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# RE-MARKINGS

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# RE-MARKINGS

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# **RE-MARKINGS**

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Re-Markings, a biannual refereed international journal of English Letters, aims at providing a healthy forum for scholarly and authoritative views on broad sociopolitical and cultural issues of human import as evidenced in literature, art, television, cinema and journalism with special emphasis on New Literatures in English including translations and creative excursions.

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## EDITORIAL

On 25 August 1944, while the Allied forces were entering the French territory to liberate France from German occupation during World War II, Adolf Hitler ordered his generals occupying the French capital to reduce the city of Paris to a pile of ruins before they departed. He asked in authoritative desperation "Brennt Paris?" ("Is Paris Burning?"). The words in Hitler's anxiety-ridden question provided the title to the 1965 best seller *Is Paris Burning* written by acclaimed journalists and writers, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. A year later in 1966 came the film by the same name directed by René Clément.

With all the satanic powers that Hitler had at his command – a well-knit, hard-working population of 70,000,000 who stood ideologically inspired, physically trained, and materially equipped for the supreme business of making war and causing the genocide of millions of Jews – he could not have the privilege of seeing the spectacle of Paris burning.

Ironically, what the tyrannous German dictator could not attain in the August of 1944 became a gruesome reality on 27 June 2023 when a French policeman shot and killed Nahel Merzouk, a 17-year-old boy at a traffic checkpoint in Nantarre, a suburb of Paris. Nahel, of Moroccan and Algerian descent and the only child of his mother, was a "kid who used rugby to get by" ...and who "was someone who had the will to fit in socially and professionally, not some kid who dealt in drugs or got fun out of juvenile crime" according to Jeff Puech, president of the *Ovale Citoyen* group in France. He was remembered as a kind, helpful child who had never raised a hand to anyone and was never violent. According to the testimony of his beloved mother, the police officer who shot him "saw an Arab face, a little kid, and wanted to take his life." The killing of Nahel for not stopping at the checkpoint while driving his Mercedes provoked unprecedented violence resulting in vandalization, torching of government property and vehicles, rioting and destruction. Paris indeed was burning and so were many other towns caught in the flare of outrage that spilled onto the streets of France against organized officialdom.

For those who have known France as the land that venerates in its constitution and practice the avowed ideals of "liberty, equality, fraternity," the Nahel incident brings to the fore once again the ambivalence of power equations in democracies by reminding us of a similar event in Minneapolis, Minnesota where George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a 44-year-old white police officer, on 25 May 2020. Besides the scenes of rioting, loot and arson, witnessed in many cities of the U.S., Floyd's death led to widespread international protests in various countries including France.

In what is believed to be the world's most powerful democracy, the Statue of Liberty stands majestically welcoming immigrants from all parts of the globe to

try their fortune in the United States of America. However, when we see Frederick Douglas in his 1852 speech asking, “What to the slave is the Fourth of July” and Ralph Ellison describing in his 1951 novel, *Invisible Man*, the Statue of Liberty “lost in the fog,” we can visualize how democratic principles and democratic practices are constantly at variance.

Likewise, we are reminded of the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian girl of Kurdish origin, in police custody on 16 September 2022. The self-proclaimed guardians of morality found her guilty of violating the sacred rules requiring women to cover their hair when in public. The death of Mahsa led to massive protests and rioting that saw Iran burning for months.

Events related to Nahel M., Floyd George, and Mahsa Amini have one thing in common: they were all victims of systemic police brutality. It is quite likely that the practitioners of power in uniform perceived a threat to their existence when they came across an Arab face, or a man with black skin, or the hair of a young girl uncovered with a scarf. Even in professed democracies it is not unusual to see law-enforcing agencies or institutions place a curb on civil liberties for the suppression of dissent in any form. In this context, I find it pertinent to mention a remark made by Aung San Suu Kyi, human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, in her essay entitled “Freedom from Fear” (1990): “It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.”

Against the backdrop of incidents and situations that reveal the state of endangered freedom and civil liberties, it is appropriate to place in perspective the current edition of *Re-Markings* that showcases issues and concerns bordering on oppression, discrimination and exploitation on grounds of nation, class, race, caste, gender, colour, creed, religion, language etc. The global outreach of the scholarly contributions in the volume brings together the efforts of historians, writers, academics and scholars to question and challenge the status quo created by centres of power to keep those on the margins in their ‘place’. While burning cities have become emblematic of the collective rage of suppressed dissent against authoritarian approaches to the basic needs of common people, be it in France, U.S., Iran or Manipur, we cannot insensitively turn our heads away and remain unconcerned.

When we get passionately involved in what and how we write, we are automatically transformed from mere spectators to participants in better causes. George Orwell had pointed out: “If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them.” It is, therefore, incumbent upon each one of us to think for ourselves rather than allow others to do our part of the thinking.

**Nibir K. Ghosh**  
Chief Editor

## CONTENTS

- Viewpoints from California - *Jonah Raskin*  
Walt Whitman & T. S. Eliot: A Personal Engagement / 7  
The U.S. Supreme Court: A Primer / 10
- Reconstructing and Demythologizing America's Story:  
An Interview with Professor Kermit Roosevelt III on  
*The Nation That Never Was*  
*Robin Lindley* / 13
- Not Writing in the Mother Tongue  
*Miho Kinnas* / 25
- Krishna Baldev Vaid's Hindi *Ibārat* and My Malayalam *Pāṭham*  
*K. Narayana Chandran* / 31
- South Asia as a Literary Category  
*Anisur Rahman* / 42
- Blended Learning in Educational Technology:  
Challenges and Opportunities – India's Perspective  
*Shanker Ashish Dutt* / 47
- Melody of the Blues and the American Racial Dilemma:  
August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*  
*Nibir K. Ghosh* / 54
- The Cracked Mirror: An Examination of  
*A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams  
*Shernavaz Buhariwala* / 67
- Re-telling (her) Stories: Sorties, Texts and Contexts from  
Northeast India  
*Sukalpa Bhattacharjee* / 75
- R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*: A Story of Lost Opportunities  
*Yashu Rai* / 89

Ecology, Spirituality and Sankaradeva  
*Nityananda Pattanayak / 96*

Decolonising the Novel: A Study of Wilson Harris'  
*The Palace of the Peacock*  
*Melissa Helen / 103*

Arundhati Roy's *Azadi* and My India  
*Pallavi Sharma Goyal / 110*

Dalit Feminism and Meena Kandasamy's Writings  
*Ruchi Singh / 117*

Debt, an Eternal Curse in Kota Neelima's *Shoes of the Dead*  
*Vikram Singh & Reshma Devi / 125*

Single Indian Women as the Other in Eunice de Souza's Novels  
*Dangerlok* and *Dev & Simran*  
*Barsha Sahoo / 129*

The Ontological Perspective of "Self" in Rushdie's  
*The Enchantress of Florence*  
*Rajeev Kumar & Sovan Chakraborty / 136*

Women and War: Redefining Historical Discourse in  
Svetlana Alexievich's *The Unwomaly Face of War*  
*Amandeep Kaur / 143*

Modes of Representation in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*  
*Paramba Dadhich / 151*

The Final Confession (Short Story)  
*Sin Keong Tong / 157*

Announcements / 160



## **VIEWPOINTS FROM CALIFORNIA**

*Jonah Raskin*

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In the first essay, the author shares his views on Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot based on his experience of reading and teaching the poetry and philosophy of two of his favorite poets whose contemporary relevance can never be undermined. His second offering records his spontaneous response to the recent SCOTUS decision that is bound to impact American citizens on both sides of the color line.

---

### **WALT WHITMAN & T. S. ELIOT:**

#### **A PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT**

What you are reading now is a personal essay about two of my favorite poets, T. S. Eliot and Walt Whitman. While it's about me, it's not I hope purely personal. It's informed by my study over the past 50 years of the work of Eliot and Whitman and also reading about their complex lives and contradictory ideas. Whitman would surely praise me for writing about myself; after all, he wrote about himself, though "the self" he wrote about was largely fictitious. He created a mythological Walt Whitman, a kind of super American. Eliot would probably scold me for writing about myself. He wanted to eliminate "personality" from writing. That was part of his rebellion against romanticism and the English romantic poets, including Shelley and Byron who poured out emotions.

Readers eager for in-depth analysis and criticism of Whitman, who straddled the nineteenth century, and Eliot who straddled the twentieth, might read this essay and then decide if they want to turn to one or two or three of the many, many books that have been written about these two poets who are almost endlessly fascinating. They are to me. Those who want biographical information might go directly to Wikipedia, which makes it all-too easy for students, teachers and readers who want facts quickly. I also suggest reading some of the poems by Whitman and Eliot before looking into the life stories of the authors and criticism about them.

### **THE U.S. SUPREME COURT: A PRIMER**

The Supreme Court of the USA ruled at the end of June 2023 that the affirmative action programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina were

unconstitutional and in violation of the law of the land. Supporters of Affirmative Action which has allowed colleges to use race and ethnicity in their admissions policies say they were not surprised by the 6-3 ruling. Indeed, the Supreme Court has been drifting slowly but surely toward conservative and right-wing positions for much of the last decade, thanks in large part to Donald Trump's appointments when he was the president from 2016 to 2021.

The US is not the only country in the world to drift toward the right. One can point to other places where reactionary ideas and values have cropped up. Recently, a French police officer shot and killed a 17-year-old named Nahel. Shades of George Floyd, the Black man murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2020. His death led to widespread international protests and calls to defund and abolish the police.

Nahel was at the wheel of a Mercedes with Polish plates. He had driven away from a police checkpoint. At 17, he was too young for a licence. Nahel's mother said that the police officer who pulled the trigger "saw an Arab face, a little kid, and wanted to take his life." She blamed that individual and not all policemen. Socialist Party leader, Olivier Faure, said, "A refusal to stop doesn't give you a licence to kill. All the children of the Republic have a right to justice." The fatal shooting prompted protests and riots in Nanterre, where Nahel grew up and also all across France.

One wonders how the U.S. Supreme Court justices have reacted. All nine of them serve for life. They are supposed to be "above" politics, but that is not now the case. It has never been the case, ever since the creation of the court in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, soon after the War of Independence and the founding of the nation.

The Supreme Court was supposed to be the third branch in the "balance of powers" that includes the legislative branch (Congress), whose members are elected and the president who is also elected and who is at the heart of the executive branch of government.

In 2022, in an historic decision, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In that case the justices ruled 7-2 that a pregnant woman had the liberty to choose whether to have an abortion. Reporter Paul Blumenthal wrote in the Huffington Post that the most recent "decision puts an end to most systems designed to help Black and Latino students access higher education after centuries of racial discrimination." Blumenthal added, "colleges and universities will no longer be allowed to seek greater diversity of their student bodies."

White people with money and social connections will find that the doors to higher education will be opened wider than they have been, ever since the 1960s, when affirmative action programs went into effect, in large part because of the civil rights movement.

**RECONSTRUCTING AND DEMYTHOLOGIZING  
AMERICA’S STORY: AN INTERVIEW WITH  
PROFESSOR KERMIT ROOSEVELT III ON  
*THE NATION THAT NEVER WAS***

*Robin Lindley*

-----

Kermit Roosevelt III is the David Berger Professor for the Administration of Justice at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. His teaching focuses on constitutional law and conflict of laws. He has written several scholarly books, including *The Myth of Judicial Activism: Making Sense of Supreme Court Decisions*, as well as numerous law review articles, and two acclaimed novels, *In the Shadow of the Law* and *Allegiance* (on the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII). He is also a member of the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court, and he frequently comments for the media on the Court and current affairs. After law school at Yale, he clerked for the Honorable Stephen F. Williams of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and then for the Honorable Justice David Souter of the U.S. Supreme Court. He is the great-great-grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt. Excerpts from a longer conversation from the *History News Network* (<https://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/154690>) appear below.

-----

We are in the middle of a metamorphosis here, a metamorphosis which will, it is devoutly to be hoped, rob us of our myths and give us our history. - James Baldwin

Acclaimed Professor of Law and author Kermit Roosevelt III calls for a re-examination of America’s past and our myths in his provocative and illuminating recent book *The Nation That Never Was: Reconstructing America’s Story* (University of Chicago Press).

The book challenges the “standard story” that most of us learn in school: that our nation’s Founders in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution stood for ideals such as the proposition that “all men are created equal.” Yet, based on careful textual analysis of those documents and their historical context, Professor Roosevelt contends that this “standard story” is not only exaggerated, but patently false.

The Founders, many of whom enslaved other human beings, did not envision equality for all—or even a majority of inhabitants of the new nation. Indeed, as Professor Roosevelt’s incisive analysis reveals, the founding documents enshrine white supremacy and protect the institution of slavery.

## NOT WRITING IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

*Miho Kinmas*

-----

Triggered by a novel nominated for the 2023 Akutagawa prize, a major Japanese literary award, written by Gregory Khezrnejat, an American author, the essay is a part book review of one language for those who don't read that language. Also, the thoughts on broader cross-language cultural issues centered on contemporary Japan. The author considers the meaning of writing in a non-mother tongue, the effect of globalization on the Japanese language, the best practice in translation, and her renewed appreciation of one's mother tongue.

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Gregory Khezrnejat didn't win the Akutagawa prize. Had he won it with his 4th fiction, *Kaikonchi* (A Clearing) he would have been the first American to win the prestigious Japanese literary prize. But, as with any award worth winning, its politics is complicated: Murakami Haruki devoted a whole chapter to not winning it in his recently translated non-fiction book, *Novelist as a Vocation*.

Kikuchi Kan, a legendary editor of a major publisher, *Bungei Shunju*, established the prize in 1935. Many award recipients experienced a major launch in their writing careers and became the notable writers that we know today. There were two non-native Japanese winners: In 2008, Yan Yi, born in China, and in 2021, Li Kotomi of Taiwan.

For the daughter of a publisher, the Akutagawa prize announcement night had been a memorable annual event from the 1970s through the early 1990s, the excitement came with extravagant expense accounts at the height of the Japanese economy. But things have changed. My father, a publishing company executive, retired in 1993 and said, "The internet changed everything." He also expressed that we should be worried about the viability of the Japanese language with the shrinking population.

Globalization doesn't help; the List of Languages by Total Number of Speakers (Wikipedia) shows Japanese as the 13th most spoken language, following English (1.452 billion), Mandarin Chinese (1.118 billion), Hindi, Spanish, French, Arabic, etc. The 12th place is German, with 75.6 million native speakers plus 59.1 million second-language speakers totaling 134.6 million. Whereas Japan, the total number of speakers is 125.4 million, of which 125.3 million are first-language speakers. By comparison, the number of second-language speakers of English is 1.08 billion out of the total mentioned above (1.452 billion.) Hardly anyone bothers to learn Japanese as a second language. The statistics also show what an outlier Gregory Khezrnejat is.<sup>1</sup>

**KRISHNA BALDEV VAID'S HINDI *IBĀRAT* AND  
MY MALAYALAM *PĀṬHAM***

*K. Narayana Chandran*

---

This paper is both an account of my Malayalam translation of Krishna Baldev Vaid's *ibārat* (Hindi) and his own translation, "Text" (English). In successive sections, I introduce Vaid, some distinguishing features of his short fiction, mainly the unreliability of the multiple selves that figure in it. Besides pointing up the reasons for the unreliability of Vaid's narrative voices, I also consider how best a translator manages to deal with such unreliability, and relay its impact in a projected translation. A sample translation into Malayalam is reproduced in verbatim English. In raising the questions of *unreliability* in relation to translation in particular, I suggest that no narrative, especially fiction related by unreliable narrators such as Vaid's, ever aspires to relatability or reliability in translations. *Pāṭham* is my Malayalam word for both an object lesson, and a text/excerpt under discussion. In this exercise, what I have learnt is that Vaid's fiction is the best record of how unreliable translators are born in the act of making of such fiction. Vaid's sense of his narrators' lives as constituted in translation has a lot to do with their unreliable lives quarantined during violent upheavals under oppressive political regimes.

---

As a translator from Malayalam into English, an occasional translator from Hindi and English into Malayalam, I have often asked myself the following questions:

1. Since fidelities and accuracies are often invoked and are not entirely discounted in studies of translation, what ground rules do I break as a translator if I carry anything other than the source across the new medium of my target language? How untrustworthy would I be in translating a narrative I find patently unreliable?
2. Are there only *degrees* of the unreliable in a translation, going by the slippages from, and approximations to, the source? (More on the assumed reliability of the *source*, presently.)
3. Given that the teller of a story has a representational body, and presumably that body belongs to a narrator who commands and controls an intimate, generic 'I' of the text, we must take that narrator as reliable even when we allow his/her narrative to be *unreliable*. In which case, how would anyone assume that there is indeed a 'reliable' translator?
4. If no retelling of a narrative is 'reliable' in an absolute sense, even while retold in the same language by the same person at different times, and subject

## SOUTH ASIA AS A LITERARY CATEGORY

*Anisur Rahman*

-----

Ever since the advent of postcolonial studies and literary theory, new ways and manners of reading and evaluation have made their way. This has also created a respectable space for area studies, as also for defining the socio-literary underpinnings of literary production. It was in this process that South Asia came under theoretical focus with special reference to language, location and ideology. An effort is made here at a modest level to mark the major marks of this literary location and identify its essential variables. As South Asia has come to acquire its identity as a literary category with a difference, it calls for the evaluation of its literary capital in terms other than those perpetuated by the Western academia.

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Let me begin by posing a kind of disclaimer first. Let me say that although South Asia is a definite geographical entity, it has generally been perceived as a composite whole of mutually compatible nations. Since this has been reiterated over a long period of time, this perception has mellowed as a truism. We do not always keep in mind, however, that this broad generalization has led to the near-effacement of South Asia's essential identity. A repudiation of this supposed truism may, however, be possible by posing certain questions which would, in turn, help us appreciate the richness of South Asia as a space characterized by diversity rather than by illusion of unity. Let us ask ourselves if all South Asian nations are really a single compatible whole in terms other than geographical, and if they are so, then there must be a center to bind them together. The answer to this question has to be in negative.

Further, we should also ascertain that if there is a center, there must also be margins to go along with it. Since answers to these have to be in negative, it may be asserted that the essential spirit of South Asia clearly denies a single center because the very strength of South Asia, as an assembly of nations, lies in the self-evolved centrality of each location and all of them, taken together, impart uniqueness to a broader South Asian identity. This argument may be carried forward by positing that the writers of different South Asian locations speak in their own voices without necessarily echoing the other. This is well borne out by the way they have negotiated with their history, and also dealt with their secondary and tertiary states of existence in their individual ways. Although South Asia has been relegated to the generic "third space," it has, with the passage of time, turned out to be a larger location of great interest to social and political scientists, cultural theorists and anthropologists, literary writers and

**BLENDED LEARNING IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY:  
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES – INDIA’S  
PERSPECTIVE**

*Shanker Ashish Dutt*

---

Blended Learning, also known as Hybrid Learning, is a teaching-learning model that combines both online and offline learning methods. In India, Blended Learning gained considerable momentum during the Covid 19 pandemic and the benefits were understood conceptually as it offers flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness. It has become a preferred choice for many students as well as educational institutions. Blended Learning combines face-to-face teaching with online learning methods and technologies. It provides students with the freedom to learn at their own pace, at their convenience and from any location. Blended Learning also allows teachers to track students' progress and understand their strengths and weaknesses, which makes it easier to customize the curriculum to meet individual learning needs. While the benefits of Blended Learning are numerous, there are multiple challenges that may be overcome with clear-sighted policies and their honest implementation.

---

In the early 1960's, communications in India was in its nascent stage. To speak to someone beyond the city, one needed to dial the operator and book a Trunk Call in any one of the three categories: Ordinary, Urgent or Lightening. A Lightening call could be connected anytime between 30 seconds and an hour; an urgent call, between half an hour and six hours; and an ordinary call between a few hours and a few days or occasionally, not at all.

From then to now, the technological leap has been exponential. The communication revolution in India began in the 1980's and today the world arrives at our phone screens at the touch of a few buttons. This ICT revolution has been so overwhelming and pervasive that without technology one feels marooned on a distant island like Robinson Crusoe. Everything from a slew of banking activities to travel, to ordering food, to stimulating lectures on global media platforms and teaching-learning are literally on our finger-tips.

Blended Learning is the combination of traditional classroom learning and e-learning through the use of digital technology. When my generation was at school, the educational technologies that we experienced were classrooms with blackboards, text and exercise books and the ubiquitous pencil. Class-room teaching was the norm along with mentoring conversations on campus. Our learning focused on education in the humanities, arts and sciences as a path to holistic wisdom which included academic excellence, personal growth,

**MELODY OF THE BLUES AND THE AMERICAN  
RACIAL DILEMMA: AUGUST WILSON'S  
*MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM***

*Nibir K. Ghosh*

-----

August Wilson's play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, performed in 1984 and published in 1985, shot into the limelight a year ago in the wake of the Oscar accolades garnered by the Netflix film by the same title. The play valorizes the contribution of Ma Rainey, popularly known as "the Mother of the Blues," by showcasing her indomitable courage and exemplary talent that made her an icon of African American pride and self-reliance. Beginning with a reference to my personal meeting and conversation with August Wilson at Capitol Hill, Seattle, the paper explores the diverse strands of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* against the backdrop of August Wilson's intense concern with the American racial dilemma.

-----

We are all familiar with the names of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Michael Dell, Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, Jack Dorsey among many others who have distinguished themselves as successful entrepreneurs and created a niche for themselves in the enviable hall of fame and fortune after dropping out of prestigious universities and colleges in the U.S.A. In this context no less distinct is the hallowed name of August Wilson (1945-2005) who walked out of Gladstone High School at the age of fifteen to emerge, in due course of time, as one of the greatest voices in the domain of American Theatre with two Pulitzer Prizes, seven Drama Circle Critics Award, Tony Awards, twenty-three honorary degrees, Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, winner of the Whiting Writers Award to name just a few. In recognition of Wilson as a trailblazer for bringing African American drama to the forefront of American theatre, the US Postal Service issued the 44<sup>th</sup> Black Heritage stamp in honor of the legendary playwright on January 28, 2021. The Netflix film *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (2020), based on August Wilson's play by the same title, was nominated for five OSCAR Academy Awards. The film won the Oscar for Best Makeup and Hairstyling, making history at the 93rd Academy Awards. The stylists Mia Neal and Jamika Wilson are the first Black women to win in this category. The film also won the award for Best Costume Design. The news came close on the heels of a proposal to rename Woodrow Wilson High School at Northwest Washington after August Wilson.

Before proceeding to the main focus of this essay, I find it pertinent to share with readers my unforgettable meeting and conversation with August Wilson during my Fulbright Fellowship year at the University of Washington, Seattle.



**THE CRACKED MIRROR: AN EXAMINATION OF  
*A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* BY  
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

*Shernavaz Buhariwala*

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This paper is an exploration of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, right from the chronological journey to the psychological one. The focus being on Blanche with the subsidiary characters throwing light and shade, offering point and counterpoint, scenery and polyphony. The symbols are scrutinized and their ramifications explored all the way from the exposition to the denouement. The clash of the Southern tradition with contemporary exigencies and its tragic causalities, is seen to offer instances of rethinking and heart searching and induce a kind of catharsis.

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The mirror is an integral part of a lady's boudoir. Before it, she summons her vanity to linger in delight or dismay at the various aspects of her feature and form. The exercise is fair enough for purposes of presentability – but when it becomes obsessive, perspective gets perverted. This paper is concerned with such a dilemma and its tragic aftermath. Inevitably the personal propensities and psychiatric compulsions that come into play, will figure in the discussion.

What is a mirror expected to do? Reflect obviously. But what can it reflect apart from the surface of things? That deduces reality to mere visibility. Visibility is actuality and actuality is discerned by the senses. It is not the whole of reality any more than daylight is day. Light and dark together make up the diurnal round. So ocean depths guard gems of teeming life. The mirror cannot probe into the secrets of the soul. At best, it can only offer a partial picture of reality. And if the mirror is cracked, the splintered glass held clumsily together by a tentative frame, throws the face out of focus. Magnified here, diminished there, disjointed or connected, it doesn't project the original at all. The mirror, partial to begin with, becomes a gruesome assailant, before whom the defendant must fight a losing battle.

To come to the intact mirror first: Behold Tennyson the genteel Laureate, presenting a picture of Victorian complacency in his portrait of the lady of Shallot. She is watching the sights of Camelot in her mirror, conscious that a curse would descend on her if she looked down directly. Then a "bow shot from her bower eaves, he rode between the barley sheaves." Her heart stirred at this unexpected thrust and she looked down. "Out flew the web and floated wide, the mirror cracked from side to side, the curse has come upon me cried the lady of Shallot." The hidden reality hitherto ignored by the mirror now and took its

## RE-TELLING (HER) STORIES: SORTIES, TEXTS AND CONTEXTS FROM NORTHEAST INDIA

*Sukalpa Bhattacharjee*

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The paper argues that the hermeneutics of personal narratives is a useful tool for understanding how women construct and negotiate their gendered identities through recounting their stories and memories. These unique modes of self-expression allow for the emergence of multiple subjectivities of women, constituting them as speaking subjects who speak for, speak to or speak from their own subject positions. Personal narratives often use temporal and spatial elements that define a region in various discursive forms. An attempt has been made to study a few representative personal narratives from Northeast India, which appropriate and map the socio-cultural and political histories of the region from a gendered perspective.

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Narrative interpretation is a useful tool for understanding how women construct and negotiate their gendered identities through recounting their stories and memories. Feminist methodology has stressed the importance of bringing women's voices and personal experiences into the research process. This is indeed a deeply complex and continually evolving process and its importance is largely due to, firstly its potential for challenging the dominant masculine genre of autobiography and secondly to read into the political significance of seemingly individual personal stories, drawing inspiration from the second wave feminist engagement with the 'personal is political'. Through women's narratives we can achieve a greater understanding of the socialised position of gender, and therefore examine how dominant, patriarchal ideologies are created, reproduced or resisted through the process of recounting gendered experiences. Feminist researchers emphasize on the ideologies of structural inequalities involved in the experiential realm of men and women, which constitutes the basis of the difference in the ways women express themselves in unique ways. These unique modes of self-expression allow for the emergence of multiple subjectivities of women, constituting them as speaking subjects who *speak for*, *speak to* or *speak from* their own subject positions. There has been an increasing interest in stories and memoirs by women as a source for understanding the social and the political.

These narratives are generally categorized as personal narratives and are used by scholars in different fields. Personal narratives provide accounts of lives and events as told by or from the respective subject position of the narrator. But a personal narrative is not necessarily a fiction, although like any other narrative, it is constructed. An attempt to study what it is constructed

**R. K. NARAYAN'S *THE DARK ROOM*:  
A STORY OF LOST OPPORTUNITIES**

*Yashu Rai*

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Woman is the part of society and we can't talk about society without woman. By giving the prisoner of the dark room, the name of Savitri, the novelist obviously intends to use the double edged irony. For while her mythological namesake had wrested her husband from the clutches of Yama and had become a prime example of devotion to the husband, Savitri in this Malgudi world leaves her husband's home as a gesture of protest against what she might legitimately construe as a violation of the sacred marriage vows by her husband who had been bestowing his favour and fervour on another woman.

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*The Dark Room* is Narayan's domestic classic. It relates the story of a typical Indian family where the husband/father is the boss. Male domination is in vogue not only in our country but in many other parts of the world as well. The position of wife/mother is that of bonded labour. She has to be a silent sufferer, tolerating the whims of her husband and pranks of her children. This probing that Narayan attempts of the inner world of Indian woman brings to him some disquieting truths: while on the one hand he finds woman up in arms against the destructive milieu, on the other he also finds that this woman has failed to take the decisive action of a revolt. Caught between two conflicting duties she flies from one extreme response to the other, using in the process both the world of tradition and modernity. Her attempts to refuse to remain a commodity, a doormat are real but equally real is this uneasy rope walk that she has to do.

Indian social literature largely has presented a situation where the woman has failed to renew herself. There is exploration, no doubt, of the female alienation and psychic dislocation that this alienation produces in her; there are gestures of defiance also. But the result of the defiance is submission, which creates greater dislocation. R. K. Narayan shows the woman at the receiving end and shows also how she is unable to create an identity for herself. In *The Dark Room*, Narayan portrays the predicament of a wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society. As quoted by William Walsh from R. K. Narayan's autobiography *My Days*:

Man has assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notions of her independence, her individuality, her stature and strength. A wife, in an orthodox milieu of Indian society, was an ideal victim of such circumstances my novel dealt with her

## ECOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY AND SANKARADEVA

*Nityananda Pattanayak*

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Eco-spirituality searches for spiritual connection between human beings and their surroundings. It recognizes intrinsic value of every being and everything, interrelationship between beings and things on this earth, appreciates their values for eco-balance. Sankaradeva, a medieval pioneer of Bhakti dharma in Assam, following pan India Bhakti movement in the medieval period found intrinsic value of every being on the earth. For him, the same life force flows in every being, be it an insect or a dog; even a lifeless thing has its own value. In compositions such as the “Kirtana-ghosa” and “Bhagavata” he takes reverential attitude to beings and non-beings and tries to find out a divine spirit present in them. This paper critically analyses eco-spiritual aspects present in Sankaradeva’s compositions by following postcolonial ecological concepts.

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Eco-studies have now become one of the most engaging and promising academic studies considering the challenge faced by the environment and human race due to man’s massive destruction of ecology in the name of development. As a result, both human and natural calamities do occur frequently threatening the very survival of mankind, evidence of which is seen in the form of new types of diseases afflicting mankind like climate change, global warming, extinction of numerous flora and fauna species etc.

Mankind now faces ecological crisis because of its detachment from nature, what William Wordsworth lamented in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and also man’s disregard for its culture. As Schlosberg maintains, “cultural recognition” is crucial to the question of “environmental justice” within the context of global village concept (173). When the Bible declared that man is at the centre of the universe and all others are the ‘Other’ the Christian mind took its literal meaning and believed that religion has given him such license to exploit nature to his benefit. Lyon White Jr. observes: “Christianity...not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper end (204).” From the age of Enlightenment, the western thinking, essentially anthropocentric, upheld the view that man could use his knowledge as a tool of power to exploit, use and utilize nature to harness development for his comfort; that nonhuman world exists for human welfare. But with the new lights thrown on Biblical sayings regarding man’s position vis-à-vis nonhuman world, the western world has realized its folly and is trying to rectify its earlier wrongs done to the natural world. Yet then Hegel, Levinas and Derrida, contemporary western thinkers, who reject all types of binaries, any kind of

**DECOLONISING THE NOVEL:  
A STUDY OF WILSON HARRIS'  
*THE PALACE OF THE PEACOCK***

*Melissa Helen*

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Wilson Harris' novels are difficult to read and they challenge the reader for the nature of his unconventional plot structure and narrative strategies. He is known for experimenting with plot and narrative structures. Often there is a blurring of the different states of consciousness – dreams versus reality; the external reality gets blurred with the internal state of mind. My paper looks at the distinct narrative style that Harris uses to present his vision of harmony in world of binaries that seem irreconcilable. Harris rejects the European model of novel of persuasion as he explores a complex world torn with colonization, the cultural divides and the moral collapse in his novel, *The Palace of the Peacock*. This paper is an attempt to analyse the narrative style and rich symbolism employed to present his vision of the harmony and unity.

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**Introduction**

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his seminal work *Decolonising the Mind* raised crucial issues regarding the dominance of writers in English. Ngugi lamented that European languages were the default vehicles for African literature. He pointed out that many writers of Africa and works written in Yoruba, Swahili, Zulu, Arabic and other African languages were excluded in the 1962 "Conference of African Writers of English Expression." The very title proved the emphasis on western cultural and linguistic superiority while African cultures and languages were debased. This led to a healthy debate later on the constitution of African literature.

However Ngugi abandoned English as the primary language of his writing, much before he wrote about in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). Ngugi wrote the novel *Caitani Mutharabaini* (Devil on the Cross), published in Gikũyũ in 1980 and English in 1982.

While Ngugi was talking about the need for decolonizing the mind and rejecting the coloniser's cultural and linguistic superiority, my paper is an attempt to bring out the application of this idea of decolonization to the idea of the genre of novel as seen in Wilson Harris's novel *The Palace of the Peacock*.

Theodore Wilson Harris born in New Amsterdam, British Guiana (now Guyana) is now a resident of England. However, he is included in the canon of Caribbean literature as Harris graduated from Queen's College in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana. He has been greatly influenced by his life and experiences

## ARUNDHATI ROY'S *AZADI* AND MY INDIA

*Pallavi Sharma Goyal*

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The following article is an attempt to explore and examine the dilemma that I observe in *Azadi*, written by Booker Prize awardee Arundhati Roy. It is an expression of those muted voices that never get any opportunity to disseminate their opinions. With their vices and virtues, the silent expressions of the countrymen need to be heard properly. The article not only raises grave concerns regarding various contemporary issues depicted in the novel with a certain kind of aberration from the ground realities of the country but also reverberates the mood of those muted natives who have been an integral part of the nation.

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*Azadi*, a collection of lectures delivered by Arundhati Roy, between 2018 and early 2020, was introduced into the literary world in the form of a novel. It immediately attracted the attention of readers around the globe like all other distinguished phenomenal works of Suzanna Arundhati Roy.

Born in Shillong, Meghalaya, on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1961, Suzanna Arundhati Roy is an ebullient, internationally esteemed, worldly acknowledged, politically active Indian author. Her novel *The God of Small Things* has been phenomenal as it was translated into thirty languages, earned advances of one million dollars, and received the prestigious Booker prize award in 1997 with a citation that noted, "The book keeps all the promises that it makes."

She has been passionately committed to environmental politics as well, notably the flooding of the Narmada Valley in North Western India. Her skilled political writing is visible in collections like *Power Politics*, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* and *the cost of Living*.

Arundhati Roy came into the limelight when she won the National Film Award for best screenplay in the year 1989 for a television film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*. She was also entrusted with Sydney Peace Prize Award, Sahitya Akademi Award, Norman Mailer Prize and many others. Roy has been immensely hailed around the world because of her literary, social and political contributions; she got featured in the 2014 list of *Time* 100, the then 100 most influential people of the world. Certainly, she has been endowed with an exquisite writing style that brought fame and glory to her and her nation as well.

The collection of her essays in the novel *Azadi* express her sentiments about her kith and kin, her own indigenous land, Our INDIA. In the series of her essays which have been delivered in the form of lectures, on various national and international platforms, she roars the chant of *Azadi* quite enthusiastically.

## **DALIT FEMINISM AND MEENA KANDASAMY'S WRITINGS**

*Ruchi Singh*

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Meena Kandasamy is known for her radical thoughts and opinions on caste, gender, and language. She became a prominent voice in Dalit literature when she was critically acclaimed for her collection of poems *Touch* and *Ms Militancy*. It is her militant approach to the issues of caste and gender, and her revolutionary reformist zeal that sets her apart from many other Dalit writers. In my paper, I have critically examined some of Kandasamy's works and analysed her contribution to Dalit feminist writings. In the process I have also tried to look at the gaps in Dalit feminist readings and the possible themes that can be explored in Dalit feminist literary sphere.

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Everywhere in the world women's experiences of identity, oppression and marginalisation are shaped by factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and religion. In "Dalit Women Talk Differently" Guru states "...women's assertion assumes particular expression by operating on a particular terrain shaped by forces of a particular country" (Guru 2548). In the Indian context caste becomes an integral force determining the experiences of Indian women. These caste identities could not be transcended by the initial wave of feminism in India. Their vision of sisterhood among all Indian women did not leave space in the feminist circles to discuss the issue of caste and gender. It is in the early nineties that the Dalit feminist assertions challenged the conceptions of casteless feminism and exposed the limitations of Indian feminist movement of the 1970s. Sharmila Rege opined that the Dalit women groups characterised feminism in India as brahmanical both in theory and praxis. Dalit women registered the need of writing about their own struggles because firstly, they realised that their voices were either inadequately represented or completely erased from feminist literary canons and secondly, to draw attention to patriarchal domination within the Dalit communities (Guru 2548). With this purpose at hand, we saw a rise of Dalit feminism as a field of academic discourse in the 1990s. Analysing the literary works of Dalit feminists from a caste-gender perspective not only challenges dominant readings but also transforms our understanding of the intersecting systems of oppression. Dalit feminism operates in these interventionist and transformative capacities (Pan 209). Foregrounding of experience from the standpoint of Dalit women writers gives them agency to establish a discourse and respond to criticism on the life and world of women disenfranchised by caste. A study of the prose forms, mostly autobiographies, and novels, short stories and poetry of the major Dalit women writers provide a sweltering critique of both mainstream Indian feminism

## **DEBT, AN ETERNAL CURSE IN KOTA NEELIMA'S *SHOES OF THE DEAD***

*Vikram Singh & Reshma Devi*

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Agriculture is the main occupation of the Indian people. Around two-thirds of the country's population get their livelihood from agriculture. Indian farmers, especially the small and marginal, are more deprived as compared to the farmers of other countries. Globalization, liberalization and capitalism brought speedy change in agriculture sector in the last few decades. Farming has changed drastically from the earlier conventional ways. The change occurred from staple crops to cash crops due to the demand generated by the market. It was accompanied by a shift towards global assimilation of agriculture markets. These changes placed the farming sector into competitive mode without being prepared for the forthcoming inevitable vulnerabilities. All these brought dire changes in the psychological, financial, social and physical conditions of the small and marginal farmers of the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, and these changes sensate in *Shoes of the Dead* by Kota Neelima. All these problematic situations hauled the small and marginal farmers at a junction where there is a thin layer of life between debt and suicide.

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### **Introduction**

The symbolical meaning of *Shoes of the Dead* is that a debt-laden farmer left his shoes for his next generation to step-in in terms of debt that they have to bear upon. This novel gives ample reasons for the cause of the distress, debt and suicides of the small and marginal farmers of the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, and also finds out the institutions and persons responsible for the worries of the farmers and their families. The protagonist of the novel is Gangiri Bhadra a school teacher, turned to be a debt-laden farmer after the suicide of his brother. The notion of suicide of the small and marginal farmers is essentially incomplete without debt as it is the ultimate substance of small farming. Suicide is a complex phenomenon largely associated with economic, social and psychological distress of the victim and his family. The farmer is the sole breadwinner of his family. Loss in farming brings the farmer under debt and repeatedly loss in farming forces him to commit suicide. There is a strong anomaly in the life of a peasant. Marxian theoretical perspectives along with other relevant theories are appropriate to find out the root cause of farmers' suicide. The hidden capitalism alienates the farmer from his own community. The exploitation of one class by another introduces 'alienation'. Peter Berry defined it as ". . . alienation, which is the state which comes about when the worker is 'disliked' and made to perform fragmented, repetitive tasks in a sequence of whose nature and purpose he or she has no overall grasp"



**SINGLE INDIAN WOMEN AS THE OTHER IN  
EUNICE DE SOUZA’S NOVELS:  
*DANGERLOK AND DEV & SIMRAN***

*Barsha Sahoo*

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Since the establishment of marriage as a social institution, “married women” across cultures and societies are respected whereas single women are labeled as misfits and side-lined into obscurity. Their marginalized status makes them “the others” in every society. *Dangerlok* paints the picture of the protagonist navigating her daily mundane existence as a single woman in India. *Dev & Simran* is about a widowed woman dealing with the aftermath of her husband’s demise. The present paper is relevant in presenting the marginalized and misrepresented place of unmarried Indian women through the fictional works of Miss Eunice de Souza.

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The hierarchy that exists between the two genders namely man and woman is widely recognized. Men or males are religiously, culturally, and politically perceived as the “first sex” whereas women are the “second sex” (de Beauvoir). In short, men are the superior gender or the first-class citizens and women are the dominated gender or the second-class citizens. There exists yet another hierarchy among women which depends on their marital status. Marital status is “the fact of whether you are single, married, divorced, etc.” (Oxford Dictionary). Most cultures around the globe like European, American, or Indian are patriarchal. In such societies, the males are the dominating figures in social institutions like family, politics, and marriage etc. A patriarchal society is based on gender roles. Gender roles are to be strictly followed by both males and females for the harmony and peaceful co-existence of the genders. Men get the role of the breadwinner. They must go out of the home to earn for their family. Women’s role was to stay at home, cook and take care of their husbands, kids, and the home. Women were not allowed to stay single and step out of the home to earn and men were not allowed to stay at home and be caregivers to their children and wives. Hence, all the women were encouraged to get married to pro-create a family to be a caregiver.

With the changing mindsets and lifestyles, women are allowed to work alongside men, and men are taking up the roles of caregivers (Ruth Bader Ginsburg). Still, women are pressured to get married and the institution of marriage is stronger than ever. The patriarchal society still views married women in high status and they are in majority. This is not the case with unmarried single women or widows. Single women and widows are in the minority and are viewed as problems, outcasts, or “the others” and the only solution

## THE ONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF “SELF” IN RUSHDIE’S *THE ENCHANTRESS OF FLORENCE*

*Rajeev Kumar & Sovan Chakraborty*

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The paper chooses for its theme two major questions which occupy the protagonist Mughal king Akbar’s conscious deliberations in the novel *The Enchantress of Florence* by author Salman Rushdie. These questions are made a point of departure for analyzing the ontological premise over which the discussions of “self” are normally built. First, the paper deals with Akbar’s idea of whether it is proper to address himself as “We” or “I”. This question ends in non-resolution, which is taken as an evidence for the possible error in the assumption of the argument. The second concern is his yearning for the possibility of a better world where barbarian victory by force and war can be supplanted by the accommodation and refinement of multiple discourses. The experiment for accommodating multiple discourses in a city by the protagonist king is viewed as a practice of a cosmopolitan ideal. The subsequent disillusionment with such wishes is explicated in terms of the ontological-existential nature of the “self.” The paper approaches above problems with Heidegger’s idea of *dasein* and its “inauthenticity”.

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### **Introduction**

*The Enchantress of Florence* is a 2008 novel by Salman Rushdie. The narrative of the novel opens with a European traveller, variously named as Sir Uccello, Mogor dell’Amore and Niccolò Vespucci, an alleged Florentine Mughal, visiting the city of Fatehpur Sikri to tell the great Mughal king Akbar an unusual story of genetic lineage he was tasked to tell for claiming kinship with the Mughals. Akbar, by this time, entering his forties, and having settled the matters of administration to his accomplished courtiers, is attending largely to the philosophical questions. “The country was at peace at last, but the king’s spirit was never calm . . . his mind wrestled with philosophical and linguistic conundrums as much as military ones” (Rushdie 28).

One major question which troubles protagonist Akbar is the way he chooses to address himself. For him the proper way to address himself is the first person plural “we” instead of first person singular “I”. The discreetness shown by him is not a grammatical one, neither a matter of cultural significance, but rather related to the position of power that he, as a king, has secured for himself. The “we” is more suitable and hence should be reserved for a king, whereas “I” is proper for the commoner, but the use of “we” by the common people precludes him from reaching any satisfying conclusion. The next concern that we see in the text is Akbar’s wish for “a world in which he could forsake the gloating satisfactions of conquest for the gentler yet more taxing joys of discourse.

**WOMEN AND WAR: REDEFINING HISTORICAL  
DISCOURSE IN SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH'S  
*THE UNWOMANLY FACE OF WAR***

*Amandeep Kaur*

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Women's active participation in wars has been either overlooked or misrepresented by historians since ages. However, the past few decades are marked by an increasing attention towards the issues of gender and war in the varied disciplines of humanities. Svetlana Alexievich, first journalist to win the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature, has written extensively about twentieth century war discourse, militarism and political violence in her documentary prose. Her writing style encompasses journalism, oral history and literature in order to create a history of human feelings. Her skills of transforming oral testimonies into a literary narrative are distinctive. In fact, she writes a parallel history by documenting the individuals' testimonies, particularly of women, which have never been acknowledged in the mainstream historical discourse. Accordingly, the aim of the present research paper is to redefine the historical war discourse with the inclusion of women's voices in the context of Svetlana Alexievich's documentary prose *The Unwomanly Face of War*. This paper brings a varied number of personal and subjective experiences of Soviet women to the fore in order to provide a fresh understanding to the twentieth-century historical war discourse.

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Women have always played diverse roles during times of wars. However, the narratives of their active participation in wars have never become the part of prevalent discourses. Their first-hand experiences about the horrors of wars have been completely ignored by historians since ages. As a result, a biased and unfair historical war discourse comes into existence which needs to be challenged. The past few decades are marked by an increasing attention to the issue of gender and war in the varied disciplines of humanities. Some of the twentieth-century writers and thinkers have even crossed the boundaries between these disciplines to rewrite the historical discourse from the perspective of marginalised groups. Similarly, Svetlana Alexievich, a well-known literary journalist, has written extensively about twentieth-century war discourse, militarism and political violence in her documentary prose works. She states: "I am writing a history of feelings . . . A history of the soul . . . Not the history of a war or a state and not the lives of heroes, but the history of small human beings, thrown out of ordinary life into the epic depths of an enormous event. Into great history." (Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face* 19). Her skill in transforming oral testimonies into a literary narrative is undeniable.

## MODES OF REPRESENTATION IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH*

*Paramba Dadhich*

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The question of representation of history, historical figures and occurrences is one of the central themes in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The novel undertakes the imaginative exploration of history through various 'modes', art being one of the dominant modes employed. The artist imaginatively rethinking and broadening the contours of known history becomes a mode of representation that the painters in the novel employ. In this sense, the narrator also becomes an artist who uses the medium of language and fiction to rewrite a family chronicle that traces its roots through diverse strands of history. The movement of human populations due to trade and migration that shaped the course of this history also concomitantly influences the nature of relationships between individuals and their communities in the novel. This movement finds expression in art, wall-frescoes, tiles of a synagogue, and in the very nature of interpersonal relationships like that of Aurora Zogoiby and her son Moor of the title and Flory Zogioby and her son Abraham. The idea of art, therefore, ranges to encompass the history of the subcontinent since fourteenth century along with the developments taking place within a particular family. The narrative draws the saga of a family involved in pepper trade along the Coromandel and through it explores the trading history of spices along the entire western coast. The paper shall try to delineate how the thread of art holds the narrative diversity of the work along with the painting the novel's title carries.

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Art and artistic representation are the two major weavers in the fiction of Salman Rushdie, particularly in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), where painting becomes a self-conscious activity for creation of parallel universes in order to understand the real one. Aurora Zogoiby, the protagonist's mother, is the central artistic consciousness of the novel who creates art and is created by art. During a period of enforced confinement upon her, she identifies her skill and pursuit and creates an imaginary universe on the walls of the quasi-prison. The narrator describes her charcoal drawn world as: "Every inch of the walls and even the ceiling of the room pullulated with figures, human and animal, real and imaginary, drawn in a sweeping black line that transformed itself constantly, that filled here and there into huge blocks of color, the red of the earth, the purple and vermillion of the sky, the forty shades of green..." (39). This is an essentially subjective world that Aurora creates but it intertwines with and describes larger movements of history spread throughout the world. Her art is an outcome of her wide knowledge of history ranging from Emperor Asoka to the building of Taj Mahal to the freedom struggle involving Nehru,

## SHORT STORY

### THE FINAL CONFESSION

*Sin Keong Tong*

On his deathbed, Meng gave his final confession. He recalled when he was four years old, his father gave him a thermometer. He was told that under no circumstances was he to make contact with the mercury inside the tube. Meng was curious to find out how high he could push the red mercury so he stuck it in the rice cooker only to find that the tube broke and leaked mercury into the rice. Not wanting to get a beating for his troubles, he kept quiet.

As the family gathered for dinner, Meng could not muster the courage to confess his misconduct. He sat and watched the family tucked into the rice and waited for them to die. All a sudden, his world transcended into another dimension. He saw his mother in a bus beckoning him to join. His future life was played to him in a flash.

His father soon got married again to a highly educated and beautiful woman. She accepted Meng like her own child until his step brother was born. She turned into an emotional and physical bully. He was called repugnant human excrement and was accused of shamelessness for his existence. She would deny Meng of lunch when his father was not around. On one Chinese New Years eve, he went to bed crying and begging for his mother. He knew that he will not have new clothes to wear on the next day and will be treated like a piece of furniture when the relatives visited.

There was an occasion when she did not provide medical care when there was a growth in his eyelid. He was taunted at school for being a peeping Tom. She made him wear pink women underwear and he was enormously embar-rassed when his class mates found out. Because of his low self esteem, he was contented at being mediocre at academics and also in sports. The turning point came when Meng was about 10. He started reciprocating her tirades. In addition, he learned to say 'f\*\*\*ing your mother' to her in broken English. He was strong enough to laugh at her feeble attempts to hit him and would wrestle the instruments from her hand. His father knew of the struggle between the two of them. Decision was made to send Meng to a monastery to prepare him to be a better human being.

The parting words from his father when they entered the gates of the monastery were "Give more than you receive to make this world a better place." Meng was determined not to cry in front of his father. The hurt of abandonment was compounded by the fear of leaving behind his comfort zone, family and friends. He entered into the new world with nothing except for a sketching of a problem that had puzzled him for years. He made self-discovery through meditation where he asked for forgiveness from himself for his transgressions

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5. Impact of artificial intelligence on upward mobility.
6. Is Orwellian ‘Big Brother’ watching us?
7. Emerging Utopian and Dystopian views of change.
8. Social Media: Boon or Bane?
9. Short films and OTT platforms.
10. Any other aspect related to the basic theme.

Interested contributors should submit an abstract of 150 words along with contact details and professional affiliation to [remarkings@hotmail.com](mailto:remarkings@hotmail.com) by 20 September, 2023. Authors of selected entries will be notified by 10 October, 2023. Thereafter, the complete paper (2000-2500 words in MS Word format, MLA Style 9<sup>th</sup> edition) will be required by 15 November, 2023.

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- *Voltaire*

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