the search “[f]or the experience of being alive”, a “centering in terms of deep principles” (xvi). According to him myths are also stories, messages, and clues that unlock the mysteries of life. It has since become a serious preoccupation with writers, artistes and critical thinkers of the modern era. Myths permeate every aspect of traditional life and culture. They shape peoples lives, their ways of thinking and continue to shape the way people understand themselves and the world. They are no longer meant to be relegated to ancient times but resonate in the here and the now.

Myth has always been an area of interest in African American literature. Despite critics questioning the appropriateness of traditional myths in reflecting modern black experience, African American writers have incorporated mythic structures into their works. They combine myth with a strong awareness of their oppressed situation. Toni Morrison, in her fictional works, searches for myths adequate for the African American experience, especially black women's experience, shifting the focus from myth as a traditional story transmitted from generation to generation to myth, as a tool to understand the past necessary for the survival of African Americans in the modern world. In an interview with Bessie W. Jones, she said, “Myth is the first information there is, and it says realms more than what is usually there” (144).

Song of Solomon, Morrison's third novel, is her first work to have a black man as protagonist and so consequently centers around all things male. However, while the story revolves round the novel's hero, Milkman's quest for freedom and wealth, it also highlights the absence of such meaningful events in the lives of black women. The multiple mythic references, folkloric and legendary stories combined with its complex narrative style highlighting the awareness of lack within the black community gives the text its polemics. What Morrison attempts to achieve in her novel is to undermine the Western and African American myths that disempower and devalue black womanhood. In the novel Morrison juxtaposes the African American folklore of a flying African with the Western myth of Icarus to show how flight is perceived in the two cultures. In the classical myth, Icarus, the Cretan hero of Greek mythology overestimates his own abilities and attempts to “break free of the earth”. He disobeys his father's instructions, his wings melt under the strong rays of the sun and he falls

into the sea. The Icarian mythic pattern is one of personal quest, to test the individual's potential. It is a flight from authority and repression and though it ends in death it is a flight towards freedom. Thus, flight in the Western tradition stands for freedom. However, flying has been historically denied and socially forbidden to African Americans. The hegemonic culture restricted the freedom of the subjugated stating that their desire to fly was "audacious and presumptuous" (Mori 140). In the absence of the freedom to fly in real life, African Americans created the myth of a flying hero which is one of the most prominent ancestral myths in African culture. In the words of Morrison herself: "...and flying Africans, not stories, just people saying you know, flying before they came here...I did check on certain things about people who fly by reading those slave narratives. It was fascinating because everybody else had heard of that or saw, or knew somebody who saw it. ...So it was already there although it was after the fact" (Jones 144).

In the novel, the myth of the flying black man is eventually traced back to Milkman Dead's great grandfather Solomon. According to this myth, Solomon flies away from slavery with his infant son Jake, leaving behind his wife Ryna and their twenty odd children. In the story, it is further elaborated that Solomon flew too close to a tree and the baby slipped out from his arms, and thus Jake too was left behind. This incident marked the long rupture of his family's history. In tracing Milkman's ancestral roots to Solomon, Morrison also reveals to her readers that while the western myth of flight was one of flying towards freedom, the African American myth showed black men flying away from their responsibilities. While Solomon flew away from slavery, Milkman flew away from his responsibilities. Both men have indulged in 'flight' at the cost of their families; Solomon leaves behind his wife Ryna and their twenty one children, similarly Milkman too leaves his parents, sisters and his scorned lover Hagar in pursuit of his freedom and identity. Morrison reminds us of the women who have been left behind – Ryna and Hagar – and their inability to participate in such a journey. When Solomon left Ryna, she lost her mind and kept crying for the rest of her life. Ryna's absence from the Solomon story implies the exclusion of women from the myth: that a man can fly away to seek freedom and enlightenment whereas a woman has to remain in the restricted area of domestic life. Further, while the male ancestors' names are remembered and used in songs, the female ancestors have been forgotten. Ryna's story was not passed down along with the song of Solomon; instead, her name was given to a pining ghost-ridden ravine called Ryna's Gulch. Likewise, Hagar dies of despair, deserted by Milkman who is on a journey of self-discovery. Thus, the traditional male hero remains the focus in the mythical story and women cannot fully participate in the process of myth making which becomes the sole concern of black men.

In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison subverts the classical notion of the flight myth in bestowing Pilate, Milkman's aunt with the ability to fly even "[w]ithout ever leaving the ground" (SS 338), thus proclaiming that Pilate had already achieved her freedom and that there was no need for a physical manifestation of the same in the form of flight. And, as one who had achieved her personal freedom, Pilate was aware of her responsibility to pilot her own life. Thus, having taken control of her own life, she was also able to 'pilot' others around her. Further, Morrison provides Pilate geographical mobility something equivalent to what men are bestowed with under normal circumstances.

She begins her wanderings at a very young age not by way of choice but when she and her brother Macon were forcibly evicted from their prosperous farm by a powerful white family in a land grab scheme. After parting ways with her brother over the killing of an old white man and three bags of gold, she continues her journey alone to Virginia. Despite her nomadic life, she engages in formal education and had it not been for the child molesting preacher she would have continued with her studies. She then learns geography and lessons of life on the road through experience. She begins "the wandering life that she kept up for the next twenty-some-odd years, and stopped only after Reba had a baby" (SS 148). So, while Milkman had knowledge about his flying ancestor and he goes out in search of him, Pilate had no such parallel to follow except for Ryna's wailing.

However, what Pilate gathers through her wanderings is the acquisition of values that will eventually suffice not only Milkman but the entire black community. But she is able to do so not before surmounting numerous difficulties. An outsider in her own community right from the mysterious circumstances of her birth wherein she had "come struggling out of the womb without help" (SS 27), she was also shunned as she was born without a navel, a "belly that looked like a back" (SS 148). This in turn forces her to refuse marriage with her lover; she knows she cannot "hide her stomach from a husband forever" (SS 147) and it is the fear of rejection when he would find out that makes her decline his proposal of marriage. "It isolated her. Already without family, she was further isolated from her people, for, except for the relative bliss on the island, every other resource was denied her: partnership in marriage, confessional friendship, and communal religion. Men frowned, women whispered and shoved their children behind them" (SS 148). She is not only rejected by society but by her own family as well. Milkman and his father, Macon Dead are ashamed to consider Pilate their kin. Their rejection of Pilate is primarily because she does not have their social class.

However, Pilate is undeterred by the rejection she constantly faces. Born without a navel, Pilate comes to understand that she is different from others. Though this lack brings her rejection and her consequent isolation, she refuses to allow it to mar her life. She converts the rejection she faces into compassion which she showers on those who are alienated like her, accepting herself and others as she finds them. This ostracism also infuses in her the refusal to conform to convention merely for acceptance from others. And the first step she takes in this direction is to "...[throw] away every assumption she had learned and began at zero. First off, she cut her hair. That was one thing she didn't want to have to think about anymore. Then she tackled the problem of trying to decide how she wanted to live and what was valuable to her" (SS 149). In cutting her hair, Pilate displays her refusal to fit into the traditional and cultural notion of femininity. In fact, there was nothing particularly feminine about Pilate. Everything about her including her appearance was unconventional like her life. Pilate reveals a self which is not determined by physical appearance conforming to white standards of beauty. Here, she is different from the women in her family especially her granddaughter Hagar and her sister-in-law Ruth Foster Dead, both of whom have cultivated habits and attitudes of the dominant culture. The dissolution and erosion of black cultural values and black sensibilities is evident in these women; they have moved away from their black cultural heritage. On the contrary, Pilate develops her own moral strength, emerging as a self-delivered and self-sustaining figure of archetypal proportions. Unfortunately, she is unable to pass this wisdom to the community of women around her that is her immediate family. Morrison describes Ruth and Pilate in the following way:

"They were so different, these two women. One black, the other lemony. One corseted, the other buck naked under her dress. One well read but ill travelled. The other had read only a geography book, but had been from one end of the country to another. One wholly dependent on money for life, the other indifferent to it. But those were the meaningless things. Their similarities were profound. Both were vitally interested in Macon Dead's son, and both had close and supportive posthumous communication with their fathers" (SS 139).

While Ruth flaunts her class, Pilate does not belong to one. She chooses to live a simple, unpretentious life unlike her affluent elder brother Macon Dead and she ends up a bootlegger much to his chagrin again. She forsakes all the middle class trappings as is evident from her house outside the town which does not have even the basic amenities required for a decent existence. The important question for Pilate was "When am I happy and when am I sad and what is the difference? What do I need to know to stay alive? What is true in the world" (SS 149). It is this introspection that gives her

life-sustaining qualities and she comes to realize the importance of nurturing as is suggested in her generous hospitality to others. Pilate represents selfless love untouched by a superior sense of self or with material concerns.

Pilate's decision to start at zero also reveals the significance she attaches in returning to the past and reclaiming her ancestral history. It is this importance that she attaches to her roots which propels her into becoming a pilot, a guide to others, a person in tune with the natural humanity in those around her. And it is this role that Pilate fulfills towards Milkman, in guiding him to finding his ancestral roots. It is Milkman's fascination with the dream of flight that propels him into undertaking the quest to trace his ancestral roots. Though it is gold that is foremost on his mind for the quest, it gradually transforms into a spiritual journey to discover his identity. Initially, as a young boy of four, his discovery that only birds and airplanes could fly made him indifferent not only to other people's lives but also to his own. The spiritual significance of the myth of flight dawns on him only when he undertakes his journey to Shalimar, the birth place of his grandparents. Earlier, in the opening lines of the novel, Morrison narrates the failed "flight" of Robert Smith from the roof of Mercy Hospital the day prior to Milkman's birth. This event for many reflects unproductive and meaningless violence which does not help alleviate the racial and economic oppression that prevents Smith from claiming his African American identity. But for Pilate who was present at the scene, it reminded her of her ancestral past prompting her to break into singing the ballad "*O Sugarman done fly away Sugarman done gone Sugarman cut across the sky Sugarman gone home...*" (SS 6). For Pilate, the song was not simply about an African who flew back home but more importantly, it was about who she was and where she came from. In short, she sang about her roots. Later, Milkman carries out Robert Smith's failed attempt to fly and thereby confronts the exclusion of African Americans from the possibility of flight. He is redeeming not only Smith's failure but suggesting the recovery of African American cultural values which he acquires at Shalimar. In this mythical place, Milkman bonds with the locals who are fond of hunting, an ancient practice of Africa which once again connects him to the past and his roots. It is during one such hunting expedition that Milkman hears his great grandmother's name, Ryna, for the first time. Also, it is during this journey that Milkman comes to understand that a woman's heroic and nurturing survival is as important as a man's heroic flight; that if it was not for the nurturing and love given by women like Pilate there would be no cultural survival and preservation. He realizes that he has ignored the subjectivity of women and simply used them to satisfy his vanity and needs. He finally acknowledges the importance of maternal assistance, thus becoming a part of the nurturing tradition of African Americans and fully able to achieve the freedom of flight.

Pilate is a revolutionary figure and unlike the biblical connotation of her name, as one who condemns and kills Christ, she acts as a “pilot” to people around her. Morrison has deliberately created Pilate differently, so as to distinguish her from other characters by attributing to her the unique characteristic of being a self-made woman. First, she was noticed because of her atypical physical feature as one without a navel. However, later she is noticed more because of her healing powers and her sympathy for others. It is her selfless life that holds her steadfast without yielding to oppression which was a constant feature right from her childhood. Her introspection leads her to be caring and giving towards others; she understands the importance of compassion and nurturing, as is suggested in her impartial hospitality to others. “She gave up, apparently, all interest in table manners or hygiene, but acquired a deep concern for and about human relationships” (SS 149). It is these qualities that turn Pilate into a special person who throws away every cultural and social assumption and convention she has learned.

Further, through Pilate, Morrison seeks to reconstruct myths by giving voice to ordinary people and shedding light on the contribution of black women in maintaining community and establishing identity. In this regard, Pilate becomes a mythologized figure herself. For in the words of Joseph Campbell, “When a person becomes a model to other people’s lives, he has moved into the sphere of being mythologized” (20). Pilate has achieved this status and it is acknowledged by Milkman at the end of the novel when he utters on her death, “There must be another one like you...There’s got to be at least one more woman like you” (336). Through Pilate, Morrison seeks to transform the black community and also wants to make black men like Milkman realize the nurturing power of black women that eventually sustains them and the black community at large. She serves as the catalyst whose inspired visions of the past give them supernatural insight into the present and the future. Pilate is also responsible for initiating Milkman into African-American aesthetics and values and into their integrated unity which in turn is crucial for their survival.

***Tar Baby* and African American Patriarchal Myths**

In *Tar Baby*, Morrison weaves both myths and legends that are predominant in African American culture. The tar baby myth provides the backdrop for the novel and it becomes the central trope of the novel as the main characters Jadine and Son must confront one another’s perception of the ‘tar baby’. The original folktale narrates a white farmer who sets a trap for the rabbit by creating a tar baby. The rabbit escapes the clutches of the tar baby by asking to be thrown into the briar patch, where his survival skills have no match as he was born and bred there. This version of the folktale implies Jadine as the tar baby created by the dominant culture to lure blacks like Son who are steeped in their tradition. But other interpretations are also possible. It is equally possible to read

Son as a tar baby for Jadine as he is keen to trap black women like her into the ancient traditional ways of black femininity. Son, unlike Milkman, is grounded in his roots and therefore is connected to his past. He is a blend of what is natural and mythical. For him, rootedness is more important than mobility. As a repository of black culture and resistance to the white Western culture, Son's notion of black womanhood is "a certain fetishization of women as signs of an authentic cultural identity in the name of tradition" (Goyal 407). He can only associate with those women who are as rooted as he is in his culture, like the "pie ladies" in the church basement or the black women in his hometown Eloë. And it is with this intention that he takes Jadine to Eloë, hoping to get her in touch with her "ancient properties" but it only distances Jadine further from him. Eloë represents the traditional Africa and Jadine finds herself at odds with the community there. In this place women engage in both men's and women's work; men are free from domestic housekeeping and they are able to spend more time in pursuing masculine activities. Son too treats her with a parochial attitude when he is at Eloë becoming and displaying typical male behavior. Thus, his idea of *femininity* is traditional and time bound and he finds Jadine a complete contrast to his notion of womanhood. She is self-reliant and unfettered, one who resists the rigid gender roles that Son attempts to force on her. She aspires to be something other than the traditional black woman. So, Son considering himself a custodian of black culture, takes it on himself to rescue Jadine from cultural unconsciousness just as the night men of the island had saved the island's blacks. The patriarchal nature of the community becomes evident to Jadine when Soldier, one of the black men at Eloë, questions her on the equation shared between Son and Jadine; whether it was Son or Jadine who was in control of their relationship. Her doubts are further confirmed when the women of Eloë alienate her for her liberated and independent attitude. Further, it is at Eloë that Jadine encounters the mythical night women representing traditional black womanhood. Jadine is confronted by their nightmarish vision, one in which "they pull out a breast and showed it to her" (TB 260). Black women are willing nurturers and the night women in revealing their breasts wanted to carry out the nurturing function for Jadine as she lacks it. Son too tries to impose the mythic qualities of ancient African women on Jadine who rebels against them. She finds herself totally disconnected with the mythic tree women and understands them differently. She feels that the women taunt her with their femininity and for her vacuousness. It also dawns on Jadine that for the women of Eloë and the night women the only proper role for women is that of nurturers and reproductive agents. But it is this very role that she rejects, refusing to "settle for wifely competence when she could be almighty, to settle for fertility rather than originality, nurturing instead of building" (TB 269). Jadine rebuffs the cultural demands made on her and desires to be a different kind of woman. According to Trudier Harris, "it is easy to be unsympathetic to Jadine" because "African-American folk culture

has not prepared us well for a female outlaw” (128). Jadine aligns herself with an alternate tradition in which modernity and hybridity were the markers for a woman who had made it in the real world. She seeks neither to be a repository nor a transmitter of black culture, and she will not have it imposed on her.

From the outset Jadine’s and Son’s interactions reveal a fierce contest between their mutually conflicting ideals. Son, the black man in tune with his black heritage, mocks and berates Jadine, the modern, “culturally orphaned” black woman for being completely out of sync with her black roots. The ideals of the black world that Son inhabits makes him want to take control of Jadine and her *femininity* on the pretext of bringing her back into the black cultural fold. If Valerian Street, Jadine’s white benefactor, is accused of creating her on the dominant culture’s principles, then, Son is equally guilty of attempting to remake Jadine in his own image of black femininity. He accuses her of being like the tar baby of the folktale, a creature molded by the farmer to catch Brer Rabbit. Jadine, on the other hand finds the images of black femininity that Son cherishes a tar baby trap. The vision, instead of bringing Jadine closer to her heritage frightens her and hastens her retreat from Eloë. She finds these older, nurturing women in the night vision coming in the way of realizing her dreams.

She has to work through for herself their significance. According to her, the night women are there for her to acknowledge and not necessarily to re-enact. Jadine is a modern, independent woman and she sees the night women and the tree women as presences that aim to annihilate the very “person she had worked hard to become” (TB 264). Morrison could also be suggesting that black women in their search for financial security and independence may be taking on patriarchal values. Jadine is striving for equality which she tries to achieve in terms of material gains. As put forward by Simon de Beauvoir, “Thus the independent woman of today is torn between her professional interests and the problems of her sexual life; it is difficult for her to strike a balance between the two; if she does, it is at the price of concessions, sacrifices, acrobatics, which require her to be in a constant state of tension” (57). For Jadine, the choice is not one of choosing between her professional or sexual life but that of choosing between either realising her goals or to discover the traditional and collective strength and values of African American women.

When Son is not able to tame Jadine emotionally, he resorts to physical means to prevent her from leaving him. Initially she struggles against his seductive influences but he finally succeeds in getting her to give in, in the stereotypical manner common to white girls. As a natural man, he is inclined to exercise his sexual prowess but with the intention of wanting Jadine to accept a passive role. According to Simon de Beauvoir, Son is a typical male who “views the bed as the proper terrain for asserting

his aggressive superiority. He is eager to take and not to receive, not to exchange but to rob. He seeks to possess the woman to an extent over and above what she gives him; he demands that her consent be a defeat and that the words she murmurs be avowals he tears from her – demands that she confess her pleasure and recognize her subjection” (51). This means of “phallic domination” is also to prevent professional women like Jadine from pursuing a career and to repress female ambitions in order to allow the patriarchal society to maintain its hold on such women. He is unable to look beyond the nurturing role of women. Son wants Jadine to give up her life in the fast lanes of New York and go live in some other place. But Jadine is equally adamant on staying on in the city and making it in the white world thus condemning Son to staying “in that medieval slave basket” that was Eloë.

Jadine and Son’s relationship is doomed because both represent different ideals, one holds on to the past and the other to the future; each a culture carrier in a different way: “Mama –spoiled black man, will you mature with me? Culture –bearing black woman, whose culture are you bearing?” (TB 272). Jadine does not share Son’s perception of the past and she feels it is better to abort the past. He believes that one’s “ancient properties” are a must to uphold communal spirit and is thus completely locked in the past. In an interview to Charles Ruas, Morrison highlights the implications of Son’s limitation: “If he decides not to join the twentieth century and would join these men, he locks himself up forever from the future. He may identify totally and exclusively with the past, which is a kind of death, because it means you have no future, but a suspended place” (237). In being completely tied to Eloë, which exists only as a past, Son is failing to connect with the present or the future.

Jadine, on the contrary, looks for a conception of self that is beyond racial and sexual stratification where she desires to “get out of my skin and be only the person inside – not American – not black – just me” (TB 48). She works against the normative formulations of black womanhood and is annoyed with Son “for pulling that black woman-white-woman shit on me...if you think you can get away telling me what a black woman is or ought to be” (TB 121). Jadine seeks to go beyond the constraints of race and gender and in this Morrison is critiquing the gendered principles that dominate black patriarchy. Jadine’s rejection of feminine roles are a means of resistance to being racially and sexually exploited. She comes to realize that the women in the real world including Ondine, Rosa, Therese, the African woman along with the mythic night women and swamp women hanging from the trees are all tar babies, with the intention of making things stick, the very quality that Jadine is attempting to reject. The stereotypes produced by the real and mythical women only serve to suppress African American female subjectivity. The stereotypical roles assigned to black women

are those of daughters and mothers who are nurturers and culture bearers. This reduction of the black women to a domestic image is done with the intention of controlling and limiting them to the private space of home and family. The patriarchal society maneuvered and imposed on black women the ideals of black womanhood and black femininity which emphasized obedience and docility.

In the novel, Morrison is attempting to reconstruct a new folktale which can accommodate female experiences by revealing a female subjectivity. She deviates from the original tar baby story giving a voice to Jadine who could be the embodiment of a modern black woman in search of her roots as well as financial independence. Morrison is also bringing to the fore, the need to accommodate mythic archetypes to modern realities or else there is always the fear of losing women like Jadine to the master culture. Here she is similar in her ideas to Campbell who was also of the opinion that "...myths offer life models. But the models have to be appropriate to the time in which you are living, and our time has changed so fast that what was proper fifty years ago is not proper today" (16). In giving Jadine a voice in constructing a new myth, Morrison is seeking to bring in cultural transformation. She is of the opinion that the past can co-exist with the present and that it need not be discarded in the name of progress.

Conclusion

In the two novels under consideration in the paper, Morrison exposes the extreme positions of black women in mythology; they are either completely excluded the ancient stories or if they are mentioned, it is only in traditional roles as nurturers or reproductive agents. She reveals the inadequacies of ancient myths to enable black women to overcome their challenged positions of inferiority and oppression. Morrison seeks to revise and demystify the dominant classical and African American myths which reduce black women to the marginal status. In both *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby*, she attempts to reconstruct the time-honoured themes in ancient myths to make them more appropriate and suitable to black women's oppressed situation recovering their subjectivity and bringing about a sense of identity, community and survival.

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Mythical Cycles and Postcolonial Dreams: Contextualizing the Kaleidoscope of Ben Okri's Magical Realism

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In this paper, my argument will be focused on Ben Okri's use of dreams, as a central part of his magical realist technique in *The Famished Road* and its sequel *Songs of Enchantment*, and what purpose they serve in his viewpoint of postcolonial Nigeria. At one level, these dreams require a culturally specific reading as they continually link the traditional, the mythical, and the modern. At another level, however, these dreams can be linked to a broader understanding of culture and society, to further the concept of magical realism and dreams in a transcultural context. I hope to thereby ascertain that the noisy congruence of disparate cultural forces, usually taken as characteristic of cosmopolitan narrative, in Okri's works become a conduit into the more bizarre conjunctions of a feverishly visionary Africa.

Defined as a mode where "two diametrically opposed ontologies co-exist on equal terms: the empirical world of reason and logic and the supernatural world of unreason"¹, magical realism thus functions on a chiasmic "intertwining of a naturalized supernatural and a supernaturalized natural"², in which what makes the text realist is precisely the blurring of the distinction between "magic" and "reality." As many have noted, the connection between magical realism and the postcolonial can be traced to several convergent or simultaneous sources both synchronically and diachronically. In the 1950s, Caribbean writers such as Jacques Stephen Alexis from Haiti and Alejo Carpentier from Cuba gave the term a specific "postcolonial" inflexion by theorizing, respectively, a "reel merveilleux" and a "real maravilloso." Both Alexis and Carpentier formulated what are now considered literary manifestoes, insisting that the writer must incorporate in his writing signs of his cultural specificity, particularly by integrating the myths, beliefs, and specific epistemological systems that characterize his "indigenous tradition." In anglophone Africa, critic Brenda Cooper identified a "magical realist" boom in the 1980s while arguing that "magical realism arises out of particular societies – postcolonial, unevenly developed places – where old and new, modern and ancient, the scientific and the magical views of the world co-exist."³

The use of magical realism in African literature can be seen as a means of speaking out against colonialism, in a voice specific to Africa. The technique has been used by

postcolonial writers to create an indigenous, independent voice within contemporary writing. It has also established a means by which they could assert a nationalist voice and resist colonialism. As Josephine Dandy suggests of magical realism:

[It] shares many of the same concerns and techniques as post-modernism, but it is located within, and in particular exists as a result of, a specific social context, and is particularly concerned with the representation of the multi-dimensionality of that social context through art.⁴

Magical realism, in African literature, often depicts this “multi-dimensionality” through the supernatural/ mythical or dreamscapes, and therefore underpins African postcolonial literature in a number of ways. Firstly, it illustrates a cultural and social belief that is a distinct part of the African tradition. Secondly, it provides a means to oppose colonialism, and the colonialist novel.

Within the studies of dreams by Freud and Jung, there is a notion of dreams as vehicles of the unconscious wishes and fears of the dreamer. To expand on this point, the conscious self suppresses desires which are unacceptable in the eyes of society, and the subconscious releases these through dreams. Thus it allows the dreamer to live out these desires in a way that is acceptable to society, and consequently, it gives rise to a dream rhetoric. An aspect of this rhetoric is symbolism within the dream, and this is a significant factor in their interpretation, allowing us access to a more fully realized view of ourselves. However, Salomon Resnik provides a different reading of Freud, as he writes:

The interpretation of the dream is a search by two persons into the past-present of the individual and of the culture; it has something of the character of an anthropo-archeological research. Freud was very fond of archaeology, the ‘logos of the arche’ ...; he liked to discourse on what was old and hidden in our culture and in each of us. In a definition that became famous, he stressed the interrelationship between the personal dream and culture: ‘The dream is personal myth and myth is the dream of a culture.’

Thus to interpret a dream would have a cultural implication.⁵

Perhaps this explanation suggests that while symbolism is a universal aspect of dreams, the symbols vary from culture to culture. Magical realism, as a mode that encourages cultural independence, depicts a resistance to a generic interpretation of dreams in literary texts, calling instead for a specific cultural analysis. According to Zamora and Faris, “Magical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness

encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures”.⁶

In this paper, my argument will be focused on Ben Okri’s use of dreams, as a central part of his magical realist technique in *The Famished Road* (1991) and its sequel *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), and what purpose they serve in his viewpoint of postcolonial Nigeria. At one level, these dreams require a culturally specific reading as they continually link the traditional, the mythical, and the modern, to provide the reader with an understanding of Okri’s hope for postcolonial Nigeria. At another level, however, these dreams can be linked to a broader understanding of culture and society, to further the concept of magical realism and dreams in a transcultural context. I hope to thereby ascertain that Okri’s utilization of dreams in magical realism provides an in-depth look at the society of Nigeria, uncovering the hidden truths of this emergent independent culture where ‘knowledge’ is questioned by the continual shifting, deconstruction of certain boundaries. It becomes apparent throughout these texts that Okri offers a certain hope for the emerging modernity, as he suggests that while elements of the past may be lost, it is still possible to integrate more traditional aspects of life with the more modern, thereby creating a ‘new identity’, from both the past and the present.

The Famished Road as well as *Songs of Enchantment* feature strong elements of magical realism, as they frequently move into the world of the subconscious. Both these texts are rife with spirits, beginning with the protagonist spirit-child, Azaro. In both the novels there is a constant combination of the world of the real, and that of the supernatural, and often it is unclear where one world ends and the other begins. In *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye*, Brenda Cooper shows how Okri is able to carve a new African vision out of a genre which sprang from Latin America,⁷ and in *Ordinary Enchantments*, Wendy B. Faris points in particular to Azaro’s mask – which is so mysterious that the reader cannot tell whether it causes the visions Azaro subsequently experiences or “forms part of them”⁸ – very similar to the first person narrator Juan Preciado’s inability to distinguish living persons from apparitions in Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo* – as a classic hallmark of magical realism.⁹ *The Famished Road*, indeed, is full of that “irreducible magic” which “frequently disrupts the ordinary logic of cause and effect.”¹⁰ Azaro is, indeed, as slippery a narrator as Saleem in *Midnight’s Children*. What is curious, though, about Okri’s text is the fact that – even while it fuses the magical with the real, and the animal with the human, the spiritual with the material, and the natural with the supernatural/ mythical – it never loses its political relevance. For Azaro’s story is not only about the life of a young child who has spiritual sight; it also functions as an allegory of the trauma of Nigerian nationhood. As Ato Quayson has suggested: “the

abiku child is also meant to stand for the fractious postcolonial history of his native Nigeria.”¹¹ This is stressed through Azaro who, as a spirit-child, has lived many lives before, and frequently refers to these instances such as the talking of “many voices”¹² inside him, and later, “all the narratives of [their] lives.”¹³ After Dad’s long dream at the end of the novel, he says to Azaro and Mum, “Many people reside in us, ... many past lives, many future lives.”¹⁴ By doing this Okri creates a narrative, not just for one specific family, but also for a community and a country.

Metamorphic Identity and Mythical Cycles in Okri’s Dreams:

In looking at the novels of Okri, the idea of “transformation and change” can frequently be seen in the esoteric environment. As Gerald Gaylard points out in *Mystery in a Broken Age*:

Fiction concerned with destabilization and alteration inevitably has transformation and change as its central thematic cluster, ... Hence the preponderance of images of circularity, shock, impact, surprise, instability, arbitrariness, alteration, deviation, dodging, transgression, heteromorphism, monstrosity, uncertainty, birth and death in African fabulism. These images all challenge a simple Cartesian notion of identity, and decentre the subject so that knowledge and ontology are questioned.¹⁵

Many of these tropes are common with elements of dreams, as Resnik writes: “The dream stage is like a signifier undergoing constant transformation. It may be flattened, enlarged, blown up out of all proportion until it loses its outlines.”¹⁶ There are many instances in Okri’s novels where transformation or metamorphosis occurs, and the range is quite extensive. People transform themselves into animals, spirits transform themselves into people, and inanimate objects are given the ability to transform. This is indicative, as Gaylard suggests, of turmoil within the country, such as the change of political powers, and the disillusionment of many within the country.

Nigerian author Amos Tutuola also makes use of the transformation of spirits in his narrative, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, where skulls, living in a community in the forest, rent human parts in order to travel into town. This idea is repeated in Okri, on a number of occasions, where spirits are referred to as having human appearances, which are distorted. They have eyes in the wrong place, or walk backwards or upside-down.¹⁷ There is also the feeling that these parts are borrowed, as in Tutuola’s narrative, making the spirits seem as though they were disfigured, rather than simply not being human. In *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel*, Christopher Warnes discusses this link between the fiction of Okri and that of Tutuola, in relation to Quayson, saying:

Quayson's comparisons between Tutuola's work and *The Famished Road* are particularly fruitful in terms of understanding the ways in which Okri has appropriated and transformed the specific interweavings of real and spirit worlds found in Tutuola's folkloric worlds, and, more distantly, in Yoruba orature.¹⁸

This next passage is demonstrative of this interweaving as Azaro witnesses distortions taking place in the spirits' appearances, as they shift between their real and esoteric forms:

As I watched them, they began to transform, breaking out of their moulds. Their shoulders seemed momentarily hunchbacked. Their eyes blazed through their glasses and their teeth resembled fangs. I edged away, slowly, and found another corner, and stared intently at everyone. The clientele kept changing, becoming something other. What they were underneath kept emerging under the fleeting transparency of their skins.¹⁹

Again, we are given the impression that these spirits are borrowing their appearances. This serves to question perceptions and sight, and subsequently, it questions the notion of identity. This reaffirms the sentiments of Gaylard, not only through his view of change and transformation, but also that of the element of monstrosity, as being representative of "destabilization and alteration". This too is resonant of Resnik's explanation of dreams, which are constantly transforming, indicating that the spirit world has strong links with dreams. This is extended by the notion that the spirit realm does not obey the logical order of time and space, which aids in the concept of destabilization.

By incorporating cyclical time, as well as other cyclical images including those of dreams, into the texts, Okri is able to suggest that a combination of the traditional and the modern is not impossible. The country need not move from one to the other, but rather can exist through the incorporation and use of both. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Elleke Boehmer particularly points out,

So Okri in *The Famished Road* ... suspends conventional chronology by introducing cyclical patterns and a seemingly irrational dream logic derived from Yoruba myth. The noisy congruence of disparate cultural forces, usually taken as characteristic of cosmopolitan narrative, in his work becomes a conduit into the more bizarre conjunctions of a feverishly visionary Africa.²⁰

Okri sees one of the main oppositions in the text as that of life and death. He extends this, saying: "That's the opposition: infinity and human life."²¹ This opposition is

incarnated in the character of Azaro. He is an *abiku*, and therefore exists in a cycle of dying and being reborn, time and again.

The happier we were, the closer was our birth. As we approached another incarnation we made pacts that we would return to the spirit world at the first opportunity. ... Those of us who made such vows were known among the Living as *abiku*, spirit-children. Not all people recognized us. We were the ones who kept coming and going, unwilling to come to terms with life. We had the ability to will our deaths. Our pacts were binding.²²

Azaro, however, does break his pact when he decides to remain amongst the Living, and therefore stop the cycle of the *abiku*. This collapses the opposition of infinity and human life, and Azaro as a spirit-child, exists in the infinity of that cycle, yet once he remains in the world he accepts human life. However, there is other evidence of spirit-children within the text. Madame Koto is pregnant with three *abikus*, and Ade, Azaro's friend is revealed as another one. These are cumulatively representative of Nigeria at this time of postcolonial pre-independence, as Cooper notes:

Nigeria is not only the wicked *abikus* in Madame Koto's belly, it is a combination of Azaro and his alter ego, Ade, the sweet ethereal spirit child who is determined to keep dying and returning to his spirit companions.²³

Nevertheless: "The relentless cycle of the *abiku* is undercut by Azaro's decision to remain in the land of the living."²⁴ Thus Okri voices a hope for Nigeria in the character of Azaro. This image of the *abiku* is a relatively new concept in Nigerian postcolonial writing, especially when compared to the poem, "Abiku" by Wole Soyinka. This earlier writer does not suggest any hope in his spirit-child, and is adamant in saying that these children will always exist within these mythical cycles, and continue dying, time and again like the *abiku*.

In vain your bangles cast
Charmed circles at my feet;
I am Abiku, calling for the first
And the repeated time. (Stanza 1)

Once and the repeated time, ageless
Though I puke. And when you pour
Libations, each finger points me near
The way I came ... (Stanza 5)

In these two verses, we are able to see the cyclical image of the spirit-child that Soyinka presents. Okri's portrayal of Azaro contrasts strongly with the image in this poem, and the hope that he sees for Nigeria is apparent in this. However, it is necessary to point out that Okri does not think Nigeria will remain as it was, instead it will be essential for it to grow and change, much like Azaro has done by deciding to remain in the world of the Living.

Azaro's dreams and visions often incorporate elements of cyclical time. Here he sees the past joined with the present and the future. They all appear to travel along the same time axis, and appear in the novels as a part of that time. This gives the impression that time is recurring, or moving along repeated spaces. For Azaro, this blurring of time is as natural as reality, such as on one occasion in *Songs of Enchantment*:

I sat on the platform of our housefront and saw the future invade our street.
The invasion took place silently. No one noticed.²⁵

This illustrates the way in which time works in the novels, moving backwards and forwards along the same path as the present, creating a feeling of cyclical, repetitive movement. This again, blurs the borders of time, creating once more the opposition of infinity and human life. Infinity seems a part of the everyday existence of Azaro the spirit-child, and as such, the opposition is deconstructed, and new possibilities seem available within this representation of postcolonial Nigeria.

The Subconscious Subtext in Okri's Fiction:

Dreams are part of reality. The best fiction has the effect on you that dreams do. The best fiction can become dreams which can influence reality. Dreams and fiction blur the boundaries. They become part of your experience, your life. That interests me.²⁶

Through the use of dreams, Okri achieves a number of things. The dreams and visions enhance the use of magical realism, while they serve to infuse the novels with a sense of tradition and custom. At the same time, they examine the consequences of modernity, thereby indicating a combination of worlds within postcolonial Nigeria. Azaro, as a spirit-child, has no difficulty moving fluidly between the supernatural domain and that of the real. Josephine Dandy describes these worlds, that of the "real" and the spiritual, as "opposing spaces [that] are by no means static, but are in a constant state of flux, expanding and contracting their pressures on the other so as to exist in a state of conflict."²⁷ She moves on to suggest that this conflict is representative of the larger conflict between the traditions of Africa and the west. Another element of magical realism that is revealed in this extract is that, as Quayson suggests, Azaro is not

consciously responsible for his entering into the esoteric. Rather, it is something that happens to him.

For Azaro the problem is that he does not always enter or exit these realms through acts of his own volition. The matter is often entirely out of his control. Rather, a spirit potential is posited as inhering in all things and this potential is shown to be able to manifest itself arbitrarily. Because the narrative is focalized through the consciousness of the *abiku* child who is himself radically decentred, the whole work has a shifting and unsettling quality.²⁸

This also reiterates Dandy's perceptions from the extract above, that these realms are constant, but their forces are continually fluctuating. Nonetheless, Azaro does enter into the interstices of other realms, not only while he is awake, but also through dreams and visions.

Throughout his novels, Okri uses dreams, to achieve many different objectives. The most obvious perhaps, is the dreams of the characters which allow them hope. Okri begins *The Famished Road* in the spirit world, and Azaro mentions that,

There are many reasons why babies cry when they are born, and one of them is the sudden separation from the world of pure dreams, where all things are made of enchantment, and where there is no suffering.²⁹

Their world is obviously one of happiness, with an "aquamarine air of love,"³⁰ without the suffering of reality. Right from the start, Okri is asserting an idea of dreams as vehicles of hope, which have the ability to offer a new reality to people.

Various episodes in the novels deal with the actual dreams that Azaro experiences. It is necessary to clarify one point at the outset of this discussion, namely that while we may hear of Dad's dream, or enter Mum's, it is always told through Azaro. Azaro narrates to us what Dad tells him of his long dream at the end of *The Famished Road*, and we enter into Mum's dream, only because Azaro does so. We are even witness to Ade's vision of the future, because he involves Azaro in this vision. This occurs periodically throughout the novels, when Azaro experiences the dreams and visions of others.

All the lights in the houses along our street were off but I knew that no one was asleep. I knew it because there were no dreams floating about in that moon-dominated air. Usually dreams floated from their dreamers and entered the mind of other sleeping forms. Sometimes dreams were transferred from one person to another. I remember once entering the dream of the carpenter's

wife, ... who was dreaming the dreams of the tailor across the road who found himself in a land of birds.³¹

In this passage, Azaro discusses dreams as tangible occurrences that can be seen and felt, albeit he may be the only character, that the reader is aware of who can experience this. Yet this does reinforce Okri's viewpoint that dreams are a part of reality. More importantly, as far as the social implication is concerned, this extract depicts dreams as communal. They float around from one consciousness to the next, and become a part of everyone's thoughts. I feel that here, Okri is implying that the dreams that offer a new hope are the dreams of the community, suggesting a process of social growth and change.

Okri also makes use of visions and hallucinations within these novels to much the same end as he does dreams. They reveal elements of the esoteric, but also images of the past and future. After Azaro has escaped from spirits trying to kidnap him, he is walking down a road, tired and hungry, when he finds a plate of food that is an offering to the road:

I was so hungry that I ate what I could of the offerings to the road and afterwards my stomach swelled and visions of road-spirits, hungry and annoyed, weaved in my brain ... The roads seemed to me then to have a cruel and infinite imagination. All the roads multiplied, reproducing themselves, turning in on themselves, like snakes, tails in their mouths, twisting themselves into labyrinths the road was the worst hallucination of them all, leading towards home and then away from it, without end, with too many signs, and no directions.³²

One of the more prominent images in this extract is the road depicted as snakes, almost as a seething mass, which has African connotations. Again, this produces the conflict between Africa and the West, as the road is a symbol, often negative, of civilization, while the snakes clearly represent Africa. Perhaps the road is also suggestive, as a symbol of the West, as having no particular direction, and while there may be plenty of signs, they do not lead anywhere in particular. Referring to this extract, Cooper notes that "the recent colonial road has brought a crisis of identity and direction."³³ Thus Azaro finds himself "merely walking to discover where all the roads lead to, where they end."³⁴ This ambiguity surrounding the symbol of the road is indicative of confusion in the postcolonial African state, where the identities of old are questioned, and direction is uncertain. An image which relates to this sentiment, which Gaylard also focuses on, is that of the labyrinth, which he says, "is not a closed system. Moreover, the labyrinth is associated with the darkly wonderful and

underworldly and is full of tricks, turnings, cul-de-sacs and surprises ... perhaps an appropriate image of the mind.”³⁵ While this yet again points out the fluidity of the realms of the real and esoteric, it also suggests connotations with the mind, suggesting that this is a “phantasy.”³⁶

Interestingly, Okri has pointed out that he is not trying to create a world of magic and myth that exists next to the real world as much as he is trying to extend our sense of the real world itself to include myths and magical events within it. Ideally, Okri’s novels highlight the magical events as an African form of realism in which the magical world is part of the real world. Okri also believes that fiction can, like dreams, influence reality, and that is what his books move towards, a social awareness, and a new cultural identity. He partially achieves this through his fictional dreams, and the dream’s deconstruction of the boundaries between reality and the esoteric.

NOTES

1. John Erickson, ‘Metoikoi and Magical Realism in the Maghrebian Narratives of Tahar Ben Jelloun and Abdelkebir Khatibi’, *Magic Realism: Theory, Community, History*, Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), p. 40.
2. Thomas Scarano, ‘Notes on Spanish-American Magical Realism’, *Coterminous Worlds. Magical Realism and Contemporary Postcolonial Literature in English*, Eds. Elsa Linganti, Francesco Casotti, and Carmen Concilio (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p. 27.
3. Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 216.
4. Josephine Dandy, ‘Magic and Realism in Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment* and *Astonishing the Gods*: An Examination of Conflicting Cultural Influences and Narrative Traditions’, *Kiss and Quarrel: Yoruba/English, Strategies of Mediation*, Ed. Stewart Brown (Birmingham University African Studies Series No.5; Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies, 2000), pp. 9-10.
5. Salomon Resnik, *The Theatre of the Dream*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), p. 9.
6. Lois P. Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Eds. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. (London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 6.
7. See Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
8. Wendy B. Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), p. 11.
9. Other critics who discuss *The Famished Road* in terms of its magical realism are: Edna Eizenberg, ‘*The Famished Road*: Magical Realism and the Search for Social Equity’, *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 43 (1995), pp. 25-30; and Philip Whyte, ‘West African

Literature at the Cross-roads: The Magical Realism of Ben Okri', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 5 (2003), pp. 69-79.

10. Wendy B. Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments*, p. 11.
11. See 'Looking Awry: Tropes of Disability in Postcolonial Writing', *Relocating Postcolonialisms*, Eds. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 217-30. According to Nigerian folklore an 'abiku' is a spiritually gifted child who is destined to die shortly after it is born and will re-enter her mother's womb again in an unending cycle. It is believed that this cycle can continue for a long time and can only be broken when the child's "iya uwa," the stone that links it to the spirit world is found and destroyed.
12. Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 219.
13. Ibid., p. 229.
14. Ibid., p. 499.
15. Gerald Gaylard, *Mystery in a Broken Age: Dissident Fabulism in late Twentieth Century Anglophone African Fiction* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1998), p. 106.
16. Salomon Resnik, *The Theatre of the Dream*, p. 1.
17. Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 15.
18. Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (New York et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 104.
19. Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 135.
20. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 242.
21. Jane Wilkinson, Ed. *Talking with African Writers: Interviews by Jane Wilkinson* (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 84.
22. Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 4.
23. Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*, p. 91.
24. Ibid., p. 91.
25. Ben Okri, *Songs of Enchantment* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 63.
26. Jane Wilkinson, Ed. *Talking with African Writers*, pp. 82-83.
27. Josephine Dandy, 'Magic and Realism in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment* and *Astonishing the Gods*: An Examination of Conflicting Cultural Influences and Narrative Traditions', *Kiss and Quarrel*, p. 24.
28. Ato Quayson, 'Esoteric Webwork as Nervous System: Reading the Fantastic in Ben Okri's Writing', *Essays on African Writing. 2. Contemporary Literature*, Ed. Abdulrazak Gurnah (Oxford: Heinemann, 1995), p. 150.
29. Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 4.
30. Ibid., p. 4.
31. Okri, *Songs of Enchantment*, p. 255.

32. Okri, *The Famished Road*, pp. 114-115.
33. Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction*, p. 78.
34. Okri, *The Famished Road*, p. 115.
35. Gerald Gaylard, *Mystery in a Broken Age*, p. 116.
36. See Hanna Segal, *Dream, Phantasy and Art* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991).

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Resurgence of Myths and Legends in Contemporary Literature of Indian English in an Emergent India

Shalini R Sinha

This research paper aims to explore the resurgence of interest in our own mythology today and to show that it coincides with the economic development of the nation and thus expresses the self confidence of its people. The use of mythology by a few management gurus to provide guidance and direction in the fiercely competitive modern world is also explored. The paper aims to focus on the works of popular writers like Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi and Devdutt Pattanaik and to look into the reason for their appeal in the present age. This paper also looks into how greater awareness, education and exposure has led the contemporary reader and the writer to seek to understand the profundity of Indian myths and legends and apply them to day to day challenges of life.

Joseph Strelka from the New York State University, Albany, in his paper *Mythe/Myth* says, "Many literary works serve as excellent examples of the revitalization of myth. No less worthy of note, it is often myth that gives power and vitality to some of the greatest works of literature." (Strelka, *Mythe/Myth*)

Some of the greatest literary writers of Postcolonial Indian English prose and fiction have made use of Indian myths and legends in their works. Girish Karnad in *Yayati*, *Hayavadan*, *Nagamandala*, *Fire and Rain* and Raja Rao in *The Serpent and the Rope* are just a few examples of writers who have brought out the emotional, metaphorical, historical and symbolical appeal of myths.

However, it is very interesting to note the resurgence of Indian mythology in popular literature and prose in recent times. Indian English popular prose and fiction has been on the rise in the India of today. A number of Indian writers and diasporic writers of Indian origin have written prose and fiction that has generated a lot of interest and been very popular with the Indian readers of today, especially young adults. In such literature, an entirely new genre of writings about Indian mythology and legends has set the book market on fire.

Writers like Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, Devdutt Pattanaik etc have gained a lot of fame because of their books and works involving Indian myths. What is the reason for their popularity and appeal?

One major reason is that post-liberalization era India is very different from pre-liberalization India. Urban India has changed drastically. The opening of India to the

world, the coming of multi-national companies into the country, and the corresponding increase in salaries and perks has led to a massive change in the attitudes and lifestyles of Indians. Global influences have led the educated, upwardly mobile Indian to adapt a more Western lifestyle. Immense technological advancement has made India an IT hub. More of work related travel, both within the country and outside, exposure to foreign films, food and literature, as well as different cultural influences have made the urban, educated Indian a thinking, questioning, rational and tolerant individual.

A capitalist economy and an increasingly consumer driven culture has opened up the publishing industry. Books were previously unaffordable and one shelled out hard earned money only for an exceptional book. Today, however, books are priced reasonably and even a student with average pocket money can afford to buy books of his choice. Then again, marketing strategies and easy interaction with authors has helped bring the printed word that much closer to the reader's heart. People now have the time and leisure to enjoy books and no journey of urban, English medium educated Indians is accomplished without books and no bedside table is devoid of them. According to an article entitled, "The Decade in Literature" in Mint, February 1, 2011,

Globalisation has, arguably, made "literature" a bigger and richer space for most serious readers, making more kinds of books more easily available to more readers, permitting old books to be sold alongside new books, and allowing readers, through the internet, to have a stronger say in book discussion and, thereby, sales.

India's book economy is on a different arc, For an observer of Indian literature in English, the last decade was full of bright lights on all three counts of publishing, book selling, the density and internal diversity of the idea of literature, and the spread of a reading culture.(Mint, Feb1, 2011)

Apart from the above, educated, urban Indians today are a self-assured and confident breed in themselves. Up till the present times, there are at least two generations of Indians that have grown up in a free India and are completely free of the humiliating past of colonization. These Indians are affluent, skilled, well spoken, well travelled and consider themselves at par with if not better than the rest of the world. These people now feel the need to be exposed to the canons and thoughts of their own texts and writers. They want to read stories written for them, by them and of them. They do not want to continue reading stories of western characters in western settings.

Paradoxically, the present lifestyle has also led to several losses. The joint family system has been replaced by the nuclear family. Nuclear families have ushered in

busy, working parents and growing children have lost that grandmotherly or grandfatherly figure who was the storyteller. Our myths and legends have been handed down to us in the oral tradition through these storytellers who occupied pride of place in children's hearts and imaginations. Hence, the young Indian of today is generally not very aware of her rich heritage of mythology. She has a very vague, often hazy idea of her own mythology. On the other hand, western myths and legends abound in the short stories, poems and novels that children read while growing up. So young readers of today may be familiar with stories of Robinhood, King Arthur and his Roundtable, vampires, Greek legends or witches and wizards, but may not be fully cognizant with stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana.

In November 2010, at the Mumbai Literature Festival, authors of popular fiction like Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi had expressed the view that when a country and its people become confident of themselves and their place in the world, they express this confidence by exploring their own inherent myths and legends. People who have grown up learning about the mythologies of other advanced cultures, now desire to explore their own culture through their indigenous myths and legends.

Hence when novels such as *The Immortals of Meluha*, *Jaya*, *The Secret of the Nagas* etc came into the market, the average Indian of today realized her lack of knowledge about her own myths and legends and hence their widespread appeal. This can be easily seen in the impressive sales figures of both *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas*. Till August 2012, both the novels had sold almost 749000 copies. The books have also been translated into Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi. Similarly, *Chanakya's Chant* won the Vodaphone-Crossword Popular Choice award in 2010 for having logged the highest number of sales that year.

This however does not suggest that any work on mythology would have met with the same success that these books have earned. These works are innovative experiments that have caught the Indian readers' imagination. The most important facet of this fiction is that elements like magic and fantasy are non-existent.

It was generally thought that Indian myths and legends were mere fantasy or superstition. This idea gets credence from the way Hinduism is practiced in a rigidly ritualistic form in most Indian homes. The true essence of the myths and legends gets lost. What remains are the dos and don'ts that most families observe. To the youth, Hinduism is anyway a religion without any single canon or text to follow and hence is so diffused and indistinct that it has lost its spiritual meaning and remains mired in rituals.

However, novels like the Shiva trilogy, *Chanakya's Chant* etc are not only well structured but have also reinterpreted Indian mythology and modernized them so as to appeal to the modern Indian reader. Hence, the reader does not have to willingly suspend her disbelief. On the other hand, the story has been made realistic and scientific so as to render it eminently believable. The author does talk about heroes who are quite above ordinary mortals but they are not supernatural and are not incompatible with science. (Segal 46).

The modern reader is discerning and prides herself in her logicity and rationality. Hence as Robert Segal says,

A defence against the challenge of modern science has been to reconcile myth with that science. Here elements at odds with modern science are either removed or, more cleverly, reinterpreted as in fact modern and scientific. Myth is credible scientifically because it *is* science – modern science. Instead of setting myth against science, this tactic turns myth *into* science. (Segal12-13).

The Immortals of Meluha and *The Secret of the Nagas*, in fact, are built on this premise. The story of the Meluhans is set in what can be called the Indus Valley civilisation with its meticulously constructed cities, drains and baths. Shiva is not any God, but a marijuana smoking Tibetan immigrant who gets anointed as the Mahadev or the God of Gods.

In *The Immortals of Meluha*, Brihaspati is the Chief Scientist, in charge of making Somras or nectar that prolongs the Meluhans' lives and makes them young. He attempts to explain the blue throat of Shiva by saying: I am sure there is a scientific explanation for the blue throat..... I believe in science. It provides a solution and a rationale for everything. And if there is anything that appears like a miracle, the only explanation is that a scientific reason for it has not been discovered as yet. (Immortals of Meluha 136)

The author of the Shiva trilogy, Amish Tripathi, too has this to say: Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance.

This trilogy is based on this fundamental premise. I believe that the Hindu gods were not mythical beings or a figment of a rich imagination. I believe that they were creatures of flesh and blood, like you and me. I believe that they achieved godhood through their karma, their deeds. I believe that the words Vishnu and Mahadev are not individual

names. They are in fact titles, given to those persons who are the greatest of leaders, who become god-like. (Tripathi, www.shivatrilogy.com)

Ashwin Sanghi uses the legend of Chanakya and portrays him as a perceptive, cunning, intelligent and patriotic master strategist. He juxtaposes the contemporary Chanakya - a wily and calculating politician, Pandit Gangasagar Mishra - with the legendary one and draws a completely realistic picture. In his latest book, *The Krishna Key*, he yet again researches exhaustively and blends historical elements with the modern age to give us a racy novel in the mould of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*. He says that he is interested in talking about fiction that sounds like fact.

Yet another reason for the appeal of mythological fiction of today is that fundamental principles like the premise of Karma or the concept of cause and effect through the performance of deeds is discussed in these works. Karmic effect is the basic tenet of religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. The popular mythological fiction author has demythologized the myth not eliminating it but by extricating its true, symbolic meaning (Segal 47). Thus Robert A Segal says: Demythologised, myth ceases to be about the world and turns out to be about human experience of the world. Demythologized, myth ceases to be an explanation at all and becomes an expression, an expression of what it 'feels' like to live in the world. Myth ceases to be merely primitive and becomes universal. It ceases to be false and becomes true. It depicts the human condition. (Segal 48)

The average Indian who is still unclear about her religion, understands the concept of karmic retribution very well. The idea that our deeds of the past have an effect on our present is very rational and logical. This idea is reinforced by the above mentioned mythological fiction. God or legends are so only because of their good karma. They are not out of this world but are mortals who through their deeds have become heroes. They too suffer from existential questions and need to struggle on their own to arrive at the right conclusions.

Shiva too has to find his own answers. In *The Secret of the Nagas*, in a conversation between Shiva and his uncle, he is told by his uncle that,

"It is your karma to fight evil. It doesn't matter if the people that evil is being committed against don't fight back. It doesn't matter if the entire world chooses to look the other way. Always remember this. You don't live with the consequences of other people's karma. You live with the consequences of your own." (Secret of the Nagas 144)

The idea of karma and other philosophies is the crux of the works of another famous mythologist, Dr.Devdutt Pattnaik. Dr.Devdutt Pattnaik has written a number of books and articles showing the relevance of mythology in issues pertaining to life, leadership, governance and management. Dr Pattnaik says, “I help people leverage the power of myth in business, management and life.” Devdutt Pattnaik is a doctor trained in medicine who spent a great deal of time reading and researching myths, rituals, sacred stories and their impact on culture and now occupies the unique post of Chief Belief Officer, in Kishore Biyani’s Future Group. His retelling of the Mahabharata, *Jaya*, was immensely popular. It told the complex tale of the Mahabharata in an easy manner, simultaneously also throwing light on the various ethnic influences that led to the stories developing in different ways.

Dr Pattnaik writes his blog, and his articles appear in various publications like Corporate Dossier of The Times of India, Mumbai Mirror etc, where he draws from mythology to provide life lessons. An example is given from his article, Rules Do Not Make Ram, where he says,

Both Ramayana and Mahabharata are about human society and about rules. In the Ramayana, Ram follows the rules but in the Mahabharata, Krishna breaks the rules. We are told both are righteous. Both uphold dharma. Both are forms of God. Both fight corruption. How can that be?

In the Ramayana, the villain breaks rules. Neither Surpanaka nor Ravan respect the laws of marriage. Surpanakha uses force to get rid of competition and get herself a desirable mate. Ravan uses cunning to steal another man’s only wife, despite having many of his own. In contrast, in the Mahabharata, the villain does not break a single rule. No one – neither Bhishma nor Drona nor Karna nor the Pandavas – cry foul when a woman is dragged and disrobed in public, as technically Duryodhan has not broken a single rule in the gambling hall. A rule-following Ram can combat a rule-breaking Ravan. But would he succeed against a rule-following villain like Duryodhan? That is why even God had to change his avatar, and become Krishna, who bends the laws of nature, and gets cloth to materialize to rescue Draupadi from her shame.

Corruption is not about breaking the rules: corruption is about rejecting our human side, embracing our animal side, and reserving resources for the mighty and dominating the meek. Corruption is about becoming the territorial alpha male who excludes competition and includes no one except those

who surrender to him. (Rules Do not make Ram, Mumbai Mirror, Aug 18, 2010)

The popularity of his writings stems from the fact that life's lessons are easy to understand and apply when couched in the stories of our mythology. Not only do we gain greater insight into the symbolical and deeper meanings of our mythological stories but we also understand life and its anomalies very well.

All of the above authors have used mythology and drawn parallels to the contemporary world. The various interpretations by these authors help the reader relate these stories to her own day to day challenges of life.

Indian mythological prose and fiction has finally found its place under the sun. The works are all written in easy to understand, everyday, non literary language that at once strikes a chord with the reader. What is also very interesting is that the profile of the writers has changed significantly. While Devdutt Pattnaik is a doctor, Tripathi is an IIM Calcutta graduate who wanted to be a historian while Ashwin Sanghi is an MBA from Yale School of Management and is a writer as well as a businessman. The very diverse profile of these writers makes them well able to judge their audience's reading tastes. They do not take their writings for granted but research comprehensively and write in a racy, fast paced manner, packing in a lot of action and suspense- just what the present day reader wishes for. They write in a pedestrian style using day to day terms which again makes the largely non literary kind of audience bond with the works. The characters of these works are also very human and life like. They may sometimes be very restricted and appear flat but they have been drawn in an interesting manner and are definitely not God-like.

The mythology juggernaut continues with recent publications like *Jaal* by Sangeeta Bahadur and *Govinda* by Krishna Udayasankar. *Jaal* . is the first in the Kaal trilogy, is set in an ancient period and borrows several mythological elements. *Govinda*, on the other hand, is an alternative interpretation of the Mahabharata. In the coming months, another retelling of the Mahabharata by Sandipan Deb will be available. Deb sets the epic in the Mumbai underworld. It remains to be seen whether this will appeal to readers the way other mythological fiction has (D.N.A Sept 2, 2012).

However, as long as authors interpret myths in new and innovative forms, mythological prose and fiction will continue to intrigue us and ignite our imagination. According to an article titled, "Best-Selling Myths", published by Ms Reena Singh on mythological fiction, in The Speaking Tree, A Times of India publication, dated September 9, 2012,

Besides philosophical, spiritual and moral insights, stuff that mythological accounts are renowned for, these new stories take liberties with the plot, often placing characters in a contemporary context. What's more, all the deep insight is no longer of the kind that sits heavy on your mind; they are reader-friendly and peppered with current jargon. (The Spiritual Tree, A Times of India Publication, Sept 9, 2012)

Myths and legends may no longer be associated with religious rituals and beliefs but "myths" of heroic characters that mediate the troubling paradoxes of life and emerge triumphant, will always compel us and cast their spells on us (Magoulick: What is Myth).

Hence the fascination for interesting literature on Indian myths and legends shall continue.

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“Damsel in Shining Armor” & “Knight in Distress” – Role Reversal of Mythical Gender Archetypes in Shakespearean Comedies

Nazua Idris

“Damsel in Distress” and “Knight in Shining Armor” are two of the most recurrent mythical gender archetypes in literature, painting, classical and medieval myths, legends and romances, fairy tales, films and soap operas. Traditionally, a “Damsel in Distress” is a woman who is young, beautiful, naïve, vulnerable and sexually attractive, and is always in need of a man to save her life or chastity. On the other hand, “Knight in Shining Armor” is a man who is young, adventurous, brave and chivalrous, and is always ready to rescue the damsels who are in distress, and usually end up marrying the damsel that they save. These two notions regarding gender roles are constructed and popularized by the traditional classical and medieval patriarchal society and these notions are still continuing. Men and women are seen in terms of the binary opposition regarding their roles, where the woman is always the helpless creature and the man is always the Messiah of that helpless woman.

However, we see a reversal of such defined gender role in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You like it*. In these plays, the two protagonists, Portia and Rosalind, come out of their socially defined role of “Damsels in Distress” and translocate themselves as “Damsels in Shining Armor”, who are capable of changing their own fortune and rescuing the suffering men from various kinds of distresses. In these plays, the patriarchal notion of “Damsel in Distress” is reconstructed and presented in a new light to uncover the misconstrued stereotyping of the genders regarding their roles. In these plays, the heroes are “Knights in Distress” who need the help of Portia and Rosalind to be saved from dangers threatening their lives as well as the well-being of the society. Therefore, this paper aims at examining how William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It* reverse the mythical gender role archetypes, by beginning with a discussion of the long-held popular notions of “Damsel in Distress” and “Knight in Shining Armor” and how patriarchal society constructed, represented and viewed these archetypes, moving onto a discussion of how Portia and Rosalind transgress the boundary of their defined roles in society and translocate themselves with a new identity, the “Damsels in Shining Armor”.

Mythical Gender Role Archetypes: “Damsel in Distress” and “Knight in Shining Armor”

The concept of “Damsel in Distress” stemmed from the patriarchal belief that a woman needs protection from her male counterpart as she is physically weak, sexually attractive and emotionally fragile. “The word “damsel” derives from the French *demoiselle*, meaning “young lady”, and the term “damsel in distress” in turn is a translation of the French *demoiselle en détresse*” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>). Etymologically, “Damsel in Distress” refers to a young lady who is very beautiful and weak and often her beauty is the reason for causing distress in her life. She is dominated by the patriarchal figure, either a dominating father, or a monster, or a villain, and on the verge of losing her life or virginity. She is unprotected against such forces and is entirely dependent upon a man, traditionally referred to as “Knight in Shining Armor”, for physical protection, social standing and emotional support.

On the other hand, “Knight in Shining Armor” is a figure who represents the strong chivalrous masculine power and who comes forward to save the damsels who are in distress or danger. The security and well-being of the damsel’s honour and life entirely depend upon the “Knight in Shining Armor”. The knight is very courageous, robust, gentle and gracious, and is always ready to save the damsel. He epitomizes valor, mercy, fairness; champions the good against the evil; protects the poor and the weak, specially, the ladies. He is always on a quest to save humanity and restores peace and justice in society.

From classical myths and legends to today’s popular culture, these two archetypal roles have a very strong presence and they emerge as a confirmation of the patriarchal “construct” that women cannot save themselves as they are weak and helpless. Man and women are seen in terms of the binary opposition regarding their roles in society. The portrayal of “damsel in distress” in literature, painting, art, films and other medias, conforms to the “masculine gaze”. Women are portrayed in a way the male wanted to see them. In terms of literature, the narratives contain stories where the woman cannot survive without the help of a man, and her life long quest is to find out a “macho man” for herself who can give her shelter, social status and emotional and financial support.

If we look at the paintings, the “damsel in distress” is often portrayed as locked or tied up, and as “nude” figures to show how much vulnerable they are. Even in films or drama today, we see that women are depicted as vulnerable creatures, especially in commercial films. These gender archetypes are still continuing and with large-scale audience approval. The heroine is always in danger and the hero comes to rescue her fighting with a band of armed villains alone. Again, in Disney movies, which are

adaptations of classic fairy tales and specially meant for children, the character of the princess is portrayed as a “damsel in distress” locked up by monsters or witches, and she survives that confinement only when her prince charming comes to rescue her with a “true love’s kiss”. Even in terms of video games, the “damsel in distress” and “knight in shining armor” themes are used to design games that are quite popular among game lovers. So, in all forms of representation, narrative or visual, these gender roles are portrayed as opposite to one another. Men represent the women as they desire to see her - a poor creature and an object of pleasure, dependent upon the mercy of a man, and such stereotyping and sexual objectification of women is still thriving today.

Patriarchy expects and loves to see a woman as a “damsel in distress” because a woman who is defenseless and always seeks help from a man reminds patriarchy of its superior status. The distressed damsel does threaten the image of a man, constructed and upheld by patriarchal society. With such stereotypical dependent damsels, patriarchy can continue with its narcissistic image of itself as a superior being. As a continuation of such superiority complex, patriarchal society brands “strong-willed” and independent women as witches or fallen women or goddesses that need to be either subjugated or appeased by sacrifice. Elizabethan witch hunting is reminiscent of such an attitude of patriarchal society.

Role Reversal in Shakespearean Comedies: Portia and Rosalind, the “Damsels in Shining Armor”

Now, I would like to put forward my argument that William Shakespeare, in his comedies *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It*, portrays two very different “damsels in distress”, who break away from the traditional role of “damsel in distress” and acts as “damsels in shining armor” who move forward to change their own fortune and help the men around them by providing them emotional support, shelter, social standing and a new life and hope. The two women are Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

At the beginning of the plays, Portia and Rosalind are, both portrayed as “damsels in distress” locked up by patriarchal figures. Portia begins by saying, “By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world” (1.2, 1). She is worried because she cannot marry the man she wishes and may end up marrying someone incompatible with her. Portia’s will is “curbed” by the “will of a dead father” as her father has devised a “lottery” to find a proper partner for his daughter. Portia’s condition is reminiscent of Hermia’s condition in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* where Hermia’s father wants to kill her when she refuses to marry Demetrius. Whether living or dead, patriarchy always tries to guide the woman as if she is incapable of making a proper

choice, and Portia's father's lottery is such an ordeal that he devises before his death to curb Portia's freewill, limiting her freedom of choice. On the other hand, Rosalind is locked up by another representative of patriarchy, her uncle, Duke Ferdinand. Rosalind also begins with a sad note, "Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet I were merrier? Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure." (1.2, 2-5). The Duke has not only banished Rosalind's father, but also drawn a circle pass not around her to control her willpower.

Though their free-will is barred by the authoritative patriarchy and their "limited feminine space" is made to grow more limited, Portia and Rosalind decide to come out of it. Instead of waiting for their "knight in shining armor", Portia and Rosalind take up the responsibility of saving themselves, asserting their willpower to make a place on this earth on their own account. Rosalind, though a young girl, denies the suffocating comfort of her uncle's palace, where she has to pass her days under the supervision of a tyrannical uncle, and comes out into the streets to find her own way. Like the adventurous "knights in shining armor", she moves onto a perilous journey to the "Forest of Arden" to rescue her father, find her lover and save mankind. By transgressing the safety and security of the palace, she not only disobeys her uncle's wish, but also dismantles the long-held patriarchal belief that home is the only "comfort zone" for women. Portia also leaves the home soon after her engagement when she finds her husband's friend's life is in danger. In both cases, Portia and Rosalind move forward to carry out the duty of establishing peace and restoring order and justice - a duty that is meant and decided only for men. But they cross that boundary and affirm their own willpower and come out of their house "to liberty, not to banishment".

On the other hand, the heroes, or the knights in these plays are in distress of some sort. Bassanio is in economic distress as he has spent all his money leaving him at the mercy of Antonio. Now he needs a strong financial shelter that will make his life certain. So, he aspires to win Portia, "a richly lady left" (1.1, 160) who will make him "fortunate" (1.1, 175) as he will inherit the money from her. Bassanio describes Portia in terms of business language, marking his wooing of Portia as a "thrif" (1.1, 174). Antonio, another "Knight in Distress", also begins with a sad note, "In sooth I know not why I am so sad" (1.1, 1) as he is worried about losing his venture abroad and suffering from the pain of losing a friend. Both of them need support of some kind - moral, physical, emotional or financial, and it is Portia who provides them with the support they need. In *As You Like it*, Orlando the knight or hero, is in distress due to his elder brother's betrayal of filial duty. Orlando is in a vulnerable condition because his elder brother has denied his rights and share of property. He is left penniless, treated like an animal and is socially disgraced by her brother. Rosalind, the "damsel

in shining armor”, rescues Orlando from his emotional distress caused by his unhappy upbringing and his recent infatuation for Rosalind, and trains him to become a man from a love-sick, narcissistic, obsessed lover.

Again, in terms of courtly love, we see a role reversal in these plays. Traditionally, a damsel should wait for either the father to choose a husband for her or for her “knight in shining armor” to come to rescue and woo her. According to the chivalric romances, the knight always woos the lady, not vice versa. But in Portia’s case, we see a reversal of this role because it is Portia who steps forward to woo Bassanio rather than Bassanio wooing her. She gives long speeches in the beginning of Act 3, scene 2, regarding her affection for Bassanio while Bassanio speaks little. Moreover, she does not have enough faith in Bassanio’s skill and so she wants to delay the process of choosing the casket for the timebeing: “I pray you tarry, pause a day or two/Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong/I lose your company; therefore forbear a while” (3.2, 1-3). When Bassanio insists that he wants to choose the casket as soon as possible, Portia gives him hints through a song and helps him to make a right choice. By wooing Bassanio and helping him to make the right choice, Portia not only subverts male and female roles in terms of professing love, but also breaks away from the lottery that her father devised and ends up disobeying patriarchy in her own way.

In *As You like it*, Rosalind, in the guise of Ganymede, teaches Orlando how to woo a lady. Rosalind strips the façade of courtly love and shows the harsh reality that lurks behind it. She makes Orlando understand that more than courtly love, a relationship that is based on mutual understanding and love is more important. He must learn to communicate his feelings properly and Rosalind gradually teaches him the use of language. The first time Orlando meets Rosalind, he becomes “tongue-tied”. He is incapable of expressing himself and his love: “My better parts/Are all thrown down, and that which here stands up/Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?/I cannot speak to her, yet she urg’d conference” (1.2, 249-51, 259-60). Even in the forest, the poems that are hung by Orlando in the trees are full of false deification of Rosalind: “*Thus Rosalind of many parts/By heavenly synod was devis’d,/Of many faces, eyes, and hearts,/To have the touches dearest priz’d./Heaven would that she these gifts should have,/And I to live and die her slave.*” (3.2, 149-54). Peter Erickson comments on the poems of Orlando:

The mechanical and impersonal nature of [Orlando’s] elevation of the women to divine status is demonstrated by the way Orlando’s poem invents her through an amalgamation of fantazsized “parts”. Worship of the woman that is supposed to pay homage creates an inhuman pastiche that demeans her and inhibits genuine contact. (43)

Again, Orlando's love poems suggest that he is a self-absorbed lover who is more in love with the idea of being in love rather than being in love with Rosalind. Erick Erickson's finds such a love an adolescent one that requires time to reach maturity. He observes, "[Such a love as] an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity by projecting one's diffused self-image on another and by seeing it thus reflected and gradually clarified" (132). Rosalind reminds Orlando that "men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love." (4.1, 101-103)". The unusual use of the image of death and worm subverts the petrarchan image of love being divine and brings it into a mundane level. Again, Rosalind reminds Orlando that the deification of the beloved and self-abasement of the lover cannot sustain in the long run when Orlando tells her that he wants to possess Rosalind forever: "Say a day, without the ever. No, no, Orlando, men are April when they wed. Maids are May when they are maid, but the Sky changes when they are wives." (4.1, 138-140). Rosalind breaks the illusion of courtly romances to show Orlando the true nature of love.

Order and justice are dismantled in both the courts - the court of Venice and the court of Duke Ferdinand. According to the mythical notion of gender roles, the responsibility for the restoration of order lies with men. The knights used to go on perilous journeys to find out the solution to stop chaos and restore order in their respective empires. But in *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It*, all the knights are suffering from some sort of distress or dilemma, leaving them unable to act like "knights in shining armor". In the court-room scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia plays the role Antonio's savior. She manipulates Shylock with cunning, closing all the escape routes for Shylock first, and gradually disclosing her proper intention. The loopholes that the guardians of patriarchy are unable to find, Portia finds out easily, and saves Antonio from Shylock's vengeance. She first guides Shylock through the teaching of Christian mercy, then she offers him ducats, threes times more than the actual amount, and finally she moves onto her final weapon, her extraordinary wit and hits back at Shylock by showing the loopholes in the bond that he can take only a pound of flesh, not more not less, without any blood or bones in it. Through her powerful rhetoric Portia shakes the foundation of the patriarchal judiciary system and her one single phrase "no jot of blood" (4.1, 302) turns the whole tide of events in favor of Antonio and restoring peace and justice.

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind's steps to come outside her uncle's home, sets the play in motion and gradually moves towards the restoration of order in Duke Ferdinand's court. She acts as a guide for the exiles and natives of the Forest of Arden. She patches up the relationship between Phebe and Silvius. Phebe refuses to listen to the hyperbolic expressions of Silvius and Rosalind takes up that refusal as a weapon to turn on Phebe when she tries to woo Rosalind/Ganymede in the same hyperbolic terms. Thus Rosalind

brings out the narcissistic “Petrarchan mistress” out of Phebe to make her see Silvius’s love for her and “put Phebe in her place and brings Silvius upto his place”. (Erickson 43-44). Though Ferdinand and Oliver begin as blackguard villains, they also suffer from inner conflict and they do not know which of their selves they should listen to. It is Rosalind’s action that makes them discover their true selves and do penance for whatever sins they have committed, and then order is restored.

Again, Rosalind is careful about keeping Celia and Oliver away from a pre-marital sexual relationship. When she discovers that Oliver and Celia may lose control over themselves and end up having a physical relationship, she prepares for their wedding. Here she acts like Prospero in *The Tempest* who also teaches Miranda and Ferdinand to abstain from pre-marital sex. As a “damsel in shining armor”, Rosalind is capable of retaining her chastity as well as her cousin’s without the help of her knight. In terms of her relationship to her father and fiancé, Rosalind is witty enough to see the demarcation between her love for her father and her fiancé and she says both to her father and Orlando that “To you I give myself, for I am yours” (5.4, 116-17). Though at the end it seems that Rosalind is giving herself up to male possession, it does not demean her will power as she does it willingly. She is clever in perceiving the rivalry between her father and her fiancé regarding her love, which Cordelia fails to see in *King Lear*, and Rosalind, is careful in gratifying both men by assuring them that they have all of her love, not half of it, saving the court from further chaos as it happens in *King Lear*.

One may ask, if Portia and Rosalind are so brave and courageous, why do they need to take on man’s disguise? Though both Portia and Rosalind need man’s apparel to win their way, but it is not their dress that gives them power, but it is their own wit, confidence in their own selves and their intellect that give them the power to overcome their problems. A knight wears his weapon and attire to facilitate him and save his body from harm. But an unskilled knight cannot survive with his weapon and armor only. It is his skill that helps him to outshine others and win the heart of his lady and restore order in society, fighting against the evil power. It is neither Portia and Rosalind’s beauty nor their “father given” property that facilitates them to rescue the men. But it is their freedom of mind and intellect that make it possible for them to write their own narrative of their existence and along with them, the narratives of other men around them, without conforming to the stereotypical notions of patriarchy. Though they are in distress, they act like heroes, providing emotional, mental and financial security and refuge to the other men around them. Clara Clairborne Park comments:

Male garments immensely broaden the sphere in which female energy can manifest itself. Dressed as a man, a nubile woman can go to places and do

things she couldn't do otherwise thus getting the play out of the court and the closet and into interesting places like forests or Welsh mountains. Once [Portia and] Rosalind [are] disguised as [men], [they] can be self-assertive as [they like]. (108)

So, in a society that does not allow women to raise their voices, the male garb gives these two damsels the opportunity to assert themselves and raise their voice against all follies and injustices of society to restore the status quo. It is also ironic that they dress as male to discard the assumed passivity of their sex, while the male in their attire are less confident and positive in their role compared to these two women.

Moreover, men's disguise makes them overthrow the long-held stereotypical notion that damsels manipulate or attract men or knights by their beauty. Feminine beauty and sexuality is the only power that women have over men. But Portia, disguised as a lawyer, in men's attire does not possess that womanly charm that can manipulate others. Rather, she uses her intellect and ends up finding out the loophole, overlooked by the representatives of patriarchy. Again, Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, manipulates Orlando and brings Orlando out of his love sickness to make him see reality and to turn him from an "unschooled youth" into a "man". Men's attire turns Portia and Rosalind into "non-sexualized" entities and they are able to dismantle the patriarchal notion that a woman can only work through her feminine charm or beauty rather than her wit or her own sense of self-awareness. So, men's apparel or the typical seductive beauty is not the thing that turns these two women into "damsels in shining armor", rather their intellect, wit, self-awareness, confidence and the power of their language have turned them into heroic figures, outshining the "superior" men folk. As the knight needs a shining armor to save himself from weapons and charms or spells cast by evil powers, these women need a man's disguise to save them. By crossing all the boundaries of patriarchy they reconstruct their identity as powerful entities capable of changing the world for the better.

In *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It* William Shakespeare creates scope for women to assert themselves. Rosalind and Portia strip the mask of narcissism from the face of patriarchy and show it how much it owes to woman power for its well-being. Patriarchy tries to hide the weaknesses in men and portray men as stronger and superior to women. Patriarchy also tries to subjugate the will power in women, marking them weak and dependent upon the mercy of men. But Portia and Rosalind prove such patriarchal beliefs about gender roles wrong because they are not only capable of working from their limited space, but also they have the will-power to change their own fate and the fate of others. By breaking all the barriers and transgressing their socially defined role as "Damsel in Distress", Portia and Rosalind translocate

themselves as the “Damsels in Shining Armor” capable of becoming the “savior” of men and mankind.

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The Rival Religion of Ted Hughes

Raj K. Dhar

In this paper I will analyse the reasons behind Hughes's loss of faith in Christianity as is reflected by his unique treatment of the myth of the Genesis. I will also argue with the help of internal evidence that Hughes's apostasy led him to explore Hindu mythology on which to base his substitute religion that could hold the western man's breaking personality together.

Ted Hughes has described the Christian concept of God as "man-created, broken down, corrupt despot of a ramshackle religion."¹ His disenchantment with Christianity becomes apparent in his poems where he parodies God and the myth of the Genesis. Having lost faith in Christianity, Hughes turned to the east in search of an alternative faith and explored oriental mythologies. His interest in the powers of the self gave a direction to this quest and provided the basis for his personal religion. Having a mythopoeic imagination Hughes makes his own myths and founds his religion on these, as his major poetical works bear out.

Hughes's disillusionment with Christianity must have been brought about by the obvious reason that with its inherent contradictions—Puritanism and "sexual repression of Protestantism,"² says Leonard M. Scigaj in "The Ophiolatory of Ted Hughes", it wasn't possible for this faith to enable the contemporary Western man to prevent the disintegration of his personality. On the one hand Christianity emphasizes egalitarianism, while on the other the powerful Church is indulgent towards priests, who feel self-important to a high degree. The priest in 'The Conversion of Reverend Skinner' (*The Hawk in the Rain*) is so conscious of his ecclesiastical status that he rebukes a poor girl in a language suggestive of bourgeoisie pride: "'Dare you reach so high, girl, from the gutter of the street?'"

Crag Jack, another character from Hughes, becomes an apostate because he cannot cope with the overbearing attitude of the Church. Both the characters see the Church as "dark" in view of its stifling effect on the life of the spirit. Hughes's avid interest in nature and animals, irrespective of their nature, has been well documented. He accepts nature as it, comprising preys as well as predators. Being an ardent lover of animals, Hughes, like his persona Crag Jack, cannot accept a religion which has excluded animals from his philosophy. Hughes had written a review of Clifford H. Pope's book *The Giant Snakes* in which he writes:

The absence of concern for animals in the teachings of Christ is puzzling, to say the least, and accounts for the feeling among Christian peoples that animal worship is an oddity.³

Hughes's loss of faith in Christianity becomes conspicuous in *Wodwo*, *Crow* and *Gaudete* : in such poems as 'Logos,' 'Reveille,' and 'Theology' in *Wodwo*, 'A Childish Prank,' 'Crow's First Lesson,' 'Crow's Theology,' 'A Horrible Religious Error,' and 'Apple Tragedy' in *Crow* and the main text of *Gaudete*, excepting the 'Prologue' and the 'Epilogue.' In these works of his, Hughes parodies certain episodes in the myth of the Genesis and recreates the myth to suit his own purpose.

In 'Logos'

Creation convulses in nightmare, and awaking
Suddenly tastes the nightmare moving
Still in its mouth

and spits it kicking out, with a swinish cry—which is God's First cry. Here Hughes qualifies "God's first cry" as a "swinish cry" and by implication calls God a swine, the most repellant of epithets—a highly heretical poetic statement. Hughes writes in 'Reveille':

No, the serpent was not
One of God's ordinary creatures.
Where did he creep from,
This legless land-swimmer with a purpose?

It was a "legless land-swimmer with a purpose" and its "purpose" was to wake Adam and Eve to the impulse of sex. It accomplished its purpose and they woke with cries of pain.

Each clutched a throbbing wound –
A sudden cruel bite.

The implication of the two stanzas is that God is helpless and the "serpent" works independent of Him and also against Him by subverting His wish of keeping Adam and Eve ignorant of Knowledge. God, he seems to suggest, is so impotent and helpless that He cannot contain the "serpent", although it was He who created it.

Hughes begins 'Theology' with a new and original insight with the assurance of a historian who has unearthed a historical fact. He refutes the temptation theory of the Genesis by saying:

No, the serpent did not
Seduce Eve to the apple

All that's simply
Corruption of facts.

This runs counter to the Genesis account of the Serpent having lured Eve to the apple. Then comes the revelation:

Adam ate the apple.
Eve ate Adam.
The serpent ate Eve.

According to the poet it was not the serpent that tempted Eve to taste the forbidden fruit first. In Hughes it is Adam who eats the fruit first which goes contrary to what the Genesis says:

And when the woman saw
that the tree was good for
food., and that it was pleasant
to the eyes, and a tree
to be desired to make one wise,
she took of the fruit
thereof, and did eat, and gave also
unto her husband with her;
and he did eat.

Hughes reverses the events of the Genesis to voice his disbelief in Christianity and to show that the Christian God is impotent. For, in the last stanza of the poem we are told:

The serpent meanwhile
Sleeps his meal off in Paradise—
Smiling to hear
God's querulous calling.

In Hughes's version the omnipotent God is reduced to a helpless brat who on seeing someone stronger than himself protests half-heartedly, not plucky enough to fight it out, knowing his own limitations. Thus God is reduced to a peevish complaining child or woman who weeps when helpless; God actually weeps in 'Crow's First Lesson' when He fails to loosen the stronghold of woman's genitals on man's neck.

The ineffectiveness of the Christian God is drawn out more sharply and with vehement savagery in *Crow*. The eponymous protagonist of this book does what God fails to do. He even manipulates the serpent who had emerged all-powerful in *Wodwo*. The poems in *Crow* that overtly deal with Hughes's disillusion with the Christian God are: 'A

Childish Prank,' 'Crow's First Lesson,' 'Crow's Theology,' 'A Horrible Religious Error' and 'Apple Tragedy.'

In 'A Childish Prank' the bodies of Adam and Eve lie in Paradise without souls. The problem of investing the two inert bodies with action is too much for God. Pondering over it He falls asleep. But for Crow it is just a "childish prank." We are told that he

. . . bit the Worm, God's only son,
Into two writhing halves.

He stuffed into man the tail half
With the wounded end hanging out.
He stuffed the head half headfirst into woman

And it crept in deeper and up
To peer out through her eyes
Calling its tail-half to join up quickly, quickly
Because O it was painful.

Crow's childish prank results in a cosmic event; by activating the bodies of Adam and Eve he makes this world become a possibility. The powerfulness of the sexual impulse from which God wanted to keep Adam and Eve ignorant is what activates their inert bodies. In this poem Hughes makes a highly heretical statement: he calls the "Worm"—the "serpent" of 'Reveille' and 'Theology'—"God's only son. According to the New Testament Jesus Christ is the only son of God. But Hughes's mythopoeic imagination sees a chance here to make an alternative myth by stating that the "Worm" or the "serpent" is God's only son because he is capable of investing the lifeless bodies of Adam and Eve with the life principle. He gives vitality to them. Christ, on the other hand, is a "naked bleeding worm/ who had given up the ghost" representing "a pernicious sublimation of sex."⁴

'In Crow's First Lesson' we come across a further emasculated God who attempts to teach Crow to say "love" but fails. Everytime He makes a try, different kinds of unwelcome animals and insects fall out of his mouth. God makes a final try

And woman's vulva dropped over man's neck and tightened
The two struggled together on the grass.
God struggled to part them, cursed, wept.

God's weakness becomes obvious with his inability to loosen the grip of woman's genitals on man's neck; it achieves pathetic proportions when God weeps and curses like a helpless woman or a child.

The serpent reemerges in 'A Horrible Religious Error,' as stronger and more resourceful than God. Man and woman pay obeisance to him and not to God. They surrender to him unconditionally, saying "Your will is our peace." Having depicted God as impotent in this poem Hughes dethrones him in 'Apple Tragedy,' installing the serpent in His place. The poem begins thus:

So on the seventh day
The serpent rested.
God came up to him.
'I've invented a new game,' he said.

According to the Genesis it was God who created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. In Hughes's remake of the Genesis, the work of creation is entrusted to the "serpent," who seems better equipped for the task, having demonstrated his powerfulness in 'Reveille' and 'Theology' in *Wodwo* and 'A Childish Prank' and 'A Horrible Religious Error' in *Crow*. While the serpent is wearing off his fatigue, God comes to him with the proposal of playing a "new game" that he has "invented." God shows him an apple, squeezes it and offers him a drink. Here Hughes launches his final assault on God: he makes Him swap places with the serpent, thereby raising the serpent to God's status and lowering God's status to that of the serpent. Thus, in Hughes's scheme God and the serpent play roles which are opposite of the roles they perform according to Christian Dogma.

As a vitalist Hughes rejects the idea of mortifying the flesh advocated by Christianity. The dichotomy between the body and the soul upheld and preached by the Orthodox Church is not acceptable to Hughes who is all for the life of the spirit as gained through the body. This sets him on a journey to search for an alternative faith that can sustain his spirit and body. As Neil Roberts aptly observes in "Ted Hughes and the Laureateship", he is not "merely a non-believer but is positively committed to a rival religion."⁵

Hughes's quest for a "rival religion" takes him over what he has called a "completely Holy Ground, a new divinity, one that won't be under the rubble when the churches collapse."⁶ A close study of his poems reveals Hughes's familiarity with and serious interest in Hindu mythological and philosophical concept. His "rival religion" seems to be very close to Hinduism and its offshoots. Hughes seems to have been influenced by the yoga cult of Mahesh Yogi, the guru of the Beatles.

We find a lot of allusions to Hindu mythology and philosophy in Hughes's works. Most of these have their origin in the transcendental meditation Mahesh Yogi taught to the West and is known as *dhyana yoga* in the language of the *Upanishads*. Hughes

told Ekbert Faas in an interview that he was familiar with the teachings of *Upanishads*.⁷ Meditation has its origins in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. In many of Hughes's poems we get the echo of concepts peculiar to Hinduism. In 'Mayday on Holderness' Hughes writes: "Dead and unborn are in God comfortable." This poetic line has a direct echo in the concept of the Vishwarupa of the *Mahabharata*. When Arjun refuses to fight against his cousins and relations, Lord Krishna then reasons with him but to no avail. Finally Krishna asks Arjun to peer into his mouth. Arjuna does the bidding and "There in the body of God of Gods, Pandava then saw the whole universe with its many divisions drawn together in one." Arjun overawed by what he sees says in sloka 26 and 27 of the Bhagavad Gita "All sons of Dhritrashtra with hosts of kings of the earth, Bhishma, Drona and Sutputra, with the warrior chiefs of ours. . . , enter hurrying into your mouth, terrible with tusks and fearful to look at. Some are found sticking in the gaps between the teeth with their heads crushed to powder." In the Vishwarupa Arjuna sees all his foes already dead and residing in the body of the Lord and also the unborn waiting to be born. Those who are yet to be born are residing in the Parmatman (the Absolute Self or God).

In 'An Otter' Hughes alludes to a yogi in the following words:
So the self under the eyes lies.
Attendant and withdrawn.

This has a close parallel in Sloka III of the Gita: "Therefore, constantly perform your obligatory duty without attachment; for, by doing duty without attachment man verily obtains the Supreme." A yogi is satisfied in performing duties without thinking about their outcome. He does not escape from the world but stays in it and performs all his worldly duties, but at the same time keeps himself detached from expectation. Thus, he is at once "Attendant and withdrawn," reconciling the two contrary states of worldliness and unworldliness. The quality of being at once "Attendant and withdrawn" is essential to yogihood. Hughes's interest in Hinduism becomes more pronounced in *Wodwo*. Here he uses theological concepts and archetypal symbols from Hinduism extensively. In the short story 'Snow' we come across a language which reflects Hughes's interest in meditation as a tool to unlock the powers of the self. There are passages in the story which closely reflect the tenets of the *Yoga Sutras*.

The story of 'Snow' is woven around the indomitable faith of the protagonist in the powers of yoga to hold one intact during adverse circumstances. He has survived a plane-crash on a vast tract of snow. Around him there is snow on all sides and no sign of life. In such hostile conditions he does not lose heart but is very optimistic about his chances of survival. There is evidence in the story of Hughes's awareness of the human mind or the atman as a reservoir of energy and how this energy can be controlled

through meditation and turned to advantage. The protagonist is aware that his survival in these inhospitable conditions depends on the one-pointedness of his mind. The reader can infer Hughes's familiarity with what Patanjali says in Book III, sloka 1 of the *Yoga Sutras* (the similarity of thought is very suggestive and significant):

Binding the mind-stuff to a place is fixed-attention.

Binding of the mind-stuff, only in s far as it is a fluctuation , to the navel or to
To the heart-lotus or to the light within the head or to the tip of the nose or
To the tip of the tongue or to other places of the same kind or
To an external object,—this is fixed attention.

The protagonist is also fully aware of the insidious and vacillating nature of the human mind. In Sutra 2, Book I, Patanjali refers to this state of mind as follows:

Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of mind-stuff.

The protagonist of the story believes that in order to achieve the state of “fixed – attention” he must overcome the insidiousness of his own mind by arresting the flow of the stream of consciousness. This way he can stop the mind from drifting away and slipping out of his control. In a poem called ‘Skylarks’ Hughes uses a bird as an archetypal symbol for the soul or the atman In this poem we find Hughes exploring the theme of *moksha*. The upward flight of the skylark is a sustained metaphor for the atman's aspiration and struggle for the attainment of *moksha*. The atman in order to achieve the state of dispassion has to free itself from all mundane attachments. It is overburdened with “ballast” that keeps it earthbound and rooted in day-to-day life. ‘Skylarks’ demonstrates the development in Hughes's exploration of Hinduism from the limited interest in *yoga* for physical survival in ‘Snow’ to the profound interest in spiritual salvation in the present poem. Here the individual is not interested in remaining attached to his body but works for his spiritual uplift by freeing himself from the “ballast” of *moha* or the desires.

In *Cave Birds* Hughes continues with his exploration of yoga and the supernormal powers that its perfect practice bestow on a *yogi*. In a poem called ‘The Summoner’ we find Hughes incorporating the idea of a yogi's power to leave his body and enter another's. This idea seems to have been drawn directly from sutra 38, Book III of the *Yoga Sutras*:

As a result of slackening the cause of bondage and as a result of the
consciousness of the procedure of the mind-stuff-, the mind-stuff penetrates
into the body of another.

The atman of a yogi can leave his body, enter another and return to its own body at will. A yogi disciplines his atman and develops spiritual powers through disciplining

his body. It is believed that by rousing the kundalini a yogi can perform wonders. It is interesting to note here that Hughes's interest in Yeats was not stimulated as much by his poetry as by his being interested in magic.

The protagonist in 'A Flayed Crow in the hall of judgment' has perfectly understood the secret of overthrowing the "yoke of after life". He has attained knowledge, known as *gyan* in the yogic parlance, which has convinced him of the absurdity of not accepting "whatever is allotted" to him. He has understood that the way to moksha is through karma yoga. Therefore, he will resign himself to the will of the Parmatman and perform his worldly duties and work for his salvation. In another poem 'Guide' Hughes's description of how the Parmatman guides the atman in its quest parallels that given in Hindu scriptures.

When the body dies the atman leaves the body through what A. Barth says in the *Religion of India* "an invisible opening at the top of the skull affording a passage for it."⁸ The Parmatman lifts it up through the cosmos while the worlds go tumbling by. The atman clings to the Parmatman and both go "Into the wind—. The flame-wind—a red wind/ And a black. Wind." The "wind" in these lines corresponds closely to the Vayu or Vata as described by W.K. Wilkins in *Hindu Mythology*:

Touching the sky, he moves onward, making
All things ruddy; and he comes propelling the dust of the earth.⁹

Moving onward Vayu makes "all things ruddy" and as such it is the same as the "red wind" in the poem and coming "propelling the dust of the earth " it is the "black wind."

Cave Birds ends on a note of affirmation—the atman's ascent towards the abode of the Parmatman. In the last poem of this collection, 'the Risen' the protagonist is again a birdlike figure symbolizing the atman. Like the lark of 'Skylark' it is also engaged in soaring: it succeeds in 'rising' above every material interest and merges with the Parmatman. As such "The dirt becomes God", the individual undergoes an alchemical transformation, as it were, and realises oneness with God.

In 'River' Hughes uses the myth of the Ganga's birth and uses a word of the yogic terminology 'samadhi' directly. He also talks about the yogic concept of levitation in this book. In the poem 'Strangers' Hughes gives us direct proof that he is familiar with the yogic concept and its terminology and assimilates these in his poems. Hughes has devoted a whole book to the poetic description of a river in *River*. It serves for him as a symbol of life. As the title-poem of the collections shows, the work reflects the poet's concern for the deliverance of mankind. The river is characterized as having

“Fallen from heaven.” This is an allusion to the descent of the Ganga which is believed to be purity itself. Therefore, “death and the pit” do not sully it. People cast their “sins” into its waves, even then

It will return stainless
For the delivery of this world..

Wilkins describes the Ganga as “the chief of the sacred streams of India, whose power of cleansing from all past, present and future sins, is believed to be divine.”¹⁰ The Ganga is believed to have descended on the earth from the heaven for the deliverance of mankind. According to the myth, the Ganga was brought to the earth from the heaven by King Sagar to deliver his sixty thousand sons who “all scorched to heaps of ashes lay.”¹¹ Becoming thus a symbol for the deliverer of mankind, the river

. . . is a god, and inviolable.
Immortal. And will wash itself of all deaths

Leonard M. Scigaj has written about the elements of oriental mythology in *Wodwo*. In his painstaking analysis he comes to the conclusion that *Wodwo* incorporates mythological elements largely from Buddhism and Zen. But these two religions cannot be the foundations of Hughes’s “rival religion” because both look upon life as “pain”. The First Truth enunciated by Buddha, which is at the core of the two faiths, as given in *The Way of Zen* by Alan Watts, is as follows:

Birth is dukkha, decays is dukkha, sickness is dukkha, death is dukkha, so are sorrow and grief. . . . To be bound with things which we dislike , and to be parted from things which we like , these also are dukkhas. Not to get what one desires, this also is dukkha. In a word. This body, this fivefold aggregation based on clutching , this is dukkha.¹²

Watts translates “dukkha” as “suffering.” Thus Buddhism and Zen consider life a burden, which can be escaped from by taking shelter under Buddha’s dharma. Both, Buddhism and Zen are nihilistic philosophies which cannot be palatable to a vitalist poet like Hughes: the vitalist philosophy is incompatible with a doctrine which preaches escape from life and duties.

Yet another reason behind Hughes’s substitute religion having its basis in Hinduism is the special place animals are given in the Hindu pantheon—the bull is associated with Shiva, the mouse with Ganesh, the tiger with Durga, the peacock with Kartikeya, the elephant with Indra. Different animals are associated with the Mother Goddess (who could be seen as an equivalent of Robert Grave’s White Goddess)—the bull with Mahagauri, the tiger with Durga, the donkey with Kaalratri and the Lion with Katayani. Even snakes enjoy a pride of place in the Hindu pantheon, such as Sheshnaag and

Vasuki. There is a particular day in the Hindu calendar called Naagpanchami, when milk is offered to snakes.

From the foregone analysis it can be inferred that Ted Hughes reworked the myth of the Genesis to suit his purpose of expressing dissatisfaction with Christianity. He set out on a poetic quest for a substitute religion which can strengthen the self and the powers it possesses. Like his wife Sylvia Plath Hughes was interested in the occult and it was the yoga cult which showed him how to realise what he called in 'Bull Moses' "the locked black of powers.

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11. Watts, Alan, *Way of Zen, The* (1957; rpt London, Thames & Hudson, 1958) p. 46

Lost Eden – Springboard to tell the Story of Another Fall?

Kamala Gopalan

Myth serves symbolic purposes in modern texts and often, narrates the stories of eras gone by, peopled with divine and semi divine beings remembered nostalgically. In all the novels studied, in the present paper, the struggle with colonialism assumes heroic proportions for the protagonists within the limitations of their contexts. The loss of an idyllic society, in the not so distant past is described and the fall from grace is experienced by the protagonists along with their communities.

The past described is of a people, close to nature, innocent of the wiles and corruption of the Western way of life, happy in an idyllic society. There is a loss of identity and dignity that they experience soon after their encounter with the West. This ambivalence is often compounded by accompanying guilt, again reminiscent of Adam's position after the Fall. The postcolonial moment serves as a springboard to examine the pain and trauma of the colonial encounter itself in these texts. The loss of an Eden in the past serves as a trope to examine the colonial encounter depicted by these writers.

The texts chosen to be studied in the light of the views expressed are *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and *Temple of My Familiar* by Alice Walker. The texts chosen enact covertly the story of the Fall, and evoke the same emotions but towards different ends.

The colonial encounter depicted differently in these texts plays a pivotal role and signifies a Fall from grace, alienation and damnation for the protagonists and their communities. There is a "looking back" that occurs in these texts, before the "writing back". Looking back generally is at a lost Eden, a pristine environment, idyllic in quality, usually marking a better state of being in terms of individual wholeness and the community's dignity and its wholeness.

The colonial encounter, akin to the Fall, results in a fracturing of the community and individual psyche. It signifies a traumatic event that emasculates and calls into question an entire world view, demeans a culture and lifestyle and strips them bare of any vestiges of dignity. This Fall is not only in the eyes of the colonizer but a Fall from the grace of their gods as well, in that these protagonists feel desecrated and abandoned by their own traditions and values. They are distressed to find that members of their communities are often duped into believing that they can be redeemed by aligning with the colonizers. Much later, realization dawns but by then they have become

“mimic men”(to borrow V.S. Naipaul’s term). They find themselves alienated in much worse ways. Ironically, the temptation before the Fall comes in the form of their own traditional practices like hospitality or compassion to outsiders. The protagonists find themselves in a position where they have to sacrifice all that they have to save their identities and that of their communities in a Christ like manner.

The poet Oodgeroo in the poem titled, “The Past” writes:

“Let no one say the past is dead.
The past is all about us and within”.(86)

These lines are a poignant reminder about the past and its continued role in the present and the shape the future takes. They also highlight the critical role memory plays in recovering the past, so essential a process in a people’s attempt to piece together the shreds of dignity and identity, both of which come under attack in colonization. “Remembrance is the key to redemption”, *Inscription on a memorial to Jews who died in World War II concentration camps, Lands End, San Francisco*(Walker, 336) These lines from Alice Walker’s novel assign a critical role to memory in the process of redemption. The African thinker/writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong’O writes, “the aim of any colonial mission is to get at a people’s land and what that land produces”. (qtd. in Nesbit, para 1, lines 2-5) To achieve this objective, the colonial power gains control of the cultural environment: education, religion, language, literature, songs, forms of dances and every form of expression to finally control outlook, people’s self-image and their very definition of self. As Gayatri Spivak defines it, it is a process of “othering” – “a process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes”. (qtd. in Templeton, para 4, lines 1-3) Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have adequately demonstrated that rereading colonial texts is a key part of postcolonial studies and this enables the critic to see processes like “othering” at work. Neil Templeton, a critic points out that, “...rewriting colonial texts in the form of “writing back” is potentially even more important, granting postcolonial authors agency to resist and correct myths propagated through literature upon which colonial relationships have been premised.”(para 10, lines 8-12)

The texts the present paper seeks to examine, namely, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Alice Walker’s *Temple of My Familiar* surely write back and certainly return the gaze unflinchingly. As critics of postcolonial texts, we need to perceive the reworking of myths that the writers do covertly and overtly as well. The colonial encounters depicted differently in the novels studied play a pivotal role and signify a Fall from grace, alienation and damnation for the protagonists and their communities.

According to Julie Sanders, in her essay, "Adaptation and Appropriation" "Mythic paradigms provide the reader or spectator with a series of familiar reference points and a set of expectations which the novelist, artist, director, playwright, composer or poet can rely upon as an instructive shorthand, while simultaneously twisting, and relocating them in newly creative ways, and in newly resonant contexts." (81) The resonance of the feelings evoked by the story of the Fall is expressed beautifully by the first two texts, and Alice Walker's novel offers a complete retelling of the Creation Myth. In all these texts a "looking back" at the way things were occurs before the writing back can be attempted.

The protagonists in these novels experience painful nostalgia for their lost Eden and the innocent state of being close to nature, unconscious of the wily ways of the world. Nostalgia is not just for the grace of their gods but for the bonding with their community members and their own cosmology. Like Adam, discarded from the Garden of Eden, lost and searching for light in a gloomy world of despair, the quest of the protagonists first leads them in a journey to re/cover their lost dignity and sense of self, brings them back, now whole and better integrated to a state of affirmation.

The protagonists in the novels studied assume mythic-heroic stature on account of untold suffering they experience at the hands of the colonizers, enhanced further by their sacrifices to uphold their tradition and loyalty. This is true for Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Lissie's experiences through several births in *Temple of My Familiar*. Their sacrifices redeem their fallen status and restore life to their people.

Despite converting to Christianity himself, Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart*, not only in response to the common bastardization of his native people, but to show his fellow citizens that the Igbo were dignified. Achebe, however, does not idealize the Igbo people and amply exposes the fractures and injustices within his community. He does this with a great deal of reverence and love for the Igbo and their ways. The Igbo in Umuofia are used to a democratic process of meting out justice and have their own socio-religious order. The men of Umuofia are known for their vigour, courage and war like attributes. Chapter 1 describes the leisurely and idyllic life of the tribe. However, not only age but achievement too was revered. Superstitions had their own place in maintaining social order. Faith holds them together. Old forms of medicine worked. The miraculous and the mundane coexisted. Vicious practices like throwing twin babies in the forest to die were prevalent as they were considered abominations and unnatural. Achebe uses proverbs and tales of animals and birds, not only to depict the order in that ethos but also to illustrate the leisurely pace of the complete lives they led.

The death of Ikemefuna, a boy who is sent to live with Okonkwo as part of the punishment to their enemies, and who becomes dearer than his own son, Nwoye. Ikemefuna's death by Okonkwo's hands signals a bad omen for Umuofia in general and Okonkwo in particular. Okonkwo is exiled from Umuofia for accidentally shooting a boy during a funeral ceremony. He goes to live in Mbanta, his mother's village with his three wives and children. His mother's kinsmen help him cultivate yams and make a life for himself but being away from his own place takes something out of him permanently. After seven years of exile, when he returns to Umuofia, he finds the winds of change have blown and it is too late to set things right. Okonkwo painfully and helplessly watches on as the white man takes over his people, their way of life, religion, government and finally loses his son, Nwoye to the white man's religion. New religious beliefs and systems of justice are thrust upon the people of Umuofia and cracks begin to appear in their way of life. Achebe writes in a understated manner: "There were many men and women in Umuofia who did not feel as strongly as Okonkwo about the new dispensation. The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia." (161) In the clash of cultures, the white man fails to understand the self-containment of the Igbo social order and disrespects their age old practices.

Achebe maintains a neutral stance in his narration, in that, he does not condemn the white man's actions openly, but only gives the sequence of events. It is this quality of understatement that provides eloquence to his account. Okonkwo's distress is fully credible and quite reminiscent of the nostalgia for the past that Adam experiences after being banished from Paradise. It is experienced more as the loss of a state of being than a geographical location. The feeling of being uprooted and alienated is uncannily similar, so much so that, it is undeniably a trope. To quote the most poignant lines in the novel: "Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the war-like men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women." (165)

Okonkwo, in a final warrior like act of defiance kills the messenger sent by the white administrators and commits suicide in his own compound rather than submitting to their justice. It is ironic that Igbo custom does not permit them to give him a decent burial, since suicide is condemned as the worst abomination. Okonkwo's body has to be taken down the tree and buried by the whites. His death assumes tragic significance in the face of the Igbo's fate as a whole, which is to surrender to the economic-military power of the white man. The most obvious sign of the destruction of Igbo culture and its authority is the repression of Igbo voices at the end of the novel. Colonialism

imposes its grammar and henceforth represents the African as a subject with neither a voice nor a logos. The story of the Fall, as part of the creation myth provides the vision with which to understand the colonized subject's distress and state of being before and after the colonial encounter very evidently in the novel discussed.

By allowing the District Commissioner's voice to take hold of the narrative at the end of the novel, Achebe achieves the twin purpose of lending an ironic twist as well as moving the context from the particular to the general. The irony lies in the fact that the tragic story of the mighty warrior Okonkwo is relegated to a paragraph in the commissioner's proposed history book. The story of the Igbo has recurred in the entire African continent wherever the encounter with the white man took place. It assumes the stature of a legend in its broad sweep and becomes part of their racial memory for all times to come.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O describes the ideal function of re-education in these words: "(the colonizer) would like to have a slave who not only accepts that he is a slave, but that he is a slave because he is fated to be nothing else but a slave. Hence he must be grateful to the master for his magnanimity in enslaving him to a higher, nobler civilization". (qtd. in Nesbit, para 3, lines 4-5)

These lines foreground the ideal slave psyche which the colonizer wants to achieve in the colonized subject. This explains the fascination the "still mentally colonized psyche" of even the intellectual and elite classes of newly independent countries, where there is a constant need for the white man's approval.

This perspective applies easily to the protagonist Antoinette's condition in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Briefly, the novel is a retelling of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* from the point of view of Antoinette, renamed Bertha. The novel is a prequel to Brontë's novel and hence, Rhys has to reconstruct Bertha Mason's early life in the Caribbean before being brought by force as it were to England to be locked up in the attic in Rochester's house, Thornfield. Rochester, without being named as such is given a voice in the novel. As Eimer Page puts it, "Rhys divides the speaking voice between Rochester and Antoinette, thus avoiding the suppression of alternative voices which she recognizes in Brontë's text." (para 1 lines 2-3) The trope of an idyllic Eden which is lost to Antoinette after her ill-fated marriage to Rochester and the nostalgia for the lost freedom and innocence of a close to nature existence of the past pervades yet another classic postcolonial novel. Antoinette's meeting with Rochester, his marrying her for her wealth, and his growing resentment and patronizing attitude towards her place and people mark the Fall for her.

She desperately seeks to win his love and even resorts to obeah with her servant Christophine's help. Christophine is a strong presence throughout the novel and a reminder of the way things were. There is a literal relocation of the characters in the novel from Coulibri, Jamaica to Granbois, Dominica. ('Granbois' meaning the great forest/woods)

The novel is a classic illustration of writing back to the empire from the colony and foregrounds the often neglected, oppressive condition of the Creoles, who were on the margins of Caribbean society after the Emancipation Act(1833), alienated as they were from the blacks and colonizers alike. There are references to their marginalized existence early on in the novel when Antoinette is shunned by the black girl Tia and called a "white nigger" and as being worse than "black niggers".(8) In spite of the racial slurs faced by Antoinette and her mother Annette, there is a sense of belonging and happiness they feel about the place. This is evident in a single, simple but beautiful line in the first few pages of the novel, describing their house in Coulibri in these words: "Our garden was large and beautiful, the tree of life grew there." Fecundity and life abound in the images of the island. The lines in which she recollects the image of her house are filled with nostalgia, "From a long way off I saw the shadow of our house high up on its stone foundations. There was a smell of ferns and river water and I felt safe again, as if I was one of the righteous."(15) Antoinette is also expressing guilt that arises out of being on the wrong side, socially and economically, at all times as a Creole in Caribbean society. The peace that she feels at home, however marginalized she might be, even as a child are expressed in these lines, soon after her mother wakes her after she has had a nightmare and puts her to bed: "I lay thinking, 'I am safe. There is a corner of the bedroom door and the friendly furniture. There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. The barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers.'" (10)

Part II of the novel has Rochester's narrative. It is evident that camouflaged in his initial feelings of excitement mixed with feelings of recoil at the exotic colours, the flora and fauna and the fragrances of the place is his lust for Antoinette and the need to possess her to the point of reducing her to a shell of her previous vivacious persona. The reader can see the consistency in Rochester's treatment of Jane early on in *Jane Eyre* too in this aspect. Even as Rochester gains control of the narrative, Antoinette loses her speaking voice and in a desperate attempt to salvage her marriage, seeks the obeah woman, Christophine. In contrast to the overtly Christian Jane with whom she shares many similarities, Antoinette is cynical about God and religion in general.

Jean Rhys, in an interview has said, "The most seriously wrong thing with part II is that I've made the obeah woman, the nurse too articulate." Christophine is a strong

presence throughout the novel but especially so in Part II. She is clearly, at least in Rochester's view, Satan, who tempts Antoinette to transgress. Christophine, however, can be seen as her only source of strength in her trapped existence with Rochester.

A reference in the novel to the crowing of the cock signifies Judas' betrayal, with the moot question being, "Who is the traitor?" There is further relocation and distancing from home across the sea to the "cold country", England. With her confinement in Thornfield referred to as "The Great House", madness and morbidity in Antoinette, now renamed Bertha, climax in her death wish till finally, she is faced with the choice of destroying herself in Thornfield. The feelings of the protagonist after leaving Eden(Home/Caribbean) serve as a springboard to the novelist to foreground issues of identity and power dynamics between England and the Caribbean as also, sexuality and madness, female isolation and anguish, subjugation and survival. There is a powerful scene of Antoinette who has no mirror in Thornfield and it resonates with Jane looking at herself in the mirror at several points in *Jane Eyre*. The resonance in this case, is to draw the contrast in their situations. Jane is permitted to flower and grow, whereas Bertha is stifled. The following lines speak volumes: "There is no looking- glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her.

But the glass was between us – hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (116) This is the nature of the angst she experiences. There is a clear loss of the sense of self after her Fall.

Rhys leaves the conclusion of the novel open ended with multiple possibilities for the protagonist and in this sense, seems affirmative. It concludes with her about to start the fire: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do." (123) This signifies her freedom and the attainment of selfhood from being "the other" in Brontë's novel. Redemption after the Fall brought about by her encounter with colonial oppression personified by Rochester, perhaps can only come through death?

Rhys masterfully maintains and deepens the gothic elements of the story. While rewriting a much canonized classic, she writes back to the empire. One could read traces of a demythification of sorts of the story of the Fall, in that the protagonist is ready to even embrace death in the face of the loss of her Eden.

Joseph Campbell said in *Open Life*, "The imagery of mythology is symbolic of spiritual powers within us". (Moyers, para 12, lines 1-2) This seems to be Alice Walker's main contention too in her novel, *The Temple of My Familiar*. The novel reads as her treatise

on the history of racism and the dignified and rich cultural heritage of African people. It remains one of the most eloquent and powerful acts of writing back in the history of postcolonial writing till date. The story of the Fall and loss of Eden in the novel recurs like a leitmotif in the stories of various births that Lissie, the main narrator/protagonist tells. Her various accounts of the loss of Eden through her different births, mainly through violent interventions by the white man, become the springboards to re/tell the history of Africa and colonization of the continent. Walker even re/covers the myth of the Black Madonna, who is still worshipped in Poland but originating in Africa as a goddess. Walker's 'womanism' informs the stories woven into each other in intricate patterns, reminiscent of 'quilting' and in the way of oral tradition. Lissie's narratives are interwoven with Zede's a woman of colour from Latin America, who in desperation escapes from the violence and oppression at home to reach San Francisco with her daughter Carlotta.

Lissie's mythical stories encompass a 50,000 year time span, when African tribes lived with their ape cousins and learnt from them to live in harmony with nature. In another birth, Lissie, born as a white man with Husa, the lion as a familiar knows paternal love only from the lion. These bygone eras speak of man with nature in Africa which give way to man over nature with the advent of the white man and his guns.

The novel includes heart rending accounts of the middle passage and sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children with the birth of mulattos and setting foot in the New World in chains. Walker beautifully weaves in slave narratives. Lissie's narratives have healing effects on contemporary Afro-American couples like Suwelo, Fanny, Arveyda (named after Ayurveda) and Carlotta. Love as a healing force is the common thread that holds the stories together.

Walker, in several ways subverts the story of the Fall from Eden beginning with the story of a python who takes care of the tribal children to the mythic story of Ba, an African tribal girl's familiar by inverting the stereotype of the serpent as Satan and foregrounding the divine aspect of snakes in myth. Walker takes a holistic view of life in the universe and speaks as an ecofeminist of the need to live in harmony with nature. She is also not in confrontation with men and sees them as equally in need of healing. She assigns a crucial role to the Erotic and does not compartmentalize sexuality and spirituality and restores both to a place along with the sacred. This is evident in the evolution of the contemporary American couples in the novel and the transformation wrought over them. A new religion heralded in by Shug and Celie (who are living legends in the novel), espouses and blends Walker's close- to- heart theme of womanism.

In this sense, this novel surpasses the others, as it does not stop at nostalgia after the Fall from grace (namely, the event of the colonial encounter), but seeks to set history

right by rewriting it, re/storing and re/affirming the place of people of colour, not just Africans but throughout the world. J.M. Coetzee reads the novel as tracing three stages in human evolution which Lissie lives through. First when humans discover fire, they live in separate male and female tribes with familiars. Second is the age of pygmies, a happy age with visits back and forth with each other and with apes. Third, the time of war waged by Europe against the great goddess of Africa, the instrument of this warfare being slave trade. In Walker's counter myth "Africa is the cradle of true religion and civilization". (para 5 lines 4-5)

Walker is able to accomplish this by examining and overturning the very myths white men have used to claim superiority and colonise, and she embarks on a literary-archaeological expedition as it were, to tell the way it was from the African point of view. The scope of the retelling straddles issues like the corruption, enslavement and fall of matriarchal societies to the goddess myths and Amazonian tribes, stripped of their freedom, subject to erasure of their history and culture.

As is evidenced in the texts studied, the story of the Fall serves as a springboard to narrate stories of the other Fall, signifying the colonial encounter in each case, loss of Paradise as a way of life and ethos, nostalgia for the lost Eden and salvation/restoration of selfhood coming after great sacrifices and even death of the protagonists. Subverting of the myth itself, as it happens overtly in Walker's novel, results in questioning a major paradigm that has dominated Western imagination, that of the Creation myth. Although writers do not overtly use the Fall story, it plays itself out as echoes of its emotions and images resonate in these works. As Northrop Frye says, myths are usually intended to convey special knowledge, what in religion is called revelation. Knowledge of the colonial experience conveyed by the writers studied borders on great revelations. Myths can often become etched permanently in the collective unconscious even cutting across cultural boundaries as archetypes and this appears to be so with the tragic story of the Fall.

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Myths Then and Today: An Analysis of the (Re)Creation of the Mahabharata by Women Writers

Kirti Y. Nakhare

As far back as we can trace human history, the human (homo) community has always participated in narrating (naran) stories. These stories are known by different names. Myths being one of them are the most complex and malleable of all forms. Myths began as primitive religious narratives. They were at times accused of being false, fictitious and far-removed from life. Some scholars considered them to be sacred narratives and assumed that they were literally true.

Myths hold an important position in human psychology and society, as it is through them that we can delve into the past. They hold a key to our future. Carl Jung, expressed that all human societies go through the same stages of intellectual and cultural development and that nature and psyche are the same in all human beings. He thus considered the psychological processes to be manifested in the same way in our expressive behaviour across ages, through our myths. That is why probably, we have similar birth, evolution myths across cultures.

With a systematic breakdown in the joint family set-up, myths are no longer handed down to us through our urban-educated-in-English parents. It is partly through media representations including T.V. serials (thanks to B. R. Chopra and Ramanand Sagar), films and plays based on the plots culled from our epics (where mythical characters, often shorn of their complexities, are reduced to stereotypes) are most of us here, products of nuclear families, introduced to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata-the repositories of Hindu mythology.

It is with this media exposure, relevant reading and interaction with people, that I realised that in our country, myths have a long tradition; and how we see ourselves collectively or individually depends a great deal upon our myths. These are a part of our psyche, part of our cultural histories. Also our epics and Puranas are with us in every step of our lives; we can see them in our conversations, dances, songs, poems, proverbs and also in our films.

Writers in India often go to epics in search of some truths about themselves and their conditions. The values in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are still an intrinsic part of us.

To quote Prof. Dandekar,

“If there is any one single work which has proved to be of the greatest significance in the making of the life and thought of Indian people and whose tradition continues to live even to this day and influence, in one way or another, the various aspects of Indian life, it is the Mahabharata.” (A Toppling World-View, Writing from the Margin, Pg199)

Commenting on the malleability of our epics, the poet and scholar, the late A. K. Ramanujan, in an essay titled ‘Three Hundred Ramayanas’, asks, ‘How many Ramayanas? Three Hundred? Three Thousand?’ Here he focuses on the easy adaptability of these oral narratives to suit different contexts, locales, by different people.

In the same manner by going back to the epics, women writers retell these stories from their own unique point of view. Women writers all over India, in all languages have been exploring myths. However, while retelling stories, women writers, need to first have a language of their own. Words and ideas cannot mean the same to women as they mean to men, because the meanings of words have been built round the interests of men. Women, have not participated in the process of word making. These thoughts resonate in the Afterword to *The Stone Women*, by Shashi Deshpande, where she states that “...the basic problem is that not only myths have originated with men, their interpretation has also been in male hands.” (Pg87)

Besides, all women in myths have been created by men to fulfil their various needs, “There is the eternal child to be protected and controlled, the self-sacrificing mother to nurture and cherish the child, the chaste partner to guarantee exclusive rights and an undoubted paternity of children and the temptress to titillate and provide sexual gratification. There is also the goddess to provide morality. What place does a real, thinking, feeling woman have in this agenda?” (‘Telling Our Own Stories’, Writing from the Margin and Other Essays, Pg 90)

In a similar vein, Simone de Beauvoir, feels that “Women have no virile myths in which their projects are reflected, they still dream through the dreams of men. Gods made by males are the gods they worship.” (Afterword, *The Stone Women*, Pg 88). The Mahabharata was also supposedly composed by sage Vyasa (again, a man!), who played a part in the events and was an eye witness to many of them. So was the Ramayana, by Valmiki.

A possible solution to this issue could be by replacing these ideal male- devised mythological models with ‘replacement models’. Elaborating on the term ‘replacement models’, Chaman Nahal writes:

“It is very difficult to construct a replacement model. One cannot escape the myth-the conditioning myth with which one has grown up. Unless we construct new myths, we cannot construct replacement models. We all revere Sita and Savitri; they did something out of loyalty, out of dedication. We may not like it today, but can we disown them? We cannot escape the myths, so, the replacement models are to be constructed in the context of the myths we already have.” (‘Feminism in English Fiction: From and Variations’, *Feminism and Recent English Fiction*)

Women writers dealt with in this paper -Shashi Deshpande, Irawati Karve, Mahasweta Devi and Pratibha Ray, have precisely tried to construct new myths in the context of the myths already existing in the Mahabharata. These writers have probed the minds of iconic male and female characters from the Mahabharata and have presented them with voices that have sensibilities of today.

In *The Stone Women*, a novella, Shashi Deshpande uses myth as a technique. It is through these short stories, to which the epic provides a common background, the author has tried to revisit her mythological sisters. She has tapped their feminist consciousness from an awakened woman’s point of view.

The artist Shashi Deshpande carves beautiful images in this text. The first story *The Stone Women*, after which the novella takes its title, speaks volumes about the depiction of women throughout ages in architecture found all across India. These stone women epitomise the passions and desires of men who have carved them out of stone, thus women are uniformly depicted as, “..lush-bodied, high-breasted women carved on rectangular stone panels, leaning provocatively out of them, towards us, it seems.” (*The Stone Women*, Pg11)

On a metaphorical level the title includes the entire female fraternity from the past to the present. Just like the female protagonist in the story, a young, newly married woman, who has to be on her guard to assert her individual existence, so do we have to be alert constantly and keep breaking new ground in all areas of life or else run the risk of being one of the stone women; frozen for all time into a pose willed by the creator. Shashi Deshpande sends out a strong message-to carve a unique identity or exist forever in the form of stone women.

In *The Inner Rooms*, she invades the mind space of Amba and her two sisters, abducted by Bhishma, at the time of their swayamwara, for getting them married to Vichitravirya, ‘a puppet in the hands of Bhishma’. Amba, an anachronism in her time, has a mind of her own and speaks for herself. She refuses to bow down to the rules of the game formulated by the Bhishmas of the world. She expresses her love for the king of

Saubha, Salva, who with a ruptured ego, refuses to 'accept' Ambaas; he is 'defeated' by Bhishma at the swayamwara. Accepting her would mean disgracing to his manhood.

This proves to be a turning point in Amba's life, she questions at this juncture, "honour, dishonour, right, wrong-what are these but words used by a man to cover their real emotions?" (The Stone Women, Pg 21). Amba realises that it is pointless to continue being a pawn in the hands of patriarchy, wilfully chooses her own nirvana by choosing death over a life of servitude, echoing probably the thoughts of Satan in Paradise Lost, "Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

And what has been decided, brings the reader and Draupadi face- to- face with the intentions of the Pandavas. The Pandavas, who are ready to settle with just five villages, had conveniently forgotten the insults Draupadi suffered at the Kuru court.

"Give us five villages –we ask for no more. One village for each one of us. And there will be peace." (The Stone Women, Pg 25)

Thus, Draupadi is forced to think, "We will forget-yes, even more easily-what they did to me, we will never think of the hands that touched me so cruelly, we will never remember the words they spoke to me. And all those oaths we took that day, the promises we made-yes ,we will forget them too." (The Stone Women, Pg 28)

The fact that promises made to women did not mean much, they were so light that they could be easily blown away. The fact that men spoke a different language and their promises were too hollow and could be negotiated is experienced by Draupadi, when she is disillusioned by the disinterest shown by the Pandavas in avenging her insults .

The anti-climax is experienced when all efforts at getting what the Pandavas want from the Kauravas fall flat, and they (Pandavas) put up a show as though they have obliged Draupadi and agreed to go to war as the *Queen wanted it!* Here, Shashi Deshpande brings to fore the Janus-faced patriarchy that we all have experienced at some point or the other in our lives.

In Hear Me Sanjaya, the hard hearted, not so beautiful Kunti engages Sanjaya, the messenger in a dialogue, which ends up as a monologue. Hardened by circumstances, forced to become a charioteer of her own life, Kunti is forced to take decisions not ruled by her heart but by her intellect. Wronged by her biological and adoptive father, unable to acknowledge her son born unwittingly and finally being cursed by her own eldest born, Yudhishtira, for having kept the secret of Karna's birth. Kunti is a face of so many women we come across in our lives, who do not experience love from any

quarter, yet carry out their responsibilities with dedication; in the process if they wrong the Draupadis or Karnasin life, they feel it is justified keeping in mind the big picture of life.

Mirrors-reflects the life of Sachidevi, Indra's beautiful queen, who devotedly functions as a mirror, which inspite of her husband's womanising and wanderings, reflects the image that he wishes to see the image of a hero, the irresistible conqueror of men and of women; basically the king who could do no wrong. Although Nahusha's wife, her counterfoil, creates awareness of the boundless power a woman possesses, yet Sachidevi is not empowered enough to walk out of the palace. She still continues to be a mirror, albeit an enlightened one. Here one is reminded of socialite wives, who inspite of their spouses' infidelity, carry on with the sham called marriage as several things are at stake. However, the powerless Sachidevi does not give up hope, when she says, "...power came out of your courage, your strength." That was no illusion." I don't have them, no, not as yet. But perhaps someday." (*The Stone Women*, Pg62)

The Day of the Golden Deer is Sita's evaluation of Lord Rama as being the victim of his own ideas of himself. He was still chasing the golden deer of perfection, while she had surrendered the golden deer-she had given up on the idea of perfection in any man, in any human for that matter. Here Sita is portrayed like any other woman, who has been through the entire gamut of peaks and troughs in the form of expectation, disillusionment in relationships and finally an acceptance of life as it is.

The Story, is a mythical account of the material obsession in human beings that starts with possession of materialistic things and ends up with possessing the perfect feminine being, that is illusionary. This craving for perfection leads to frustration and ends up in loss of the meaning of life.

Shashi Deshpande deconstructs the mythical image of women created by men in a systematic manner. The image created by men depict these women from the Mahabharata, with an angelic halo, submitting to the demands of their men without a whimper of protest. However, it should be understood that the way the exalted virtues of tolerance, kindness and faithfulness are accepted as female traits, in the same vein self-assertion should not be seen as a contrast but as a trait arising out of these virtues. In *The Stone Women*, although the contexts, figures and situations are mythological; the responses and reactions are akin to contemporary women.

Shashi Deshpande gained insight into the Mahabharata after she read Irawati Karve's *Yuganta*. To quote Shashi Deshpande on the influence of *Yuganta*, "Her (Irawati Karve's) readings of the characters in the Mahabharata showed me how differently a woman would view these characters; her interpretations made the women (and even the men) much more real and plausible-at least to me." (*The Stone Women*, Pg 88).

This radically new approach of viewing the Mahabharata, by Irawati Karve, spurred me on to take up *Yuganta* as the second text for this paper and *to set off* on a fascinating journey.

Irawati Karve's approach to the epic in *Yuganta* is that of an anthropologist-mercilessly practical, often giving the impression that she has put her characters under a microscope, thus presenting a clinical analysis of their motives. She adopts an historical approach to the text. She does not deal with the religious aspects of the epic stating those to be later interpolations. To her, like other Indians, it is not an imaginary tale, it represents real events that took place around 1000 B.C. The Mahabharata was called *Jaya* (victory), in its earliest form of narration. It was a poem of triumph and told of victory of a particular king over his rival kingsmen. For centuries there have been additions to it and today we have various versions of the epic.

Irawati Karve breaks new ground when she holds Bhishma responsible, the most respected character in the epic, for having wronged two generations of women, who face hardships in life due to his oath to celibacy. He had wronged Amba, who cursed him and had to take another birth as Shikhandi to avenge the insult of her previous birth. Ambika and Ambalika (abducted along with Amba at the swayamwara), were forced to unite with the horrible looking, dark complexioned, red-eyed man with unkempt hair- Vyasa- "these poor women were so repulsed at his sight", that they were forced to substitute a maid servant for the third time instead of offering themselves.

Bhishma wronged the second set of women-Gandhari, Kunti and Madri-by getting them as brides for the flawed princes of the Kuru dynasty. In his zeal to perpetuate the Kuru house, he humiliated and disgraced these women. Only Shishupala had the courage to denounce Bhishma at the yajna held by Yudhishtira, for wronging Amba and accusing him of being impotent not celibate.

Karve states that there was no attitude of chivalry towards women during the Mahabharata but none was as callous as Bhishma. Karve questions, "Had Bhishma achieved anything in keeping his vows?" (*Yuganta*, Pg29) In today's scenario we have many head strong patriarchs, who like Bhishma assume a difficult role i.e to take decisions on behalf of their children, and have to play their part to the end. Honour killings, the Khap Panchayat are manifestations of the rigid principles adopted by Bhishmas of today, at the hands of whom many Ambas are sacrificed.

The character of Gandhari is well etched; she wilfully opts to blind herself against all injustices. Dhritarashtra accepts in this text, having wronged her and pleads for forgiveness. Gandhari realises that only love can heal and establish bonds, which forces her to open her blind fold.

At the end she holds her husband's hand and walks towards the pyre (forest fire). If not in life, in death, she is united with her husband.

Kunti is wronged by every man in her life. Kunti establishes the fact that a woman is considered only to be a field to produce children from any man her father or husband wished. Born as Pritha, to Shurasena, her biological father gave her away to Kuntibhoja to have an heir, since Kuntibhoja did not have a daughter who could be used to wait on the Brahmin sage, out of whose blessings he could get his progeny.

Kunti's staying with a Brahmin for a year could result in the birth of a child (Karna), was no extraordinary occurrence. This scientific argument helps in busting the birth myth of Karna. Furthermore the maid also helped Kunti in disposing of the child thus born, with lots of gold, thus supporting the fact that this eventuality was foreseen and was provided for by Kuntibhoja, when he gave her to the Brahmana.

This son was a source of sorrow all through her life. One father gave her away to a friend that was the source of one sorrow, the adoptive father gave her in marriage to an impotent man Pandu, that was the source of another sorrow, the rest of her sorrows were the result of this union. After Pandu's and Madri's death, she had to drudge the path of life single-handedly with her sons. Knowing the fact well that marriages amongst the Kshatriyas were motivated by political needs rather than love, she got all her sons married to Draupadi, so that the brothers would remain united. She insisted on Bhima marrying Hidimba; and the son born of this union proved to be an asset at the Kurukshetra war.

A true Kshatriya woman, she never complained about the adversitiesshe had to face. Instead, when she found her eldest son craving for peace and not war, she goaded him into action with her harsh words.

Finally, she atoned for her lifelong sin of not having acknowledged Karna as her son, by asking Yudhishtira to perform his last rites. She died the way she lived, unbending, consumed by the forest fire.

Draupadi, born out of the yajna fire, gave the Pandavas their status and the reason to remain united lifelong. Karve calls her, 'Nathavatianathavat' (having husbands, but like a widow) (Yuganta, Pg 91) as each time she is dishonoured, her husbands and fathers-in-law stand watching in silence. Each agony of the dying Yuga, Draupadi suffered in her own person.

The disrobing episode, where Draupadi suffered at the hands of patriarchy finds semblance in society even today, as the values of our society even today are misplaced. Victimising a woman comes easy in the patriarchal society, that tells its men they are right in 'putting a woman in her place'.

“The recent Guwahati incident where a teenager was groped, violated, molested for more than thirty minutes in full public glare showed the world that the men committing this heinous act were neither deterred by the fact that they were in public place, nor the fact that it was being recorded.” (Times Life, ‘Why the molester won’t be deterred any time soon.’)

The fact that molestation is a cognizable, but bailable offence in India did not act as a deterrent. Similarly the presence of seniors at the Kuru court did not deter the revenge-driven Kauravas.

Also the hair-raising account of the sexual assault on the British journalist Natasha Smith by an unrelenting mob of hundreds of men at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, reminds us of the humiliation that Draupadi must have experienced. Violation against women, thus continues to be a trend with onlookers present, sadly through ages, universally.

Draupadi is also blamed for having caused the Mahabharata, according to the Jain Purana. In actuality the day Dhritrashtra was denied the throne due to his blindness and Pandu was made king, the seeds of war were sown. Draupadi did not cause the war, she wanted it but as true inheritors of Indian patriarchal society that they were, the Pandavas were hardly men to bow down to their wives wishes.

Draupadi’s questioning whether Yudhishthira had staked himself before he staked her, before her disrobing, was supposed to be the cause of all misfortunes that ensued. Instead of asking questions, she should have begged for forgiveness. However, technically sound the question was, it was seen as the height of pretentiousness; a young Kshatriya-bride showing off her knowledge in front of elders was hardly appreciated. Yudhishthira called her a ‘Lady Pandit’, hardly a compliment in the eyes of the Kshatriyas of the Mahabharata. Although like a modern woman Draupadi tried to salvage her dignity with her reasoning, yet this part of her was not acceptable to patriarchy as intelligence and scholarship were considered a male prerogative.

In spite of roughing it through life, the worst allegation made by Yudhishthira, when they set out on their last journey where Draupadi was the first to fall, was of her loving Arjuna more all through her life. This was the worst accusation that a devoted wife could take; especially after having sacrificed everything to carry on the balancing act successfully all through life.

In *Yuganta*, Irawati Karve paints a huge canvas called the Mahabharata making it relevant even today. By demystifying all characters and presenting them with clay feet, we find a bit

of ourselves in Kunti, Gandhari and Draupadi and can completely identify with them in their reactions to situations. Karve's interpretation of the Mahabharata reveals that all human life ends in frustration and human toil, expectations, hates and friendship –all seem puny, without substance.

We should consider ourselves fortunate to be part of such heritage that offers us myths which when altered a little can easily suit current times. To sum up the significance of the epic in Irawati Karve's own words, 'I am indeed fortunate that I can read today a story called Jaya, which was sung three thousand years ago, and discover myself in it.' (Yuganta, Pg 217)

In *After Kurukshetra*, Mahasweta Devi presents the battle of the Mahabharata and its immediate aftermath. The three short stories present a convincing and consistent picture of the 'other' and the 'marginalised'. Mahasweta Devi speaks of women from a woman's point of view, in a woman's language, marked by thoughts and feelings that mainstream literature wishes to sideline.

Through all the three stories, she reveals the woman's side of the Kurukshetra war. The first of the three titled, *The Five Women*, is about young lokavritta (common people) war widows. These widowed young women are courageous enough to accompany their husbands to war, but watch them fighting from far. They have no illusions about life; they are very clear that there would be no chariots descending from Divyalok to deliver their husband's souls as they did not consider the war to be holy. Where blood was thirsty for the blood of the same family was not their idea of a Dharma." Brother kills brother, uncle kills nephew, shishya kills guru. It may be your idea of dharma. It is not ours." (*After Kurukshetra*, Pg 26). They are aware of their rights, their power and lead dignified lives that are very close to nature.

The Rajavritta (royalty) have completely different notions of life. Devi has juxtaposed the life of the naïve Uttara, Abhimanyu's wife with the life of these five women. In spite of being war widows of the foot soldiers, these five women, named after five rivers, have more aspirations and dreams of the life that lay ahead. "We need husbands, we need children." "... We will create life!" (*After Kurukshetra*, Pg 25) For as long as there was life, they believed in fulfilling its demands and not repressing it like the Rajavritta.

On the other hand, Uttara's life, after the child would be born and handed over to royal care after a year, would be full of penance, prescribed rituals and rites and self-denial. Devi tears the velvety veneer of the Rajavritta and exposes what lies beneath - unpreparedness and ignorance amongst the Rajavritta about the brass tacks of real life.

Kunti and the Nishadin, deals with Kunti's inner mindscape. She has repressed herself throughout her life, and gives a vent in the form of a monologue. Her life in the Rajavritta has been full of playing different roles, where there was no space of being her true self. She confesses all her sins, but not the heinous crime where to save herself and the Pandavas, she burns a Nishadin (a tribal woman) and her five sons. The nishadin who confronts her is the eldest daughter in law of the nishadin; who along with her five sons was then brutally burnt to death.

She makes Kunti realise that harming innocents in their self-interest is the most unpardonable of all sins. The nishadin believes in poetic justice and tells Kunti of the fate that awaits her in the form of the forest fire which she would be unable to escape.

Souvali, the third story in the text reveals the self-righteousness of Souvali, a prostitute in service of Dhritarashtra. She gives birth to Dhritarashtra's son named Souvalya or Yuyutsu. She does not follow the rituals that a widow should follow, when Dhritarashtra is dead, as she is very clear that her son and she were of no great consequence to the king when he was alive. Also she tells Vyasa who was to write the Mahabharata, that she did not even want a mention. She wants her son to realise that in spite of him having fought the battle from the Pandava's side, he should not expect them to accept him as their own.

In *After Kurukshetra* - Mahasweta Devi is not re-writing history or the epic for the contemporary peasant or tribal community as the nishadins of the Mahabharata cannot match the people in contemporary times. Mahasweta Devi is not trying to displace or replace the canonized version with an alternate reading of the epics, she uses it as a tool to open us up to different feelings, emotions and situations that are unexpected.

In *Yajnaseni*, originally written by Pratibha Ray in Oriya and translated in English By Pradeep Bhattacharya, the epic is viewed from the point of view of Draupadi. The epic is in the form of a letter that starts backwards chronologically. In this text Draupadi is clearly aware of the purpose of her birth i.e to establish dharma and annihilate evil. Born nubile out of the sacrificial altar of dharma, the prophecy at her birth is to establish dharma and destroy the Kauravas. This dictates the misfortunes that she has to face all through her life. She takes every difficulty in her stride and proves to be a faithful daughter, a chaste wife. She endures different husbands with different dispositions, with hardly any physical or mental space left.

Ray questions whether it is Draupadi's pride in her learning and wisdom that has led to her downfall. Ray's Draupadi is a woman trapped by circumstances; one cannot but help sympathising with the Draupadi created by Ray. However, Ray has also portrayed her as an

‘agent of change’ in her time and honours her for holding the Pandavas together; but for Draupadi, the Pandavas wouldn’t have functioned as one single force to be reckoned with.

These representations by different writers of the Mahabharata drive home the fact that we are not much different from our mythical counterparts. These texts teach us to stand our ground and to fend for ourselves. We could also imbibe the virtue of patience and tolerance which we are losing out today. When we talk about needing space in a relationship, we need to remind ourselves of the near claustrophobic life that Draupadi would have led, with no physical or mental space whatsoever. Similarly, when we think of self-respect, sacrifice and about compromises made in life, we can reassure ourselves that things can’t get worse than what Gandhari, Kunti and Draupadi would have faced.

The pressing need of the hour however, is a paradigm shift in the way women are to be treated in society today, for which we need to sow permanent seeds of change. This can only happen by changing men inherently, by teaching our boys to respect women and to put them first.

Tomorrow definitely holds the promise of a better man as long as we catch them young and train them right.

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The Need for an Integrative Model of Myth Making (A Viewpoint)

Dr. Avinash Desousa

Arguably, the realm of neurobiology and myth provides a fertile area for research and analysis for young scientists to explore. The universality of myth may be suggested to offer a “novel environmental stimuli” which enables participants with a degree of ontological security within their cognizant environment. Myths provide templates for organizing life, assisting during life crises and self discovery. Myths may deliver psychological healing and directs human consciousness through various life stages, and for mitigating the potential for psychological fragmentation. Myth narratives play a part in arousing sub-cortical levels in the brain’s limbic areas which coordinate affective states. In this sense, myth serves as a neural model for its motor expression ritual.

Characteristic of myth and ritual sequences in many societies is there capitulation of the mythical world, its entities, animals, places and objects. The mythical world is “created by the process of classification and the repetition of the classification of itself perpetuates the knowledge which it incorporates”. An understanding of myth demands a neurobiological examination of those brain areas where myth and ritual are generated. As suggested, that the study of human behaviour under the auspices of social science needs to locate human symbol making capacity to human biology. Human beings are biological beings with a unique propensity towards symbolic construction. The crowning point of human beings is an advanced central nervous system of massive parallel capacity for complex problem solving and self awareness. The human brain consists of approximately 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion synaptic connections; an extensive neuronal network operating a vast range of cognitive functions. Human cognitive functions are vehicled via cortical maps, connecting the neo-cortex, limbic and complex areas of the brain. This neuronal circuitry is a multifarious feedback system which modifies “multiple and parallel mappings of sensory surfaces,” and interactions with motivational and affective “structures in subcortical areas”. The neurosensory system responds to certain patterns of stimulation which are proffered by myth and ritual to the production of arousal, ecstasy, distress, anger, calm. Representation of mythic and ritual patterns can be perpetuated, and “modified to produce variation, and communicate mimetically, dramatically, or symbolically to others, in storied forms which we learn and are socialized”. The brain has a triune level of organization, consisting of composite archaean limbic areas and the neocortex. Each part of the brain has a different phylogenetic history and “distinctive organization,” albeit, being interconnected by the neuronal network. The neocortex co-ordinates

abstract thinking, problem solving, language, and self reflexive consciousness, the birthplace of culture which modifies genetically programmed behaviour. “The evolutionary hypertrophy of the prefrontal cortex,” resulting in much of human higher brain functions characterises “human cognitive ability” such as the inventions of symbolic behaviour. The neuroplasticity of the neural tissue is subjected to the emergence of a supervenient symbolic world such as myth” and ritual. Consciousness is largely dependent on “somatic marking” such a ritual which foregrounds the body as mythic representation.

In addition, the brain consists of left and right hemispheres. The right brain hemisphere seems to be actively involved in the social world while the left brain hemisphere seems to be more receptive and private. More investigation needs to be done on the two brain hemispheres and symbolic emergence. The right brain hemisphere which coordinates intuitive, artistic and spatio-temporal modalities has been largely dismissed.

The construction of myth is inherent in the neural structure of the brain. From an evolutionary point of view, the problem solving capacities of myth which herald a cognitive imperative maybe regarded as being cultural advantageous to environmental adaptation. Myths are organized precisely because cognition demands order and existential mastery. Such “organization of reality into mythic structures” is seemingly innate and an immanent feature of the human brain. In short, humans cannot live without creating myths. As Hefner declares: “Our hardware is so made that we are open to the sacred”.

My overview of neurobiology to the study of myth as attempted to highlight areas in which memetics may be involved in such an analysis. Bateson’s ideas of high civilisation are important here. The pathologies of the present age indicate an over-emphasis of left brain hemispheric functions which have resulted in loss of adaptational strategies. This brain asymmetry needs to be redressed. The dilemma facing modern societies is one in which we are facing collective entropy due to widespread ecological degradation and loss of social flexibility. Bateson purports that a “budget of flexibility” of ideas is central to the workings of civilization and that the transmission of unwise ideas has led to our present pathology. Our present civilisation is in need of a more integrated brain function which harmonises left and right brain hemispheres. Myth assists in the training of the human instincts and emotional life. As I have shown, the neuroanthropology of the brain views myth as inculcating basic life principles. Mythogenesis is intertwined in the neural chasis; the biogenetic roots of myth have influenced human cultural and biological evolution. The memetic complex of myth is facilitated by ergotropic and trophotropic systems which when working in unison may generate new memes. These memes are transmitted in mythopoeic forms between human generations that produce new possibilities for cultural evolution.

Listening the Unheeded: Women Appropriating and Re telling Myths of Maddened Cassandra and Murderous Medea

Shaweta Nanda

One cannot help but notice the increasing engagement of contemporary or near contemporary women writers with Classical myths in their works. The first part of the paper explores the possible reasons behind this phenomenon. Myths are a fertile site in order to analyze the manner in which women have been perceived rather constructed and designed by patriarchy as silent, inferior, mad passive non entities, like Cassandra, or active monstrous creatures, like Medea, in the past. These myths are not dead but still continue to bind women in different guises thus, women writers explore how these mythic figures and stories have relevance for the present times too. The second part of the paper unravels the complex ways in which women writers engage with myths thereby propelling us to reconsider our conventional definitions and understanding of the term 'myth'. Myths no longer seem sacrosanct as women writers become "resisting readers" (J. Fetterley) who seek to appropriate, revise and re tell/ re write these "grand" patriarchal narratives from the feminist/ 'womanist' points of view. In doing so they radically "novelize" the myths by making them "dialogic" in nature by inserting polyphonic voices and accounts that intend to disrupt the hierarchy of the Greek male narratives, including those of Homer and Aeschylus.

Cassandra, daughter of the Trojan King Priam, had the gift of prophesy but was cursed by Apollo that no one would believe her once she refused to submit to him sexually. She was disbelieved, silenced, incarcerated, termed "mad," raped by various agents of patriarchy as recounted in the several versions of the Greek myth, especially in Homeric and Aeschylus's accounts. She is allowed to tell her narrative in Christa Woolf's *Kassandra*. Furthermore, she becomes symptomatic of the frustrations of the nineteenth century English woman in Florence Nightingale's autobiography *Cassandra* and is later deployed by America poet Lousie Bogan to underscore her plight and sense of alienation as a woman poet, who like Cassandra, is marginalized/ignored in the patriarchal set up. As opposed to Cassandra who is presented as a "pitiable" victim, Medusa is denigrated and castigated in the Greek myths as an evil witch, a vengeful lover and a murderous mother. She is reinvented in Christa Woolf's *Medea* which gives "counter version" of classical male representations of Medusa.

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) who has been enshrined in the public memory as the "haloed lady with the lamp" and upheld as an ideal loving nurse, surprisingly,

named her autobiographical essay *Cassandra* (1852), thereby, deploying the image of a highly beautiful but deranged woman, shrieking and shouting through the streets of Troy significant prophecies about the impending doom and destruction that will obliterate the entire Trojan race. However, she disbelieved, incarcerated and declared mad by her family, countrymen and her enemies alike. Nightingale appropriates the figure Cassandra in order to underscore not only how women have been oppressed by patriarchy in the past but more disturbingly, Cassandra also becomes symbolic of plight of women in the Victorian society.

Victorian society despite being ruled by a female monarch created a dichotomy between the public domain of power and politics that was occupied by man who was considered to be 'rational', strong and active and the woman who was considered to be emotional, weak and passive and who was associated with the private domain of domesticity and motherhood. In patriarchal Victorian society, women were accorded the status of "property" that was bartered by the father to the husband. A woman had no identity, freedom of choice and free will as she was denied political rights (especially the right to vote), right to property and even that of her own body. One of the primary causes of women's degraded state was their lack of economic independence. Despite having education, women suffered on two counts. Firstly, they had no vocational training. Secondly, there were no respectable job options available for them. They could earn money only as a prostitute, school teacher, governess or a factory worker. None of the job options were respectable and/or well paid. In the absence of a suitable vocation, women were forced to be ideal and waste their time and abilities in beautifying the body, doing needlework, painting, singing, playing, making plans to charm/ entice an eligible bachelor, discussing balls and parties and making innumerable social visits without any attention to intellectual development or creation of identity. This is the kind of life that Nightingale came to despise. In one of her letters to Mary Clarke she expressed her frustration with such a futile life : "what is my business in this world and what have I done this forthright?"

In such a scenario, Nightingale deploys the figure of Cassandra to underscore the constricting and demeaning condition of women in 19th century British society. Cassandra is a seer. She is endowed with power to prognosticate. However, in the patriarchal society she is rendered powerless as she is cursed by Apollo that no one would believe in her prophecies. Thus, Nightingale argues that 19th century women, like Cassandra, have the desire, will and moral agency to act and work, however they have been rendered useless by this "forced idleness." Nightingale, then, deploys the myth of Cassandra to register her protest against the sexual politics and powerlessness of women in the Victorian society. Nightingale uses the tragic end of Cassandra who was first disbelieved, then termed mad and locked up, and finally killed to talk about

the butchering of women's identity, talent and time in Victorian age. Absence of suitable training, work or vocation resulted in women subjugation and marginalization as they lacked of control over their lives and identities.

This image of woman who has knowledge but is termed mad and is turned into an outcast also seems symbolic of Nightingale herself as she felt like an isolated, lonely, aberrant woman who demanded something that was not allowed by the oppressive patriarchal society. In her private notes, Nightingale expresses her longing for a "profession that would deploy "all her faculties": "I craved for some regular occupation...for something worth doing instead of fretting my time away on useless trifles." Furthermore, Cassandra has knowledge but is ignored by everyone and is eventually denounced and locked up as crazy for she dares to speak against her father, brother Paris, and predicts the fall of Troy. Nightingale devoted her time and energies in setting up a training school for nurses, thereby creating nursing a respectable profession for women.

While Nightingale deploys Cassandra in order to bring to the fore the plight of 19th century women, later women poets like Louise Bogan, engage with Cassandra to introspect about the alienation of the female poet from the social world dominated by codes of domesticity and a professional scenario governed by male authors. However, unlike Nightingale, where Cassandra figures primarily as a victim, Bogan renegotiates the old myth in order to revise the old model, thereby reconfiguring the myth of Cassandra to explore the liberatory, and empowering possibilities inherent in the myth.

Twentieth century American poet, Louise Bogan (1897-1970) has been hailed by some as belonging to the small group of poets named the "reactionary generation." Bogan's own troubled experience with the breakdown of her parent's marriage due to her mother's adulterous behaviour, separation from her husband, and later bouts of extreme depression that bordered on madness for which she was institutionalized, led to a sense of loneliness. All this is pertinent for her deployment of the figure of Cassandra in her short verse of the same name. The Greek female prophet Cassandra, who is disbelieved and isolated by the patriarchal society including her family members and enemies, is deployed by Bogan as symbolizing her own position (read alienation) as a woman poet hailing from the Irish working class/lower middle class background in a patriarchal set up that idealizes the "angel in the house" (Patimore).

Bogan's sense of isolation that arose due to her personal experiences and class position become magnified due to her status as a woman poet as she feels unable to relate with other women who are immersed in domesticity. Bogan, who wishes to pursue a career in writing, finds herself a misfit as she says, "to me, one silly task is like another"

("Cassandra" 1). Furthermore, Cassandra's voice, that was 'unheeded' both by her family, countrymen and enemies, is deployed by Bogan to talk about her own poetic voice that is neglected by her male contemporaries. Her works were largely neglected by literary scholars till feminists like Elizabeth Frank in the 80's recovered such lost voices¹. She suffers from what Gilbert and Gubar term "anxiety of authorship"². Bogan seems to be grappling with a literary tradition that is overwhelmingly masculine and marked by the absence of female literary godmothers. Apollo, who cursed her after she refused to gratify his "lust," cursed her such that no one would believe her prophecies represents the patriarchal world that suppress women's voices (2).

By voicing the anger and frustration of Cassandra, Bogan seeks to impart agency to Cassandra who develops a voice, which though is unheeded despite the "shrieking" (7), nevertheless, seeks to "bare the shambling tricks of lust and pride" of the patriarchal world. Cassandra's "song" which by extension is that of the woman poet, is configured as the "wings" that will liberate her from the constricting socio-political patriarchal setup that disbelieves her prophecies and pushes her into the quagmire of self doubt, loneliness and derangement. Unlike the 5th century male writer Aeschylus, Bogan chooses to focus not on Cassandra's prognostications but on the "act of speech" (Upton) or rather the potential of the voice that seeks to disrupt/ "tear" the present order (4). Furthermore, Cassandra's "song which tears through" her "breast" at once associates this rebellious voice with the female body as opposed to the discourse of rationality that is prioritized by men. Moreover, "madness that chooses out my voice again" (5) read in Bakhtin's terms becomes an empowering force rather than a debilitating one," Cassandra's "madness," thus, serves to challenge and then disrupt the official hierarchy of the normative/ rational masculine point of view.

Having said this it is significant to note that Cassandra's madness is more complex than this as it lacks the "gay parody of official reason" which Bakhtin argues is the hallmark of the "carnival grotesque." Conversely, like the "Romantic grotesque" as

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- 1 Elizabeth Frank wrote a biography of Lousie Bogan named Louise Bogan: A Portrait that not only brought Bogan's work to the limelight after years of neglect but also won Pulitzer Prize in 1986.
 - 2 The woman writer, Gilbert and Gubar argue, " she must confront precursors who are almost exclusively male, and therefore significantly different from her. Not only do these precursors incarnate patriarchal authority... they attempt to enclose her in definitions of her person and her potential which, by reducing her to extreme stereotypes (angel, monster) drastically conflict with her sense of self – that is, of subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity"... The "female writer's battle for self creation involves her in a revisionary process...not against her (male) predecessor's reading of the word but against his reading of *her*."

analysed by Bakhtin (and later Foucault) it leads to Cassandra's isolation. Engagement with issues of madness, laughter, body and sexuality are further complicated in the work of German author Christa Wolf. Wolf seems to be conscious of a third emergent strain of discourse on madness where madness seems to be a 'logical'/ 'natural' response to the world that is mad. Patricia Waugh argues that there is "a dangerous tendency in the various postmodern critiques of reason, which circulated in the 1980s, to regard alterity as a sublime space outside law, recoverable through madness, hysteria, or some metaphorised return to the body" (Waugh 350).

It is interesting to note that a woman author of German origin chooses to re-engage with the myth of Cassandra. Gamble's statement, "in the wreckage of old myths and moral values, the subversive writer is free to play" (45), provides a clue to Wolf's engagement with the myth. Cassandra, who is only mentioned three times in Homer, twice as the most beautiful of Priam's daughters (II 13.365) ,and later when Agamemnon speaks of her death, becomes the central character in Wolf's text. Furthermore, in the Classical myths, Cassandra has primarily been presented from the male writers' point of view. In Wolf's radical revision and rewriting of the old classical myth from the woman's point of view, the mad outcast regains her lost voice and agency in the monologue which comprises the entire novella delivered three hours before her death. Wolf's Cassandra propels one to revise one's understanding of myths as being 'eternal,' 'unchanging' or true. Wolf makes one sensitive to how myths are not written in stone but "the relationship between the radical writer and myth... is necessarily...contentious because ...myths have to be argued with, dismantled through the act of writing"(Carter 38). Wolf seeks to dismantle the master's house (male narratives) by deploying the same myths that are used to naturalize women's subordination, oppression and violence against them in a patriarchal society in multifarious ways.

Firstly, Wolf deploys Cassandra to problematize, question and even negate the male conception of grand ideas like heroism, honour, warfare and nationalism that are venerated in the Classical texts of Homer and Aeschylus in her complex treatment of "heroes" like Agamemnon, Achilles, her father Priam and brother Paris. Cassandra denounces Achilles who has been hailed as one of the greatest heroes of the Classical world as "Achilles the brute" who wrecked havoc not only in the war but also due to his love of boys like Troilus whom he murders in a complex moment of violence, vengeance and extreme lust. He is further denounced for his inhuman treatment of Hector's dead body and his gory act of gratifying his lust for the dead Amazon Penthesileia. Wolf radically counters Homer's version of Achilles's "love" for Brisie, Calcha's daughter whom he won as an exploit of war³. Cassandra, however, talks about the plight and psychological death of the young Greek girl who was madly in

love with Cassandra's boyish, young brother, Troilus who was unarmed when murdered by Achilles. In her representation of Achilles, Wolf seems to be attacking the very foundations of this code of virility/ heroism that is venerated by the male Greek tradition.

Furthermore, Wolf counters Aeschylus's representation of Cassandra, especially her opinion of Agamemnon whose death she prognosticates and seems to lament as it fills her with dread. Like Achilles, Agamemnon, the "great king" is severely criticized as "imbecile" "empty headed ninny" (41) and a selfish weakling who sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia. In a radical departure from Aeschylus's *Orestes*, where Cassandra denounces Clytemnestra as a "lionesses" and a murderess, she seems to understand and uphold her decision to murder Agamemnon who killed their daughter and brought home a concubine. She says "in different times nothing would have prevented us from calling each other sister" (40).

Secondly, Wolf further problematizes one's perception of myths as being sacrosanct as they are stories about Gods and heroes. In her retelling of the old myth, Wolf exposes the politics behind how myths are 'created', popularized and enshrined in popular imagination by the dominant discourse in order to attain political motives. Cassandra gives a counter version exposing the truth of the "divine" parentage of great heroes, of Achilles in particular. In her counter version, Cassandra exposes how "prophesies" were not always divinely ordained but controlled by those in power to serve the socio-political, economic interests of the dominant group.

Furthermore, in her 'alternative mythology', Wolf gives voice to those experiences (of women) that have been throttled/silenced/obfuscated by the dominant discourse (racial, sexual and/or political/rational). She traces a pattern of violence physical, social, psychological- against women. Wolf seems to have appropriated Cassandra's myth, in order to question this pattern of violence. Apart from giving a detailed insight into her own life, Cassandra analyses the different women characters in order to throw light on the constricting and oppressive condition of women in a patriarchal society. She shows how beautiful women like Polyxena were used as bait by her brother and state in order to kill Achilles. She shows how patriarchy cuts across both the warring clans where a father, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia in order to win a war. She shows how her father barter her as a wife to another king in exchange for political help during the war. Her rape by Ajax serves to highlight how the female

3 "He (Achilles) possesses Briseis as a gift of honour and yet he loves her as his wife" (Homer, *Illiad*). Wolf debunks this view completely presenting him as the "brute" let loose.

body becomes symbolic of national and familial honour and is desecrated not only to gratify male lust, but also to hurt the male honour of the 'Other' (whose wife/daughter is being raped). Furthermore, Wolf's critique of the atrocities that are committed on women become stringent when she shows the plight of women like Brisies and Cassandra who are turned into slaves/concubines and are objectified by being "awarded" to the 'heroes' of the war.

Wolf in her "counter version" gives voice to a woman who has been unheeded, disbelieved and termed mad by society. Cassandra's critique of the male dominated familial, political and social structure comes about in her discussion of the manner in which she was declared mad, later experienced madness, and was incarcerated by her father/king. She was first punished for rejecting the sexual advances of the male God Apollo who took away her confidence in her predictions. In *Aeschylus*, Cassandra is made to refer to her decision to spurn Apollo as a "sin". Wolf, however, does not make Cassandra do so. Rather she complicates her character by delving into her psyche in order to explore how her quest for knowledge and desire for power propelled her to compete with her sister Polyxena in the struggle to be the one who would be chosen to be the prophetess. Secondly, Cassandra is punished by her father/king and the state machinery and incarcerated like an animal when she decided to raise her voice against her father/ruler and the Trojan political structure that was waging a war against the Greeks for no solid political/social reason. She rebels against the authoritarian/tyrannical political setup that was deploying all sorts of false prophesies, propagating myths about the so-called 'greatness' of the king and the infallibility of the state, and using women to win the war. Cassandra, thus, with her prognostications announcing the fall of Troy becomes symbolic of the women who warn about the dire consequences of war but are ignored and silenced.

Unlike Homer or Aeschylus, Wolf is able to impart agency to Cassandra whose "shrieking" "voice" is not seen as symbolic of her degraded/deranged mind but something which is liberating and sets her free: "the voice...forced its way out of me...it floated above me, free"(59). The voice despite the fact that it is embedded in the male structures as it is disbelieved, is endowed with the capacity to rent through the strictures that bind her. Furthermore, her madness, along with her laughter has transformative possibilities as Helene Cixous argues that woman's laughter is intrinsically linked with the breakdown of patriarchal hegemony. Out of the story of Cassandra's oppression, Wolf is able to present an alternative, liberating narrative. Cassandra emerges as a victim of patriarchy; but she is also a victim endowed surprisingly with the virtues of dignity and defiance.

Thus, one can conclude by saying that by “revisionist mythmaking” women writers and artists are able to transform women protagonists who were earlier marginalized as silent objects in Classical patriarchal accounts into active subjects as they gain voice and agency.

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Myths of the Origin of Language in World Mythologies

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Myths of the Origin of Language in World Mythologies

The mystery of the “Origin of Language” has always been a matter of great curiosity to people of all generations and times. Different cultures and civilizations have their own mythical interpretations of the origin of language. The varied and fascinating stories associated with the origin of language best exemplify the basic urge of humanity to decode the mysterious and inexplicable fact of human existence. Different civilizations and people from varied parts of the world such as India, America, Mesoamerica, North America, Amazonas, Brazil, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and Oceania, Polynesia, Australia, Andaman Islands have their own myths of the origin of language. The present paper makes an attempt to set forth the varied myths pertaining to the origin of language and to substantiate how these myths decipher the mystification and perplexity involved in the inscrutable secret of the origin of language.

“The genesis of language is not to be sought in the prosaic, but in the poetic side of life; the source of speech is not gloomy seriousness, but merely play and youthful hilarity...In primitive speech I hear the laughing cries of exultation when lads and lassies vied with one another to attract the attention of the other sex, when everybody sang his merriest and danced his bravest to lure a pair of eyes to throw admiring glances in his direction. Language was born in the courting days of mankind” says O. Jespersen (See Yule, 1997).

The quotation explicitly states that the human language came into being while humans were making merriment. Language originated in human beings’ urge to express them, to articulate their feelings and emotions, to communicate their ideas and thoughts to other fellow beings. There is no definite and explicit substantiation of how language came into being. But there is a vast range of myths available in the world mythologies which unequivocally present the stories of the origin of language. R. Murfin and S. Ray (2003) define a myth to be

“a traditional anonymous story, originally religious in nature, told by a particular cultural group in order to explain a natural or cosmic phenomenon...Myths generally offer supernatural explanation for the creation of the world (whether seen as the planet alone or the universe generally) and humanity, as well as for death, judgment, and the afterlife (Pg. 284)”.

But A. Bernard says,

“Myths are never just stories. They always occur in the context of a mythological system, which is specific to a given society or culture.”

While talking about the postmodern implication of myth, L. Shaffer (2005) states that in the work of Roland Barthes,

“...myth is the result of ideology’s dehistoricizing of cultural phenomena, of lifting them out of their historical specificity, as in timelessness” (Pg.312).

There have been many stories in the world’s mythologies which elaborately explain how human languages originated. These stories present an imaginary depiction of the process of the development of language. But they definitely prove the fact that our primitive ancestors used language as a medium of communication and they also confirm the traces of human speech back in the history of human civilization.

The myths related to the origin of language have many resemblances and analogous themes. Floods and catastrophes are the parallel themes for the spreading of languages. There are two corresponding themes for the language dispersal. Firstly, it is said that due to flood the people on the Earth dispersed all over the world. As a result many languages came into being. Secondly, the God punished human beings for their erroneous and immoral deeds which consequently gave birth to different languages. Usually the myths related to the origin of language are part and parcel of the creation myths. Some stories claim the existence of human language right from the beginning of human civilization. But some tales maintain that human language developed after the creation of the world in later stage and the God gifted it to human beings or gave it as a curse.

B. Harrub, B. Thompson, D. Miller (2003) state that the origin of manifold languages is in the Tower of Babel incident recorded in Genesis 11:1-9. They quote the Scripture which confidently asserts:

‘Now the whole earth had one language and one speech’ (11:1).

They record the whole incident in an interesting manner. They state,

“When Noah and his family stepped off the ark, they spoke a single language that was passed on to their offspring. As the population increased, it apparently remained localized in a single geographical region. Consequently, little or no linguistic variation ensued. But when a generation defiantly rejected God’s instructions to scatter over the planet, God miraculously intervened and initiated the major language groupings of the human race. This action forced the population to proceed with God’s original intention to inhabit the Earth (cf. Isaiah 45:18) by clustering according to shared languages.”

An identical story to the Tower of Babel is told by a group of people of Hao Island in Polynesia. The angry God trailed the people erecting a building, drove them away, broke the building and altered their languages. As a result they started speaking different languages. (See Wikipedia)

T.A. Aarons in her scholarly and interesting article “Global Myths Surrounding the Origin of Speech” presents an exhaustive review of the myths related to the origin of languages in the world mythologies. The story from The Hebrew Bible states that the human language originated when God asked Adam to name the creatures that God had created. While talking about the Hindu myth of the origin of language, Aaron says that the creator-god Brahma punished a proud tree and then differences in language, diversity in culture and customs came into being. There was the magnificent ‘world tree,’ or ‘knowledge tree.’ in the centre of the earth. It was very tall and it reached nearly to heaven. The proud tree thought that it shall hold its head in heaven and spread its branches over all the earth, and gather all men together under its shadow, and protect them, and prevent them from separating. Lord Brahma punished the proud tree by cutting off its branches and casting them down on the earth. They sprang up as wata trees, i.e. banyan trees, and diffused men by making variations of belief, speech and customs.

The ancient Greek myth tells that men lived without law for centuries. They were under the rule of Zeus and spoke one language. The language was bequeathed to them by the god and goddess of ingenuity, Philarios and Philarion. It was God Hermes who brought variety in speech and then men were separated into nations and the result was dissonance. Later on Zeus left his position giving away the place to the first king of men, Phoroneus.

Norse mythology states that the third son of Borr gifted the faculty of speech, hearing and sight to mankind. While treading on the sea shore, the sons of Borr came across three trees. They took up the trees and formed men of them. The first conferred them spirit and life; the second, wit and feeling and the third, form, speech, hearing, and sight.

There is a wonderful story told by the Wa-Sania, a Bantu people of East African origin about the origin of language. The story tells that all the people of the earth knew only one language in the beginning. But then a severe famine came and madness hit the people. This insanity made them to drift in all directions. They started chattering weird words which resulted in the birth of different languages. In African mythology the Yoruba tribe believes that Eshu, the messenger of gods, speaks in all languages. Orunmila, the god of divination, is another god who also speaks all the languages of the world.

The people of Encounter Bay of Australia share an appalling story of cannibalism about the origin of language. The tale is about an old woman named Wurruri who lived in the east and walked with a large stick in her hand. She used to scatter the fires around which the people used to sleep. When Wurruri died, people were very much happy. They sent messengers in all directions to tell people the news of her death. Men, women and children were very glad and they expressed their joy when they came. Firstly, the Raminjerar attacked the corpse and ate her flesh. In a moment they started to speak comprehensibly. Then the tribes from the east ate the contents of the intestines. Instantaneously they began to speak intelligibly. The language they spoke was somewhat different. Lastly, the northern tribes arrived and consumed devoured the intestines and all that stayed behind. At once they spoke an altogether diverse language which was totally different from the language of the Raminjerar. There is still one more fascinating story of the Gunwinggu, a group of Australian aboriginals which says that a goddess bestowed all her children their own languages. They sport with the language.

There are a number of stories shared by the North American tribes related with the language dispersal as a result of the deluge. According to the Aztecs' story of Mesoamerica, after the flood only a man, Coxcox, and a woman, Xochiquetzal, survived and floated on a piece of bark to a new land. They gave birth to many children who were incapable of speaking when they were born. But they were bequeathed with language upon the appearance of a dove. They were unable to understand one another as they all were bestowed with a different language. In the Iroquois story the god Taryenyawagon (*Holder of the Heavens*) directed his people on a journey and asked them to inhabit in different places due to which their languages altered. The Kaska people of North America tell a story that before the flood there was only one country and people lived together. There was only one language shared by all people. But after the flood the people spread all over the world which led to numerous new settlements, several new tribes and many new languages.

As per the Salishan myth the language dispersal took place due to an argument between two people. The argument was whether the high-pitched humming noise that accompanies ducks in flight was from air passing through the beak or from the flapping of wings. The argument was not settled by the chief, who then called a council of all the leading people from nearby villages. The council failed to come to a unanimous conclusion and then because of the dispute the people went far away from each other. Slowly and gradually they started speaking differently and new languages came into being. In California, the mythology of the Yuki believes that Coyote along with the God created different languages as he created various tribes in different places. He laid sticks and they transformed into people upon daybreak. He also gave them their

customs, mode of life and languages. According to the Ticuna people of the Upper Amazon there was only one single tribe and all the people spoke only one language. But once somebody ate two eggs of hummingbird and then the tribe broke into groups. The people went far away from each other and formed different groups and languages.

The aboriginals of Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal believe that the god Puluga granted the bojig-yâb language to the first man and woman after the flood. This language is still spoken by the tribal people living in the south and south-eastern portion of middle Andaman. There is a strong belief that bojig-yâb is the first language and all other varieties of language originated from it. There is another belief that after the death of the first man, his children increased in number. The number went on so high that their home was not sufficient for them and hence they spread all over the country. When Puluga departed them, he provided them with necessary weapons, implements, fire and offered them different languages. (Refer to Wikipedia)

It is also interesting to know how the Indian language Sanskrit came into being. Swami Savitânanda (2007) presents a fascinating account of the origin of the Sanskrit language in his contemplative book *Stotra Mantranche 'Vidnyân*. Swami Savitânanda says that there are six chakras in the human body, namely, the Mulâdhâr, the Swâdhishtân, the Manipur, the Anahat, the Vishuddha, and the Adnya Chakra. Dr. S. Kale defines the Chakrâs as the Energy Centres of the human body. He says, "Our living soul, originated from the luminous divine God, has come to earth by assuming all the energies of God. All that exists in the cosmos is said to be inside our body. God's energy lies in human body in dormant state. It awakens with the blessing of Spiritual Guides and moves upwards. During this journey, the energy meets the stop points of intensity and these are seen in lotus shaped clusters in the energy sheath." He further elucidates that every stop point or chakra has petals. The Mulâdhâr Chakra, the root chakra is located at the perineum, midway between the anus and genitals. This lotus of four petals is yellow in color and is connected to the earth. The Second Chakra is the Swâdhishtân, the Sacrum Chakra, which is located above the root chakra and six fingers below the naval center. This chakra has six petals and is connected to water. This is the abode of mother Saraswati and Bramhadeva. The Third Chakra Manipur Chakra or Solar Plexus Chakra is located in the naval center itself. It has ten petals and is related to fire and radiance. Lord Vishnu resides here along with Goddess Mahâlakshmi. This is also the abode of ten great manifestations and Shiva's original Râma Shakti.

The Fourth Chakra, the Anahat Chakra is the Heart Chakra, placed near the heart. This lotus is of twelve petals and is related to air. God Shankara resides here accompanied by mother Parvati. The Fifth Chakra Vishuddha Chakra is the Throat Chakra which located in throat and is related to ether. This lotus has sixteen petals.

This is the abode of Durgâ and Saraswati. The Sixth Chakra, the Adnyâ Chakra or the Third Eye Chakra is located between two eyebrows and has two petals. This lotus has a confluence of Ida, Pingalâ and Sushumna nâdi (channels for flow of consciousness). The goddesses Mahâkâlî, Mahalakshmi and Mahâsaraswati reside here. Also, Mâruti, the gatekeeper of Stree-rajya and God Dattatreya reside here.

Swami Savitânanda further points out that there are total 50 petals in the six Chakras, that is, 4 petals in the Muladhar Chakra, 6 petals in the Swâdhishtân Chakra, 10 petals in the Manipur Chakra, 12 petals in the Anahat Chakra, 16 petals in the Vishuddha Chakra and 2 petals in the Adnya Chakra. The Sanskrit language has 50 letters in the alphabet. The great sages saw these Chakras during their meditation. They saw the diagrams on each of the petal of the Chakras and also listened to the varied sounds they represented. After coming out of the meditation they drew the diagrams on the ground. Later on by pronouncing different sounds and by observing which petal was vibrated by which sound, they finalized the different letters of the alphabet. This is how the Sanskrit language came into being.

Thus there are innumerable myths which explicitly depict the stories of the origin of language. They not only narrate the mesmerizing stories but also point out the human urge to unravel the secret of the origin of language. In this paper an attempt is made to study some of the representative myths pertaining to the origin of language. The varied and wide-ranging myths present the mysterious origin of human speech. It is the complex structure of human language which makes us speculate on the very nature of the origin of language. The intricacy and complexity involved in the design of all human languages bring in the element of divinity in their evolution and development. No doubt, the human quest of getting the ultimate answer of the origin of language will go on till the edge of the doom.

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Dr. Brian Weiss's *Many Lives Many Masters* and *Only Love Is Real*: A Contemporary Re-invocation of the Reincarnation Myth in Literature

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The term “myth” in popular usage is a synonym for “illusion”, “legend”, or false propaganda, or in an earlier literary sense, of decorative or illustrative material. In a critical sense, however, “myth” becomes a heavy synonym for “belief” or sometimes “convention” or “higher truth”. Reincarnation, as a word, also has several connotations. Throughout my paper, the term “reincarnation” is used in the sense of “rebirth in a different body”. The reincarnation myth articulates the hypothesis of pre-existence and thus the implication of the continuity of a living entity even after the physical demise of a living being which is usually referred to as the soul. According to Hindu Philosophy, the doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation are inextricably linked to each other. The basic argument here is that the environment that a man is born into is a result of his actions in his past life. In the West, the doctrine of reincarnation had its origination in Greek Philosophy and termed as “Metempsychosis”. Its most famous philosophic exponent is Plato who embodied it in some of his greatest works. In Plato’s view, birth did not mean the creation of a soul as the number of souls was fixed but only a transmigration from one body to another. Plato’s theory of transmigration expostulates the idea that souls of both the good and the evil come together to draw lots, and choose their bodies according to their tendencies and the bent of their characters. Some prefer to be born as animals, such as lions and eagles or some other animals while others try their luck in being human beings. Thus the reincarnation myth incorporates the many moral presuppositions that sanction the moral values of a society and grapples with the essence of the human psyche.

Contemporary Worldview of the Reincarnation Myth

The two most influential belief systems of contemporary Western society, “conventional” Christianity and Rationalism, undermine the reincarnation myth as a retrograde belief. The “conventional” Christian belief that an individual’s suffering on this earth would be compensated by a place in Paradise after death is in opposition to the Hindu Philosophy wherein suffering was explained in terms of past life actions. Rationalism debunks the doctrine of reincarnation on the grounds of insubstantial empirical evidence. Despite the overwhelming influence of these two belief systems, a substantial number of Westerners , nevertheless, entertain some kind of belief in reincarnation. In a study conducted by Tony Walter and Helen Waterhouse titled “A

Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England” and published in the *Sociology of Religion*, they sought to ‘explore what reincarnation means to some of those who believe in it, why they find it attractive and how it relates to other aspects of their life...’ It was a small intensive interview study of a group of English people who take seriously the possibility of reincarnation. The study concluded that ‘reincarnation is, indeed, for them a very private belief, detached from religious and other affiliations, from the New Age, from popular literature on the subject, and from everyday life... reincarnation may prove prototypical of a kind of new religious belief that requires no Church, sect or cult for its sustenance. It is similar to old style folk religion in that it need not be integrated into a systematic worldview, but is unlike folk religion in that it is not handed down within a local community. It is perhaps the folk religion of the media age, where the television, the bookshop, and the internet transmit bites of religious “information” in which private individuals take an interest, without any consequences for their behavior, conversation or affiliations. It is the ultimate detached, private belief.’

This microcosmic study is in many ways representative of the complexity of religion and personal beliefs in modern life. In recent decades a renewed interest in reincarnation has been noticed among the Europeans and North Americans despite belonging to a societal structure that negated such beliefs. Even scholars have researched and recorded the issue of reincarnation. Psychiatrist Ian Stevenson from the University of Virginia, conducted more than 2,500 case studies over a period of 40 years.. Ian Stevenson’s *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* and Jim B. Tucker’s *Life Before Life* are published reports of children’s memories of earlier lives. It thus appears that the general notions bound up with the conception of reincarnation has gained wide acceptance in the West with the simultaneous rise of the modern/post-modern individualistic spirit. With conventional Christianity floundering to provide an answer or solace to individuals caught up in the complexity of modern life, especially in times of personal crisis, the reincarnation doctrine solved intellectual questions, notably about suffering and justice.

It is in this context I would like to analyse Dr. Brian Weiss’s *Many Lives many Masters* and *Only Love Is Real*. Both these texts are based on clinical records of Dr. Weiss’s patients Catherine and Elizabeth. Dr. Weiss, a prominent psychiatrist, met his patient Catherine while working as the Chief of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami. When conventional methods of therapy failed to cure her symptoms of anxiety, panic attacks and phobias, Dr. Weiss resorted to “hypnosis” to treat her. It is from this hypnotic state that Catherine started recalling her “past-life” memories and in the process dramatically altering the therapist’s long held beliefs. *Many Lives Many Masters* is based on Catherine’s recollections of her “past-life” memories and the messages that she conveyed from the “spirit entities” on the secrets of life and death.

At the very outset in the Preface, Dr. Weiss narrates a brief history of his scientific qualifications and his background to hammer home the point that his belief in reincarnation is based purely on the revelations by Catherine and not on any previous leanings towards Oriental Philosophy or Reincarnation as he himself states: 'Nothing in my background had prepared me for this. I was absolutely amazed when these events unfolded.' (*Many Lives*, p. 10)

Dr. Weiss's third book *Only Love Is Real* speaks of the enduring nature of love, and of 'soulmates, people who are bonded eternally by their love and who come around together and together again, life after life.' It recounts the unfolding of the past lives of two individuals Pedro and Elizabeth, separately, during Dr. Weiss's hypnotic regression sessions and the gradual discovery on the part of the author narrator as to how deeply intertwined they were in their past lives. The book ends with the union of these two lovers who had loved and lost each other across many lifetimes. The message that the author narrator derives from the hypnotic regression of Elizabeth is that love is the ultimate truth and the only godly and spiritual attribute that can guide mankind towards the right path, "Love is the ultimate answer. Love is not an abstraction but an actual energy, or spectrum of energies, which you can 'create' and maintain in your being. Just be loving. You are beginning to touch God within yourself. Feel loving. express your love." (*Only Love*, p. 65)

Validation through the Narrative Style

The narrative style adopted by the author narrator effectively presents the reincarnation myth as a validated reality. The first person narration and use of the two narrative modes 'mimesis' and 'diegesis' (Gerard Genette) in tandem becomes an effective tool for clinching the argument. The scenes where Catherine and Elizabeth narrate their past-life experiences are presented in a mimetic manner thereby creating the illusion for the reader of hearing and seeing those experiences themselves. Dr. Weiss's comments on the unfolding of Catherine and Elizabeth's past-life memories as both an onlooker and narrator gives the narratorial voice a credibility which then imposes a convincing impact on the reader. Chapter Two of *Many Lives Many Masters* contain the first narration of Catherine's past-life memories. This part of the narrative makes use of the mimetic mode which presents in a scenic way the unfolding of events, "I see white steps leading up to a building, a big white building with pillars, open in front. There are no doorways. I'm wearing a long dress... a sack made of rough material. My hair is braided, long blond hair." (*Many Lives*, p.27)

This is a style which speaks directly to the readers and appeals to their visual faculty, thus creating the illusion for them to see and hear things for themselves. The author

narrator's desisting from the diegetic mode of narration or summarizing the events of Catherine's past-life memories enhances the credibility appeal of an extraordinary tale which might not find many takers. The author narrator then records his immediate response, "I was confused. I wasn't sure what was happening. I asked her what the year was, what her name was." (*Many Lives*, p. 27). Dr. Weiss reflects, "I had examined thousands of psychiatric patients, many under hypnosis, and I had never come across fantasies like this before – not even in dreams. I instructed her to go forward to the time of her death. I wasn't sure how to interview someone in the middle of such an explicit fantasy(or memory?), but I was on the lookout for traumatic events that might underlie current fears or symptoms." (*Many Lives*, p. 28) This response strikes an immediate chord and identification with the skeptics, as was Dr. Brian Weiss, then, with his scientific training and family background. The author narrator's state of denial and his reluctant acquiescence creates a convincing impact on the skeptical reader that it is not an uncritical rendering of the reincarnation myth. He states,

"I was stunned! Previous lifetimes? Reincarnation/ My clinical mind told me that she was not fantasizing this material, that she was not making this up. Her thoughts, her expressions, the attention to particular details, all were different from her conscious state. The whole gamut of possible psychiatric diagnosis flashed through my mind, but her psychiatric state and her character structure did not explain these revelations." (*Many Lives*, p. 29)

For Dr. Weiss, the ultimate validation of Catherine's past-life memories came in the form of revelations about his personal life from the Master Spirits through Catherine and to which Catherine had no access, "Your father is here , and your son, who is a small child. Your father says you will know him because his name is Avrom, and your daughter is named after him. Also, his death was due to his heart. Your son's heart was also important, for it was backward like a chicken's. He made a great sacrifice for you out of his love. His soul is very advanced. . . his death satisfied his parents' debts." (*Many Lives*, p. 54) The veracity of the revelations needed no more testimony than the implicit admission of the truth by the author narrator himself and his belief that "Catherine could not possibly know this information. There was no place even to look it up." (*Many Lives*, p. 56)

In his third book *Only Love Is Real*, Dr. Weiss employs the same narrative technique whereby Elizabeth and Pedro speaks in the direct speech while describing their past-life memories; thus, enhancing the credibility of the unfolding memory. While conveying the 'message from the Masters' that love is the most positive and powerful emotion/ energy, the author narrator's language is couched in the language of a romantic ideal. Thus a desired fantasy conveyed as the absolute truth,

“All is love... All is love. With love comes understanding. With understanding comes patience. And everything is now.”(*Only Love*, p. 64)

Such utterances strike a chord with the readers as it stirs the deepest human yearnings.

Intertwining of Reincarnation Myth and Modern Psychology

Dr. Weiss in his two texts *Many Lives Many Masters* and *Only Love Is Real*, through the narration of two real life stories involving past-life memories, delves into the fundamentals of man's existence and the belief in the immortality of soul or a living entity that continues even after the physical death of an individual. Catherine in *Many Lives Many Masters* and Elizabeth in *Only love Is Real* was tormented by phobias, panic attacks and fear of death. Gradually, with every session of hypnotic regression, Catherine's "phobias and panic attacks had just about disappeared. She had no fear of death or dying. She was no longer afraid of losing control."(*Many Lives*, p. 92) The author narrator also mentions that people with Catherine's symptoms were usually treated with high doses of tranquilizers and antidepressants alongwith intensive psychotherapy or made to attend phobia group therapy sessions. The medical prognosis for such symptoms was deficiencies in one or several brain chemicals. But it was remarkable that Catherine was nearly cured without the use of medicines, traditional therapy or group therapy. The author narrator's search for a plausible scientific explanation for these occurrences leads him to ask, "Could the memories be carried in her genes?" as a man of science he himself reasoned the answer, "Genetic memory requires the unbroken passage of genetic material from generation to generation. Catherine lived all over the earth, and her genetic line was interrupted repeatedly... And what of her survival after death and the in-between state? There was no body and certainly no genetic material, and yet her memories continued. No the genetic explanation had to be discarded."(*Many Lives*, p. 105) Then the author narrator toys with the idea of Carl Jung's idea of the "Collective Unconscious" which is not personally acquired but "inherited" somehow in the brain structure. But he reasons, "Catherine's memories were too specific to be explained by Jung's concept. She did not reveal symbols and universal images or motives. She related detailed descriptions of specific people and places. Jung's ideas seemed too vague. And there was still the in-between state to consider. All in all, reincarnation made the most sense."(*Many Lives*, p. 106) Dr. Weiss infers that the root cause of many of the incurable psychosomatic diseases in individuals may not be due to any physical deficiencies or traumatic experiences in this life. The answer lies somewhere in the realm of the supra-rational. The reason behind the incurable psychosomatic diseases he infers lies in lives lived before the

present. Thus his texts are an exposition of reincarnation as a reality and capable of proof as is demonstrated by the disappearance of neurotic fears and anxieties in Catherine and Elizabeth, two of Dr. Weiss's patients, through hypnotic regression. Hypnotic regression, a tool of modern psychology, thus, becomes a conduit for the exposition of a supra-rational reality. The regression into the past-lives of the protagonists to cure inexplicable psychosomatic diseases and, infact, finding a cure reaffirms the belief that the soul is the carrier of an individual's psychic life through countless lifetimes. It is a re-invocation of the reincarnation myth debunked by Christianity and Rationalism. In so doing, it questions and subverts the dominant values of contemporary society, based on Christianity and Rationalism. The author narrator thus harks back to a mythopoeic psychology to delve into the mysteries of the human psyche. The messages that the Master Spirits convey through Catherine and Elizabeth during their hypnotic regression and the author narrator's communication with the highly evolved spirit entities provide a subtext for the speculation on the deepest human experiences, needs and aspirations. A mythopoeic perception of human emotions thus calls forth for an alternate set of values for mankind whereby love, charity and fellow feeling should be the reigning order instead of the materialistic aggression of the age.

Conclusion

The message gleaned through a reading of the two texts is that reincarnation is the mechanism through which "a soul can evolve and be transformed even through the most ignoble of lifetimes. It is the learning that is important, not the judgement." (*Only Love*, p. 16) Thus the reincarnation myth implicit in both the texts emphasize the continuity of an individual's psychic life to be the consequence of unlearned lessons in one lifetime and the carrying over of human emotions from one lifetime to the next, thus implying the creative/spiritual evolution of the soul through numerous lifetimes. This is a departure from and also a reiteration of the reincarnation doctrines of Eastern Philosophy. The Hindu and Buddhist philosophy of *karma* expounds that an individual can create "good" and "bad" *karma* and thus reap, accordingly, suffering or happiness in his or her next incarnation, thus emphasizing the retribution and reward principle of the doctrine. The idea implicit in the two texts is of learning and developing from one life to the next which is analogous to the western notions of self-determination and progress. Moreover, the idea that all individuals have some autonomy in choosing whether, or how fast, they learn, and hence how soon, and in what form, they reincarnate echoes some of the western notions of free-will. Also, the growing belief in the reincarnation myth in contemporary western society mirrors the changing perceptions of what constitutes the essence of human existence.

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Nathuram Godse in Perspectives: The Cult of an Assassin in the Indian English Writings

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Nathuram Vinayak Godse is undoubtedly one of the significant figures in Indian history for he turned one of its “pages”, as he himself calls it, without hesitation but with solemn determination which put an end to the life of an apostle of truth and non-violence in the modern world (Dalvi). “Unparalleled in recent history,” Nathuram’s was no ordinary act, it was an “an assassination that shook the world” for the victim was “Mahatma Gandhi ... who fought and saw an end to an empire with his non-violence” (Kapoor ix). And, with this action, “Nathuram has qualified himself for a sort of odious immortality” (Malgonkar 42). In fact, Nathuram Godse is an interesting personality and it would be a mistake if we consider him a mere Hindu fanatic who was the cause of Gandhi’s untimely demise, as his character testifies in the play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy*, if he was the cause of Gandhi’s assassination, Gandhi, the “messiah of peace” and non-violence, was the cause for his death (Dalvi; Kapoor ix). The writers of post-independent India are prone to represent this historical assassination as they might be tempted to write about the partition which cut the country into pieces. The assassination of Gandhi, for historical reasons, is interlinked with the partition of India, for, it was because Pakistan was there that the Indian government had to share the reserve bank balance and it was because Gandhi compelled the government to hand over Pakistan its due of the 55 crores through his fast unto death, that Nathuram Vinayak Godse and Narayan Apte decided to assassinate Gandhi, the “Father of the Indian nation,” who, the assassins believed, was delivering “his paternal duty not to India but to Pakistan” (Dalvi). Through a reading of selected fictional and nonfictional texts from Indian English writings, and contextualising them in the historical context of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, this paper attempts to explore the representation of Nathuram Vinayak Godse in the said literary corpus.

This paper aims to understand the various perspectives through which Nathuram Godse is portrayed, the various standpoints from which he is viewed by writers, and their contradictions, paradoxes and similarities. The selected texts are: *The Men Who killed Gandhi* by Manohar Malgonkar, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* by A. G. Noorani, *Godse’s Children: Hindutva Terror in India* by Subhash Gatade, *Mahadevbhai*, a play by Ramu Ramanathan, “The Last Soliloquy of Nathuram Godse”, and “Nathuram Godse” poems by Rizio Yohannan Raj and Farooqh Dhondi

respectively. While the first three texts are nonfictional prose narratives, the remaining three are fictional; one play and two poems. This paper also posits a Marathi play titled *Mi Nathuram Boltoy* by Pradeep Dalvi, for a comparative analysis with the English play *Mahadevbhai*.

The objective of this study stems from the want of similar studies on the character of Nathuram Godse and the existing two-fold perception of Nathuram as a villain and a hero by the various contradicting sections of Indian society. Nathuram Godse as a historical character enters people's consciousness as the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi and the two-fold perception is based on whether he was right or wrong in being Gandhi's assassin. What is attempted here is to see how Indian English writers portray this complex assassin in their works, fictional and nonfictional, and to analyse the diverse ways of their representation. This study does not aim to privilege any text over the other. Instead, it focuses on the coexistence of various perspectives on Nathuram Godse as a historical and fictional character, and the dynamics of these texts at various levels. The attempt here is an intertwined textual analysis of the selected texts and an inter-textual theorisation of their modes of representation. The textual analysis serves to explore the representation of Nathuram Godse in accordance with various facets of his life, by various writers, and the significance of these representations in understanding the multifaceted character of Nathuram Vinayak Godse. One can see that Nathuram moves gradually from an ordinary individual with an extraordinary childhood to an extra-natural phenomenon which breeds terrorism in India. The character of Nathuram, in these narratives, exemplifies the image of an individual who is floating in between the realms of normativity and abnormality.

The 1975 book *The Men Who killed Gandhi* by Manohar Malgonkar is a monumental work investigating in depth the andhi assassination case and its background starting from the arrival of Mountbatten and the partition of India, to the subsequent communal riots it unleashed. It is an "incredibly well researched book that reads like a thriller" and covers the hitherto unheard parts of the life of the assassins of Gandhi and their convictions (Kapoor ix). Malgonkar investigates the case of Gandhi's assassination through a vivid representation of the persons involved in it, their life, attitudes, visions and fortunes. Beginning with the etymology of the name 'Nathuram', his narrative travels through different facets of Nathuram Godse's life. He portrays with sufficient information Nathuram's acquaintance with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, his friendship with Narayan Apte, the co-convict in the assassination case, and the reasons for their decision to stop the Mahatma at any cost. Instead of showing a stereotypical image of an assassin, Malgonkar represents Nathuram Godse as a well developed character, if one takes the book as a tragic prose narrative, Nathuram is portrayed as a round character, a tragic hero who falls for his error of judgement. From birth to death

Nathuram's life is narrated by the author intertwining it with the other characters in the narrative who are faithful partners in bringing the protagonist's catastrophe.

Here Nathuram Godse is a tragic character destined to receive misfortune because of his convictions, who receives his tragedy with full felicity. He is an individual "born into an orthodox Brahmin family which came from a small village called Uksan, which is ten miles away from the wayside railway station of Kamshet, on the Bombay-Poona line" (Malgonkar 43). The most interesting part which Malgonkar describes about Nathuram's life is that he was brought up as a girl while he was a child. In Malgonkar's words: "the fact that three sons had died one after the other while a daughter had survived held a clear warning" to the parents of Nathuram Godse, that "their male children bore a curse. One remedy, which had been often proved effective, lay in offering to bring up the next boy as though he were a girl. That might appease the Fates" (43). The next issue was a boy child and as per the vow "his left nostril was pierced to take a *nath* or nose ring" and he was brought up as a girl through his infancy (43). "Though he was named Ramachandra, which name customarily shortened to Ram; because his nose was pierced to take a *nath*, the pretence that he was a girl was taken a step further by his parents, who began to call him Nathuram, or 'Ram who wears a nose-ring'." Thus "the name stuck" and became official (43). Nathuram grew up as a strong child despite his early upbringing as a girl. Malgonkar also wonders about the possibility of psychologists finding some explanation for Nathuram's "warped mental process in the fact that he was brought up as a girl" (43). Informed by Gopal Godse, Nathuram's younger brother, Malgonkar gives a spectacular account of how Nathuram Godse was considered possessing "oracular powers" while he was a child.

Nathuram would sit before the family goddess, staring fixedly at a spot of soot smeared in the exact centre of a copper tray, and soon fall into trance. While in the trance, he would see some figures or writing in the black spot before him, much as a crystal-gazer is supposed to see in his glass ball. Then one or other member of the family would ask him questions. His answers were believed to be those of the goddess, who spoke through his mouth. (Malgonkar 43-44)

Gopal Godse remembers: "he would recite parts of scriptures or Sanskrit hymns which he never remembered... and nor, when the trance was over, could he repeat them or indeed remember what he had recited" (qtd. in Malgonkar 44). Such was Nathuram Godse in his childhood days. The explanation of Nathuram's childhood days serves as a counterpart to Gandhi's childhood days with its entire idiosyncrasy as he mentioned in his autobiography. A contrast is established in silence between a pilferer boy and a boy with oracular powers.

This childhood picture, in addition to the description of how helpful a youth Nathuram was for his neighbours and villagers in various ways, adds to the construction of a dynamic and complex character in the narrative. Though born an orthodox Brahmin, as he grew up, Nathuram became, “a fierce protagonist for the removal of Untouchability”, much to his own parents’ discontent, and later he rejected the idea of passing his matriculation and securing a government job, as he came to be influenced by Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. This was the Nathuram before he met Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Nathuram’s acquaintance with Savarkar is an important chapter for both these historical characters, for it provided Nathuram with a vision and conviction, and it helped Savarkar, in Malgonkar’s view, to be dragged into Gandhi assassination case and serve one year imprisonment (46). In 1929 when his family moved to Ratnagiri, Nathuram came under Savarkar’s spell and by the time his family moved from Ratnagiri in 1931 Nathuram had become a disciple of Savarkar. The reason for joining the Hindu Sanghatan which later became Hindu Mahasabha, in Malgonkar’s view was that he realised it had his master’s full support. The author’s construction of Nathuram’s character sketches his private life and personal traits. As a matured youth, Nathuram decided never to marry, and remain celibate forever. “He neither smoked, nor drank, wore the simplest clothes, read a lot of books on politics, history and Hindu religion, and worked hard” (Malgonkar 58). “At thirty-one Nathuram Godse was a quiet man of simple, almost austere tastes and a serious turn of mind. Pledged to celibacy he shied away from the company of women and deliberately shunned the temptations of life. He was bothered by even small lapses of middle-class morality. His favourite reading was books on religion and philosophy, his secret pride his ability to sway crowds with his speeches, and his admitted weakness a liking for coffee” (60-61). Though the author does not characterise Nathuram as a Mahatma, he is nonetheless give a perspective of Nathuram as a well mannered gentleman and a complex individual and not a religious fanatic.

One theory made out of Nathuram’s acquaintance with Savarkar is that the latter is the master brain behind the plot of Gandhi assassination and Nathuram was only his lieutenant in the process. This theory stems from the approver Badge’s argument that he saw Nathuram and Apte with Savarkar on the eve of their trip to Delhi for the January 20’s attempt on Gandhi’s life, and “within Badge’s hearing, had blessed their venture with the words, ‘Yeshaswi houn ya’” (Malgonkar 333). Badge’s recollection goes like this: “We got down from the taxi and walked down to the house of Savarkar. Shankar was asked to wait outside the compound ... Apte, Nathuram and I entered the compound. Apte asked me to wait in the room on the ground floor. Nathuram and Apte went up. They came down after 5-10 minutes ... followed immediately by Tatyarao

[Savarkar] who said to them ‘Yeshaswi houn ya!’ [Literally, ‘come back successful!'] (qtd. in Malgonkar 144). But Malgonkar does not buy this argument and problematises Badge’s argument as a police motivated one:

That Nathuram and Apte should wish to see Savarkar before setting out on their mission is altogether understandable. Both venerated Savarkar as many Congressmen venerated Gandhi, as the man whose *darshan* (sight) would constitute an auspicious beginning for any venture. But to deduce from this visit, if it ever took place, that it was Savarkar who directed the two to kill Gandhi, or that he even sanctioned a killing that was proposed to be accomplished in so clumsy and so inhuman a manner, would be altogether fatuous. (Malgonkar 144)

He sustains that Nathuram was the commander of the team and he was his own lieutenant, and not Savarkar’s, in killing Gandhi. Malgonkar silences Badge’s ‘hearing’ of Savarkar by this, and he is also sceptical about the very fact that they met Savarkar before leaving for Delhi.

Narayan Apte is another vital point in the life of Nathuram. The author introduces Apte’s relation with Nathuram rather dramatically, juxtaposed with his introduction of Nathuram himself in the book. He writes:

Even as Gandhi was talking to Mountbatten, the news that he had decided to go on a fast was being broadcast over the news media in all of India’s fourteen languages. In Poona, two men sitting in a shoddy newspaper office read it over their teleprinter. Read it and suddenly made their great decision: Gandhi must be killed. Their names were Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte; they were the editor and manager respectively of a Marathi language daily called the *Hindu Rashtra*. (Malgonkar 41)

Apte was the best friend of Nathuram, as the author confirms. Nathuram’s close association and telepathic relation with Apte are amply explained when Apte tells Gopal Godse that “in the four and a half years that Nathuram and I worked together, we often thought the same thing at the same time. Nathuram would send a leading article from wherever he had gone to, and it would turn out that I had already written on the same subject and on the same lines. And as to our devotion to the cause, we were like one mind in two bodies” (qtd. in Malgonkar 42). The author here adds to the character of Nathuram, an image of a true and infallible friend.

Nathuram was a good organiser, and a speaker who could sway away the crowd with his eloquent rhetoric, a politician, and a journalist. He was a disciplined activist for

his organisation and since 1939 held the leadership for many protest campaigns for the Hindu cause. In 1942 when the Hindu Mahasabha introduced an armed group called Hindu Rashtra Dal, Nathuram, along with Apte, became its office bearer. In 1944 he established the Marathi daily *Agrani*, which was later renamed as *Hindu Rashtra*, and became its editor, and Apte, its manager. The motto of the paper was also the motto of Nathuram's life: "Public good, not mere popularity" (Malgonkar 65). Much to prove the development of his aggressive anti-Gandhian mindset Nathuram says: "As regards non-violence, it was absurd to expect forty crores of people to regulate their lives on such a lofty plane" (qtd. in Malgonkar 119). He was never against Gandhi, but he was against the cause Gandhi stood for.

To further exemplify Nathuram's paradoxical character, Malgonkar adds that once the assassination was plotted both the principal convicts tried to pull themselves back from any significant roles. "If it did not show up Apte and Nathuram as cowards, equally so it did not show them up as men of courage either, for they had managed to farm out all the dangerous roles to their subordinates and themselves intended to remain in the background. They had even put the pistol into the hands of the most inoffensive of men, Badge's servant Shankar Kristayya" (Malgonkar 123). But this perspective of a cowardly Nathuram soon changes into the image of a daring militant when, after the failure of January 20's attempt on the life of the Mahatma, Nathuram decides to do it himself without any assistants. His words were firm: "I am going to do it. I don't need any help, not another man. No recruiting people, no depending on anyone else," Nathuram's catastrophe was decided by these words (qtd. in Malgonkar 187). The power of these words was such that, hearing it, Apte swore that, "in that instant," he "saw Gandhi dead" (187).

Quoting Gandhi's words on 27 January on his visit to the Mehrauli shrine, Malgonkar posits the ultimate image of a civilised man so as to counterpoise his narrative of Nathuram Godse. "Gandhi has been called a saint, a villain, a politician, a statesman, a fool, a knave, a charlatan, an astute tradesman, a naked fakir and many other things, but the few words he now said at the urging of the Mullas of the Mehrauli shrine are enough to show that, whatever else he might have been, he was, above all a truly civilised man." Gandhi said: "I have never known what it is to be communal. To unite all sections and all communities that people this vast land of ours has been my dream ever since my childhood, and till that dream is realised my spirit can know no rest" (qtd. in Malgonkar 232-233). By this, Malgonkar makes his standpoint clear that he finds Nathuram guilty of assassination for ending the life of this "truly civilised man" (232). This also drives out any suspicion of Malgonkar sympathising with Nathuram Godse. Had Malgonkar found any point to sympathise with Nathuram he would not have brought Mahatma Gandhi suddenly into the narrative and established him as a

“truly civilised man” (232). But still he goes on exploring further images from Nathuram’s album. The fatal act of the assassination is described by the author in Nathuram’s own words:

‘With the pistol in my right hand [,] I folded my hands and said Namaste! [Greetings!]. With my left hand I pushed aside the girl who might have come in my line of fire. Then the shots went off, almost on their own. I never knew whether I had fired two rounds or three. Gandhi gave a quick gasp, a sound like ‘Aaaah!’ and fell down, I kept holding my hand high, gripping the pistol tightly, and began to yell “Police... Police!” I wanted everyone to see that this was something premeditated, something deliberate – that I had not acted in a fit of passion. I wanted no one to say that I tried to run away or to get rid of the pistol, but wanted to be caught complete with the pistol. But everything was suddenly still, and for at least half a minute no one came forward’.

(qtd. in Malgonkar 250)

After he was overpowered by the police, “he saw the pistol being passed from hand to hand and shouted to a police officer, ‘You’d better take possession of it and put on the safety catch before they shoot one another!’” (Malgonkar 251). After the assassination, Nathuram accepted full responsibility for his deed and maintained that he did not desire that any mercy be shown to him. He was convinced of the righteousness and logic of his deed and was proud of having fulfilled it. His defence in the appeal court was full of rhetoric and logic which made the audience feel for him. Malgonkar, by citing Justice Khosla who was the judge at the appeal court for Gandhi assassination case, shows how convincing Nathuram’s speech was. Khosla said: ‘Had the audience of that day [in the High Court] been constituted into a jury and entrusted with the task of deciding Godse’s appeal, they would have brought in a verdict of ‘not guilty’” (qtd. in Malgonkar 278).

Malgonkar maintains that Nathuram has been stern and unemotional throughout till his death. He was true to his convictions till the end, and lived a rather relaxed life. This is further exemplified when he describes Nathuram’s last days as similar to the casual comedy outside the cell.

To the question of Nathuram’s link with the RSS, which has been denied repeatedly by the BJP and the RSS leaders, Noorani presents Nathuram as an avid worker of the RSS. He cites from Gopal Godse’s confirmation in a later interview: “You can even say we grew up in the RSS rather than in our homes. It was like a family to us. Nathuram had become a *bhuddhik karyavah* (intellectual worker) in the RSS. He said in his statement that he left the RSS. He said it because Golwalkar and the RSS were in a lot

of trouble after the murder of Gandhi. But he did not leave the RSS” (qtd in Noorani 138). This testimony of Gopal Godse provides evidence for Noorani to place Nathuram as an RSS cadet and to connect him to Savarkar through the RSS also, for “Savarkar moved closer to the RSS after the Gandhi murder” (138).

What we get from this representation of Nathuram is that while Malgonkar tries to present Nathuram as the author of his own catastrophe, Noorani tries to authorise Savarkar with that authority. Here Nathuram Godse is not the master of his acts but he is merely an obedient of his master. Nathuram’s own claim - “no depending on anyone else” - which Malgonkar privileges is not appreciated by Noorani. Noorani’s conception of a strong link between Savarkar, Hindutva and Nathuram Godse sets in motion the work of Subhash Gatade which came out in 2011 with marked observations on the contemporary Indian polity and the presence of what Gatade calls ‘Hindutva terrorism’ in it.

Portraying Nathuram Godse as the harbinger of ‘Hindutva terrorism’ in India, Gatade’s contentious work *Godse’s Children: Hindutva Terror in India* introduces Nathuram as the first terrorist in independent India and Gandhi’s assassination as the first terrorist activity. Reading the Savarkar-Nathuram-RSS equation along the lines of Noorani, he fortifies Noorani’s claim of Nathuram’s affiliation to Savarkar and the RSS and the connection of both in the Gandhi assassination plot. He, like Noorani, cites the claims of Badge and Gopal Godse to base his argument on Savarkar-RSS-Nathuram question. He supplants his arguments with further claim on grounds of enmity with Gandhi over the Hindutva forces. He claims that there were five attempts on the life of Gandhi including the final one. In four of these attempts Nathuram Godse is featured, and in the culminating attempt Nathuram achieves his goal. This claim contradicts Malgonkar’s version which mentions only two attempts on Gandhi’s life and which introduces Nathuram as the leader of those two attempts.

The five attempts on Gandhi’s life spans 14 years.

The first one happened in Pune on 25th June 1934 when Mahatma Gandhi was going to the Corporation Auditorium to deliver a speech... The explosion caused injuries to some police men and ordinary people. The second attempt on Mahatma Gandhi’s life also involved his future assassin, namely Nathuram Godse. Gandhi was visiting Panchagni, a hill station near Pune, in May 1944. During the prayer meeting in the evening, Nathuram rushed towards Gandhi with a dagger in his hands, but he was overpowered by others. The third attempt took place when Gandhi’s talks with Jinnah started in September 1944. When Gandhi was leaving for Mumbai from Sevagram Ashram, a group of fanatic

Hindu youth, led by Nathuram Godse, tried to stop him. Nathuram again was found in possession of a dagger. The fourth attempt was on 20 January 1948. It involved Madanlal Pahwa, Shankra Kristiya, Digamber Badge, Vishnu Karkare, Gopal Godse, Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte. The last attempt took on 30 January 1948 at 5:17 pm when Nathuram Godse approached Gandhi and shot him three times in his chest at point blank range.

(Gatade 43-44)

For Gatade neither is Nathuram the master of his own acts nor is he the lieutenant of Savarkar, instead he is just a representative of the Hindutva forces in whose hands he was a mere pawn. Gatade's representation of Nathuram is not focussed on the fact that he assassinated Gandhi, but focuses on the image of Nathuram as a symbol of terrorism, a preamble of a wider politics of Hindu domination, a harbinger of Hindutva terrorism in India.

Mahadevbhai by Ramu Ramanathan is a play featuring Mahadev Desai, one of Gandhi's most significant assistants, who passed away in 1942 while he was imprisoned in the Aga Khan Palace, near Poona, in connection with the Quit India movement. The author says: "In fact I wanted to write the play in the nineties when there was a surge of anti-Gandhi plays" (Ramanathan 04). Thus, the existence of this play is based on its 'other' Nathuram Godse, as the playwright makes a reference to the Marathi play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy* by Pradeep Dalvi, which, he says, is "a PR hype for Godse. History is distorted. Lies invented. And at the end of it, we're informed, Gandhi *Hatya* was not an assassination, but a *Vadh* (as in *Ravana Vadh* or *Kamsa Vadh*)" (Ramanathan 04). The play *Mi Nathuram Boltoy* stems from the defence of Godse in the appeal court. It shows Nathuram as the convinced individual who plotted one of the most significant assassinations, as the character of Nathuram says: "IPC 302, the assassination of Gandhi" (Dalvi). Here Nathuram Godse is the hero speaking in two different time periods. The play begins with the speech of the protagonist who comes to the stage to face the audience many years after his death. Then the scenes move back into Nathuram's life, focussing on the decision to kill Gandhi and its execution. Here Nathuram is given voice by the playwright:

Gandhi has acquired some position in history which nobody can deny, not even Nathuram. The page will be there forever in fact. Sometime in the future, in some storm, the pages will flutter and there will be that same Gandhi's page before the world. I don't refute Gandhi's theory of non-violence. He may be a saint but he is not a politician. His theory of non-violence denies self-defence and self-interest. The non-violence that defines the fight for survival as violence is a theory not of non-violence but of self-destruction. (Dalvi)

This shows that the play is made by intertwining the playwright's narrative with that of Nathuram's speech in the appeal court. This 'other' is countered by Ramu Ramanathan's historical narrative of Mahadev Desai's life, travelling through his diary notes, which he wrote during his life with Gandhi. The writer's representation of Gandhi-friend thus keeps an absent presence of the Gandhi-enemy.

Rizio Yohannan Raj, placing the poem "The Last Soliloquy of Nathuram Godse" in her collection of poetry titled *Eunuch*, shows Nathuram Godse portrayed as a character entangled in recurring thoughts of his deed in the last hours of his life. Here, Nathuram is contemplating the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, and his memories act "like faraway childhood kites" on the scaffold. As a child flying a kite, Nathuram was well praised by his friends as a good kite fighter while he "manoeuvred the line as he pleased" (Raj 17). The mind of Nathuram is made peculiar at this stage by the poet, for she attributes to him a realisation of the odd ways of winning the game.

The weirdest kite cuts the best in flight, I'd understood
the game of intimidation early enough. (Raj 17)

Since Nathuram was the best of the kite fighters, his friends could only fight themselves to be his preys. As a navigator, neither did Nathuram like anyone entering his territory, nor did he allow anyone to cross the borders, since the sky was his "own sheer blue territory" (Raj 17). Nathuram grew up with this mind of a kite fighter and saw Gandhi crossing the borders infinitely. The poet, by titling the collection *Eunuch* and characterising the book with the "idea of crossing the borders" which is fundamental to the eunuch's identity," opens the book with the poem "Eunuch" which represents Mahatma Gandhi as the paradigm of crossing the borders "with his womanly fasts", "singing hermaphroditic non-violence" (Raj 01). "Eunuch" addresses Gandhi as our last *ardhanareeshwara*. Through this representation of Gandhi, the poet prepares the reader for the words of Nathuram justifying his deeds:

Later, later when I saw Gandhi crossing
the borders of land, religion, gender, age
my hands were again seized
by the fervour of kite fighting;
I had to cut his line
and finish him in the open.
Now, no more miracles, no Noakhalis,
I said, aiming at the Joiner of Opposites. (Raj 17-18)

And when Nathuram says this the reader gets the image of an imagined kite fighter cutting the lines which crossed his imagined borders. With her undeniable love for Gandhi, the poet makes Nathuram doubt his conviction in the second part of the poem:

Was my fury at Gandhi only a spectre
from my childhood training? (Raj 18)

Nathuram here is a character caught between his confused thoughts and guilt. In a convoluted mind, he sees his “macho kite” which stayed with him in all his wars he waged on the effeminate piety and infinite power of the one who crossed the borders. Now the “macho kite” no more stays with him. Now, the Joiner of Opposites “snaps ties” with the tender nights of Nathuram’s childhood, as he sets upon to paint Mahatma’s face with the killer instincts he earned as a kite fighter.

What is contradiction in this representation of Nathuram as one who waged war on the effeminate piety or the *ardhanareeshwara* is the fact that Nathuram himself was brought up as a girl, subjugating his own masculine identity. Raj, by portraying Mahatma Gandhi as the *ardhanareeshwara*, posits a masculine character of Nathuram, with the symbolic macho kite. But at the same time she seems unconcerned about the fact that Nathuram had to experience the life of a *Brahannala*, to cure the curse of the Fates. The childhood experience as an in between eunuch might have haunted Nathuram so that he could not bear the sight of another eunuch, and later when he saw Gandhi, presumably another eunuch as Raj portrays, he could not finishing Gandhi in the open, true to the “warped mental process” mentioned by Malgonkar. Thus, one can see an obvious irony in Raj’s portrayal of Gandhi as *ardhanareeshwara* and Nathuram as a macho kite fighter.

Farooqh Dhondi’s poem “Nathuram Godse” is a complex blend of material and philosophical aspects of the change which has occurred in India, and the assassination of Gandhi. The poet makes the poem complex with references and allusions. It opens by introducing the shift of the socio-political system through independence. The British system was replaced with another kind, which is perhaps not quite the thing that India had aspired for. The poem works in two phases the British leaving and what changes happen physically around, and how these physical changes are accorded to certain individual/spiritual aspects.

The first part of the poem connects itself to the materiality of the change. The second part begins immediately after Gandhi is brought in. Gandhi’s killing in the middle of the poem is the axis on which the material change turns around to reveal its implications. And revealing the implications, Nathuram is introduced. There is a hope for, and an

imagination about, a recreating of Nathuram's life. What did this killing bring him? The poet portrays how Nathuram would have lived on after the assassination if he was not executed.

The ousting of the British and the killing of Gandhi by Nathuram are juxtaposed and both amount to the same effect. The first creates a material change which is reflected in the psychic/deeper realm in a happening such as Nathuram's killing of Gandhi, which was also done with some hope. But like India falling apart, Nathuram's dream also falls apart. Both India and Nathuram fall preys to banality. The author here identifies Nathuram with the nation itself. There is hope of Nathuram's survival after the assassination, his free life etc, which stems from the hope that his deeds would be considered valid by the society. But it never happened, and his vision could not be fulfilled by him. But there is a later system which developed in India as many of the other writers consulted in this would argue, and that system was capable of taking Nathuram's ideal of Hindu Rashtra further. Nathuram Godse as an individual could not survive, but he was successful in doing what he needed, and is surviving still through an "odious immortality". So, as Dhondi portrays, at an individual level, just like India falls in the very moment it achieved what it searched for 200 years, just like the "messiah of peace" becomes the reason for capital punishment for two persons at the same moment he sacrifices himself for the cause of peace and non-violence, Nathuram Godse also falls exactly at the moment he achieved what he longed for. Dhondi's portrayal of a living Nathuram after his actual death in the timeline of the narrative itself finds a parallel in Dalvi's Marathi play *Mi Nathuram Boltay*.

One can see that there are three major ways in which Nathuram is represented in both fictional and non-fictional works in Indian English writing; Nathuram the individual, Nathuram the assassin, and Nathuram the paradigm symbol for Hindutva politics.

While Malgonkar analyses the life of Nathuram as an individual, paradoxically under the title *The Men Who Killed Gandhi*, and explores his various personal traits and their implications throughout his life, creative writers like Rizio Yohannan Raj and Farooq Dhondi goes in search of the psychological and philosophical realms of Nathuram the assassin. Noorani concentrates on Nathuram the assassin, with the view of him being the lieutenant of Savarkar in his attempt to portray Savarkar as the master mind behind Gandhi's assassination. Gatade exemplifies a symbol of Hindutva terrorism through Nathuram by portraying him as its harbinger, the first terrorist in independent India. And Ramanathan engages with the absence of the "other" image so as to counter Godseian narratives in the contemporary scenario.

Though none of these texts in Indian English seems to celebrate the political assassin and his deed, as against Dalvi's Marathi play, the Indian English writers represent a complex image of Nathuram Godse, both as a private and public individual. The representations do not suggest any trace that the authors sympathise with Nathuram, instead they show that these writers have their own political stand points, either pro-Gandhi, anti-Hindutva, or neutral. Thus, one could see Nathuram Vinayak Godse represented in Indian English Writings through diverse narratives and dynamic images which show light to Nathuram Godse's life in various ways and make him a cult representation in Indian English Writings.

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Myths and Legends from Netherworld in Mamang Dai's Novel *The Legends of Pensam*

Biju M.A.

Human appetite for narratives is universal and has never abated. Narratives are ubiquitous and pervasive in nature. They are as old as the human imagination. We find the presence of narrative in fiction, film, myths, legends, rituals, ceremonies, beliefs as they are varied forms and modes of narratives through which human beings try to make sense of this world. In other words through them, the human mind engages in the creation of different possible worlds which seek the whence and whither of existence in different places and time. Though they differ from each other substantially in their content and the mode of presentation across different cultures, they represent the fundamental human quest, the quest for meaning, deliverance, perfection etc. Joseph Campbell in his *Primitive Mythology: The Masks of God* asserts the need for myths. He writes, "Man, apparently, cannot maintain himself in the universe without belief in some arrangement of the general inheritance of myth. In fact, the fullness of his life would even seem to stand in direct ratio to the depth and range not of his rational thought but of his local mythology" (4). Based on the claims of Roland Barthes, David Herman argues that "Stories are cognitive as well as textual in nature, structures of mind as well as constellations of verbal, cinematic, pictorial, or other signs produced and interpreted within particular communicative settings"(8). Myths and legends are essentially stories inherited and elaborated over centuries from generations to generations. They, being part of a particular community, are essential cognitive frames through which that community explains and understands many mysteries of life.

Arunachal Pradesh: The Land of Legends and Myths

The Legends of Pensam by Mamang Dai is essentially a recounting of the myths, legends, beliefs, customs and rituals of the *Adi* tribe in Arunachal Pradesh, the land of the dawn lit mountains, to which the author belongs. It is estimated that there are twenty six tribes with a large number of sub clans that live in Arunachal Pradesh. The Tibeto-Burman speaking hill-tribes with their distinct dialects live in harmony with each other in the state. In the 'hidden land', the people have been leading a life of endurance and perseverance even in the extreme wheater conditions. This coexistence of mutual bonding is deeply ingrained in their culture. Mamang Dai writes in her article *Oral Narratives and Myth* that "The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have always lived off the forest without any threat to the ecosystem. The tenets of traditional practice are deep rooted in environment ethics, supporting a close and harmonious relationship

with nature” (Glimpses from the North- East 2). All these have a long history mired in the collective memory and recalling them becomes difficult. She also suggests how to approach tribal myths:

How do we identify ourselves as members of a community belonging to a particular place, with a particular history? Some of the signs for this lie with our stories. We are here today as members of a community with a particular set of beliefs, by an act of faith, because we believed in the ‘word’ as composed in our myths and legends. It is here that we may find that peculiar, indefinable something by which we recognise each other, and make others see us as a group, a society, a people of a particular community (Glimpses from the North-East 2).

Myth-making

This recounting in the fictional form is a kind of myth-making, indicating our primitive urge for narratives in the face of demythologising tendencies in the advent of rapid changes in our outlook and approach to life brought about by the fascinating developments in science and technology. Human science and technology are far advanced and our achievements in every sphere are great leaps in our capacities and skills. Amidst all these developments, all achievements and pleasures, human beings search for myths. It is often highlighted that ours is a posthuman world where human capacities and capabilities are enhanced with the technological innovations. In other words we have to define human beings as technical beings. But then monstrosities of the modern age along with the advantages often lead man into kind of vacuum, a kind of meaninglessness. This fundamentally makes him return to and revisit his roots, roots of orace, clan and tribe. In this regressive adventure, myths and legends become the threshold of wonderful wisdom and knowledge that lead humanity forward and through which the ordinary and banal activities become quite meaningful.

Mamang Dai’s Pensam of Stories

Set in a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh, *The Legends of Pensam* presents before us a narrator who makes a rigorous regressive journey into the myths, legends, beliefs, customs of her tribe, *Adi*, along with her friend Mona who is a foreigner and a proprietor of the magazine, ‘*The Diary of the World*’. They listen to oral renderings of all these myths and legends from the village elders in Duyang, Yelen, Sirum, Pigo, and Gurdum in the Siang Valley. The narrator even recollects some of them from her accreted memory. All these stories of *Adi* belong to *Pensam*. In the language of *Adis*, the word *Pensam* literally means ‘in-between’. Mamang Dai explains what *Pensam* stands for

in the novel. “It suggests the middle, or middle ground, but it may also be interpreted as the hidden spaces of the heart where a secret garden grows. It is the small world where anything can happen and everything can be lived; where the narrow boat that we call life sails along somehow in calm or stormy weather; where the life of a man can be measured in the span of a song” (Vii). GSP Rao in his review of the novel writes that “In the narration, Pensam is literally the middle-ground between myth and reality governing the lives of *Adis*, and also the transitionary phase between the traditional and modern ways of their life”.

It’s quite intuitive for the members of the *Adis* to identify them as they are part of *Pensam*. The mode of rendering and the person who renders these myths and legends are significant for the *Adi*. Among the *Adis*, the custodian of the ‘word’ is the *miri* (priest). Mamang Dai writes their significance in her essay in the book *Understanding Tribal Religions*. She says: “And the role and importance of the Miri is inextricably linked with the myths and stories of the tribe as he chants and invokes and restores all the images from the beginning of time that offers a body of tradition that shapes our imagination and characterises our attitudes towards certain fact and phenomenon” (88). Thus we find the *miri*, the great shaman of *Adi*, the priest, exorcist and the preserver of the tribal myths and legends, who narrates the creation myth of *Adis* in the novel.

In the beginning, there was only *Keyum*. Nothingness. It was neither darkness nor light, nor had it any colour, shape or movement. *Keyum* is the remote past, way beyond the reach our senses. It is the place of ancient things from where no answer is received. Out of this place of great stillness, the first flicker of thought began to shine like a light in the soul of man. It became a shimmering trail, took shape and expanded and became the Pathway. Out of this nebulous Zone, a spark was born that was the light of imagination. The spark grew into a shining stream that was the consciousness of man, and from this all the stories of the world and all its creatures came into being (56).

The creation myth of the *Adis* is similar to other cosmogonical myths of ex nihilo nature. Apart from that it has no allusion to *Brahma* or *Prajapti* who is associated with the origin of universe in Hindu mythology. In other words the creation myths of the *Adi* tribe do not have any relation to other Indian Vedic mythology. The same shaman in the novel says that all here in the world are with a purpose, to fulfil their destiny. He also says that “From nothingness we have come to be born under the stars, and almighty *Donyi-polo*, the sun and the moon, whose light shines on all equally, is the invisible force that guides each one of us. All life is light and shadow; we live and we die, and the path of destiny is the quest for faith” (57). Oshong Ering, an expert in

the tribal mythology of Arunachal Pradesh, explicates the concept of *Donyi-polo* in the book *Understanding Tribal Religions*. He says, “To them, *DONYI-POLO* is the Truth. Truth is purity free from all coercion. It is the light that enlighten human mind. It rules Supreme in guiding ideal life. It is undestructible and indivisible. It is absolute by itself. *DONYI- POLO*, therefore, stands as an ever-shining beauty that attracts the *Adis* throughout their life” (36)

The *Adis* have primitive beliefs, customs and rituals. Their belief in spirits, malevolent and benevolent and the rites and rituals to propitiate them are significant. The spirits may appear in different forms and their appearances evoke awe and fear among the members of the tribe and they believe something bad like murder, or death may occur if they are angered. Such is the story of *Birbik*, the water serpent. It was Lutor, Hoxo’s father who said that he had a strange apparition. He couldn’t ascertain whether it was a fish or snake. They understood that something unnatural was bound to happen and shortly Hoxo’s father was killed in a hunting accident. The narrator tells everyone knows the story of *Birbik*, the water serpent, as it is fixed in their collective memory. ‘It had happened on a night of heavy rain when a fisherman was alone with his nets by the river. He heard a rushing sound as the waters parted and then suddenly he looked up at the tree he was sheltering under, he saw a serpent coiled up in the branches looking down at him with ancient eyes. What shocked him most was the fact that the serpent had head with horns” (9-10). After being bed ridden for a few months, he died of the sickness. They were unsure of the different manifestation of the spirit as they couldn’t explain about the fish they found in the Lutor’s pocket while he was brought dead. The sudden death of Kalen in a hunting accident is also attributed to the spirits.

Making the spirit angry is inauspicious as they may bring misfortune to the community. The story of sad plight of bed ridden Kepi is also attributed to the malevolent spirits. It was attributed to the actions of Kepi’s father. He was unable to read the signs of the presence of a spirit in the form of a python from the strange behaviour of the elephant he hired to pull the logs. Frustrated after his continuous attempts to make the elephant work, he makes a search among the logs. He was brave enough to find out the coiled python among the logs and kill it. When his son became ill, he recalled his encounter with serpent in the hour his misfortune. They had to perform the serpent ritual, chanting and negotiating with the spirits, calling them to heal the sick child but the spirits had moved away to a place beyond recall. “They are the most dangerous ones, the ones who go away and never return” (24)

Another instance of belief in the spirit world is found in the story of Pinyar, the widow. Though she was widowed when her husband abandoned her, she lived alone. Once while she was in the field, her house caught fire. It was *Adi*’s custom that when a

house catches fire its owner is banished to observe certain taboo. During that period no one can eat with her as they are afraid of provoking the tiger spirit, for it is the tiger spirit that causes fire. Leading such difficult life, she believes in all types spirit and it is she who tells “there is a bad spirit lurking in the *si-ye* that makes men go mad” (29). It is the same belief that makes her think that her son, Kamur is haunted by the spirits since he had killed his son and daughter in a sudden fit of unknown urge. She wanted to bring all powerful priests from across the river to drive away the spirits that affect her son. “They understood that it was a nebulous zone that divided the worlds of spirits and men-infact, at one time men and spirits had been brothers. They knew that what was real could well be an illusion, and that reality might only be the context that people gave to a moment” (31) Though the people lead a life close to the nature, their belief in the spirits’ envy and jealousy makes them fearful of the nature. Even they are afraid of their annual journey to the snow-mountains to harvest a precious root, the deadly aconitum that is collected for the preparation of poison arrow. “There were rivers hungry for lives, they knew, and mountains waiting to tear the breath out of their lungs. The piercing wind whistled and jeered around them, trying to steal their senses. The cooked rice they carried turned to hard grain. ... They had to convince the jealous spirits circling them to permit them safe return” (59)

When affected by the bad spirits, it becomes mandatory for them to call the shaman to do necessary rituals to save the people from the spirits. Asserting the relevance of shamans in primitive society, Joseph Campbell says that “In primal societies, the Shaman provides a living conduit between the local and the transcendent. ... Of course what this individual has encountered by going deep into the unconscious is the unconscious of their whole society. These people are bound in a small horizon and share a limited system of psychological problems. And so the shaman becomes a teacher and protector of the mythic tradition but is isolated and feared; it’s very dangerous position to be in” (Pathways to Bliss Xviii). Shamans chant the song and perform the rites. It is the *miri*, the shaman who is the protector of the word and myths and rituals of the *Adis*. They preserve the legends and varied histories of the tribe. It is they who come to rescue the people from the reign of malevolent spirits. The *miri* can communicate with the spirits. The villagers invite the shamans and perform the prescribed rituals to ward off the impending danger. Every primitive myth is associated with rituals. This novel provides such instances where the shamans perform rituals. Serpent rituals, rituals before a journey, ritual when something unexpected and inexplicable happens, and the priests are called to perform the necessary ceremonies. The *Adis* belief in the *miri*, the priest is very deep. The elders in the novel suggest “*It is better to call the spirits. It is necessary to let the miri speak to them so that the territory of men is safe from their jealous rage*” (60) Joseph Campbell rightly says

that ‘Ritual is simply myth enacted: by participating in a rite, you are participating directly in the myth (Pathways to Bliss Xix).

Even after the changes the land witnessed with the arrival of migulans, missionaries, schools, and the successive governments after Indian Independence, people believe in the myths and legends that they have inherited from time immemorial. Roads and other transportation facilities improve their standards of living still people are strongly rooted to their traditional beliefs and rituals. Myths and legends recounted and performed through stories, songs, ritual and ceremonies function differently in *Adi* community.

According to Joseph Campbell there are different myths in every community. All myths are validated by decades, centuries of experience and so they provide a model for them to emulate. Myth provides a field where one can locate oneself. Myths direct us from the phenomenal world to the transcendent. According to him, there are four main functions Myths do in a community. “The first function of a living mythology is to reconcile consciousness to the preconditions of its own existences; that is to say, to the nature of life” (Pathways to Bliss 3). There are characters in the novel, who lament on their miserable life in the difficult terrain and extreme climatic conditions. Some of them often question but it is their sacred myths and legends that enable them to find out meaning of their existence. “The second function of mythology is to present an image of the cosmos, an image of the Universe round about, that will maintain and elicit this experience of awe, this function we may call a cosmological function of mythology” (Pathways to Bliss 7). *The Legends of Pensam* presents before us the *Adis*’ conception of the creation of this universe. Curiosity to know the making behind the world is universal and the *Adi*’s creation myth is equipped enough to answer the tribes doubts.

These myths and legends dictate the norms of normal behaviour in the tribe. It also gives guidelines to the members how they should conduct themselves in the society and their relation with other people. This is the third function that Joseph Campbell says. “The third function of a mythology then is to validate and maintain a certain sociological system: a shared set of rights and wrongs, proprieties and improprieties, on which your particular social unit depends for its existence” (Pathways to Bliss 8). “Finally, the fourth function of mythology is psychological. The myth must carry the individual through the stages of his life, from birth through maturity through senility to death” (Pathways to Bliss 9). We find in the novel different people resorting to the local mythology in different stages of their life. They try to propitiate spirits, conduct rituals and ceremonies in order to lead a happy life. For them these rituals are equal to religious customs. Mamang Dai asserts all these function myths do in the *Adi* tribe.

Life generated it (myths) in us, and the significance of songs and stories is that they demonstrate the complex nature of human faith founded on memory and the magic of words in the oral tradition. With time, the collection of myths developed into parables and a code of conduct that became the basis for daily customary practice as observed by the tribes. Everyone knows the stories, in one form or another, and it is this knowledge that links the individual to a group, a certain region and community, but most often the stories are inseparable from the routine of daily life that they are not even perceived as stories anymore. (Glimpses from the North- East 5)

Human beings search for order and modern life. All the facilities and technological innovations often make man to search for a certain order, myths and beliefs are often kept away from the busy life. Fundamental science often tries to disprove the claims of myths. Still human beings search for spiritual, metaphysical reasons for their life that may often help them to face different life experiences. To hold on something strong is basic to human nature. They resort to different myths and legends. This is what Mamang Dai means when she writes “Perhaps the quest for faith is the destiny of man; and perhaps by the story teller’s art reviving the ancient myths and reawakening our ties with the spirits of the river and the invisible gods, faith, defined as the living reception of religious belief is the jewel that gives meaning to life” (*Understanding Tribal Religions* 94).

Conclusion

Mamang Dai’s recounting of her tribal narratives in the form of a novel is quite innovative. When the modern society searches for reasons behind every phenomenon, myths and legends call for faith in the readers. It’s the myths, legends, beliefs, and rituals of a community that remain in their collective unconsciousness and bind them together in their life. Writing of a novel is a kind of reviving the old stories and practices in the tribe. She gives her reasons for this in the novel for, “The truth, after all, exists in portions, and the rest is a matter of words changed by each person’s perception” (32). Moreover, she tells that “And we are here today, as we are, as members of a particular tribe with a particular set of beliefs be an act of Faith, because we have chosen to repose belief in the ‘word’ as composed in our myths and legends, from these all streams of thought run together to give us a guide to life’ (*Understanding Tribal Religions* 88). Roland Barthes in his *Mythologies* writes that myth is kind of communication. “It is a type of speech. ...It is a mode of signification” (107). Through *The Legends of Pensam*, Mamang Dai brilliantly presents the myths and legends, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies of the *Adis* as their particular mode of signification.

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Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Internet

The Myth of Transformation and the Cult of the Personality in Blogs

Sucharita Sarkar

I. *Homo Fictus* and The Web of Stories

In *The Storytelling Animal*, human beings are classified as *homo fictus*, because, 'we are, as a species, addicted to story'.¹ Defined as the 'quintessential story',² myths have fascinated us and resonated with us across cultures and centuries.

Demythologization seeks to limit myth as 'being opposed to reality (myth is fiction) ...and to what is rational (myth is absurd)'.³ But any attempt 'to chase myths like moths, and fight them with a pin',⁴ is a flawed and futile exercise. Myths are better understood as 'containers of universal truth': Mircea Eliade defined it as 'true history' and Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell regarded it as the product of the 'collective unconscious'.⁵ Myths open up to reveal multiple meanings, and 'can be made to mean whatever the myth teller wants them to mean, and their rhetorical power can be subjected to the prevailing modes of discourse of a particular era or power elite'.⁶

This paper attempts to establish the valence of myth in the post-modern, Internet-enabled 21st century, with special reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the 'encyclopaedia of myth' of Latin Literature of the Golden Age.⁷ Ovid's poem was ambitious in scope, covering the entirety of time from 'the world's beginning' to his 'own lifetime'.⁸ The universality and comprehensiveness of Ovid's canvas and the poly-vocality of the mindboggling array of inter-connected characters in his poem seem to be a fore-shadowing of the Internet, with its promised network of 'a thousand voices' that would 'flourish, communicate, connect'.⁹

In *Metamorphoses* VI, Ovid describes a weaving competition between the goddess Minerva and the mortal Arachne.¹⁰ Minerva's tapestry arranges its material in a 'formal and balanced way':¹¹ with the 'twelve Olympians, Jove in their midst', sitting in 'august dignity'.¹² The corners depict myths of thwarted ambition where humans are transformed into inanimate/bestial forms. These transformations are disciplinary, and, along with the central figure of Minerva subduing Neptune, the entire tapestry justifies singular dominance and authority. In contrast, Arachne's tapestry is a riotous abundance of myths depicting amorous love, where gods transform themselves into beasts/humans.

The mighty Jove becomes, by turn, a bull, an eagle, a swan, a satyr, a human, a shower of gold, a shepherd, and a serpent, recklessly abandoning control for carnal satisfaction and procreation. Neptune and Apollo follow suit, and the entire tapestry, bordered by 'flowers all interwoven with tendrils of ivy' suggests a carnivalesque, de-centred expressiveness.¹³

The competing tapestries symbolise two contrasting worldviews: classical vs. romantic; order vs. plurality, planning vs. profusion, causality vs. carnality; narratives of power as punishment vs. narratives of power as pleasure. This also symbolises the dynamic opposition between the Age of Print/Broadcast media and the Age of the Internet. 'We have moved from a culture dominated by mass media, using one-to-many communication, to one where participatory media, using many-to-many communication, is becoming the norm.'¹⁴

Whereas cultural production in the 20th century was controlled by elite editorial cliques, the Internet was a game-changer in the way we produce and consume culture, as it gave a 'new freedom to publish at will',¹⁵ replacing control with an abundance of stories and story-tellers, where the 'ivy' has run over the 'flowers', as in Arachne's tapestry.

Minerva's punishes humble-born Arachne by transforming her into a spider, who, from her abdomen, 'continues to spin/ her thread and practise her former art in the web of a spider.'¹⁶ This prophetically foreshadows the World Wide Web. When Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1990,¹⁷ it opened up the Internet for the common people. The web-image is exceedingly appropriate for the open-access network of the Internet, as its fluid spinning mirrors the 'ease and spontaneity of self-expression that blogging, Twittering and posting on social media sites like Facebook allow.'¹⁸

In its prolific creativity, Arachne's web microcosmically contains Ovid's own 'continuous poem',¹⁹ and also fore-shadows the post-modern flux and uncharted frontiers of the 'wild, wild, web'.²⁰

II. 'Changes of Shape, New Forms, Are The Theme'²¹

The myriad myths that Ovid chooses to weave together have one theme in common: metamorphoses or 'change of form'.

Going back to the contrasting/contesting tapestries of Minerva and Arachne, it may be noted that the transformations in Minerva's tapestry are done to passive victims, to

punish/censure/impose, whereas the transformations in Arachne's tapestry are active transformations by the agents, for the purpose of disguise/role-play/satisfaction/fulfilment.

Between Minerva's and Arachne's tapestry, there is a power shift and a paradigm shift. This parallels the shift from the 20th century Age of Entertainment to the present Age of Transformations. Instead being fed entertainment from television/cinema screens, we now have bloggers or reality-television show participators transform their existing identity into something else. The lean-back, passive consumer of culture has become a sit-forward, active and inter-active user of cultures. 'When consumers become producers, one of the objectives of their creative activity is the construction and multiplication of new selves....Individuals interested in *transformational opportunities* will produce and consume startling cultural departures. Entertainment bent us back toward the centre of our culture. Transformation will take us away from it.'²²

The Internet catalysed this shift from the centralised, standardised print and broadcast media. Through its dispersed, dynamic, interactive, *user-generated* content it offers 'transformational opportunities' that allow for the construction of multiple identities: personal/ethnic/sexual/social. Maximal heterogeneity was till now only possible in art, for instance, in the linked yet chaotic overabundance of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It has now become possible in reality: a post-modern, *virtual* reality.

One of the most obvious transformations is played out in the virtual world of gaming portals. MUDs (Multi-user domains) like *Dungeons and Dragons* and MMORPs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) like *World of Warcraft* provide immersive platforms where the players 'slay monsters, explore a fantasy world, complete quests, go on adventures, create a story by role-playing, and advance the created character.'²³ The role-play in mythic settings explores the transformations into the 'second person' inside the player's real-life personality: diverse personas such as explorer, achiever or socialiser.²⁴

User profiles on Facebook, Twitter and other social-networking and micro-blogging sites incorporate role-playing through carefully-constructed online identities. Status updates and tweets offer multiple ways for users to explore identities. The ease of access and the option to keep the 'real self' anonymous on the Internet allows relatively consequence-free experimentation that helps to shape our 'core self' or social identity.²⁵

Online identity-constructions erode boundaries between public/private, as even the most trivial aspects of the users' personal lives are played out and recorded for posterity

in Facebook/Twitter through status updates, tweets, and photo galleries. Social networking has an obvious self-publicising aspect: 'The Daily Me'.²⁶ Such legitimized self-absorption is cautioned in Ovid's re-telling of the Myth of Narcissus, who falls in love with his own image – 'a shadow mistaken for substance' – in the water and is transformed into a flower by the waterside.²⁷

Post-modernist culture studies, however, validates the personal/trivial/domestic as identity-discourses embedded with meanings. The scope for personality-exploration is probably the widest in blogs. Blogs serve to facilitate identity construction through self-reflection and social interaction. The chief features of blogs are a near-total authorial control, and infinite space to write. A blog may, thus, be a 'tabula rasa', a whole new world where the identity may be transformed and reshaped at will.

III. 'Clay...Was Metamorphosed to Assume the Strange New Figure of Man.'²⁸

Ovid's poem depicts the creation of Man as an act of transformation from inanimate clay to sentient being. This paper looks at some blogs from the Indian blogosphere to examine how bloggers negotiate transformations through the creation/perpetuation of their blogger identities. The paper will also attempt to link them to the transformation-myths narrated by Ovid.

I start with a blogger I personally know. Suranga Date began her blog, *Gappa*, in 2006, after retirement and the demise of her parents.²⁹ As she says, 'Blogging... to me is therapeutic, sometimes I celebrate, sometimes I console my self, sometimes I share, and sometimes I cannot help crack up as I go tongue in cheek about something or someone....Yes, earning prizes in blogging competitions has brought back those days of school and college, and the delight is the same and unchanged.'³⁰

Like Philemon and Baucis, the old couple who were transformed into the long-living oak and linden trees in Ovid,³¹ blogs confer a degree of permanence. The transformative potential of blogs is like a 'therapy' for Suranga, and for other marginalised senior citizens who 'look back' and 'make friends' through their blogs to counter looming loneliness and mortality.

Blogs are spaces where the ordinary transforms into the extra-ordinary. First-hand blogs-posts of important events by chance witnesses transform them into citizen-journalists. *India Uncut*,³² arguably India's most popular blog, transformed blogger Amit Varma into a celebrated gate-watcher after he blogged eye-witness posts on the tsunami of December, 2004. As he says, 'I returned home to find that my posts had

been linked to ...across the world, and the traffic was stratospheric.... And as I continued to blog steadily, it continued to grow. It didn't matter that I was nobody, that I was new to this...As long as I consistently put out compelling content, I would have readers. The only limit on me was me.'³³ Like Ovid's mythic Phaethon, who journeys into the sky to 'question the sun god himself',³⁴ the blogger with his participatory/immediate/interactive civic journalism and fresher/deeper/wider insights challenges and transforms mainstream media.

The shape-shifting blogosphere also allows reverse-transformations of the extraordinary into the ordinary, just as *Metamorphoses* describes myths where gods like Jupiter, Apollo and Neptune, transform into mortals. This is exemplified in actor Amitabh Bachchan's blog, *BigB@bigadda.com*: in his daily posts and the deluge of comments generated.³⁵ With erasure of celebrity/commoner boundaries, the celebrity can connect to his fans without media-intervention. He transforms himself from a remote, media-created hero-figure to a more accessible, self-created persona. Simultaneously, the fan becomes a lean-forward more-equal participator who can directly interact with the celebrity with a voice and choice of his own.

In *Metamorphoses IV*, the three daughters of Minyas resist the rule of Bacchus by continuing their assigned women's tasks of spinning and weaving, and by *choosing* to 'relieve the toil of our hands by telling stories of different kinds', all involving transformations.³⁶ Blogging offers a free and accessible self-publishing platform to any woman who chooses to step outside her the confines of her patriarchy-assigned role as mother/cook/homemaker to share/connect with feminine networks and find her own voice. Each food-blog/mom-blog is underpinned by a story of metamorphoses. These blogs validate cooking/house-keeping/child-rearing from a domestic chore to a self-fulfilling activity worthy of documentation and distribution: from feminine subservience to female identity-realisation.

In *The Bong Mom's Cookbook*, blogger Sandeepa, a Diaspora Bengali working-mother of two, negotiates her multiple identities of 'A Bong, A Mom, A Cook', connects with her fore-mothers through inherited recipes, which are a 'legacy' she intends to pass on to her daughters, and also defines her own individual space through her 'innovations' of 'authentic recipes'.³⁷

Even hitherto silenced categories of women, like Muslim housewives, are writing new identities through their blogs. In India, their disempowerment is caused by lack of 'knowledge... economic power...and autonomy'.³⁸ In her blog, *Zaika*, Mona – an

Indian Muslim mother/homemaker - identifies herself as a 'Hyderabadi foodie muslimah, a home cook, mother, writer and blogger' and she intends to 'inspire all Hyderabadis to share their tried and tested recipes with the world'.³⁹ Her self-transformation inspires her to encourage others to transform.

Sometimes, women-bloggers are successful in transforming further into published authors. Alamelu Vairavan, who learnt cooking after marriage and migration and who blogs about Diaspora Indian food at *Curry on Wheels*,⁴⁰ published the regional cuisine cookbook, *Chettinad Kitchen*, as a record and validation of her cultural identity.⁴¹ Ovid narrates the story of the daughters of Pierus, who challenged the Muses to sing better and were transformed to magpies for their temerity.⁴² In the Indian blogosphere, such temerity and transformations lead to empowerment, not punishment.

The myths of self-metamorphosis and sex-change narrated by Ovid (for instance, Caeneus and Periclymenus),⁴³ can be related to the opening up of marginalised LGBT voices in the Indian blogosphere. Stigmatized groups like homosexuals often feel safer in their on-line identities than in normal social interaction, especially in a traditional, relatively conservative society like India. Malika, in *Malika's Indian Transgender Blog*⁴⁴, is one of many such who speaks up: 'I am an Indian transgender woman.'

The myth of Medea depicts how she uses her magical and transformative powers to help Jason.⁴⁵ Bloggers also often consciously use transformation as an activist-tool to help their causes. In *The Uniform Project*, Sheena Matheiken pledged to 'wear one little black dress for 365 days' to explore 'sustainability' and as a 'fundraiser to support...underprivileged children'. She 'reinvented her uniform' and transformed not just her self but the world beyond that.

The privileging of individual transformations in blogs has a 'liberatory potential'.⁴⁶ Read individually, blogs offer transformation-narratives of post-modern fragmentation and fluidity. Read together, blogs function as collective memory that re-imagines culture in diverse ways to shape the present and the future.

IV. The Poet Who 'Spins a Thread'

In his Invocation, Ovid prays for divine inspiration to 'spin me a thread' to shape and link the plethora of mythic, transformative experiences.⁴⁷ The figure of the poet as an inspired creature was a traditional Homeric epic convention. Ovid, however, continues

to privilege the poet throughout his narrative through a number of poet-surrogates. Arachne with her tapestry is a weaver, Orpheus with his lyre is a bard; and others are inspired/transformed by circumstances to verbalise outbursts of poetic creativity.

‘They engage in a lament (Narcissus), deliver a powerful monologue (Medea), act as a dramatic storyteller (Achelous and Orpheus through his own surrogate narrator, Venus), deliver a persuasive speech in competition (Ulysses), and, in the manner of Arachne, produce a material work that has a close affinity with the design of Ovid’s epic (Daedalus).’⁴⁸

The image of inspired poet-figures expressing the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’⁴⁹ has been reiterated in literatures down the centuries: Shakespeare’s ‘poet’s eye, in fine frenzy rolling’ that ‘gives to airy nothing/ A local habitation and a name’;⁵⁰ Coleridge’s poet-prophet with his ‘flashing eyes’ and ‘floating hair’ who had ‘drunk the milk of Paradise’;⁵¹ Shelley’s poet-visionary who creates ‘forms more real than living man/ Nurslings of Immortality.’⁵² This exalted image of the poet was the key to the Romantic cult of Personality, with its emphasis on imagination, subjectivity, spontaneity, self-expression, personal emotions and experiences.

A line of development may be traced from this Romantic cult of personality to the Cult of the Amateur in the Internet Age. In 19th century Romanticism, the poet was privileged by virtue of his imagination, and from this vantage point, he would poeticise ‘incidents and situations from common life...in a selection of language really used by men’.⁵³

In the 21st century, these people from ‘common life’ are writing their own stories. Andrew Keen notes that there has been a ‘blurring of lines between audience and author...between amateur and expert.’⁵⁴ This is the Romantic cult of Personality taken to its fragmented, individualised, post-modern extreme: every person is a potential author as well as a reader. Every person is embryonically ‘automythological’: they can find and live their own myth and create their own ‘individual mythostory’.⁵⁵

Myths are cosmogonic narratives that engage with creations and cultures. Claude Levi-Strauss uses the image of the bricoleur to explain the process of myth-making, where ‘fragments which at first seemed disparate, once they found their appropriate place and the correct relationship to their neighbours, come together to form a coherent picture.’⁵⁶ Structurally, the swollen narrative of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* links together myth, history, inserted stories, interludes, catalogues, and ecphrases through the motif

of transformation. Ovid's work is the mythic archetype for the web of cosmogonic narratives linked together by the distributed network of the Internet. Bloggers create communities by linking to each other, by commenting on other blogs, through blog-forums and cross-posting on social networks. In this way, discrete posts and blogs come together like a bricolage of 'networked publics',⁵⁷ which transforms individual mythostories to cultural zeitgeist.

India has several such very active blog-directories and blogger networks that encourage blogger-interaction through online discussion forums and real-life blog-meets; like Indiblogger.in (<<http://www.indiblogger.in/>>) and BlogAdda.com (<<http://www.blogadda.com/>>). The Indiblogger membership widgets/badges – with categories like IndiWriter, IndiMommy, IndiChef and others - emblemize the sense of belonging and identity. IndiBlogeshwari, a discussion forum exclusively for women bloggers, creates a sisterhood that reinforces the sense of empowerment which blogging gives to women in India. As new bloggers join the blogosphere, their new narratives transform not just their own identities, but also the processes of cultural production and consumption.

V. 'The Finer Part of Myself Shall Sweep Me Into Eternity'⁵⁸

Myth is understood through 'paradigm, perfection and possibility'.⁵⁹ This is as true of Ovid as it is of the Internet. Even as *Metamorphoses* examines the concept of identity and change - pre-figuring the Internet's identity-explorations - its ambitious sweep of fifteen books in dactylic hexameters aims to expand the possibilities of the epic as written by Homer and Virgil. The search for perfection, both in the transformations narrated and the poet's own quest, is never complete. Ovid suggests in *Tristia* I.7, a poem written after his exile, that the *Metamorphoses* was not quite finished.⁶⁰ In a sense, the theme of transformations and identity construction that he explored is still an unfinished project, being carried forward by the Internet today and tomorrow.

Ovid concludes with the prophetic claim that: 'My name shall never be forgotten. Wherever the might of Rome extends in the lands she has conquered,/The people shall read and recite my words.'⁶¹ This prophecy could well extend to all those seeking fame through self-transformations on the Internet. The reach of the Internet, increasing exponentially by the minute, is indeed mighty. Although millions of bloggers/gamers/social-networkers/tweeters languish in obscurity, they are still frozen in time in the virtual world. And those who succeed are assured of both eternity and readership (actual and potential) of proportions measurable only through the parameters of myth.

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The Bacchae of Euripides, A Communion Rite
Bi o s'enia, imale o si :
If humanity were not, the gods would not be

Suchetana Banerjee

I shall begin by commemorating the gods for their self sacrifice on the altar of literature and in so doing press them into further service on behalf of human society and its quest for the explication of being¹

This paper deals with the dramatic texts of Akinwande Oluwole “Wole” Soyinka’s *The Bacchae of Euripides: A communion Rite* 1973 and *The Bacchae* of Euripides (premiered posthumously at the Theatre of Dionysus in 405 BC as part of a tetralogy). *The Bacchae of Euripides: A communion rite* was commissioned for performance by the National Theatre at the Old Vic, London, in the summer of 1973. Focus of this analysis will be Soyinka’s attempt of translating rituals between cultures and not of texts and investigating certain political and mythic elements, of the Yoruba as well as the Greek tradition. Also underlying my analysis is Wole Soyinka’s tendency of appropriating his cyclical view of history derived from the Yoruba belief and to learn how these myths lead him to the formation of his play world and how ritual enables him to transfer this into drama. Hence the question arises: how does this expression of a cosmic worldview occur in Soyinka’s plays, and how is it useful to actually make those texts ‘dramatic’? Soyinka’s view is that those materialist historians who fail to take² this cosmology into the account “tend to construct a false adumbrated reality of their own social milieu.”² Thus he admits Yoruba cosmology into the realm of factually consciousness historical analysis. The Yoruba concepts of “being” endowed Soyinka with a base of ideas from which his works flow.

The original home of the Yoruba is western Nigeria. G.J.Afolabi Ojo, a distinguished Yoruba scholar defines his cultural area- “the area where Yoruba culture is typical coincides with the six western provinces of Western Nigeria-Oyo, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ondo, Lagos, Ilori in division of Ilorin Province and Kabba division of Kabba Province.”³ Soyinka was born in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria, and an area which still remains the highest density of Yoruba speakers over 90% of the population according to Ojo. The Yoruba ascribe themselves to four hundred and one gods. Soyinka prefers to translate a similar expression Irunmale, not literally four hundred deities but a thousand and one. There are of course major deities who are recognized and worshipped all over Yoruba land. Olodumare (Olorun) - is the supreme god- “the Creator King, Omnipotent, All wise, All-knowing, Judge, Immortal, Invisible and

Holy.” The Yoruba does not represent physically or build shrines to him. The Yoruba pantheon includes Orisa Nla, the principal deity under Olodumare. Esu, the spirit of disorder, evil and change. Sango, god of lightning and electricity. Esumare, Eriule and Soyinka’s favourite god, Ogun. The duality of this last god, the seeming contradiction in his nature, both creative and destructive essence- makes him an enigmatic symbol both in Soyinka’s own creative work and in his criticism. The three deities chosen by Soyinka are Ogun, Obatala and Sango. They are represented in his drama by the passage-rites of hero-gods, a projection of man’s clash with³ forces which challenge his efforts to complement with his surroundings physical, social and psychic. In Soyinka’s words ...

... gods they are unquestionable, but their symbolic roles are identified by man as the role of an intermediary quester, an explorer into territories of ‘essenceideal’ around whose edges man fearfully skirts.⁴

Why does Soyinka need an intermediary to fulfill his communication with the world at large? Compared to other literary genres drama is realised through dialogue mainly. But it is also meant for performance. The structure of the genre helps it to be much undiluted, responsive, communicative, and transparent between the readers, the playwright and the text where the authorial agency of dramatist is hidden. Is this expression relevant for the dramatic texts of Soyinka? Because it is the dramatist who structures the semiotic system of the play world, and adjusts the principal beliefs that inhabit that world. Is Soyinka’s audience familiar with his world? And if they are not, how does he achieve communication of an unknown world view to his audience/readers? Soyinka point outs in *Myth, Literature and the African World* that the gods of the Yoruba world enhance man’s existence within the cyclic consciousness of time. It is within this divinely engineered framework that traditional society poses its social questions or formulates its morality.

gods control the aesthetic considerations of ritual enactment and give to every performance a multi-leveled experience of the mystical and the mundane⁵

For Soyinka the source of drama is through ritual, the drama of the gods in its cosmic whole he compares it with the Epic “which represents also on a different level, another access to the Rites of Passage.”⁶ Therefore Soyinka’s play world can be defined as the natural home of the unseen deities, a resting place for the departed and a staging house for the yet-to-be-born. Soyinka defines his world as

A chthonic realm, a storehouse for creative and destructive essences. It required a challenger, a human representative to breach it periodically on behalf of the well being of the community.⁷

Soyinka's work represents an important phase in the deliberate formation a new mythography which draws from the indigenous resource base. His work has generated a large mass of commentary and analysis. This is in keeping with not only with the variety of his output but also with the cultural energy with which his writing is imbued. Biodun Jeyifo notes that Soyinka's plays have an elaborate substructure of myth, ritual and symbolism which transforms them into "haunting apocalyptic creations of the imagination",⁸ he suggests that the mythic substructure and the symbolic and ritualistic framework are rarely given full thematic clarification, but are "cumulatively elaborated in hieratic action, emblematic mime, epiphanic image and passages of incantatory speech and prose description"⁹

It is an interesting evaluation of Soyinka's work for his assessment in terms of a subtext or substructure of meaning which is seen as elusive and requiring special attention in order to be grasped. I think this substratum is a function both of the literary artifact of the play-text, as well as of the cultural references woven into Soyinka's texts.

Several critics have sought to uncover the cultural meanings of Soyinka's plays. His work has often been explored in terms of mythological motifs and cultural rituals evident in the plays. This emphasis has been necessary because of the need to engage with the culture- specific elements of his writings to set the readings of his plays against his own critical pronouncements on the nature of tragedy. That is vastly different from the Western notion of tragedy. Wole Soyinka in his book *Myth, Literature and the African World* writes

"the persistent search for the meaning of tragedy for a redefinition in terms of cultural or private experience is at the least man's recognition of certain areas of depth experience which are not satisfactorily explained by "general aesthetic theories" and of all the subjective unease that is aroused by man's creative insights, that wrench within the human psyche which we vaguely define as 'tragedy' is the most insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources."

Aristotle maintains that kinds of poetry imitate different kinds of subjects in different sorts of ways. Comedy treats baser figures, while tragedy and epic focus on noble characters. Epic and tragedy differ in other subtler ways: tragedy exploits many kinds of verses, while epic constrains itself to one; tragedy but not epic, make use of tune in addition to rhythm; and most significantly, epic is expansive in time, whereas tragedy, as a matter of actual practice and perhaps also ideally, is compressed and unified in its temporal setting. In saying that the imitation of an action is serious and complete, Aristotle has in view the thought that a plot must be well ordered and optimally

sufficiently complex to encompass both a reversal of fortune (peripeteia) and a recognition (anagnorisis) on the part of the protagonist. Plots which are simply strung together one after the other bother against an audience's legitimate expectation of probability and verisimilitude. Aristotle remarks, 'it makes a great difference whether something happens because of something else or merely happens after it'¹⁰.

Completely opposed to Aristotle, Nietzsche traced the evolution of tragedy from early rituals, through the joining of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, until its early "death" in the hands of Socrates. In opposition to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche viewed tragedy as the art form of sensual acceptance of the terrors of reality and rejoicing in these terrors in love of fate and therefore as the antithesis to the Socratic method or the belief in the power of reason to unveil any and all of the mysteries of existence. Nietzsche in "What I Owe to the Ancients" in his *Twilight of Idols* wrote:

"The psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, where even pain still has the effect of a stimulus, gave me the key to the concept of tragic feeling, which had been misunderstood both by Aristotle and even more by modern pessimists. Tragedy is so far from being a proof of the pessimism (in Schopenhauer's sense) of the Greeks that it may, on the contrary, be considered a decisive rebuttal and counterexample. Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and most painful episodes, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustible vitality even as it witnesses the destruction of its greatest heroes — that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to be liberated from terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by its vehement discharge — which is how Aristotle understood tragedy — but in order to celebrate oneself the eternal joy of becoming, beyond all terror and pity — that tragic joy included even joy in destruction"¹¹

Aristotle's stricture was almost dictated by the decree of the Greek city state. A Greek tragedy is a tribunal, a kind of institution. Tragedy is like synecdoche in the Greek world for the Athenian democracy. Nietzsche demands that tragedy asks for celebration of self. Both Aristotle and Nietzsche cannot depart from in the realms of pity and fear as Nietzsche also highlights that the tragic joy is the joy of destruction. Whereas Soyinka's definition gives us the flavor of a different perspective in terms of cultural or private experience dealing with man's recognition of certain areas of depth experience which are not satisfactorily explained by "general aesthetic theories" and of all the subjective unease that is aroused by man's creative insights that wrench within the human psyche, that bids one to return to their own sources. Returning to sources is much more important to Soyinka than purgation of pity and fear or celebrating

the joy of destruction. For Soyinka “remembering” and “returning” entails selectivity and what is selected invariably subverts the remembered. His view of history is best summed up in his own words:

Historical data is permanently irretrievably and irrevocably incomplete....which is why the creative (or re creative) imagination has its function in the world, ‘system’ may be elicited from the incomplete data naturally at the expense of regarding the missing, the distorted, the incomplete as the nonexistent or irrelevant. Not so, says the creative originator, poet or ideologue for whom not only the anterior but the potential human history remains ... permanently, irretrievably, irrevocably incomplete.”

To include the dramatic texts in this analysis one would want to begin by citing a poem by Soyinka named ‘Idanre’ written in celebration of Ogun’s night pilgrimage:

Rich-laden is his home, yet, decked in palm fronds
He ventures forth, refuge of the down-trodden,
To rescue slaves he unleashed the judgment of war
Because of the blind, plunged into forests
Of curative herbs, Bountiful One
Who stands bulwark to off springs of the dead of heaven
Salutations, O lone being, who swims in rivers of blood.

Such are the virtues that Soyinka eulogizes Ogun with. Ogun is a metaphoric representation of the realization that people create the means to destroy themselves. He stands for the collective human attempts to govern, not what is out of control in nature, but what is out of control in culture. He represents not so much what is inexplicable, unseen, or unknown, as what is known but not under control. This vigor and fortitude of the Ogun-hero is found in Soyinka’s *The Bacchae of Euripides, A Communion Rite*. In Wole Soyinka’s adaptation of Euripides’s *Bacchae* there can be no doubt that the historicist response is a planned analysis of the circumstances within which he and his people have been accustomed to look at the world in which they live: namely the relations between their ancestral traditions and an imperial culture⁹ that continues to pose severe challenges to these traditions. Soyinka’s effort is clearly grounded in an ideological review – against the background of relations between the residents of Soyinka’s own world and in the world in which Euripides wrote his play. Soyinka begins the introduction to his adaptation of *The Bacche of Euripides (A communion rite)* by citing a passage from his essay “The Fourth Stage” where “the Phrygian god and his twin hood with Ogun” are presented to us in quite positive terms. “*Bacchae*”, he tells us at the end of the citation, “belongs to that sparse body of

plays which evoke awareness of a particular moment in a people's history, yet imbue that moment with a hovering, eternal presence". It was thus "inevitable" that he should do an adaptation which basically celebrated the play's "insightful manifestation of the universal need of man to match himself against Nature"¹² Soyinka explains his interest in this play in both religious and political terms.

Andre Lefevere suggests that Soyinka has achieved an accomplished translation with *The Bacchae*, because of his "attempt to translate not only the linguistic circle but the cultural circle and the circle of literary procedures as well." This includes his attempt to influence "the cultural and/or the literary circle towards change."¹³ In rewriting *The Bacchae of Euripides (A communion rite)*, he has made Euripides's treatment of oppression and religious conflict "significant" to a new context. He has translated Euripides's temporal setting, after the Peloponnesian Wars, to the period of the postcolonial African Wars. Soyinka demonstrates a certain political affinity with Euripides, who in 407 B.C., in his seventies, had written *Bacchae* in a spirit of distancing from the Athenians. There are, however, other reasons for finding *Bacchae* relevant to Yoruba and other African societies, reasons both mythic and cultural.

Most important is the fact that Soyinka uses the Yoruba god Ogun as a close resemblance to Dionysus. In fact, both gods may have sprung from similar roots; yet, while Soyinka's Dionysus is clearly indebted to Ogun, Soyinka does call him Dionysus. The beings who inhabit the Yoruba world, help Soyinka to recreate *The Bacchae of Euripides (A communion rite)* with no help from the western theoretical paradigm of which Euripides is part of the defining canon. In his introduction Soyinka also points to the mining industry as a major employer of slave labour keeping alive the imperial war machine. The harsh conditions under which these slaves worked are evidenced by periodic incidences of revolt. Whereas the historical canvas of Euripides exposes the birth of a new industrial economy which had begun to replace the agrarian economy on Mainland Greece, in her colonies and in the outlying areas of Asia Minor. Silver and gold mines opened up. A series of wars had displaced peasants and forced them to work in the mines. Labour migrations brought with them their customs and religions.

At this point it is also important to mention that from the Yoruba world the major population of slaves was transported. Such brutality puts in perspective the dangers faced by the slaves in Soyinka's play from among whom one must be chosen every year as scapegoat in the Eleusinian mysteries.¹⁴ The Old slave originally slated for the Eleusinian rites would have died from the flogging had Tiresias (protected by the fawn skin under his garment) not offered to take his place, in the event. The Old slave would have added to the figures like those lining the road to the grain fields. So far Soyinka has stayed close enough to the society of Euripides' day in his adaptation. But

why does he portray a slave leader fully Negroid? The stage direction reads:-

“The Slaves and the Bacchantes should be as mixed a cast as is possible, testifying to their varied origins. Solely because of the ‘the hollering’ style suggested for the slave leader’s solo in the play it is recommended that this character be fully Negroid”¹⁵

The image of the slave leader does indicate a gradual disengagement from Euripides’ purposes. The choice of the skin colour of the slave leader is just the beginning of the translation of culture from the climate of Greek Tragedy into the play world of Soyinka. The moment the curtain lifts on Soyinka’s stage we begin to witness that we are dealing with an essentially different god from that presented by Euripides. Ogun begins to possess the root traits of Dionysus in terms of image. Soyinka in the *Fourth Stage* mentions “Ogun for his part is best understood in Hellenic values as a totality of the Dionysian, Apollonian and Promethean virtues.” The opening set almost proves that the play will be far less a tragedy than a “communion rite”, as the subtitle suggests which illustrates the continuities of Yoruba experience. The subtitle “*A Communion Rite*” is essential, since communion and sacrifice have an inevitable relation in Soyinka’s play. He draws on the ancient Greek notion that to ensure the fertility of the crops, a scapegoat must be sacrificed to the gods (specifically, to Dionysus).

This idea of sacrifice does not occur in Euripides’s play; it is brought out in Soyinka’s version. At first, the chosen scapegoat is not the king, but an old slave. Of major importance to Soyinka’s theme is the transference from sacrificing the slave to sacrificing the king. As the rebellious slave leader argues, “Why us? Why always us? . . . the rites bring us nothing. Let those to whom the profits go bear the burden of the old year dying.”¹⁶ The responsibility for the ritual is thus transferred from the elite to the masses, who adopt Bacchus as their god and reject the “state religion” that demands their sacrifice. Through communal participation, they enhance their social power, as Soyinka emphasizes in his introduction to the play. “By drinking the king’s blood, the community as a whole partakes of his power and all are revitalized and unified.”¹⁷ This theme of communal participation is dormant in Euripides’s version, but Euripides ends with vengeance, not communion or regeneration.

In the opening speech of Dionysus, Soyinka makes a conscious departure from Euripides. The theme of revenge in which Dionysus states his grudges against Thebes for slandering both his mother Semele and himself is very much more detailed and prominent in Euripides than in Soyinka. Pentheus acts as a king in Euripides where as legal authority in Soyinka. Euripides’ Pentheus is the representative of god who cannot be questioned but he feels threatened by the outside force that is Dionysus himself

from Asia Minor. Euripides' critique of his society took place in an era when Athens was in social and political crises that led her to defeat in the Peloponnesian war with Sparta (431-404 B.C). Euripides was forced into exile in Macedonia. In Macedonia he composed *The Bacchae*.

As I have already mentioned that tragedy is like synecdoche in the Greek world for the Athenian democracy; and in order to maintain this Athenian democracy each time, Dionysus was being suppressed by Pentheus. By the end of Euripides' *Bacchae*, Dionysus also somehow gets assimilated in Greek pantheon. He remains no more the 'other' from the Asia Minor and shares the attributes of the Apollonian gods. In Soyinka the worship of Dionysus is the worship of Ogun. Ogun can connect man and god. Oludumare is the creator who divides man and gods. Soyinka's tragic hero is modeled after Ogun, the Yoruba god who works within the space of marginality. Ogun is not a part of any community. To be a part of any community he has to undergo conflicts and trials. He often loses sanity under the influence of palm wine but he is also the one who dares to pave a path for his community to follow. The Ogun tragic hero is the one who destroys himself, lives and dies for the community.

In Euripides's *The Bacchae* Dionysus, though born in Thebes has been travelling in Asia and is considered a foreigner by Pentheus. Although his worshippers, the Bacchantes, are Asian, Dionysus is a mediating figure between Hellenistic and Asian cultures. Dionysus is not the anti-Apollo that Nietzsche considered him to be. He is in the center between opposite poles, not the god of change, but the god of dichotomy. He is in the middle between man and woman, between Asia and Europe, between Hellas and the barbarian world, between heaven and hell (according to Heraclitus, his other name is Hades), between death and life, between raving and peace.¹⁸ Comparing this with Soyinka's description of Ogun in *Myth, Literature, and the African World*, the chthonic god of metals, creativity, the road, wine, and art: no other deity in the Yoruba pantheon correlates so absolutely with Dionysus, through his own history and nature, with the spiritual temperament of the fourth area of existence which he identified as the abyss of transition. Ogun is also the master craftsman and artist, farmer and warrior, essence of destruction and creativity, a "recluse and a gregarious imbibor", "a reluctant leader of men and deities". His was the first rite of passage through the chthonic realm.¹⁹ In Soyinka's view of tradition, the Yoruba believe that the spiritual turmoil of the gods began when a slave rebelled and hit the original being, Atunda, with a rock, shattering him into 1,001 fragments that turned into 1,001 beings. "The shard of original Oneness which contained the creative flint appears to have passed into the being of Ogun."²⁰ Ogun then journeyed into the human realm and was made king. All went well until the trickster god Esu gave Ogun some palm wine. After that,

Ogun confused friends with foes and began slaughtering his own men. When he realized what he had done, he shrank from the human realm but did not forbid the use of palm wine, since the wine was essential to his own self-realization.²¹ The description of Ogun, in Soyinka's play makes it evident that the god's effect on mankind is favourable and spiteful, gentle and terrible, as Euripides said of Dionysus. Both gods mediate between earthly and heavenly realms, but whereas Dionysus represents dichotomies Ogun is transitional. The difference, according to Soyinka, lies in European and traditional African conceptions of reality. European thought has tended to operate in Manichean terms, opposing good and evil, reason and emotion, and so forth, whereas the Yoruba have what Soyinka calls a "cohesive cultural reality."²² Furthermore, whereas Euripides's Dionysus is soft and effeminate, Soyinka's is "a being of calm rugged strength", one who merges both Apollonian and Dionysian characteristics. Cadmus and Teiresias represent the inherited wisdom of the elders. Euripides has Teiresias say "We are the heirs of custom and traditions hallowed by age and handed down to us by our fathers. No quibbling logic can topple them, whatever subtleties this clever age invents."²³ Pentheus, on the other hand, is an iconoclast who would rather trust his own wisdom (Apollo is the only god he worships) and not accept anything foreign, strange, or undignified. He tries to suppress Dionysian ritual, but this attempt only leads to its extreme expression as the god demands his due. In Soyinka's play Teiresias is outraged that the floggers, having forgotten that this is only a ritual, have really hurt him. The theme of ritual and emotion in *The Bacchae* eventually spills over into the sphere of political and social reality. The question is who will be in control? Recognising the power of strong emotion, Pentheus tries to suppress these Dionysian rites based on religious emotion. Yet it is Pentheus's own internal disorder that causes him to see corruption in others, despite Teiresias's comment, "But even in the rites of Dionysus, the chaste woman will not be corrupted."²⁴ Pentheus cannot understand why he smells rottenness all around him. Euripides has him say, "When once you see the glint of wine shining at the feasts of women, then you may be sure the festival is rotten". Pentheus's own sense of corruption destroys him; Dionysus lets Pentheus see what he expects to see. Soyinka also recognizes this problem of Pentheus and emphasizes it by having him say, "I shall have order! Let the city know at once, Pentheus is here to give back order and sanity"²⁵. Yet Pentheus violates order by flogging the Old Slave, which the crowd knows to be an atrocity:

"We are strangers but we know the meaning of madness. To hit an old servant with frost on his head such a one as has stood at the gateway of mysteries. When even one person steps out of place, he disrupts universal order. The consequences are even greater when this disruptive element is a king. He must be sacrificed to restore harmony."²⁶

Euripides's play stresses the theme of order. His chorus cries out, "O Justice, principle of order, spirit of custom, come! Be manifest; reveal yourself with a sword!" The principle of order is used to extract vengeance. Pentheus is pulled down from the treetops and torn apart like a beast. Agave mounts Pentheus's head high above the doorpost, only to bring it down later when she discovers her errors. Euripides's characters learn very late that Dionysus is an agent of divine justice. Another medium for revenge is the perversion and destruction of rationality.

Pentheus prides himself on his reason, during debates with Dionysus, when he humiliatingly tells Dionysus, "You wrestle well-when it comes to words."²⁷ Yet, Dionysus comes out the winner through his subtlety. Dionysus not only out reasons Pentheus, he hypnotizes him and makes him drunk, until Pentheus says,

"I seem to see two suns blazing in the heavens. And now two Thebes, two cities, and each with seven gates. And you-you are a bull"²⁸.

This, it turns out, is both a drunken vision and a true vision. The ultimate degradation and hallucination of Pentheus, however, occurs when he lets himself be dressed as a woman so he can spy on the Maenads. Soyinka develops this image more fully by having Dionysus wrap Pentheus in a chain of hallucination (Ogun is a god of metal). Soyinka's Dionysus creates two visions of weddings, first a traditional but cold, formal one, among nobles, then one with the warm, loving image of Christ turning water into communion wine. Here Soyinka has temporarily underplayed Euripides's political implications and stressed the religious connotations. Scornfully, Dionysus tells Pentheus to reject illusion and seek truth on the mountain:

"You are a king. You have to administer. Don't take shadows too seriously. Reality is your only safety. Continue to reject illusion."²⁹

Is Dionysus telling Pentheus indirectly that mercy is not for him or should this be read ironically? Soyinka creates a gentler Dionysus than does Euripides, one who reveals his divine posar to the audience although Pentheus is too blind to see it.

Euripides's sacrificial ritual ends in merciless destruction of the royal family, Pentheus dismembered, Agave banished, and Cadmus and his wife doomed to become serpents leading a barbarian host. All have come to a horrified realization of Dionysus's divinity, but realization comes too late. "When there was time, you did not know me."³⁰ Cadmus seeks pity from Dionysus, but Agave recognizes that Dionysus is inevitability, the hand of fate, and cannot be outmoded. In Euripides's conclusion, the people of Thebes are sentenced by Dionysus to slavery in other lands for blaspheming him and threatening

him with violence. Soyinka's conclusion is quite different, with no sense of violent revenge. Not merely a just conclusion, but a reordered world, is foreshadowed by the Bacchante as Pentheus goes to his death (p. 75):

Come dawn, herald of the new order.... the hunter's shrieks Forgotten. Let the new order bring peace, repose, plenitude....³¹

In a lyrical passage, which Soyinka quotes from his own poem *Idanre*, which is sung by a slave as Pentheus goes off to his death, the slaves' newfound freedom is stressed:

Night, night, set me free Sky of a million roe,
highway of eyes Dust on moth wing, let me ride
On ovary silences,
freely Drawn on the reins of dreams.

The stage directions tell of "casting off of the long vassalage in the House of Pentheus" as Pentheus goes to his death. Dionysus tells him:

Yes, you alone make sacrifices for your people, you alone. The role belongs to a king. Like those gods, who yearly must be rent to spring anew, that also is the fate of heroes.³²

This is partly ironic, since Soyinka seems to believe in the involvement of the total community. Still, it is more believable than it would be coming from Euripides's Dionysus. Although Dionysus does not appear in Soyinka's final scene, his music, a red glow, and a wine fountain, wonderful and terrible, spurts from Pentheus' head. Thus the cycle is complete. Pentheus, the rejecter of Dionysus, has become the source of Dionysus. In this version, unlike that of Euripides, there is no need for pity because no one suffers without finding some positive resolution.

I would argue that in substituting the characteristics of the Yoruba Ogun for the Greek Dionysus, the playwright is compelled to transform the ending into a communion rite that creates a dramatic problem: while the transformation of Pentheus' head into a fountain of blood changing into wine is a depiction of the renewal of life and unification of the community that his sacrifice made possible. But it is bought with a disquieting negation of Agave's voice as a grieving mother. By altering the character of Dionysus into Ogun, Soyinka removes the central axis of Euripides's play: that the young Pentheus and his half-mortal cousin Dionysus are two sides of the same coin. The impulsiveness and cruel, unmeasured power that the young King Pentheus exercises in concert with his inability to recognize the sensuousness and irrationality of Dionysus within himself are the qualities that unleash the same uncontrolled forces of will in the god. Clearly,

Soyinka rejects this mirror image as well as its implications in the original play because it does not fit with his vision of Dionysus as Ogun. Soyinka considers myth to be part wish fulfillment through hero projections and elaborates it to be an outline for action, especially for groups within society who have experienced loss and deprivation. Soyinka's denial of revenge as a fitting impetus for Pentheus's sacrifice in favour of the king's death is to serve as the means for purification and subsequent rebirth as a fitting way to restore the "sacrificial logic of the play". The play is the reconstruction of those facts that are not written in historical narrative contrasted to other plays of Soyinka like *Death and the King's Horseman* that deals with history directly.

Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* comments:

Without myth all culture loses its healthy and natural creative power: only a horizon surrounded by myths can unify an entire cultural movement. Myth alone rescues all the powers of imagination and the Apollonian and Dionysian dream from their aimless wanderings. The images of myth must be daemonic guardians, omnipresent and unnoticed, restored well in the rituals, which protect the growth of the young mind, and guide man's interpretation of his life and struggles. The state itself has no unwritten laws more powerful than the mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with all social aspects of life. . . . what is indicated by the great historical need of unsatisfied modern culture, clutching about for countless other cultures, with its consuming desire for knowledge, if not the loss of myth, the loss of the ritual home, the mythical womb.³³

Soyinka's rewriting of Euripides is a task that seems to allow full rein to his metaphysical preoccupations. The close association of the world of gods and men is as much Greek as it is Yoruba, with an added advantage that Soyinka uses fully – he dramatizes the Greek city state as one that owns slaves and treats them in inhuman manner. This historical fact is added to the chief drawback of Pentheus' power hungry sovereignty. The gross nature of Pentheus who opposes the rejuvenating religion of Dionysus thus becomes the target of all who search for ecstasy of freedom, be they slaves or Bacchantes. Ironically Pentheus becomes the inverted Soyinkan tragic hero. We meet the unfeeling Pentheus who is lured into becoming the sacrifice for the rites of renewal that the Bacchantes observe. Again ironically it is Pentheus' reluctance that makes him the carrier of the negativity of the old and a helper in replenishing the new with his sacrificial blood that turns into wine. It is interesting to note that in the rewriting of Greek tragedy Soyinka keeps to the formal requirements of off stage actions, chorus and long speeches of description. With respect to Greek tragedy, offstage action, verbally reported, fixed the hierarchy of dramatic devices. The verbal, largely under the control of the dramatist came to be the most important device – the extra verbal

(actions), verbal level of gestures was ‘covered’ by the verbal level, the semantic filter being manipulated by the writer to attain the desired effect. This is in complete contrast to the performance of the Yoruba, where the performance in its immediacy determines the effect of the orature. There is only one spectacular instance of an actual event happening in Soyinka’s play – the fiery escape of Dionysus from Pentheus’ prison, a sequence that is underplayed in Euripides. Soyinka’s constant effort for *The Bacchae of Euripides* is, to continually change in the direction of the dialogue to dramatize the difference of worldview between Dionysus and Pentheus. This is directly performed on stage and directly communicates and carries out a dialogue with the audience. While the conflict that Soyinka insists on is confined off-stage and does not communicate directly, leaving it to the audiences interpretive activity. The style of representation is crucial to the establishment of the play’s theme in Soyinka’s play.

Soyinka had asserted in an earlier essay that the structure of theatre is linked with the kind of theatre it spawns.³⁴ The Greek theatre ideal that Soyinka has espoused in his forays into tragedy is in both structure and orientation geared to the preservation of the status – quo. Society is a material through which the Soyinkan hero travels to his final destiny. In a state of crisis he forges the way and in the process destroys himself. He does not actually live in society rather he operates alone outside of it using it as material to prove his mettle, whether this be the next higher stage or the status quo. But he is not himself either constrained or directly affected by its crisis. The prototype for Soyinkan tragic hero, Ogun, was unable to live in the community of men, though he alone among the gods was able to forge a path to the human world. The outcast deity, the monster deity as Soyinka calls Ogun will yield only a superhuman ideal for the playwright. Ogun’s daring his addiction to risk and his attempt at communication suit the figure of a hero. Possibly a rebel hero. But he is not provided by Soyinka with a dynamic society in which he is to function nor is his status that of a revolutionary. For if the society forges its own impetus by collective effort then there is no need to re establish or preordained status quo. The Soyinkan tragic hero is however the kind who acts as mediator, as outsider or as one uninvolved with the actual working of the society that he acts within. The conflict does not involve his choice the choice is already made for him by the exigencies of the Ogun role. Hence he functions as a single unit which would function despite being alienated for he does not need the identity of a community to make him effective. The successful interpreter captures not just the words, but also an implied spirit, from the indigenous world view. Soyinka’s creation of his play world, in its suggestion with a Yoruba deity named Ogun filled a cultural role similar to that of Dionysus, which enriches the implications and evocations of his play. In my view the political dimensions of Soyinka’s play are integral to myth and borrows a lot from the native performative pattern of the rituals, since Soyinka seems to believe in the involvement of the total community.

End notes

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- 5 Soyinka, Wole. 1976. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press. (Soyinka, 1976, 2)
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- 8 Jeyifo, Biodun. 1988. "Wole Soyinka and the Tropes of Disalienation". In *Perspectives on Wole Soyinka: Freedom and Complexity*, ed. Jeyifo, Biodun, 2001. United States of America: University Press of Mississippi.⁵
- 10 ibid
- 11 Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1889. *Twilight of the Idols (Götzen-Dämmerung)*. Translations by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. England: Penguin Books (1990).
- 12 Introduction Soyinka's *The Bacche of Euripides (A communion rite)*, Soyinka. Wole. 1963. *Collected Plays I*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 13 Andre Lefevere, "Translation: Changing the Code. Soyinka's Ironic Aetiology," *Babel* (Spring 1981), p. 80. 4.
- 14 The Eleusinian Mysteries were initiation ceremonies held every year for the cult of Demeter and Persephone based at Eleusis in ancient Greece. Of all the mysteries celebrated in ancient times, these were held to be the ones of greatest importance. These myths begun in the Mycenaean period (c. 1600 BC) and lasting two thousand years were a major festival during the Hellenic era, later. The name of the town, Eleusis, means arrival. The rites, ceremonies, and beliefs were kept secret, as initiation was believed to unite the worshipper with the gods and included promises of divine power and rewards in the afterlife.
- 15 Soyinka. Wole. 1963. *The Bacche of Euripides (A communion rite)*,. *Collected Plays I*. New York: Oxford University Press
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- 21 ibid
- 22 ibid
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- 32 *ibid*
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