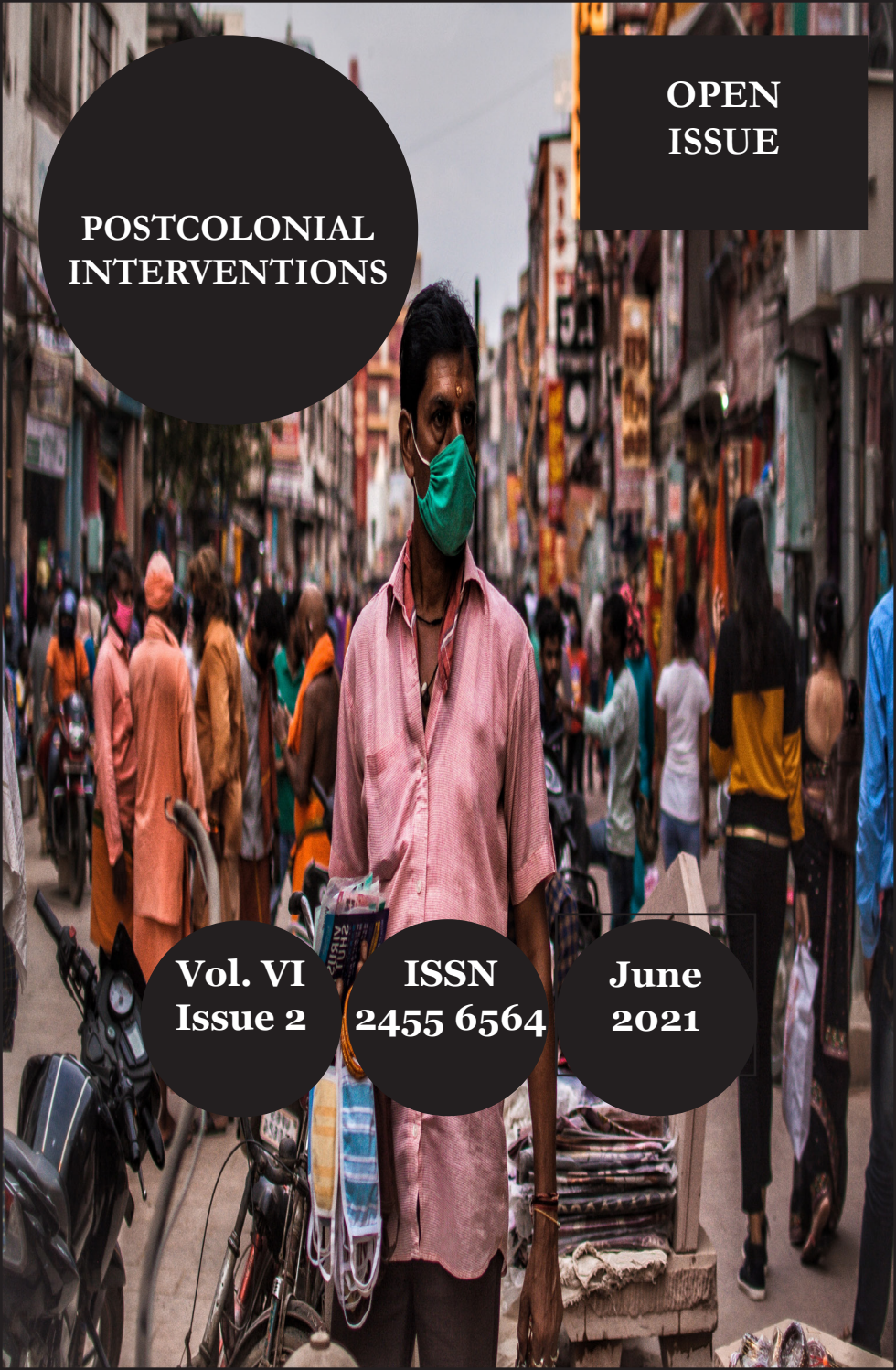

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Cover image: 'A man selling masks in the busy street of Varanasi during the pandemic. ' uploaded by Shubhangee Vyas; sourced from Unsplash.

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EDITORS' NOTE

2021 was not supposed to be like this. Most of us had probably hoped that after all the trauma of 2020, this year was going to be different. Vaccines were being made, people had become more aware, more and more medical options were becoming available to combat the effects of this dreaded COVID-19. But, to our utter dismay, especially in India, the new year brought only a more devastating second wave and friends, relatives and colleagues of all ages started succumbing to the apparently unstoppable disease. However, what traumatised people more than the aggressive mutations of the disease was the utterly unprepared response of the administratative apparatus as a result of which oxygen became scarce, hospital beds became unavailable and people started dying on the streets, gasping for breath in the arms of desperate near and dear ones who frantically ran helter-skelter for a cylinder of oxygen which either did not materialise or became available too late. Such was the extent of the crisis in India that even crematoriums became overwhelmed with corpses, leading to skirmishes over plots to cremate one's parents or spouse or children in a an atmosphere that reeked of utter helplessness, indignity and anarchy. As the world watched on with agony, corpses of patients who had succumbed to this deadly contagion began to be dropped into the

Ganga by families who could not even reach hospitals or crematoriums. Hundreds of such bodies found their final refuge in shallow graves on the banks of the Ganga, to be intermittently exposed to the horrified gaze of the survivors by the ebb and flow of the tides. It rarely gets as grim and infernal as this.

The only ray of hope in these traumatic period was the spontaneous expressions of solidarity shown by citizens' organisations and their digital networks through which oxygen cylinders and other necessary equipments were made available, blood donors were arranged, ambulances were called, hospital beds were booked, sanitisation drives and food supplies were organised. This was done by a large number of young people in associations with medical professionals and charitable organisations which eventually saved hundreds of lives. Alongside such measures, various inexpensive canteens and food packet distribution networks were also initiated so that the impoverished and the unemployed could find a source of succour in these extensively exploitative times. It is our pleasure that certain members of this journal's editorial team as well as those associated with our extended network of friends and well-wishers actively participated in these humanitarian endeavours with intense passionate involvement and utmost selflessness. We begin this issue by acknowledging the contributions of these exemplary human beings and also by mourning the loss of all those who have left us during the last few months.

Quite naturally, proceeding with the activities associated with the journal has been quite difficult and we have even had to delay our publication by a fortnight or so. Yet the only reason that we have been able to finally deliver is because of the dedicated and stellar contributions of the editorial team and the understanding responses of our contributors. A specially note of thanks must be conveyed to Professor Emma Dawson Varughese whose analysis of gendered constructs and attendant reconfigurations through public wall art in Mumbai inaugurates this open issue. We are very grateful for receiving this essay which will surely enrich the readers.

This inaugural essay also foregrounds the quite exceptional focus on India which characterises this issue. Over the last six years we have not only received contributions from across the world, but the foci of those contributions have been geographically varied as well. Instead, for once, we have an issue in which much of the focus is on India. E. D. Varughese's featured article is followed by the Raktima Bhuyan's exploration of female characters in the literature of North-East India with principal focus on Mamang Dai's fiction and Sukanya Maity's analysis of biopolitical discourses of nationality and citizenship in the context of AIDS and COVID-19 in contemporary India. This is followed by two articles that look back at the colonial period, but through two very different and often diametrically opposed realms of existence - sports and cuisine. While Rituparna Sengup-

ta explores the culinary arts of colonial Bengal, Subhasish Guha investigates the colonial constructs associated with football and the postcolonial responses to those colonial discourses, particularly in Bengal. The final article marks a departure from the subcontinental plane and instead explores Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in light of a new generic entity which the author identifies as "intersectional magical realism".

This issue also contains two reviews - the first is of Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb's extremely topical *Epidemic Empire* while the second one is of *Dastarkhwan: Muslim South Asia*, edited by Claire Chambers. Both of these reviews are remarkable in that they not only focus on the recycled circulation of imperial tropes across disciplinary boundaries but also articulate the possibilities of hope and resistance that reside within everyday experiences.

Let me conclude by once again thanking our contributors, readers and well-wishers in these troubled times. On behalf of the *Postcolonial Interventions* family we offer you our prayers for safety and well-being in the coming months and years. May our enclosed, virtual lives gradually find their way into the throbbing classrooms, cafes, public squares, cinema halls and teachers' lounges where we can resume our daily concourse with the scholarly, the mundane and the sublime once again!

Public Wall Art on Tulsi Pipe Road, Mumbai: The Indian post-millennial contemporary, sexual violence and 'femaleness'.

E. Dawson Varughese

Introduction and Context

This paper examines a selection of nine public wall art images, photographed during fieldwork on an approximately 2 km stretch of Tulsi Pipe Road (see Fig. 1), Mumbai in April 2016 and December 2017.

Fig. 1

As part of this fieldwork, I made contact with an artist who took part in the creation of this public artwork and I learnt that this section of wall on Tulsi Pipe Road had been painted in late February 2016. The work had been facilitated by a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative through the Mumbai-based company Arcil, an 'asset reconstruction company'. To show solidarity with, as well as express personal interpretation of the S*wachh Bharat Abhiyan mission*[1], the CSR initiative called volunteers to join 'The Art Walk 360'[2] and in doing so,

1."Swachh Bharat Mission Urban," accessed February 15, 2021, http://swachhbharaturban.gov.in/
2. Arcil ARC India Ltd, "Invite to The Art Walk 360," Facebook, February 20, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/arcilarms/photos/a.174669312576152.40182.169693653073718/1051597664883308/?type=3

invited volunteers to respond to the four themes listed on Facebook, which were: 1) Heritage & Culture, 2) People, 3) Environment and Social Issues and 4) Joy & Harmony, 'encouraging talent and passing on relevant social message'[sic]. I learnt that many of the volunteers lived in the area and were not necessarily employed by the Arcil company. Importantly, the artwork produced from this activity is varied, demonstrating a rich interpretation of these four themes. Specifically, though, for our discussion here, I focus on artwork that conveys social messages of violence against women and girls and the 'social issue' of women's empowerment. The fact that some of the volunteers/artists interpreted the four themes in a manner which foregrounded the topic of 'women's empowerment' is significant given that this was not a prescribed theme as such. It might be productive to consider this particular prevalence of 'women's empowerment' artworks as one which demonstrates the volunteers/artists repurposing the Tulsi Pipe Road wall as a canvas to make visible 'women' in a public space, as Bhattacharyya (2015) writes: '… access to violence-free and safe public space is the basic right of a woman. Yet, the greatest challenge relates to the alarming threat to women's safety and freedom of movement in public spaces.' (1350)

From a significant body of public artwork spread along the approximate 2 km stretch of Tulsi Pipe Road that specifically communicates issues of sexual violence and

women's empowerment, I have chosen nine images for consideration here. These images relate to ideas of 'femaleness' and how these ideas are made visible and thus documented through the medium of visual arts. Notably, these images encode recent social memory by their invocation of notorious rape cases (and sexual violence), the images call for action ('Save the Girl Child', also the condemnation of violence) and they communicate messages of empowerment and societal freedom for women. As I have written elsewhere (Dawson Varughese, 2017), there is a uniformity to the Tulsi Pipe Road wall due not only to the whitewashing that covers its bricks but also a uniformity due to its inherent physical structure; the brick wall separates the road from the western line train tracks and is constructed of individual panels, linked by brick (and concrete) pillars. This specific construction has allowed the artists to create individual panels (as canvases), and the length of the artwork along Tulsi Pipe appears somewhat 'curated', with each individual piece organised by the framing of the pillars, left and right. This appropriation of the walls for artistic endeavour underscores how Indian streets according to Edensor (1990) 'are never merely "machines for shopping" but the site for numerous activities' (206) and moreover, how here on Tulsi Pipe, the street has been employed as a site for social messaging (of the 'old-fashioned' kind).

In order to refer to the selection of images (Figures 2–10) with some clarity, I have attributed captions. I have,

where possible, formulated captions using text from the artwork panel itself; where this was not possible, I have used descriptors pertaining to the scene portrayed in the artwork. The captions are:

Fig. 2 'Wings and Shackles' April 2016
Fig. 3 'Out from the Cage' April 2016
Fig. 4 'Seize the World' April 2016
Fig. 5 'Drive my Bike' April 2016
Fig. 6 'The Secret Touch' April 2016
Fig. 7 'Let me see the World' April 2016
Fig. 8 'Save Girl Child' April 2016
Fig. 9 'Wings and Shackles', Dec 2017
Fig. 10 '#Missing Girls', Dec 2017

By way of thematic classification, I divide images 2–8 into two groups. Images 2 to 5 are discussed in relation to the paper's interest in how the Tulsi Pipe Road wall art negotiates contested ideas of the post-millennial contemporary Indian woman. Images 6 to 8 are discussed in relation to how the wall art somewhat sidesteps sites of violence that all too often accompany the re-articulation of gender relations. [Figures 9 and 10 pertain to the paper's concluding remarks.] With both sets of images, I am interested in how the medium of public wall art complicates ideas of representation of women and the documentation of gender issues, given that the interlocutors are somewhat not visible (although not invisible) in terms of their presence when compared to physical participation in demonstrations, petition signing or having a

virtual presence on social media. Here, the 'visual script writers' of these artistic panels are visible specifically through their visual and textual messaging. Although there is sometimes a signature for the artwork panels on Tulsi Pipe Road, it appears only as a first name and thus it is difficult to concretely identify the artist. Some pieces are dated (as February 2016) and a few carry a Twitter or Facebook identifier. Of the images analysed here, one image (Fig. 5 'Drive my Bike') is signed by the artist using both first and last names. Later in the paper I suggest that because this image 'celebrates' the female through both its form and content, it is socially more 'agreeable' for the artist to be associated with the image compared to the images of 'The Secret Touch' (Fig. 6), 'Let me see the World' (Fig. 7) and 'Save Girl Child' (Fig. 8) which register the horrors of gender violence. Although 'Let me see the World' (Fig. 7) is signed using a first name, the other two images do not carry an artist's signature or identifier. In order to place these images in the longer context of Tulsi Pipe Road, in my concluding thoughts, I include two images taken in December 2017. These images show both the effects of the passage of time on the artwork as well as how the wall is appropriated for the creation of new wall art in response to ongoing social issues and the need for both documentation and mobilisation on such topics.

Through the semiotic analysis of the images, the paper suggests that the positioning of the wall art and the broader context of public, participatory wall art creates

a social messaging space which combines both older (established) ways of 'seeing' with newer ways of 'seeing' but both engage with the documentation of social issues.

Analysis

Figures 2–5: 'Wings and Shackles' (2); 'Out from the Cage' (3); 'Seize the World' (4); 'Drive my Bike'(5).

Meenakshi Thapan (2004) suggests that we need not always think of the 'new' (Indian) woman 'in the context of a charged and transformed modernity' (413); rather, she writes:

> … she should be viewed in the fluid and marked nature of her identity as a woman, which is shaped and redefined in the everyday experiences of women as they both contest and submit to the images and constructs that impinge on their sense, their emotions, and their material and social conditions. (2004, 413)

Fig. 2 ('Wings and Shackles') signed by 'Simar', depicts a faceless female shackled to a man's head.

Fig. 2

From her red sari blouse emanate wings which spread back and away; strong, full of white feathers. We notice the red tips of the feathers forming the outline of the wings which appear to join seamlessly onto the woman's body. The red stands in contrast to the bleu clair sari and thus the red seen around the woman's wrists, ear and ankle is foregrounded. The ring of red on the wrists suggest bangles (traditionally a sign of savarna Hindu marriage) and around the ankle, pyal (anklets), except that in the place of one of the pyal is a grey metal clasp, part of a chain shackle that is attached to the male figure located to the right of the frame. Like the female, the male figure

is also faceless save for a large, black moustache. Their common 'facelessness' might speak of an 'every wo/man' whilst we wonder if the man's imagined eyes are being covered by his turban, and we might read this as signalling an anonymity of sorts as he (half-)recognises his wrongdoing. This potential admission of guilt stands in stark opposition to the masculinity portrayed here; his oversized moustache as well as his large red pagri (turban), both of which are set to a flat gunmetal grey complexion. In foregrounding his masculinity, the pagri and the moustache sit in direct opposition to the female's light colourway. As he remains static, she attempts to move into flight, her feet pushing away from the man; the play of movement against stillness highlights the tension and underscores a resoluteness – on the part of both – to stand their ground. In her right hand she holds what seems to be a sign of the 'law', a parchment-like document, rolled up like a scroll. The scroll points the way forward as she looks back, pushing away from the man to whom she is shackled. The grey shackle is curiously placed on the side of the man's head, where an ear would ordinarily be. This positioning suggests that he hears her every move; thus, she is never able to move away from him, no matter how quiet or light-footed she may be.

We might read Figure 2 as being redolent of what Lau (2006) states when she writes: '… the domestic space of home continues to be important not only as the world

South Asian women primarily occupy, but also as a space loaded with implications of their worth and their social positions.' (1114.) Despite the lack of any 'domestic/ home scene' portrayed here, Figure 2 seems to explore such a space as it blends not only tropes of the masculine and feminine, placing them in dialogue and tension, but it also blends tropes of the old and new. The shackle is an object reminiscent of medieval times associated with being held captive and with torture, whilst its rendering in metal grey here, attached abstractly to the man's face, is somewhat redolent of a filmic superhero-villain scene of the 20th century (Mumbai as the centre of Bollywood production). Read in this way, the female's wings symbolise more than an angel's; they empower her (as a heroine) and the red/blue colourway takes on the hues of a superheroine's costume, the scroll in her right hand underscores this position of empowerment as it signifies access to education and law-given rights. This 2016 image of a woman's 'moment' of resistance reminds us of what Uberoi (1990) wrote thirty years ago: 'The authentic voices and genres of women, and the modes and moments of their resistance to patriarchal domination have to be located and celebrated in a self-consciously subaltern project.' (WS-41) Thus, Figure 2 takes on broader meanings and implications as it returns society to the on-going debates of patriarchy, gender and choice in post-millennial India.

We find in Fig. 3 that the female is also portrayed with wings.

Fig. 3

Unlike Figure 2, however, which depicts the male as a concrete obstacle to her freedom, in Figure 3 the 'freedom' semiotic is underscored by the depiction of a cage which is surrounded by a tree from which menacing and predatory branches appear as arms and hands, reaching out to grab the woman. As her black hair is blown behind her, the strands of hair almost touch the black branches of the tree, and this near-connection might be read as a sort of anchoring or rootedness. This as-

pect of the image seems to suggest that she must cut loose from that which she has always known or been anchored to because, in order to flee from something, one must first have belonged to it in some way. The woman walks defiantly from a dark colourway into a light one, the warm yellows and reds welcoming her as she looks forward, pushing her way into the light. The female here is young and this youthful depiction invokes a sense of hope that emanates from the scene into which she walks. The manner in which the female is dressed in this image is noteworthy as it encapsulates Indian female ways of dressing (langa davani, ghagra choli as examples) yet simultaneously transcends Indian ways of dressing, given that a long, full skirt with such a top might be commonly worn elsewhere in the world (known variously as: flowy skirt, Boho skirt, Kanga, Maxi). As with Fig. 2, the wings on the female in Fig. 3 are effortlessly drawn into the body, suggesting an almost primordial ability to be free. Notwithstanding their fantastical semiotic, the wings painted here in a light cream blend effortlessly with the woman's arms, extending into beautiful elongated arms, swept back as she faces forward into the light. Despite the common theme of 'freedom' across Figures 2 and 3, Figure 2, through its depiction of shackling, the lack of facial features and the slightly robotic, mechanistic trope of the male figure, makes for a more challenging image to see. Figure 3, with its softer, warmer tones to the right of the scene, suggests a hopefulness that is lacking in Figure 2. Both images invoke a more 'empowered wom-

an', but in Figure 2, she is depicted as being bolder in her quest for independence; a show of force towards that which holds her back.

Figure 4 is somewhat more impactful on the gazer as it depicts a female viewed in profile, her hair ablaze, her right hand elevated and open, an image of the 'blue planet' levitating, spinning in her near-grasp.

Fig. 4

The woman is striking – her large almond-shaped eye, long eyelashes, arched eyebrow, full lips and angular nose filling a face whose strong jawline gives way to a solid neck and shoulders. The woman's gaze is intense as she looks at the Earth, spinning in her hand. The colourway, with her yellow-gold skin and fiery red hair,

suggests an otherworldly-ness akin to a fantastical being or a goddess. The image invites us to look even though we are taken aback by her presence. The image is rendered powerful through these facial features, the colour palette and, not least because she is depicted as holding our planet in her hands. This gesture seems to question a sense of authority: who holds the world in their hands? In turn, it dispels ideas that such an authority might be gendered as 'he'. This very public and emboldened 'presence' responds to Nilufer E. Bharucha's (1998) call for female discourse to break out of the antharpurs and zenannas, to 'tear apart the purdahs and demolish[ing] the architectural enclosures of a misogynist patriarchy' (93). And yet, despite the striking nature of this image (Fig. 4), the presence of distinct fantastical tropes risks rendering the message of this image indistinct. If we consider that this image is one that portrays the female identity as strong, courageous and bold (as expressed through the scale and size of the image, its colour palette and foregrounded 'female' facial features), then the couching of such a figure in the fantastical I suggest, questions the reality of such a portrayal in relation to everyday India, and specifically women's lived experiences. Figure 4 is significantly more fantastical than the 'wing' semiotic of Figures 2 and 4 which functions as a metaphor for 'societal freedom'. Figure 4 moves significantly beyond such a portrayal of societal freedom, taking such a 'right' as a given, since here, the woman holds the world in her hand.

It is perhaps Figure 5 that harnesses the bold colourway

preferred in Figure 4 but privileges portrayal of the 'real' over the 'fantastical'.

Fig. 5

Figure 5 uses a common everyday gendered-trope of Indian life, that of riding a motorbike. Importantly, the bike in Figure 5 is not a scooter, it is a motorbike that men drive. The bike depicted in Figure 5 is redolent of those depicted in Bollywood films (such as in the opening credits of Jab tak hai Jaan) as well as being the kind of bike showcased in many advertising campaigns for Hero Honda or Royal Enfield (and for related products such as tyres, fuel and oil), thus underscoring the maleness of this mode of transportation. Bollywood actor John Abraham's video 'Why Do I Ride?' epitomises this popular, cultural symbol. Through this short, filmic vid-

eo he explores ideas about why he chooses to ride a motorbike. Freedom, choice and problem-solving (getting lost, navigating difficult terrain, as examples) feature in the video, which advertises the 'Castrol Power Biking' app for smartphones. It is against this veneration of the Royal Enfield-style motorbike and, by extension, contemporary ideas of (Indian) masculinity that we might begin to read the image of Figure 5. The gleaming dark red motorbike, moving at speed (the indexical lines suggest this, as does the movement in the sari palu and in her hair) is accompanied by a bright yellow sun, emitting its strong rays, and the favourable, bright colourway of the female rider in a blue sari, green blouse, gold jhumka-style earrings and open sandals. The artist signs her work: Vanaja Jadhav.

The woman's gaze is fixed on the road ahead of her; arms flexed, she drives her bike with a steely determination. The celebration of her female Indianness is achieved in the depiction of her clothes and accessories. I suggest that Figure 5 is a curious mix of the everyday and the empowered; the stark line drawing, clear lines and bold artwork suggest a very matter-of-fact state of being, a regular occurrence, whilst the content, the actual central image is otherwise, less than commonplace in its occurrence and presence. The form of this image seems to make something of a connection with Hindu calendar art; its bright, favourable colour palettes, stark line drawings and veneration of the figure in the frame

(see Jain, 2000). Moreover, calendar art is both commonplace and empowered whereby it invites gaze and, importantly, the veneration of higher ideals. In short, in Figure 5 there is no movement from dark to light; this female occupies a current, positive moment and, moreover, she focusses on moving forward as a continuation of that momentum.

Figures 6–8: 'The Secret Touch' (6); 'Let me see the World' (7); 'Save Girl Child' (8)

As we turn to Figures 6 to 8, I consider how the gazer is called to engage with images that depict both the idea of 'the female' and the experiences she might encounter, specifically experiences that are challenging to behold as they articulate sites of sexual violence and mistreatment. Moreover, they centre on the young female or, in the case of Figure 8, the unborn female. Phadke (2013) writes of the contemporary moment, saying that, '… we live in times that are full of risk for young girls and women – health risks that come from anxieties about body shape or unsafe sex, risks of assault and risks of making choices that undermine self-esteem' (92–93). The three images analysed in this section underscore and, in turn, document Phadke's concern for young girls in terms of the 'risk' of assault. Figure 6 addresses the topic of child sexual abuse through the panel's title, 'The Secret Touch'; a topic that remains widely taboo within society.

Fig. 6

'The Secret Touch' has a childlike simplicity (and naivety) encoded in its artwork. The two-dimensional portrayal of the girl child wearing a pink dress is surrounded by 'bubble-style' typeface painted either side of her. The orange-brown square that frames her focusses the gaze, making the image appear like a photograph taken in a studio or at school. As the girl is centre frame, she stands inert, staring forward into a nothingness, her mouth clamped shut whilst muddy handprints wander over her legs and torso. The use of a handprint, laid on top of the painted image, further documents the reality of sexual abuse. The handprint 'identifies' its owner and is unique to the person and his/her identity as an abuser.

It invades the painting and, as the hands climb over the body, the gazer is called to imagine this violation of personal space. This intrusion into intimate, personal space is rendered more acute by the positioning of this wall art in a public space – Tulsi Pipe Road. The passing-by of commuters, residents and even schoolchildren gives visibility to this piece of artwork by the very fact that they walk past the girl and 'witness' a violation of this, her personal space and body. The interaction of this intimate sexual violence couched in the socially taboo yet embedded within the very public space of Tulsi Pipe Road gives force to this message, urging the gazers to look on, even if, then, this is to look away.

Figure 7 is also engaged in visually narrating the taboo.

Fig. 7

Here in this image signed by 'Hrutuja' (some of the letters are not clearly visible), the girl is centre stage. She is flanked to her left and right by silhouetted girls 'swinging' from a tree. To the right of the girl, the tree is bathed in a warm orange background; a young girl sits on a wooden swing and the text underneath reads 'what they deserve'. To the left, a cold blue background reveals a silhouetted girl, her hair and skirt in the breeze as she 'swings' from the tree by a rope around her neck. Under this image, the text reads 'what they get'. This dichotomy of lived reality and hoped-for reality is joined by the wall art's plea: 'let me see the world'. A bright-faced girl peeps out of the scene, her hand suggesting that she wishes to climb out and 'see the world'. The disturbing image of the silhouetted body, hanging from the tree, makes a ready connection with the 2014 case in Uttar Pradesh where two girls were found hanging from a tree near their village although it should be stated that there have been many reported and documented cases of women and girls who have been killed or have committed suicide in the wake of sexual violence. However, I make particular mention of the 2014 Uttar Pradesh case here because it garnered significant domestic and international attention. It was covered in detail by the media for several reasons – the girls were reportedly gang-raped before their death; the investigation was poorly managed and there was a report stating that the victims were from the Dalit community – but what has remained in the public memory is the circulation of the disturbing images showing the dead girls

hanging from the tree. Of the seven images from 2016, it is Figure 7 that articulates the act of gendered violence in the most straightforward terms, since the image of the female corpse hanging from the tree is graphic in the sense that it cannot be misinterpreted for some other act. Moreover, the artist's text in the bottom half of the panel is equally bold in its foregrounding of the personal pronoun 'YOU'. This direct call out to the gazer places the responsibility for young girls' safety and well-being with the passer-by.

Unlike Figure 7 that calls its gazers to action and to responsibility, Figure 8, with its bold blue, black and red colourway, seems to 'simply' call its gazers to 'save girl child'.

Fig. 8

The leaves shown growing from the vine-like letters sug-

gest vitality as the buds of leaves form on the branches, growing into full, green leaves. The vine-like branch is created through the blending of the graphemes 'S' and 'C'. They form a line that curls its way (lovingly) around the 'female' embryo. Central to the image, the symbol that traditionally identifies biological gender – Mars for 'male', Venus for 'female' – has also been blended, creating, like the changed-grapheme (of S and C), an artistic use of space and, importantly, a re-articulation of gender relations. Although the biological symbol appears at first glance as the Venus symbol, the placement of the protruding line from the circle is in a different direction to how it is usually placed. Rather than the line facing downwards (towards the pavement in this case), here we see the line mirroring the direction of the line on the 'male' Mars symbol (upper-right quadrant). Importantly, we note that the artist has not painted the Mercury symbol (assigned to represent transgender identities) but rather has mindfully insisted on the 'female' Venus symbol, appropriating it by placing it in the position of the 'male' Mars symbol. This creative play with the biological symbols of gender reinforces a message of equality in terms of the right to life. As the image of the embryo itself cannot make its gender apparent (visually), the use of the biological gender symbols communicates the importance of equality before birth and thus underscores the message that the right to life is (and should be) assumed.

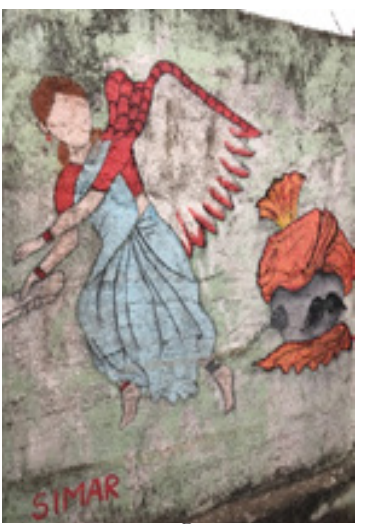
Conclusions

The analysis of the images above has been shaped by an interest in how the medium of public wall art complicates ideas of how women (and relatedly, some lived experiences) might be represented and documented. Given that the articulation of women's rights, the expression of their daily experiences, especially when such expressions depict unfavourable and challenging scenarios, often find their voice in demonstrations, petition signing and activism, thus in visible terms, the public artwork on Tulsi Pipe Road in Mumbai is curious in its messaging, given that only a few pieces give direct access to the creator/artist. Since the fieldwork for this project (2017), the last few years have seen an outpouring of visible contestation through street and public space protests in response to both Kashmir's special status being revoked (Article 370), the introduction of the controversial Citizen (Amendment) Act of October 2019 and the farmers' protests of early 2021 in response to the Modi-government's proposed agriculture reforms. The visibility of people's protest is powerful, not least with 24-hour news coverage domestically, and the various installations of wall art across the country, not only in Mumbai, feeds into this renewed sense of urgency and determination around pressing social topics.

The artists and co-creators of the wall art on Tulsi Pipe Road are visible by way of the artwork itself but, for the most part, invisible in terms of their presence. The

females portrayed in Figures 2–8 have been fashioned by the hands of female (and we might also assume, male) artists who have chosen to depict women and certain lived experiences in India in various ways. As important and valid an expression of identity and representation as these images prove to be, I suggest the wall art, however, sidesteps the sites of violent struggle that often accompany the expression and re-articulation of gender relations. The wall art is present and pervasive, but it remains unidentified when compared to scenes of protest or demonstration. When we recall the protests in the wake of the 'Nirbhaya' (or Delhi gang-rape) case and the reaction to the Shakti Mills gang-rape case of 2013 in Mumbai (especially as the victim of the latter was able to report and provide a detailed statement of the events), public outcry, demonstration, activism and protest are visible as people publicly identify (themselves) with the cause. Such reaction and public outcry have served the women's movement in India well, as Dutta and Sircar (2013) write that, 'Historically, rape has been the precipitating event that has led the autonomous women's movement in India to engage with the law and to forge a collective visible presence in public spaces. These engagements have also made talking about women's sex and sexuality in public respectable, as long as it was focussed on sexual violence.' (296) Indeed, the topics of gendered violence, rape and abuse circulate in public discourse and become visible via the wall art in addition to their more obvious visual presence as public artwork

on a busy arterial road in the city. Tulsi Pipe Road is particularly significant as a site of wall art in urban centres in India since the artwork covers approximately 2 km of wall, resulting in a sustained and powerful presence. The wall art of Tulsi Pipe Road suggests a process that combines ways of 'seeing' as the images are displayed for public consumption, a common practice of 'seeing', whether it be film posters, advertising or campaigning in the city of Mumbai. The artwork, although not permanent, has a certain durability given that the paints are waterproof but Figure 9 shows an eventual dilapidation of the artwork over a few years of appearing on the walls (see the same image from 2016 in Fig. 2).



Installed in February 2016, the artwork, although some-

what weather-worn, was still just about visible in December 2017 and thus we might argue that such wall art enjoys more permanence than public demonstrations and protests, which might be described as fleeting by comparison. Still, as Figure 9 shows us, the effects of the sea air of Mumbai and the pollution from the traffic on Tulsi Pipe Road contribute to the wall art's eventual demise. We might consider this passing of time as being consistent with the social issue portrayed on the wall – domestic violence continues, women's freedom continues to be curtailed in various ways – and in this sense, the bleed of the paint into the wall's render, the staining of the colours into the cement and mortar leave a mark that is not completely erased even when the complete image is hard to perceive; the image has recorded and documented a social ill in its own way. The various images of the female (or of femaleness) itself may fade but aspects of the wall art remain both physically by way of paint or emotionally, in the minds of those who have routinely commuted along Tulsi Pipe Road and bore witness to the images' call for social justice. Local people as well as visitors to the city have encountered these images since early 2016 charting their slow decay into early 2018, meaning that the messages of women's rights, empowerment and equality remain alongside continued reports by the media of the most recent horrific gang rape or act of sexual violence.

The challenge of these images does not lie in the combination of content and form uniquely; rather, the challenge is the overarching invitation to 'see' challenging

representations of Indian society. Even what appears to be the simplest of images calls passers-by to see (and engage with) challenging issues of Indian society.

Fig. 10

Figure 10 shows how the canvas of Tulsi Pipe Road has more recently been appropriated for a new creation; a whitewashed wall with a black silhouette of a female painted on it, the hashtag to the right of the image reads '#Missing Girls' (photographed in December 2017).

The image might be thought of as simple in its composition – a monochrome colour palette and a hashtag – but in its supposed simplicity, it is a powerful image and moreover, due to the inclusion of the hashtag, it calls the gazer to action. As I have argued elsewhere, (Dawson Varughese, 2017), Tulsi Pipe Road calls its gazers to action in response to very current and pressing issues regarding female social justice in the post-millennial years and Figure 10 is another example of this trend. This image, taken in December 2017, shows how the walls continue to document and speak of social justice for women even when the previous images have faded (note the faded paint, the whitewashing and the silhouette painted on top, creating these layers). Just as the cause remains urgent so then does the wall art respond to and express this urgency with renewed vigour and purpose. At the start of 2020 when the convicted Nirbhaya gang rapists' execution date was set for February, for it to be then moved to March, the country was once again reminded of the enormity of that particularly tragic event. Eight years on from the death of 'Nirbhaya', Tulsi Pipe Road's wall art continues to strive for matters of social justice for women. It makes visible those acts that often take place behind closed doors, in dingy clinics and in remote, isolated places. It foregrounds such acts, rendering them both visible and present.

Of the seven images from the April 2016 fieldwork, five of them analysed here are such depictions of that which

is preferred not to be made visible; Figure 4, 'Seize the World' and Figure 5, 'Drive my Bike' being the exceptions. The artwork depicts Indianness in a challenging light; it foregrounds the need to address sexual violence and inequality within society and specifically calls the public to engage with these issues. Unlike other forms of visual-text narration such as films (see Datta, 2000) or graphic narratives (Dawson Varughese, 2018) through which representation of women's lived experiences, sexual abuse and rape are both documented and communicated, the public wall art of Tulsi Pipe Road is made available to 'see' gratis. There is no entry charge to pay or book to buy in order to (privately) 'see' the struggle, rather the gazer enters into a moment of public seeing and is publicly called to build a better society wherein sexual violence, abuse and inequality have no role or place.

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Telling Stories and Searching for an Ideal Listener: North-eastern Women in Modernity

Raktima Bhuyan

North -East literature has developed as a category of writings clad in an intentional assertion of the roots, an attempt to be heard and an awareness of its own conflicts in the threshold of modernity. With writers taking recourse to vibrant storytelling tradition that characterises this land, North East writing has pitted itself against the propinquity that is posed by the electronic and digital medium. Storytelling requires a teller and a listener, and utilising the 'oral tradition', much of these writings have focused on a generation and community of people who

have lived and grown in close-knit communities. This paper will focus on Mamang Dai's *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), as a primary text to analyse how the stories and history of a tribe are represented in a lyrical tribute to her land. In her individual way, she shows women caught up in the tangles of love, honour and duty, asserting their own sexuality, searching and finding 'home' and in the process always searching for a 'listener'. The methodology used is a careful reading of the stories set in a unique ecology from the perspective of voices that require a listener to respond in special ways. 'Politics of voice' and 'erotics of talk' provide a frame to the perspective adopted in this paper. This is because these are women's stories, narrated to women as an immediate audience. Hence the 'listener' index is crucial both in unmasking the subjugation that women face psychologically as well as the assertion of liberty in the context of voicing their opinions. In both cases, women 'speak' and Mamang Dai appropriates this conflict in the journey that becomes Pensam. In the supposed egalitarian set up of tribal societies, the paper questions the very mode of equality in what women are 'allowed' to do as regards life choices. In a recourse to legends, myths and day to day experiences of women, *Pensam* and any analysis of it has to be mindful of the uniqueness of both the geography and location. In a guide to women's writing, Patrocinio P. Schweickart's recalling of Showalter's 'gynocritics' and the implications become important to this context: "development of the reading strategies conso-

nant with the concerns, experiences and formal devices that constitute these texts" (Schweickart 2004, 433). It needs no reiteration that the women are sited in a postcolonial setting mediated by modernity, and it is only important to remember that "imperialism and colonialism have had distinctive effects on women" (Harding 2008, 155). In conformity with the consequent changes, women narrate and listen to each other.

Storytelling is perhaps as old as human beings, yet thinkers like Walter Benjamin have devoted a sustained attention to the tradition of storytelling in various moments of history and its subsequent oblivion under the pressures of information. The writer under discussion, relies heavily on storytelling, on orality and in doing so, veers away from a kind of 'revisionist imperative' (Showalter n.p.) that Elaine Showalter warns against. While, echoing her words, the text is not radical or separatist, it however capitalises on women's experiences of storytelling, mysticism, love and assertion of individualism. Bijoya Sawain's very indicative title to her book *Khasi Myths, Legends and Folk Tales* is a 'retelling'. These are popular tales passed on through generations and preserved in the collective memory of the people of a region (here, Meghalaya). The paper begins with a mention of Sawain's work though it deals mainly with Mamang Dai's *Pensam* because her work or 'retelling' is evocative of the popular tradition of the region. A trove of twenty one tales, these are divided into sections that deserve mention for

a few reasons. The division is mindful of the putative heads under which folk tales are circulated. A listing of the heads in this book will make things clear: Origin Tales; Explanatory Tales; Trickster Tales; Tales of Love and Tragedy; Moral Tales; Tales of Horror and the Supernatural; Tale of Human Adventure; Tales of Kings and Queens; Tales of Hills, Rivers and Waterfalls. As the names suggest, this collection contains characters ranging from animals to human beings to trees to waterfalls. The veracity of these tales can be easily questioned or its legitimacy as potent sources of history. However, in the absence of any written records of pre-colonial times of the tribal areas of this region, folklore functions as the repertoire of both tradition and culture, and of man's indomitable spirit in surviving disasters. What orality 'chooses' to remember then is a strand of memory that gives a particular group a feeling of solidarity or belongingness. In the words of Paul Recoeur :

> We must not forget that everything starts not from the archives, but from testimony and that… we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past. (cited in Malsawmdawngliana, Gangte, and Rohmingmawii 2015, n.p).

In the absence of archives, or any tangible form of history, oral memory is the testimony to a people's past. In opposition to seeing it as tapered down to the subse-

quent generations, tales of love, kinship and even origin become the breathing spirit of a community's identity. It is in this note that Mamang Dai puts in paperback the fascinating tales from Arunachal Pradesh, specifically from a village of the Adi tribe. The author's note gives us a glimpse of the world we are about to enter: this is a narrative of and about people who practice animistic faith, with a sustained preoccupation with forest ecology and co-existence with nature. Mamang Dai, in the very first tale "The Boy who Fell from the Sky" gives, as if, an aerial view of the landscape in a character's ocular understanding of his surrounding: "..he saw green. A green wall of trees and bamboo, and a green waterfall… the giant fern at seemed to be waving to him." (Dai 2006, 7) The insistence on green prepares the reader for an association of every event with nature. The writer brings an ecological understanding to the text, nature is beautiful, benevolent and redoubtable. Nature finds its way in the "collective memory" (Dai 2006, 9) of the community. The story of a water serpent Biribik invites both fear and admonition: any sight of it by anyone culminates in unnatural consequences, hunting accidents for example that would lead to death of someone and ostracism of the other.

Myths and legends have become the inevitable definitions of culture for the people of this region where the fear of the loss of identity looms large in the face of majoritarian assimilation. Since the politics of repre-

sentation plays a fair share in the assertion of identity, 'subaltern' identity in the case of the North East has remained true to the myths, legends and folklore of the land. There is a constant appropriation of these in an attempt both to preserve and assert the distinctive voices of a region which is caught in in-betweenness.

The stories provide an inventory of queries regarding the ideas of ethnic authenticity that are enmeshed in discussions of gender identities and the feeling of community as family. These have become important strands to comprehend the ideas of ethnicity, gender in ethnicity, the endangerment of ethnicity among many other things. This is then an understanding of tradition as "invariant repetition" (Gilroy 1993, x): how tradition is re-asserted, reworked and recontextualised so as to fit in the weighing demands of modernity. In a bid against the segregating politics, such preoccupations focus on the ever-developing nature of identities, however much rooted in tradition. Such mutability garners attention, for it undergirds much of the works under focus. Women, in traditional set ups, undergo a process of development in their character. Assertions of their voices, actively participating in storytelling process, secure the safeguard of narratives that the people, across generations, hold dear. There is a propensity to pass down stories, establishing brotherhood/ sisterhood and establishing an intimacy between people and the stories that have distinguished them for long. Such writers demystify oral tradition so

that readers understand the ways its conventions are exercised over time. A postcolonial world takes different forms in different historical contexts, and the one that Dai is dealing with affirms that "women live in different conditions, with different relations to patriarchal principles and practices, in different classes, races, ethnicities and cultures" (Harding 2008, 157).

For an outsider like Mona, the stories that she is acquainted with through the people, of their past, myths and their beloved people, are full of awe. On asking for any tangible proofs of family or lineage, such as photographs, the woman replies: '"There is nothing like that.'…. 'There are only stories that I hear all the time, and most of the time I think my husband just makes them up."'(Dai 2006, 89)

In these lines are encoded the middle way between belief and disbelief that *Pensam* treads on. When Walter Benjamin warms against "the decline of storytelling", (Benjamin 2006, n.p) *Pensam* provides the answer through a collection of myths, legends and simpler narratives that have kept the spirit of storytelling alive. In being listened to, sometimes by outsiders and sometimes by the various generations of the village, Pensam's breathing spirit is memory: "Memory is the epic faculty par excellence." (Benjamin 2006, 368) In the belief-disbelief dichotomy, the reader is never forced on with the credibility of the narratives. Mamang Dai, artistically, leaves the ends

open, insisting more on the potency of the stories to define a community rather than assuring and forcing the veracity. This, Benjamin again remarks , is a mark of the penchant for storytelling:

> The most extraordinary things, the marvellous things are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks. (Benjamin 2006, 366)

The writer herself, in the midst of narrating these tales, ponders on the authenticity, never dismissing but never again affirming any tale/ myth. For example, as regards the strange behaviour of a man and attributing it to him being possessed by spirits, the narrative voice speaks on behalf of the villagers:

> They understood that it was a nebulous zone that divided the world of spirits and men-in fact, at one time men and spirits had been brothers. They knew that what was real could be an illusion, and that reality might only be the context that people gave to a moment. But they were shaken. (Dai 2006, 31)

Reality/illusion, tradition/modernity, belief/disbelief, these are the binaries within which the narrative structure operates and *Pensam* is in its collective form

the in-betweenness of these. It thereby becomes, in Mamang Dai's artistic endeavour, a repository of the various practices that characterize the land, a belief system that has survived generations through orality and the perpetual conflict of independence and domesticity encoded in women's experiences.

Conversations and sometimes only listening to each other is rampant in the pages of *Pensam*. Richard Rorty says, conversation "is the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood" (1979, 389). Rorty's conversationalism attributes wisdom and philosophy to conversation, and keeping a conversation going. The dialogic exchange encourages "plurality of voices and social vocabularies that we now associate with multiculturalism." (Kaplan 1996, 8). However, Rorty's model fails to acknowledge the varied social footings that determine who says what, and how much. A social or cultural hierarchy more often than not only furthers alienation for those located at the periphery. Nancy Hartstock, in offering a feminist critique of the model, questions the apparently emancipatory power of conversations, it being "dangerous to those of us marginalized." (Kaplan 1996, 8) This contention comes up from a reservation regarding the equal footing of people involved in a conversation. Under such circumstances, there are dangers of one / a group's voice being silenced and the other's imposing. Rorty's model, thus analysed, can be legitimate only when the conversation is between equals. In *Pensam*,

Mamang Dai is on a nostalgic visit to the hills, accompanied by her friend who is a magazine editor, Mona, who is of Arab-Greek origin. In this rendering of a multicultural set up, there is every probability of the hills' voices being subdued under the gaze of the educated, modern eye. However, Pensam shuns any patronizing gaze of this kind from the very start. In fact the stories narrated here establish a sort of affinity between women from walks of life placed at very different poles. In "the Silence of Adela and Kepi", the author establishes parallels between motherhood and its unheard retaliation to unjust accusations of neglect. Mona is a mother to an autistic child Adela who subsequently died and Kepa is a child of the village on who 'tragedy' befell. In both cases, the mothers are blamed for what the men deem to be "neglect" towards their child. These stories bind the women in a common grief, one longing for motherhood again.

Five tales sectioned under "Daughters of the Village" set the tone for understanding how women live in a traditional Adi village. As in a series of snapshots, Mamang Dai gives a picture of community life and living. In "Words of Women", for instance, the scene is of women working hard in the forest, collecting stuff to be carried back to the village. While their hard work awes the reader, their longing for happiness and a latent wish to see and know the world beyond the village is very apparent: "'Is this a place to live?' She had asked. 'Why did

our forefathers choose this place? Surely we are outcasts dumped in this bone and knuckle part of the world!"' (Dai 2006, 74)

Such exchanges are limited to groups of women, where women expect a kind of solidarity in their conditions of being immured in a village that seems to be cut off from the world outside, in their bereavement, in their eternal longing to be 'happy': "Of course we are unhappy. I am unhappy. Unhappy, unhappy, unhappy!" (Dai 2006,75)

These are women who are aware by now of the vast advancements that are happening in the world outside, and their latent desire to partake in it. "Live properly", or "speak English" (Dai 2006, 75) for instance point at an already pervading colonial influence in the land. While the younger lot are lured both by education and the world outside, the older listeners to these outpourings come up with their warnings: "If a woman becomes too clever no one will marry her." (Dai 2006, 76) In these exchanges, the caveats of what women should want, desire, or wish for are placed at opposite ends. This is a choice between limiting oneself to the natural ecology of the village, getting married and performing duties as a wife and mother as opposed to moving to a place where the landscape does not demand ardent physical exhaustion and the charm of colonial education. Anecdotes and exchanges of this kind nevertheless point to a condition where women have 'listeners', as opposed to

not having anyone to listen to them. This is what can be called "contestatory politics of voice" (Kaplan 1996, 4) which involve women, placed across various age groups, characterised by a multiplicity of opinions and choices. This "politics of voice" is very different from an ideal "erotics of talk" (Kaplan 1996, 15), where you seek not just for a listener, but a listener who can respond appropriately to it. This is evident in the story in the speaker's desire to be heard. This erotics of talk is then a utopian situation where you imagine both parties, the speaker and the listener to share an understanding of what is being said, what is desired and what is wanted to be understood. The narrator here (Mamang Dai) involves herself in this 'talk', sharing and understanding the speaker's mind because she comes from a similar position and has 'lived' the world, moved beyond her village and is a product of colonial education.

It would also be helpful to bring in Victor Turner's concept of "liminal". This can be explained as a space where the female tries to transcend exile or cope with it. In resisting thus, they try to reconnect with their bodies and communities. The agent of their resistance becomes the female bodies, via speech, silence, starvation or illness. The 'politics of voice' is linked to this, communicating about the compromises they need to make each day, capitalising on speech and exchanges to narrate their troubled and confined existence as well to express their desires.
The friction between colonial advent and indigenous

set-ups is most explicitly evident in the story "River Woman". In a tale of love between a woman of the land, Nenem and an officer named David, there is a deviation from the Oriental gaze to the exotic 'other'. Nenem and David's story is a testimony to a love that did not culminate in marriage. However, here lies the story of a woman who 'dared' to love, and their story is a playing out of Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone"(No parenthetical or bibliographic citation): cultures meeting, often in relations which are asymmetrical in nature. The initial interactions are not unmarked by fear: "Nenem knew in her heart that this strange man was calling her into an unknown zone that could only bring her disaster." (Dai 2006, 97)

Their love without even knowing each other's language captures the spirit of *Pensam*: the one the writer explains at the beginning. In addition to suggesting the middle ground, 'pensam' is also the small world where anything can happen. Here, love defies language and power relations (in respect of the colonizer and the colonized). It is in this relationship that the woman indulges in the "erotics of talk" previously explained. The two found their lost and missing pieces in each other:

> Through him she saw the world beyond. She saw cities and streets full of people and heard the skies reverberating with the sound of airplanes that filled her with a longing for far-off places. (Dai 2006, 100)

In David, both the village and Nenem brought in a kind of peace and spiritual connect. The two, even at such diverse positions, communicated and understood with a show of love and empathy:

> … it was he who was searching for the meaning of his life, and he sensed that through this woman he was beginning to unveil the secrets of the earth, the stillness of the sky, and even the depths of an unaccountable, ageless sorrow that he had always carried inside but from which, he now knew, there could be rebirth. (Dai 2006,100)

Even when they consummate their relationship, it liberates her: "Her body had changed. She was complete and she felt no fear. She felt alive, full of power, and full of the desire to give and to receive." (Dai 2006, 4)

The body thus remains inextricably linked to a political praxis. As Ketu H. Katrak explains in *Politics of the Female Body*, a politics of the female body must include the construction and control of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions, its location socio culturally, even materially. Sexuality becomes the arena where patriarchal control is exerted most distinctively over the female body, but in Nenem, it is a mode of liberation. Female protagonists undergo "internalized exile" where the body feels disconnected from itself, as if it does not belong to it and it has no agency. In the oral testimonies, the body speaks, and women find voice in narrating their

lives. The complicity and consent as internalized oppression may even be embodied as 'female responsibility' as in putting up with oppressive marriages, complying with dominant spouses, even making the body available for others' pleasure. While many women in the village have put up with such 'responsibility', Nenem remains the epitome of exercising her will, letting her body speak and liberate. When the choice comes to go away with David and choosing her own people, she 'chooses' the latter: "No one dies of love. I loved him, and now I am enough on my own." (Dai 2006, 109)

While there are tales of love in *Pensam*, the Nenem-David tale is outstanding in its contrasts that characterize the location of the lovers' selves as well as the seamlessness with which each finds his and her completion in the other. In a book that sets out (and successfully fulfils the attempt) to consolidate the Adi experience in writing, this paper has devoted a sustained attention to a retelling of women's experiences because it is in these handful of tales that the perpetual quest for a listener is very explicitly highlighted. The reader is a listener again, to a woman's attempt to capture women's experiences set in a time when tradition and modernity are not placed at loggerheads but side by side. The author's voice is distinctive, like in most women's writing, for "womanhood itself shaped women's creative expression" (Showalter 2004, 312).

The paper concludes with the proposition that Mamang Dai's *Pensam* is a treasure trove of tales from the hills. However it is in its implicit search for a listener that the urge of these tales to reach a wider audience can be inferred. A thorough reading of the text thus succeeds not only in understanding the community but also in establishing a sort of affinity as regards shared experiences of women, the universal charm of community living and most importantly, human beings' natural instinct of storytelling. While colonial influence changes the very make-up of the society, it also brings into question important aspects of women's education, relationships and marital demands. In the mid-path that Pensam traverses, there is the dilemma of women more than anything else in the perennial conflict of 'obligations' and 'will'.

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Survival of the 'Unfit': Constructing the Compromised Citizens through a Comparative Study of the AIDS Epidemic and the COVID-19 Pandemic in India

Sukanya Maity

Introduction

According to Jayal (2013), citizenship in India can be perceived through three different dimensions– "citizenship as legal status, citizenship as a bundle of rights and entitlements, and citizenship as a sense of identity and belonging" (02). Although there is no universal definition of citizenship and it is "fluid and dynamic" (Mooney, 2009), "Citizenship, in modern usage, means specifically the possession by the person under consid-

eration, of the highest or at least of a certain higher category of political rights and (or) duties, established by the nation's or state's constitution" (Koessler, 1946, 63). Hence, in the absence of a globally accepted definition, the successive Indian governments have time and again redefined the eugenics of citizenship. These definitions are mostly determined by particular dominant traits that one must possess, to claim their citizenship— race, religion, culture, sexuality and so on, as Ratna Kapur (2007) puts it "cultural normativity and sexual normativity are formative to the construction of Indian citizenship" (553). Anything that does not fall within the boundaries of these prescribed 'qualities' is regarded as an 'outcast' or 'other'— in the sixteenth century Spain, possession of Christian blood would act as a determining factor, in Nazi Germany, the Nuremberg laws exclusively provided citizenship to the ones who were considered "racially pure" and India has been no different.

This otherization gains prominence in the successive Indian governments' dealing with a ravaging epidemic and a pandemic— HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. As Cohn (2012) rephrases William Eamon to argue that "new diseases bring out a culture's deepest phobias" (03), it is particularly true as epidemics have been endemic to the ghettos and slums and no sooner they surpass these boundaries, blaming and hatred act as a strategy to comprehend and control these 'mysterious'

and devastating diseases. Walls that isolate and exclude play the most important role here— "they work as barriers to separate people, in what some see as a disease and others as apartheid" (Callahan, 2018, 462). It would be interesting to observe how sexual minorities and the interstate migrant workers who populate the bastis and ghettos separated by raised walls from the gated communities, were isolated and cornered, during the AIDS epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic, but later came to the forefront to claim what they deserve and made their way into the policy-framing platforms. Here, I refer to Chaitanya Lakkimsetti's (2020) categorisation of sex workers along with MSM/gay and *Hijra* under the umbrella term of 'sexual minorities' since "sex workers challenge the normative expectation that sex, which should be available for free in marriage or a committed relationship, ought not to be commodified outside of these relationships" (07).

Hermeneutics is a methodological process to trace the significance and understand texts in terms of their hidden content— "for visual politics, hermeneutics is useful for revealing who is left out of political debates: who is visible inside the frame and who is invisible outside, who is included inside the wall and who is excluded outside the wall" (Callahan, 2018, 464). Hence, this article seeks to study how the acquisition of biological citizenship made these marginalised groups come out of their walled communities where they so far were

isolated, to the streets where the civilised world traverses regularly. The crises have made the non-citizens gain citizenship and the second-class citizens gain visibility, leading the policymakers, activists and scholars to question the equality of citizenship.

Methodology

A qualitative analysis of various reports, policies and programmes has been performed. Available and more recent literature on similar subjects has been reviewed to get an in-depth understanding Data has been collected through first-hand narratives of the interstate migrant labourers originally from *Selmabad*, a small village in the East Midnapore district of West Bengal, interviewed during the course of one week. A sample size of forty respondents was selected randomly from the list of registered interstate migrant workers provided by the local officials, followed by snowball sampling.

Walls, Epidemics and Exclusion

In the history of pandemics and epidemics, hate, 'otherization' and foreignness have been very prevalent, right from the introductory to their concluding phases. The Bubonic Plague of 1348 in Europe was labelled as a Jewish Conspiracy. The passing of the Leprosy Act in 1891 by the colonial government in

India was a factored consequence of the protests led by the upper-class Indian elites and the Britishers who opposed the sight of not only the ones afflicted with leprosy but also the lepers who were considered filthy. The Spanish Flu was synonymously referred to as the 'Asian Flu' or 'Indian Flu', much like the labelling of COVID-19 as 'Chinese virus' by the western politicians and media houses leading to the Indian politicians' rhetoric of 'China Virus' that needs to be dealt with in a Hindu way, often resorting to Ayurveda, and faeces and urine of sacred animals like cows as the ultimate cure.

HIV was first detected in 1986 among sex workers in Chennai. Soon, the Indian state claimed that it was a Western disease, and vilified the women engaged in sex work "for importing the disease by having sex with foreigners". They were identified as potential carriers and reservoirs of infection and were forcefully confined in prisons. The state also denied the existence of homosexuality and hence medical and essential services related to AIDS were withheld from these communities. Hence, by creating these "states of exception", medical and juridical services separated "innocent victims" from the ones who "deserved it" and were hence left to die, therefore, "the marginalised populations faced death" whereby a dialectical relationship between "letting die" and "letting live" was produced (Lakkimsetti, 2020, 13). The public health crises prominently por-

tray the Social Darwinism and Neo-Malthusian logic of counting just the "productive labour" and letting the unproductive one die, thereby treading "affordable deaths" with the crisis (Dey, 2020).

Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interstate migrants were left to die as they were thought to be carriers of the virus. The 2011 Census estimates that India shelters 139 million internal migrants, constituting people from rural areas who shift to the urban spaces in search of jobs and better living conditions. Engaged in informal sectors, the migrant workers comprise more than 93% of the labour force in our country. However, it was only during and since the imposition of the pandemic-induced countrywide lockdown, that this particular section of migrants became surprisingly and suddenly the talk of the country. In March 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a nationwide lockdown to control the spread of the virus, but without any prior hints of it. The interstate migrant labourers who account for a large number of working population were stranded in their host states, without money or food and hence they decided to walk back home since the transport facility was completely suspended. Many scholars and prominent newspapers have documented this as the 'greatest exodus' since the partition of India in 1947. These migrant labourers took to the empty streets and national highways, trekking hundreds of thousands of kilometres only to

return to their home states. The sight of birth, deaths and exhaustion of these groups of people soon became a subject of discussion that the media houses and the governments of the states used as weapons to evoke sympathy of the middle-class masses and blame one political party over the other. Chief Minister of the East-Indian state of Bihar, Nitish Kumar opined that their movement would disseminate the disease while the Chief Minister of Telangana, a state in the southern part of India, threatened to issue a 'shoot-at-sight' order to prevent them from taking to the highways in numbers— "the political society for long held the belief that the viruses and migrant workers both belong to the outside" (Samaddar, 2020, 03).

Taking a glance at the past- during the 1947 partition, migrant subjects or refugees were similarly considered as an "excess" who were justifiably subject to incarceration, stigma, persecution and annihilation. Law became a site to "construct the subjectivity of the 'other' as distinct and external" (Kapur, 2007). In mid-Victorian Britain, fitness and the ability to procure were considered important factors in determining one's citizenship. The isolation hospitals which were set up to separate people with infectious diseases from the rest of the population, just served to be a "poor man's spare bedroom" because the unsanitary conditions in the overcrowded colonies made domestic isolation unfeasible. The mid-Victorian citizenship's criterion of

fitness also included the ability to "secure a dwelling space" and hence, the poor and vulnerable population was deemed unfit. The otherwise ironically ghettoised hospitals made these vulnerable people conceal their disease to avoid hospital admission (Mooney, 2009).

Isolation and Citizenship

"Isolation and exclusion are policies through which health and citizenship are seen to interact" (Mooney, 2009, 149). It is through isolation and exclusion that policies based on health are formulated which further provide the State with the power to either do away with its citizens or make them the prime constituents of the social structure who cannot be done away with; most of the times, it does both simultaneously whereby the marginalised majority are isolated and treated as compromised subjects sacrificed for the survival of a privileged few. However, economically disadvantaged migrant workers and sexual minorities have always been excluded, so what makes their present exclusion and isolation different from how it was initially? The answer to this question is that the "social distancing" and 'separateness' gets medical, legal and social sanctions during the pandemics and epidemics— the customers start distancing themselves from the sex workers, and the factory owners and employers who had so far leeched on the labour of the migrant workers abandon them suddenly. Even in their home states, the

migrants encountered new forms of untouchability as their identity was reduced to mere bodily carriers of the disease itself, deprived of rights, responsibilities, demands and needs. They were treated as 'outsiders' both in their host as well as in their home states.
According to Tiwari, the migrant worker's body is reduced to "bare life" whereby they are treated as biologically infected who need to be removed into confinement. Just like the sexual minorities, they are considered to be filthy and dirty, less valuable and not a social-human. Their bodies are under constant surveillance. Dey (2020) opines "sociality of touch is a relationship of inequality" as the agential quality of touch is retained by the dominant party who further decides the difference between good touch and bad touch and India's infamous caste system has for long practised this exclusionary isolation through contamination of touches , which in turn is followed by the Indian state as it retains the codes of touch in times of pandemics and epidemics in a similar way.

India is infamous for its caste-based operational hierarchy and the structures of oppression associated with it. Almost 73% of the workers, I interviewed, belong to historically marginalised castes, with little to no educational background and the most privileged among them hardly owns two acres of land in the village. Most of them worked as sweepers and cleaners, while few worked as rickshaw-pullers and waiters at

local restaurants. Deshpande and Ramachandran also conclude that although job losses among all caste groups during the lockdown was a common scenario, the members of stigmatised communities (Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe and Other Backward Classes) were far more vulnerable to losing their livelihoods. While the share of upper castes losing jobs remained restricted to 7% points, the lowest-ranked Scheduled Caste stood at almost 21% points. Devoid of quality education, members of the historically marginalised caste are overrepresented in informal sectors where they work as manual labourers.

The Spanish flu of 1918 which spread from Bombay to other parts of India, claimed the lives of 61 backward caste Hindus for every 1,000 people in their community while 18.9 upper caste Hindus died per 1,000 people from their groups. Similarly, Europeans living in India stood at 8.3, in terms of mortality rates for every 1,000 people (The Economic Times). It was majorly because the backward caste engaged in work like manual scavenging and sweeping and were housed in congested and unhygienic localities with no medical facilities. As the number of people affected by COVID-19 shows an impact of birth and affluence in recovering and escaping its clutches, it only reflects how little has changed in more than a century. While physical distancing gradually became a privilege solely enjoyed by less than 40% of the Indian population,

half of 60% of the population living below the poverty line, succumbed to the fatality of the pathogens without even being affected by it. The politicisation of the public space, earlier by the caste supremacists and now by the Indian state has made these already marginalised sections of the population more prone to discrimination and oppression and simultaneously reflects the position of the state and questions the equality of citizenship.

Biological Citizenship: Diseases as Companions

Lakkimsetti, in her book, 'Legalizing Sexualities' (2020), narrates an experience whereby a sex worker from Kolkata considered HIV no less than her friend— "Without HIV, you wouldn't be here, you wouldn't even talk to us" (29). Before the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the State viewed sex workers only as criminals with infected (filthy) bodies (Hinchy 2019; Lakkimsetti, 2020), but after, due to pressure from international and national activists and non-governmental organisations, the state rather than suppressing the epidemic by locking the sex workers in prisons and carrying out drives to cleanse and rehabilitate homosexuals and *Hijras* to transform them into "pure citizens from their recalcitrant selves" (Kapur, 2007), focused on policies towards prevention and control. In 1994, India's first National Aids Control Program (NACO) was launched, which in turn challenged the

issues of violence, marginalisation, criminalisation and stigma faced by the sex workers. It made them partner with the government to control the spread of AIDS, they were now "implementing, running, and overseeing HIV/AIDS programmes" (Lakkimsetti, 2020, 39). Soon *Hijras*/transgender people were included in these programmes. This marked their shift from high-risk groups and 'victims' to "pandemic subjects" .

However, HIV was never a cause of worry as much as police brutality and violence was to these sexual minorities. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) of 1956 which was passed as a protective measure to safeguard people from getting into the sex trade and being exploited, eventually did as little as nothing. On the other hand, the local police used it to their advantage to further oppress the sexual minorities— sexual harassment in prison and asking for bribes were common scenario. The ITPA proved as an effective juridical weapon to keep sexual minorities, sexual activities and sexuality in check. Even the HIV activists and peer educators faced abuse from the local police so much so that scholars termed it as an "Epidemic of Abuse" (Lakkimsetti, 2020). The infamous 2001 Lucknow incident whereby activists were jailed for forty-seven days and other incidences forced the NGOs to first challenge the stigmatisation and violence associated with sex work and the sexual minorities in general, which would inevitably lead to the smooth

functioning of their programmes. While sex workers used these programmes as a way to demand inclusion in legal processes, other sexually marginalised groups used it to challenge Section 377, a colonial era law introduced by Lord Macaulay that criminalised homosexuality and categorised homosexual and transgender people as non-citizens. These projects provided sexual minorities with "moral citizenship" as they could now have a legal claim to their entitlements (like health and biological rights) of social citizenship . In strong sex worker collectives, these groups were able to secure civil identity through the creation of bank accounts and voter registration.

Nikolas Rose introduced the concept of biological citizenship to explain identity-based movements which were shaped around disease and illness. Neoliberal bio-citizenship also includes practices to manage risk within and between bodies that were consequences of isolation (Mooney, 2009; Maunula, 2017). This neoliberal citizen is dependent on the consumer-entrepreneur identity as the sexual minorities transformed themselves from being service-providers to consumers (of service) and entrepreneurs, contributing to society. This is where the concepts of 'good' and 'bad', and 'thick' and 'thin' citizens come into play whereby the sexual minorities are no more subjects of ridicule, stigma and filth but are subject-citizens— 'thick' citizens acting desirably as deemed fit by the state with

"qualities of good citizenship as duties, rather than rights: the duty of obedience in the one case, and the duty of resistance in the other" (Jayal 15). Hence, three criteria can so far be identified to acquire 'biological citizenship' – being infected, living with the infection and 'managing' the infection. The AIDS epidemic made marginalised groups visible who could now approach the State with demands. Even in the context of West Africa, AIDS proved that "the only way to survive is by having a fatal illness" (Lakkimsetti, 2020; Hinchy, 2019).

Similar opinions sprung up when the migrants were interviewed. One of them said that it was because of the pandemic that the government and city-dwellers (like me) were interested in their whereabouts, with cameras pointed towards them. Life before pandemic has not been easy for them either— all of them stayed in makeshift tents, rented beds, lived on one meal a day and worked for more than eight hours a day. These inevitably make them, in the words of Brinda Karat, "disenfranchised and second-class citizens" and prove Marshall's statement of citizenship "as an architect of social inequality" (Jayal, 2013). The government's claim on the loss of data on the migrant workers' death makes it apparent that the state deprives these workers of their citizenship, even as disenfranchised, second-class and thin citizens, and their position is no better than that of the refugees. It shows how they

never existed in the eyes of the government. Because of the pandemic, they are now an integral part of the policy-framing platforms. Perhaps, unlike how it was a decade ago, scholars of contemporary India have gotten tired of the radical Hindu government at the centre and perhaps visibility is all that the migrants needed, since the introduction of policies favouring them are far from situational reality.

Conclusion

As the country recovered from the initial wave and battles with yet another strain of the mutating parasite, people gradually adapted to the 'new normal' in due course. Some of the migrant workers were summoned back to their work by their employers and contractors within a month of their return with promised journey fare which initially was not paid to them when they needed it the most. This is where Ghosh and Chaudhury's (2020) 'calculated kindness' comes into play, whereby it is "shrouded in constant ambivalence between antagonism and hospitality" (93). The migrant labourers are treated no better than illegal encroachers and refugees in their host states and the state depends on their cheap labour. The moral anxiety and panic associated with their mobility stem from their status as outsiders and refugees who represent all the negative aspects as opposed to the ones residing in it. Works of feminist scholars portray similar

moral panic stemming from cross-border migration of the sexual minorities through trafficking. Hence, the problem constructed by the dominant elites lies not in the presence of slums and ghettos but the people who populate these and not in the sex trade but the ones engaged in it. By not questioning the root of oppression, the State and the privileged few add on to and carry forward the cycle of exploitation through dominant discourses.

The State also provides its employers with the rights to 'discipline' and treat the migrants as per their needs. Moreover, the setting up of the *PM 'Cares' Fund* to 'help' the migrant labourers somehow makes their rights synonymous with 'sympathetic measures'. The very terminology of "care" takes away from it the value of being an obligation that needs to be fulfilled by the State and the governing body. "Such discourse of care has always been shaped from a position of charity on the part of the state as 'discretionary' compensation for the rightlessness of the migrants" (Ghosh and Chaudhury, 2020, 93-94). Perhaps a pandemic becomes a pandemic when the state fails to hide its loopholes and the already raging endemics and not even the urban middle and upper-class elites can escape the wrath of misgovernance.

It is also noteworthy that the Indian state loosens and tightens its walls as per its needs . The very act of

constructing the pandemics and epidemics within the walled, isolated spaces where its thin, unfit citizens reside and the granting of civil rights being determined by their position as refugees, fleeing from the nation of diseases who need to be rehabilitated lest they contaminate the pure citizens residing in the gated communities of the Indian nation, time and again proves its fetish for colonial incarnations and reiterate the history of partition whereby in order to be a citizen, one had to be a refugee, seek protection from their host states and prove their productivity through desirable labour. Biological citizenship or citizenship that emerges in the face of crisis is, therefore, along with 'desirable labour' the only way for the marginalised, left-out population to claim their rights. Citizenship is as much a process than an event as is nation-building and any of us could be expelled as soon as we fail to satisfy the prescribed normative criteria, a large part of which account for the economic, social and biological privileges, and citizenship is as temporary as these privileges are.

Notes:

1. The economically marginalised sections populating the ghettos and slums are vulnerable to diseases like Malaria, Dengue and other ailments due to their mar-

ginal living conditions and restricted access to basic necessities, besides poverty and hunger. UNICEF reports that 0.88 million children under the age of five died in 2018 (highest in the world). According to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020 report, 189.2 million people are undernourished in India.

2. Colloquial term for slums.

3. Community of transgender and intersex people.

4. An MLA in Telangana from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Raja Singh, led a protest against coronavirus by raising slogans like "China Virus Go Back". Prime Minister Modi urged the citizenry to light candles to fight the virus- enumerating a Hindu ritual of warding off evil spirits (News18, "China Virus Go Back"). Later, a BJP legislator in Assam publicly declared that 'gaumutra' can act as an effective remedy to cure coronavirus (The Economic Times, "Gaumutra', 'gobar' may cure Coronavirus: BJP MLA tells Assam Assembly.)

5. Untouchability is practised by both who touches and the one who retains the touch- even if the so-called upper caste Brahmin touches a Dalit (a so-called lower caste) who remains passive, the touch is said to be contaminating.

6. They not only formed the grounds based on which policies were to be framed but also acted as agents of implementing those policies. It can be said that from being constructed as villains, their positions transpired to that of the protagonists.

7. T.H. Marshall identified three elements of citizenship- civic (right to individual freedom), political (right to exercise political power) and social (right to live in a civilised way with access to economic welfare and security). Social Citizenship forms the core element of citizenship and legal citizenship is only a way to acquire social citizenship. (Jayal, Citizenship and its Discontents, 163).

8. The sexual minorities are not only obeying the government through adoptive measures but also resisting the state intervention to in turn resist the spread of virus.

9. "Vinh-Kim Nguyen's work on West Africa shows how for the disenfranchised West African AIDS population, sometimes the only way to survive is by having a fatal illness. The "therapeutic" forms of sovereignty and citizenship in the context of AIDS can ensure life itself as well as varying degrees of opportunity beyond health." (Lakkimsetti, Legalizing Sex: Sexual Minorities, AIDS, and Citizenship in India, 05).

10. "Loosening/tightening is a contemporary Chinese concept used to describe the non-linear and non-progressive exercise of power seen in China. Fang/shou generally describes a cycle of loosening and tightening of state control over society." (Callahan, "The Politics of Walls," 468). Here, I use this to refer to the state's provision of citizenship whereby grip in terms of identifying them as criminal is loosened through conferring upon them the rights of civil citizens as long as they contribute productively.

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Questioning the Culture of Food and Cuisine in Colonial Bengal: Reading Select Cookbooks

Rituparna Sengupta

The Bengali cuisine in the late 19th century was hybrid in nature under the influence of West. It would be a significant call to understand it's making, the very production of the hybrid space in the domesticity of the Bengali kitchen, accommodating the politics of gastronomy in simulating the brand of 'bangaliana'. The introductions of professional cookbooks in the household reflect this transfusion space as well as determine the platter,

broadly the food culture in Bengal. This paper would take this drifting period between 1883 to 1907, precisely from the first publication of Bengali cookbook of Bipradas Mukhopadhay, *Pak-Pranali* (Cooking-Recipes) to the first professional cookbook of Prajnasundari Devi, *Amish O Niramish Ahar* (Non-veg and Veg platter) to explore this gradual transformation of the kitchen space, to examine how the Bengali 'pathya' (diet food), upheld and preached in the medico-moral Bengali magazines and periodicals is finally assimilated into the cosmopolitan platter as manifested in the professional cookbooks. Therefore, the performance of production, writing, presentation and consumption of food in a culturally codified sequence would be the plethora of this paper. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the question of gastronomic taste and consumption not only became a marker of identity for the middle class but came to define their everyday existence.

The print culture and literature emerged as an important instrument in framing social and political identities in colonial India. The establishment of the vernacular press enabled the formation of a nationalistic feeling, and thus nationalism found its first expression. Learning the vernacular language was crucial in order to cultivate a national identity for the indigenous people. On the other hand, it helped the ruling class monitor the rhetoric of nationalistic speech in order to maintain law and order. The indigenous population depended on language and

writing to form a cultural identity. However, the trend of necessitating the social divide between 'bhadralok' and 'chotolok' was marked by the latter's coarse use of vernacular language and lifestyle.

The mutual concern of both the colonizer and the colonized in the nineteenth century revolved around the nature and extent of education. With the introduction of cheap print technology and the colonial form of education in the city, Calcutta became the centrifugal site of knowledge. The journey to the city to acquire education worked as an epistemic pilgrimage from the rural to the urban cityscape.The elite indigenous population upheld the practice of reading, writing and speaking the colonial language thus, in turn contributing to the 'bhadralok' identity. Members of the trading community, settling in the dingy alleys of Black Town had little to do with the language of the elite. This settling population, with their make-shift residence in the northern part of the city formed a majority of the vernacular readership.

The canon of elite literature was formed by a conscious choice of preventing language from being defiled by accommodating the language, lifestyle and food practices of the lowly communities and the cultural 'other'. The print technology dominated by the educated middle class has essentially produced occidental knowledge, without adequately appreciating and documented cheap printing techniques. In this context, Ghosh writes:

> Commercial print- cultures emanating from the numerous cheaper presses in Calcutta and its suburbs, that were shared by a wide range of literate but not so educated people actively disseminated literary preferences that ran counter to the efforts of the reforming literati. Far from being abashed by their 'vulgarity', these groups made the use of the vibrant publishing milieu to proudly assert their linguistic (and social) alterity. (Ghosh 2006, 8)

Vernacular printing reached its climax around 1857, small presses cluttered around the numerous dingy lanes in the Battala area of the Black Town and College Street. The variety of books published ranged from religious and mythological to comics and anonymous cookbooks and lifestyle magazines printed in budget. These Battala books had a significant readership in Bengali homes, they were cheap, vibrant, entertaining as well as informative. The first cook-book was published around 1831. *Samachardarpan*, one of the earliest Bengali periodicals, consisted of an advertisement of a cookbook called *Pakrajeshwar*. The second edition of the book was funded by the Maharaja of Burdwan and was published along with *Byanjan-ratnakar*. The first professional cookbook however appeared after half a decade in 1883 with Bipradas Mukhopadhay.

Recipe, as the most textual form of food in cookbooks is a fairly recent phenomenon, originated in the postcolonial period. However, the literature of food that we

read from the nineteenth century onwards was heavily influenced by the texts that have survived the test of time. A scanty number of scholars have documented the art of preparing food. Manuscripts that have survived like the 'Paka-yaajana' by Pashupati, an elder brother of Halayudha, an ancient smriti writer of Bengal. The miscellaneous tantric text, 'Matsya-sukta-tantra' dealing with body, food and purity by Halayudha; 'Pak-vidhi' by Divakarachandra, 'Chikitsa-Samagraha' by Chakradutta are some of the records that trace back the culinary practices of ancient Bengal.

A majority of texts presenting the food habits of ancient Bengal lay down norms of ritualistic eating. A strict Hindu code of conduct was followed in preparation, and consumption of food served both in feasts and mourning rituals. The sacred oblation or the ritualistic offering of 'pinda' to satisfy the soul of a decreased relative was offered for ten days after death. The offering consisted of a handful of cooked or raw rice harvested in autumn- 'Sali', along with some fruits or 'phala', some esculent roots or 'mula', edible pot- herbs or 'sakas', milk 'payas' and molasses or 'guda'. Some tentative inferences can be drawn from the description of Damyanti's wedding banquet in 'Naisadha- carita', of the food served in feast of 'bhoj'. The pattern of serving food was based on taste, from bitter to sweet or 'tita' to 'meetha'. These traditional modes of cooking werecarried forward by cheaply printed anonymous books and leaflets around the Battala market.

Bipradas Mukhopadhay in *Pak-Pranali* talks about the inclusion of culinary skills in the educational curriculum of the nineteenth century colonial Bengal. When the middle class insisted upon the inclusion of cookery skills in the curriculum, they argued for the education system in Britain which included cookery skills as a part of its curriculum. Unlike Victorian England where cookery was clearly a part of women's education, in colonial Bengal, the discourse of preparing food was gendered in a more complex pattern. In the European counterpart, there was a clear-cut demarcation between the private and the public sphere, but in colonial Bengal the demarcation was much more complicated. Although women were situated in the domestic space of the 'grihastha', bestowed with the responsibility of preparing food, the knowledge of cooking was primarily monopolized by men. What was generally considered to be a woman's domain, was co-opted by educated middle-class men who took keen interest in the subject of cookery and wrote about it. Through, the production of recipes, cooking as an act of 'grihastha' crossed the boundary of the private space .

The kitchen space in a Bengali household was heavily laced with religious connotations, thus the eateries serving homely meal around the newly introduced railway stations necessarily had Hindu names, highlighting the taboo around taste and touch. It was presumed that the already maligned practice of consuming food out-

side home would be less sacrilegious if it is somehow religiously attuned. Women from affluent families, like Prajnasundari Devi , Rabindranath Tagore's niece, transformed the humble Bengali kitchen into an aesthetically charged space; documenting and innovating traditional knowledge creating a new identity for herself through cookbooks.

Existing scholarship of nineteenth century colonial Bengal has often merged the notion of 'grihastha' and that of 'bhadralok'. But a study of the kitchen and the domestic space inevitably demands for a clear understanding of these two categories. The urban middle class was busy educating itself with the vogue of Imperialism, self-fashioning into the newly found 'babu culture', in embracing the idea of a 'bhadralok'. In the nineteenth century, 'grihastha' was understood as an upper-class male dominated category. However, the category of 'grihastha' can incorporate a variety of caste, class and gender cutting across the demarcation of the urban and the rural as well as the traditional and the modern. The category of 'grihastha' need not necessarily merge with the idea of the 'bhadralok' and inherit its rigidity.

The nostalgia around the authentic Bengali cuisine in the 19th century can be considered as a bioethical construction of an inter-class conflict resisting colonial modernity while capitalizing on the sentimental bond of the 'grihastha' with domesticity of food. Thus, the tradition

of prescribing 'pathya' (diet) nullified the celebration of a traditional Bengali notion of 'bhoj' (feast) bearing the traces of cultural transaction. The nostalgia itself is the outcome of a deterritorialization from the rural to the urban space distorting the idea of home and domesticity. The cityscape revises and re-appropriates the notion of the kitchen space and the modes of production of the Bengali cuisine and its professional documentation. The cookbooks document these sentiments and channelize us further into an acceptance of a hybrid food culture.
One needs to consider the power of tradition that refused to be reformed as embodied in the hierarchies of caste and gender that were necessarily interlocked. The questions of taste and touch were consolidated in some ways under the British rule but certainly did not originate from colonialism;"Taste is the sense which communicates to us a knowledge of vapid bodies by means of sensations which they excite"(Brillat - Savarin 2011, 46). Taste is culture specific, a particular community might or might not be inclined to a particular taste depending on the locality it inhabits, the climate condition and the topography. The culinary culture of ancient Bengal records the use of sugar, jaggery, honey, milk, fish and herbs both for the usual day to day meal and as a means of 'pathya'.

The tendency to romanticize the pre-colonial era as idyllic, one must recall the Brahminical 'ideology of discipline' and 'public control over public life' that had already prevailed much before the colonial presence.

This paper aims to question the motive of creating the genre of Bengali 'haute cuisine', its formation through a process of continuous dissolution of the taboo around desire, consumption, touch and taste. We would closely scrutinize the gradual evolution, originating from the pedagogy of medico-moral journals controlling the inner circle of 'grihastha', through 'pathya' to the popularity of fusion food and street food in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In most nineteenth century texts, Bengal was prefigured as the landscape of diseases, presenting debility as a constant household presence. The narrative of debility was well circulated in advertisements published in newspapers with commercial interest in investing in the healthcare system of colonial Bengal. Rajnarayan Basu in *Shekalar Ekal* (1874) talked about the degeneration of Bengali men as a result of incorporating European working schedule and lifestyle. Debility was often perceived as a precondition of a disease and the widely circulated medico-moral journals tried to control and curb the desire for the excess. Contemporary literature celebrating gluttony in myth and folklore through 'bhoj' (feast), was simultaneously accompanied by the norms laid out for 'pathya'(diet).

Chikitsa Darpan (1880), *Paribarik Chikitsa Bidhan* (1889), *Svastha Raksha* (1881) sought to safeguard the heath of 'grihastha' beyond the clinically configured ailments suggesting 'pathya' so that it could help the financial-

ly insolvent towards a perfect lifestyle. The nineteenth century medical literature emphasised on the need of 'pathya' or medically sanctioned diet routine for the debilitated body. Medical manuals cutting across traditions maintained that a physician's prescription would be redundant without an elaborate sick-diet. In these manuals, 'pathya' or medically endorsed diet emerged as a normative means of taming various forms of lust, greed and desire. They harped on the need to carefully distance oneself from the objects of unbridled seduction and lust.

However, advice concerning 'pathya' clearly transcended its preliminary cause of addressing physical ailments. These manuals seemed to acknowledge 'durbalata', or debility as attributes of the 'normal' in the late nineteenth century 'grihastha' life in Bengal. These manuals seemed to circulate the idea, that the 'normal' Bengali body remained inevitably debilitated. Variations were tolerated as long as they conformed to the configuration: a balance between 'paripak'(digestion) and 'pushti'(nourishment). Medico-moral manuals thus tried to impose restraints on individual through consumption of everyday food.

In *Pathya Randhan,* Bipradas Mukhopadhay talks about three distinct forms of culinary practice, 'sahaj-randhan'(Easily digestible recipe), 'mulyaban-randhan'(Recipes with rich ingredients) and 'rogir-pathya '(Cooking

for the debilitated), here traditional modes of cooking 'pathya' accommodated with the European components of a diet for the sick, so that chicken broth could be placed along with 'jaber-manda' or barley soups. Strict disciplined dietary practice was also recommended for nursing mothers in Hemangini Ray Dastidar's *Grihinir Hitopodesh* (1915).

The claim for a refined Bengali cuisine needs to be contextualized into the mesh of an evolving material culture of colonial Bengal. These changes ushered in a surge of writing on the refinement of taste. The Bengali identity as a liberal, cosmopolitan yet familial was born from this discourse of taste. Unlike food cultures around the world, Bengali cuisine not only refused to be national but at the same timed remained emphatically regional. This regional as well as cosmopolitan nature emerged from a myriad of caste, class, communal and gender negotiations. In *Bhojan Shilpi Bangali* (Bengali Gastronomy)1971, Buddhadeb Basu claims that, the element that sets Bengali cuisine apart from any other cuisine is its distinctive nature of domesticity, protecting it from the vulgarity of random commercialization.

Bengali cuisine in late nineteenth century is both liberal and cosmopolitan in nature with the potential to incorporate different flavours and indigenizing them; thus, representing a synthesis of multiple flavours. Exploring this intrinsic hybridity characterized in the process

of producing a Bengali cuisine, generally utilizing local ingredients and using European modes of cooking displayed the process of a healthy cultural transaction. However, this hybridity also refers to the influence of sub-regional culinary practices incorporated into the folds of Bengali cuisine.

Both Mukhopadhyay's and Prajnasundari's cookbooks are classic testimonies to the changing food habit of the Bengalis. The vegetarian recipes that Mukhopadhyay described were mostly made from vegetables already available in India. However, the cosmopolitan Bengali gastronome also took delight in new vegetables such as cabbage and cauliflower. Since cabbage was a new vegetable, Mukhopadhyay deemed it necessary to first introduce cabbage to his readers, Mukhopadhyay tried to make his readers aware of different categories of cabbage, like drumhead and sugar loop, and they also learnt from *Pak Pranali* that cabbage seeds were brought into India every year from abroad. A detailed discussion of how to choose and clean a cabbage preceded the recipes in the first volume of *Pak Pranali*.

In the periodical, as well as the cookbook of Pak Pranali, so-called Bengali recipes happily coexisted with 'new' recipes, which ranged from British to Italian to French cuisines. Recipes included Jewish fried fish, Italian mutton, French cutlets, English chops, plum pudding, ginger pudding, hasty pudding, orange jelly, Irish stew, orange custard, and the like. What must be noted in this context

is that the nomenclature itself, was becoming hybrid. "Kochi Mangser Akhni Soup" (Soup made with tender meat, rice and legumes) suggests that, 'the meat used in brewing the soup should be necessarily tender' (Mukhopadhay 2000, 22-23, translation mine). Mukhopadhyay had recipes for 'English bhuni khichuri' (khichuri being a dish made of rice, lentils, and spices consumed commonly by people all over India) and 'English shik kebab' ('shik kebab' again was a form of skewered mutton generally eaten by the Muslims in India). The British who resided in India loved khichri/ khichuri and Mukhopadhyay went one step further and gave an English flavour to Indian dishes. He was creating a cuisine that was a synthesis of incorporation and localization. The result was a 'new' cuisine that would shape the identity of the Bengali middle class.

The play on nomenclature was perhaps most evident in both Mukhopadhyay's and Prajnasundari Devi's use of the term 'curry', which was often an English innovation of an Indian recipe of a mixture of spices. However, for Mukhopadhyay, curry had an entirely different definition, quite dissimilar to what the British recipe writers had to say. Mukhopadhyay defined curry thus: "Europeans learnt to cook "curry" from the Jews and the Jews learnt it from the Muslims" (Mukhopadhay 2000, 210, translation mine). When Mukhopadhyay described recipes for 'curry', he was quite emphatic that he was either following the English or Muslims.

Prajnasundari Devi hardly used the English formulaic recipe for 'curry', which was generally made from a hodgepodge of spices known as curry powder. She used different recipes for 'curry' and these recipes were applied to quintessentially Bengali vegetables like 'enchor' (green jackfruit) and 'mocha' (banana blossom), and fish like 'hilsa' and 'parshe'(Bengal mullet) (almost iconic ingredients of Bengali cuisine). She used different spices for each 'curry' recipe. Again, her play on names in this context is noteworthy. She named one dish "firingi", Anglo- Indian/Eurasian/European] 'curry' even though she used 'patol' (wax gourd), a vegetable native to Bengal, in the recipe. Neither 'firingi' nor 'curry' can be called either British or Bengali, but essentially hybrid. Historically, the culture of street-food is not very old in Bengal. Before the late 19th century and that, too, in the context of Calcutta, there is no mention of street-food anywhere in old Bengali literature, though references to food and meals are plenty, the larger part of Bengali investment on body being mostly through food. This is understandable because in a society ruled by caste and intricate codes of purity and pollution connected with eating and touch, the very anonymity of street-food would be unthinkable.The first reference to street-food, 'telebhaja' and roasted grams along with chilli-chutney, appears in Kedarnath Dutta's *Sachitra Guljarnagar* (1871), one of the picturesque novels about the 'mysteries' of the big city.

It is the cultural image around the food, its exchange, rather than use-value in the symbolic economy, that is important. Eating these non-nutritious foods that break the code of diet and 'meal', entails the membership of a cultural group and confers on the eater a certain non-conformist identity. The signs of a certain 'civilizing process', of an 'education of desire', became visible in British Bengal at around the end of the 19th century. A good deal of the history of recent post-colonial intervention can be written through their use of the term 'culture'. Central to our interest here is a certain ramification in the Bengali palate implicated in Bankimchandra's idea of change in the food-habit that must come through proper 'anusilan'(practice). 'Katu' ('jhal' in colloquial Bengali) and 'amla'(sour) had stable but extreme positions in the spectrum of Bengali taste hierarchy. The former comes from chillies and peppers and the latter from tamarind and 'amra'(Hog plum), 'chalta'(Elephant apple) and other very sour fruits.Historic disavowal of these two tastes comes across clearly in an effort to expurgate these from the enlightened neo-Bengali 'haute cuisine'.

The narrative of the marginalization of chilli and tamarind in the construction of Bengali 'haute cuisine' in the late 19th-century remains to be documented. All the 'classic' recipe books in Bengali from Bipradas Mukhopadhyay's *Pak-pranali* (1987[1885–1902]) through Pragyasundari Devi's *Amis O Niramis Ahar* (1900) to Baisnab

charan Basak's *Soukhin Pakpranali* (1916) make passing references to tamarind only in sections on 'amla' (where there are recipes of chutney and pickles), and chilli of course comes in as an inevitable ingredient, but such 'excesses' are not to be indulged in.This taboo around taste had much to do with disciplining youngsters, maturing and widowed women. Controlling the desire for the forbidden creates a sense of domination over the body. Thus, sensitizing a section of the society to avoid extreme tastes, ensured satisfying parental domination and in turn cultural control:

> The chaste Bengali of Bankim became a flexible vehicle in his hands for communicating a wide range of ideas- pride in the past Hindu traditions in his historical novels; views and attitudes of the bhadralok on contemporary issues like love in marriage, the kulin system and position of widows in his social novels; opinions on Hinduism and Utilitarianism in his theoretical articles; and raillery at the expense of the Anglicized babus in his satirical pieces…The code of love as found in English romantic novels of the period, marked by a display of male gallantry and heroism, female subservience and the ultimate triumph of fidelity and domestic bliss, was presented in Bankim's novels in the framework of the traditional Brahminical value system.(Banerjee 1989, 179)

Gastronomic pleasures reached their heights by the end of nineteenth century, both because of the slowly in-

creasing number of hotels and restaurants and because of the new cookbooks that made it easier to enjoy 'exotic' cuisine at home. A central point of criticism was that the city had become a place of excess and greed. The expenditure on the feasts symbolized that excess in consumption.Hence, therewas a sharp distinction between what was consumed at home and what was eaten in the public eateries. However, notions of the public and the private also needs to be problematized in this context. The cityscape no longer maintained the defined taboo of touch and taste. The private space of grihastha and the sacred kitchen space allowed contamination of street food. The popularity of cabin-culture and coffee houses in urban Calcutta served as a melting pot of regional and colonial cuisine and cultivated a section of enthusiastic young consumers eager to experiment with fusion cuisine. "Allen Kitchen", "Anandi Cabin", "Niranjan Agar", "Dilkhusha Cabin", "Basanta Cabin", "Favourite Cabin" are some of the pioneers of the cabin culture that sprouted in the evolving cityscape incorporating the black town into its fold of cosmopolitanism.

In the late colonial Bengal, the newly jeopardized family structure develops a taste for cookbooks and the genre in turn aestheticizes the actions performed in the professional and the domestic space, coinhabiting the liminality of class, caste, gender and the nostalgia around the Bengali cuisine. Existing Scholarship of nineteenth century colonial Bengal has often merged the notion of

'grihastha' and that of 'bhadralok'. But a study of the kitchen and the domestic space inevitably demands for a clear understanding of these two categories. The urban middle class was busy educating itself to the vogue of Imperialism, self-fashioning into the newly found 'Babu culture', in embracing the idea of a 'bhadralok'. The apparently homogenized idea of 'bhadralok' is rather stratified, anda strict cultural hierarchy is deliberately maintained to distinguish the lifestyle and social status of each stratum. Sumit Sarkar's account on the 'kerani'(clerk) in *Writing Social History* (1997) hints at the socio-economic differences within the category of 'bhadralok' and the ways in which such differences were maintained. In Bhabanicharan Bandhyopadhay's *Kalikata Kamalaya* (1823), the category of 'bhadralok' has been divided into three major divisions. The employees in the higher office were called 'banias' or 'dewans' who directly served the British administration. The next strata termed as - the 'madyabitta' or the moderately rich, the third were the poor but 'bhadra' group of people working as accountants or 'sarkars'. In eastern India, racially discriminating administrative policies encouraged an exclusively British dominated economy till the outbreak of the First World War affecting the growth of Indian Enterprise. With the decline of Bengali entrepreneurship and the rise of a professional, elite middle-class we popularly term as the 'bhadralok'; shifting their livelihood from 'byabsa' to 'chakri' as Tithi Bhattacharya observes:

> "Writing in the earlier part of the century on the Faridapur District, J. C. Jack observes that 'clerks, lawyers and government officers' who work in the headquarter towns 'very rarely bring their wives and still more rarely their children to the town to live with them'. This he concluded, was 'partly due to the difficulties and expenses of conveyance'. It was thus a class of petty landowners, who came to the city under duress to become the white-collar worker or the much maligned 'kerani'. While ownership of even a small holding in a village provided a degree of status, the city in all its impersonal homogeneity and pecuniary hardship robbed him of even that. A large literature of this period was thus devoted to positing a nostalgic green village where all was well, against a hard-concrete city where life was a treadmill of chakri and humiliating drudgery." (Bhattacharya 2005, 57)

The human body posits ambiguous or even paradoxical role in modern civilization. It is at the same time the subject and the object, the raw material or the tool to be worked upon. It is the site where realization of corporeal presence and absence solidifies. Most importantly, it is the vessel of existence through which we exercise our sense of being into the world. The mysteries of the human body is not merely biological, physiological or even cultural. It occupies a significant role in being cerebral, negotiating the spatiotemporal, and the psycho-somatic aspect of a sensory and sensual existence. Focusing on

the ambivalence of body politics, we may realize the rhetorical complication in its representation. It is often objectified, at times animated and capitalized on. Thus, 'being' and 'having' a body are not similar expressions. The body is both the container and the contained in reaction to the 'inside' and the 'outside' of culture and society.

The human body is simultaneously corporeal and cultural; thus, sustaining the tangible frame of the human body necessitates consumption. The consuming body links the sense of 'self', body and the cultural together in a common topological scheme. It is the potential site of self -construction, integrating personal and the social. The topology of the body opens and closes in response to external stimuli, contextualizing the sensory experiences in a particular social order.

> "The role of the different senses, or in topological terms, different sensory bodily openings conventionally categorized as the close or contact senses (touch, smell, taste) and the distant ones (sight, hearing) is by no means a biological constant. Sensory organization is, in a fundamental way, dependent on the cultural and social Order. The changes in the sensory organization are always, in one way or another, conditioned by the changes in the Order defined in general terms, from practices to discourses. (Falk 1997, 10)

The mouth is the central element in the act of consumption. Based on the relationship between sensory percep-

tion and the 'Order', traditional western philosophy hierarchize distant sense of sight as higher and that of touch, smell and taste as lower aesthetic experience. Eating builds up a relationship of the body with the outside world. Different sensory stimulus synchronizes in the act of eating; the process of assimilating food involves identification of consumable material through sight, appreciating the aroma of the food and finally tasting it. The mental and visual understanding of this process of consumption is largely influenced by culture. Thus, the human body as a cultural entity is in constant interaction with the 'outside', assimilating, absorbing and accommodating it, into the 'inside' of corporeal existence.

The Bengali identity formed through its culinary practice, displays an inclusive pool of food culture which accommodates food from the 'poly-colonial' influences of other cultures. The tabooed tastes are incorporated in the everyday pallet along with the age-old tradition of consuming otherwise forbidden food erasing borders of nation, class and cast essentially created a progressive cultural experience. The topology of taste extends a multicultural, ethnic, flexibility to the literature of Bengali food in turn sensitizing the consuming body .

Utsa Ray, in *Culinary Culture in Colonial India: A Cosmopolitan Platter and the Middle Class* (2015), writes that the changing patterns of consumption revolve around the issues of hybridity and authenticity. Both Indian and

British ingredients and modes of cooking were intelligently combined to create hybrid recipe. Parasuram or Rajsekhar Basu wittily highlights the impact of hybrid cuisine on the younger generation. In his short story, "Ratarati" mocks the eccentricity of fusion food through a child's quest for "Murgir French malpoa"(Fried chicken pancake dunked in sugar syrup). The introduction of fusion food in the newly mushroomed eateries and fast-food joints inspired awe and admiration. With the gradual inclusion of traditionally 'tabooed' food into the everyday food habit of the 'ghrihastha' Bengali, the rigidity around the consumption of fowl or chicken and eggs melted away. The British tradition of eating roasted chicken contributed to the north Indian variety of "Butter Chicken" recipe, recycling the leftover pieces of roasted chicken cooked in a lightly spiced gravy to suit the English taste. A similar variety is also found in the "Dak-Bungalow"(Buildings accommodating British officials), version of cooking goat and chicken. Both the recipes were well received by the residents of the British officials. The English version of scotch egg was localized as "dim er devil"; the tradition of consuming fish and fretters contributed to the hybrid recipe of the famous fish-fry. Similarly, an Indian version of cooking Chinese cuisine emerged from the Chinese population settled in the area around Tangra or the old China Town, in Calcutta.

Traditional practices have always associated the consumption of meat with the lower section of the soci-

ety, indulged in scavenging and manual labour. The predominant Hindu tradition prohibited the consumption of a variety ofmeat and certain fishes. The 'grihastha' was barred from fish and meat consumption on specific lunar and solar cycles, allowing a scanty number of proteins in the traditional platter throughout the year. With the ushering in of cabin culture in the cityscape, consumption of experimental cuisine was normalized. Pubs and restaurants offering variety of alcohol, meat and fish sprung up. Experimental cuisine gained popularity in the food industry appeasing the affluent section of the society while,affordable street food sustained the majority of working-class population settled in slums with minimum or no provisions to build up a kitchen space. The taboo around street food still prevails, it is notorious among the wealthier section of the Bengali elite and the middle-class. The food industry has conveniently created and maintained a hierarchy in the practice of 'eating out'. The glamourous fine dining or 'take away' is marketed as desirable and hygienic while street food is scorned upon. The pandemic situation and the popularity of apps like Swiggy and Zomato have further consolidated such hierarchies.

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Exploring Football as a Site for Discursive Construction and Disciplinary Power in Colonial India

Subhasish Guha

The emergence of the body as an important analytical tool in recent years in studies of South Asian history and culture has had two main sources. On the one hand there is Edward Said who emphasized the place of cultural constructions of the body in the dissemination of the ideology of Western superiority and non-Western inferiority that was key to legitimizing the colonialism of Europe. Indeed, representing these bodies as somehow different and corrupted was the first step towards justifying the control over such bodies. The control of the

physical manifestation of the 'other' was justified and naturalized by representing them as somehow 'different' and inferior to the 'norm' — the 'normal' body of the West. Foucault, of course is the other source/influence. He argued that the body became central to the operations of the modern state from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. Modern systems of production and government control demanded that individuals be able to submit their bodies to regular and repeated work organized around timetables, deadlines etc. Watching, analyzing, regulating, recording the functioning body of the individual therefore became of the highest importance to modern states. As a result a range of institutions and technologies was devised to ensure large populations of strong and regulated bodies ready for work and for duty. Foucault implicates such phenomena as modern medicine, the factory system, modern prisons and penal techniques and psychiatry in this web of disciplinary techniques.

Introduction

So, the body as a discursive site and as a subject of disciplinary power were the two sources of the recent focus on the body in South Asian Studies. The range of studies that focusses on the body in South Asia include medicine in India, psychiatry in India, prisons and convict system in the region, constructions of masculinity and femininity in South Asia, and in representations of race,

caste and communal identity there. All of these studies originate in the works of Said and Foucault. For the purpose of this paper, the discussion will be limited to the area of sports — rather, the importance of the body in the experience of sport in the region and into the centrality of sport in conceptions of the Indian body.

In order to understand the development of sports in India it is necessary to understand the way in which these activities relate and intertwine with existing concepts of the body in the cultures of the country. Equally important is to examine how the corporal experience of sports and other physical activities often extend to other social and cultural experiences and identities. What follows is an approach to the early history of football in India by using the body as an analytical tool. It will demonstrate that football there acted as a means for imagining and transforming the Indian body. But perhaps more importantly, it will show that the game also became implicated in Indian attempts to resist these colonial corporal politics.

The British used the sports to focus on the Indian body in order to transform it into types considered more suitable or desirable by the colonizers. But, Indian bodies were also sites for resisting these intentions, and indeed for mediating and negotiating them. An analysis of corporal politics is needed to comprehend why Indians took on European sports.

Football and Corporal Politics in Colonial India

The body is central to understanding the introduction of football into colonial India by the British and its subsequent spread and development. But an analysis of football texts is also important for the wider project of understanding the broader colonial designs for Indian bodies. Such an analysis can yield any of the following three conclusions. First of all, football was one of the means through which the British sought to control and transform Indian bodies into units suitable for colonial projects. Secondly, the imagery of the game was an idiom in which the British attempted to construct discourses about Indian bodies that implicated them in the ideologies of colonial rule. And finally, the footballer's body was one of the sites where Indians contested these colonial discourses about their physiques.

Football was often used as a means to exclude Indians from European circles. It was also used to emphasize the social and physical distance between the two communities that was considered desirable by the British. But there were many among the colonial establishment that wished to encourage football among certain Indian groups. The reasons for the desire of many British to have Indians play the game lies in a range of discourses about 'race' and about 'orientalism' that coloured the British thinking about India after the uprising of 1857.

The British tried to classify and categorize Indians on the basis of perceived 'racial' qualities. A healthy race was postulated to be characterized by bodily vigour and strength, so that it was capable of defending itself through warfare but also capable of self-sacrifice for weaker allies. Accordingly, the strong and independent nation was constructed as one that had the 'male' qualities of physical power and prowess, while the colonized were portrayed as weak and effeminate and in need of the benevolent protection of a 'male' civilization.

Bengalis were represented by the British as an example of such a weak and effeminate people, and they were dismissed by the colonizers as possessing 'the intellect of a Greek and the grit of a rabbit' (Rosselli 1980, 121). The image of the effeminate *babu* became a dominant feature of colonial life and a general slur upon all Bengalis. *Babu* was a term of derision specifically relating to the English-educated Bengali middle-class male who was employed in the service of the empire as an administrative or professional worker. The *babu* was widely reviled as physically weak and morally suspect for collaborating with British interests.

All of this points to the wider cultural and social changes within which football emerged and that made football politically meaningful. The 1857 mutiny originated among Bengali officers. Thereafter soldiers from the region were looked upon as unreliable. As a result, recruit-

ment policy after 1857 deliberately excluded Bengalis, choosing to focus instead on recruiting soldiers from parts of India that had chosen to remain loyal to the British in 1857. The association of these races with the military service and of Bengalis with treachery (and exclusion from the army) led to a construction of a series of images classifying supposedly 'martial' and 'non-martial' races of India. Punjabis and the Gurkhas, the martial races were constructed/ represented as essentially 'different' from the effeminate 'Bengalis'. As Stanley Wolpert argues:

> The British soon [after the Mutiny] developed their spurious theories about 'martial races' and 'non-martial races, based for the most part upon their experience with 'loyal' and 'disloyal' troops during the mutiny. (Wolpert 1997, 241-242)

In fact, fitness for football in particular and sports in general were important tools through which these representations of 'different' Indian bodies were constructed. One observer, for example, decided that "by his legs you shall know the Bengali. The leg of a free man is straight or a little bandy, so that he can stand on it solidly […] The Bengali's leg is either skin and bones; the same size all the way down, with knocking knobs for knees, or else it is very fat and globular, also turning in at the knees, with round thighs like a woman's. The Bengali's leg is the leg of a slave". (Chowdhury-Sengupta 1995, 298) This

can be contrasted with one officer's assessment and suitability regarding recruitment in the army. Regarding the Gurkhas he feels: "physique, compact and sturdy build, powerful muscular development, keen sight, acute hearing, and hereditary education as a sportsman, eminently capacitate him for the duties of a light infantry soldier" (Vansittart 1915, 60). The honing of the body through sporting activities was a factor that recommended the Nepali for service in the imperial armies in the eyes of a British soldier.

Football itself was used as a means to construct distinctions between the various martial races. An article in *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* (September 1909) described regimental football as follows:

> Practically all the men from the various Panjab regiments in Burma who play in these tournaments are of two classes, Sikhs and Panjabi Musulmans and of these two the numbers are about equal, with perhaps a slight preponderance of Musalmans, who are more of a football build than the long and snaky Sikh… The Gurkhas approach more nearly to the proper type of footballers, and are powerful, sturdy, not too big, and strong on their feet, but they are decidedly slow at running, which defect neutralizes their other great advantages. (Bale and Cronin 2003, 116)

The body, as constructed in the imagery of football, was the British construction of different Indian body types.

These constructions had a profound effect on Bengal. Sir George Campbell, Lieutenant –Governor of Bengal in the 1870's believed that "if the educated Bengalees, instead of giving way to intellectual vanity, set themselves to rival European qualities depending on physical and moral tone, they are capable of very great things" (Campbell 1893, 267). As a consequence of such views, the following stipulations were made for the Bengalis who applied for posts in the Native Civil Service:

> By every candidate a certificate of character must be produced, as also a medical certificate of fitness for employment in any portion of Bengal. Candidates for appointment of over Rs.100 a month must show that they can ride at least 12 miles at rapid pace; candidates for inferior posts must have similar qualification or be able to walk 12 miles within 3 ½ hours without difficulty or prostration. Good character, health and physical energy [are] thus secured (Campbell 1893, 267).

The British transmitted to the Bengali elites the idea that they were considered physically inferior through such statements and mechanisms. . However, in sports the British offered Indians a means of developing themselves physically. Indeed, many among the British saw it as part of their imperial duty to help Indians to 'improve' themselves and deliberately set about encouraging Bengali men to engage in games. Many Indians and

subsequently Bengalis learnt the lesson that an ability to demonstrate to the British that Bengalis did possess physical vigour was necessary both to get ahead in colonial India and to gain respect of the imperial power. Many Bengalis realized the value and importance of taking advantage of the opportunities to play the colonizers' games. One of the most obvious places where British 'improvement' met with ambitious young Indians was in the Anglo-Indian schools and colleges.

Sport was central to the curriculum in the British-run Anglo-Indian colleges modeled on the British public schools of the nineteenth century. Many middle class Bengalis were educated in such colleges. Sir George Campbell for example emphasized the importance of sport in the syllabus of the College of Engineering in Calcutta:

> I spared nothing to make that college complete, but the Bengalis seemed infinitely to prefer literature, law, and politics to anything that required some physical as well as mental exertion. At the same time I am bound to say that when I introduced gymnastics, riding, and physical training in the colleges, they heartily accepted these things, and seemed quite ready to emulate Europeans in that respect. (Campbell 1893, 273-274)

Campbell's implication that Bengalis embraced these benefits indicates his belief in both the superiority of

British ways and in his strategy for Bengali 'improvement'. Although Campbell makes no mention of football per se, another Briton resident of Calcutta in 1885 spotted its importance:

> Many educated Natives, in Bengal specially, have for years past felt the reproach which attaches to their want of courage and corporal activity and have earnestly set themselves to remedy these defects: hence on all sides find efforts to follow the examples of Europeans among native students. Football and cricket are becoming popular, and gymnasia introduced. (Bale and Cronin 2003, 117)

Sir Charles Elliott's (Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal in 1891) proposed measures to assist in the 'improvement' of the Bengali 'race' through physical culture is another example of similar colonial attitudes towards sports:

> In 1891-92 it was particularly noticed on every hand that there was a great interest in the zeal with which the national English games, especially football were played. On tour Sir C. Elliott constantly watched the performance of the boys with great interest… He looked forward to great improvement in the physique of the Bengalis in the course of one or two generations from this source. (Buckland 1976, 117-118)

Football was considered a source of improvement necessary for the bodies of the Bengali 'race'. The game

was also important in the Army, for ensuring the endurance of 'martial' bodies for war. One officer serving with a Punjabi regiment in Burma noticed that "there is always some sort of game going on every afternoon, and everybody gets an opportunity of playing." (Bale and Cronin 2003, 117) He goes on to explain that "the great thing about football is that it gets the men and ourselves out, and gives us good exercise and something to take an interest in", (Bale and Cronin 2003, 118) emphasizing that the games "were not serious efforts, but merely means of improving the physique, general activity, and resourcefulness of the boys". (Bale and Cronin 2003, 118)

The Indian soldier's body in football was however also used by the British to construct discourses about the need for the control of a 'civilized' nation over India. Michael Anton Budd has spoken of the denigration of the physically robust and militarily indispensable Irish as both 'savage' and weak by virtue of a "lack of self-control". (Budd 1997, 92). Indiscipline (an 'inherent' but invisible weakness) is one of the templates engraved in the discourse regarding the body of the colonized whose physique was desirable. This denigration is then used to justify or rationalize the course of 'improvement'. One officer had this to say about his footballing soldiers: "the recruit, when he first emerged from his jungle or village, has rather less control of his legs than a new-born camel." (Bale and Cronin 2003, 118). Another such officer

gives the following account of the Indian soldiers' use of their own bodies when allowed free rein:

> I tried to introduce football. It amused the players highly, but no great skill at the game resulted. The players would not keep their places, but preferred getting in a jumbled mass, in which they pushed and kicked one another indiscriminately. This 'scrum' like mass never approached the goalposts, but generally wandered off the confines of the field, where abounded a plentiful growth of prickly cacti […] the game generally ended with the ball being punctured by a thorn. (Perry 1921, 108-109)

The Indian body and its response to football is thus used as a metaphor for creating a sense of the uncontrolled nature of the unschooled Indian physique — having within it the flaws of being impulsive and lacking self-control. This is used to justify the discipline imposed by a 'higher' race — the British colonizer. Football thus was an idiom through which different types of Indian bodies were constructed and in which the evidence of the flawed nature of Indian bodies were manufactured. The ideological project of the British of legitimizing their rule revolved a great deal around the construction of the above-mentioned ideas — ideas through which they not only claimed physical superiority over the Indians but also claimed to have the keys to improving these 'problematic' physiques. These were crucial to the theoretical justifications of British colonial rule.

However, football was much more than just an idiom — it was one of the techniques that were used as a technology of corporal transformation and control. It was intended to 'correct' the supposedly feeble body of the *babu* in schools and colleges. On the other hand, football was used to maintain vigour of the martial race soldiers and discipline their 'impulsive' bodies in the Army. This is exemplified in the speech of Lord Roberts while presenting the Durand Cup in 1892: "the same qualities, discipline and combination, were equally necessary in good soldiers and footballers." (Bale and Cronin 2003, 119) Thus, football was implicated in the colonial strategies — both as a discourse and as technology for power.

The Indian Response and the Footballer's Body as a Site for Discursive Resistance

But it is fundamental to look at the question of how Indians responded to all this representation of their bodies for a proper consideration of football in India. One example will demonstrate the complexities of approaching this issue in the case of football. In 1911 the Bengali football club, Mohun Bagan, saw off St. Xavier's, the Rifle Brigade, and the 1st Middlesex Regiment, on their way to the IFA Shield final in Calcutta. The club was recognized as having a serious chance of winning the most important football tournament in colonial India. The final had brought a crowd estimated at between 60000 and 100000 that travelled from far and across. They trav-

elled by specially arranged trains, streamers and trams to see the game. A temporary telephone had been installed at the nearby Calcutta Football Club to transmit reports across Bengal. Mookerjee sums up the feelings of the day thus: "Soccer fever had engulfed Calcutta. The IFA Shield final pushed everything else to the background. Hope, once kindled, whatever the odds against be, refuses to be snuffed". (Mookerjee 1989, 150) In an exciting match, the Indians came from a goal down to score twice in the last five minutes: "wild excitement burst out among the Indian spectators…When the referee blew the long whistles, shirts, hats, handkerchieves, sticks and umbrellas started flying in the air". (Mookerjee 1989, 151)

This was a victory that unified Bengalis of different religions against their colonial rulers. It also happened to be the moment when the axioms of colonial discourses on the body were dramatically reversed, a point that Indian newspapers were quick to explain. The fact that Bengalis resented representation as physically inferior and saw football as a means of challenging such a construction is evident in the ironic reconstruction of these discourses in the media. The Bengali newspaper *Nayak* encapsulates the message in the following manner (July 30, 1911):

> Indians can hold their own against Englishmen in every walk of art and science, in every learned profession, and in the higher grades of the public ser-

> vice…It only remained for Indians to beat Englishmen in their peculiarly English sport, the football. It fills every Indian with joy to learn of the victory of the Mohun Bagan team over English soldiers in the Challenge Shield competition. It fills every Indian with joy and pride to know that rice-eating, malaria-ridden, barefooted Bengalis have got the better of beef-eating, Herculean, booted John Bull in the peculiarly English sport. Never before was there witnessed such universal demonstration of joy, men and women alike sharing it and demonstrating it by showering of flowers, embraces, shouts, whoops, screams and even dances. (Bale and Cronin 2003, 120)

Such a quotation becomes all the more telling when placed against an article from the same newspaper that was published just before the Mohun Bagan match:

> We English-educated *Babus* are like dolls dancing on the palms of Englishmen. The education which makes *Babus* of us, and gives us our food whether we are in service or in some profession, is established by the English. Our… political efforts and aspirations are all kinds of gifts of the English people… English education and the superficial imitation of English habits and manners have made us perfectly worthless, a miserable mixture of Anglicanism and *swadeshism*. (Bale and Cronin 2003, 120)

Thus it is evident that the body was central to Indian conceptions of their subjugation and their frustration at

that. The dramatic reversal of this discourse is revealed in the doll metaphor. So it does not come as a surprise to see that the football victory of Mohun Bagan was celebrated in a triumphant corporal idiom that satirizes the reversed axiom.

The Nuances of such a 'Triumph'

However, the complexity of choosing the Indian footballer's body as a site for discursive resistance is not so straightforward. The 1911 victory was a moment of nationalist triumph when one of the ideological mainstays of colonialism — that of the belief in the innate British superiority and in Indian physical frailty, was dramatically and publicly undone. And yet there was an acceptance of the British moral system (introduced through Anglo-Indian schools, colleges and the Army, in which only success in sport and the demonstration of physical prowess could signal strength and self-reliance), in celebrating the undoing of these stereotypes. The celebration of the victory was a corporal metaphor which contained an acceptance of the colonial culture that dictated that the body was the correct site for judging a people and its destiny. The football final and the Indian victory was at one and the same time both a victory for the bodies of the Bengali team and the people that they represented. But at the same time it is also an acceptance and legitimation of the discourses of strength and self-discipline that underlay the body politics introduced by the British Raj.

This is nowhere more evident than in the following excerpt:

> We question ourselves, why with such glorious tradition, with such heritage, and with such immense resources of talented footballers, we are lagging behind those elites of soccer, who did not even exist when we lived and thrived on the game of soccer. It is because of defective management, or socio-economic conditions coupled with genetic imperfection of Indian footballers concerning physical fitness, or because of the indifferent attitude of the government that we are yet lagging behind a good number of the soccer playing countries, even in Asia[1]. (Bale and Cronin, 2003, 121)

The British trick of conceptualizing/framing football failure in terms of essentialized Indian bodies is something that still seems to have remained. For Indians to still be thinking in these terms almost fifty years after Independence is a testament to the inextricably intertwined nature of body, football and the politics of colonialism in post-colonial India.

Conclusion

The paper has tried to demonstrate that corporal politics are central to any attempt at understanding sport in South Asia, and India in particular, and conversely

that sport has been significant in the corporal politics of the region. As far as football is concerned, it was demonstrated that the game provided the British an idiom for the discursive construction of the inferiority of the Indian body and the superiority of the European body — a strategy crucial in legitimizing colonial rule. The British could manipulate a set of images provided by football to construe certain Indians as inherently weak and those Indians deemed to be strong as corporally indisciplined. These representations were then conveniently pitted against the model of the British colonizer which was already constructed/upheld as both strong and disciplined. Thus football provided a reason for active British intervention in India, through which the colonizer could 'improve' the colonized. So, sport in general and football in particular acted as idioms for discursive construction and technologies for disciplinary power.

The paper also highlighted how football became central in the local resistance to colonial discourses. The victory of the 'rice- eating Bengali' over the 'beef-eating John Bull' in 1911 was the epitome of such a resistance/intervention. The paper concludes by pointing out the complexities of choosing the footballer's body as a site for discursive challenges by an extract which shows the prevalent mindset of thinking of failure in football in terms of essentialized Indian bodies even fifty years after Independence.

Note:

1. The excerpt is to be originally found in a 1993 document of the Indian Football Association entitled "Role, Achievements of the Indian Football Association (W.B) in the Promotion and Development of the game of Football in India."

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Intersectional Magical Realism: Articulating Suppressed and Ignored Realities

Scheherazade Khan

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a move to re-describe magical realist literature in more specific terms. Scholars such as Jeanne Delbaere-Garant and Patricia Hart have put forward their own terms: psychic, mythic, grotesque realism, and magical feminism. Novels such as *Beloved* and *Nights at the Circus* have been referred to as both postmodern and gothic texts. The need for different categorical labels implies that there is a dissatisfaction with

the ability of the term "magical realism" to account for issues that appear in the novels these scholars have reframed. Coining the term intersectional magical realism is my contribution to this practice of reframing certain novels to bring attention to their potential in specific arenas.

A term laden with meaning, and plagued with misunderstandings, intersectionality inspires avid debate in many fields. However, though the term's popularity truly began following legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw's seminal articles, evidence of intersectional experiences (or at the very least an understanding of their existence) can be seen in literature preceding Crenshaw's articles. As this essay will explore, authors of fiction would employ specific literary genres to best depict the experience of compounding oppressions that, at the time, lacked a name or even greater societal acknowledgment. While there are many such genres, this essay specifically investigates how magical realism was adopted by authors to acknowledge and voice identities that are characterised by compounded oppressions. By appropriating the dual world tension inherent in magical realism, where distinct realms of fantasy and realism coexist, this form of fiction, which I refer to as intersectional magical realist literature, enables complex identities to be represented in terms that celebrate and recognise difference by acknowledging how their realities differ from identities depicted by dominant canonical literature. The question

that then arises is how a reading of intersectional magical realism differs from that of "traditional" magical realism? At the crux of this paper, I argue that magical realism is the literary genre most capable of representing complex identities, mirroring the "equal but different" nature apparent in both magical realism and intersectionality.

This paper will explore Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), focusing on how the violence suffered by the protagonist, Sethe, is a result of intersecting systems of racism and sexism. Magic in the form of a ghost is a crucial tool in Beloved to enable a testimony of personal and collective trauma due to slavery and establish a specifically female voice of experience. In this feminist text, magical realism articulates subjective perspectives that have been suppressed and ignored, establishing them as valid and important accounts of oppression and indescribable trauma.

Intersectionality describes the state of living with multiple and intersecting oppressions of gender, race, class and sexuality, none of which are superior to any other, nor hold any priority. Crenshaw's articles highlight the 'problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis' (1989, 139). Crenshaw points out that the 'need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersec-

tional disempowerment that men of colour and white women seldom confront' (1991, 1252), demonstrating that the relationship between social circumstances, namely social oppressions, and identity is acute. Moreover, this self-division of political energies ignores that 'individuals typically express varying combinations of their multiple identities of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and religion across different situations' (Collins and Bilge 2016, 125). Intersectionality specifically engages with social context in the creation of identity, challenging the essentialist models of subjective autonomy.

The complexity of intersectional identities remains largely unspecified and untheorized in literature and at times supressed by one-dimensional narratives of identity. The notion of intersectionality is emphasised as being a 'work-in-progress' project and as such, intersectionality invites study into unmapped places. One of these places, which serves as the foundation of this dissertation, is feminine representations of the experiences of class, race, and queerness, without which a singular narrative of identity is perpetuated. The experience of compounded oppressions is relatively unmapped and, therefore, cannot be described by a subscription to literary realism, often ideologically motivated and reflecting only that which is already mapped.

Further insights into the ways in which power systems affect contemporary identities can be facilitated by writ-

ing about the unknown by appealing to the unreal, which highlights the complexity of identities. The unreal serves as a metaphor for the traditionally unrepresented or unaccepted identities and behaviours finding a space in which to exist without suppression, just as magic finds a space to coexist with realism in the literary genre magical realism. The genre holds the potential to describe future identities that have yet to make themselves widely known, as intersectionality, in being a 'work-in-progress' project, is not limited by which identities it can represent. Indeed, Christopher Warnes (2009) claims that the 'magical realism of Carpentier, Asurias, Rulfo and García Márquez is shown to develop from an urge to reclaim a space of otherness by appealing to myths of difference' (5). In referring to some of the foundational magical realist authors, there is inherent exploration of difference through magic ascribed to the genre. The notion of otherness requires exploring the unmapped to claim space that is free from the suppression brought about by normativity.

First and foremost, it is a mode of literature that inspires many contradictions and confusions in the attempts to define it. Maggie Ann Bowers rightfully states that '[t]he one thing that the majority of critical works about the related terms "magic realism", "magical realism" and "marvellous realism" agree upon is that these terms are notoriously difficult to define' (2004, 2). However, as Fredric Jameson states, magical realism 'retains a strange

seductiveness' (1986, 302), regardless of the constant disputations. The debate itself begins with the issue of classification, with the inability to determine whether magical realism is a genre or simply a mode of literature. This desire to define magical realism in terms of such limiting categories and its subsequent refusal to fit neatly into those terms, marks magical realism as a method of writing back to the collecting and categorising attempts of the western colonial project. Indeed, traditionally, magical realism has been considered primarily a Latin American 'genre', synonymous with the 'boom' era of Latin American novels in the 1950s, and 60s, one that spoke to a style and mode of expression distinct from the literary west. Credited with being the first critic to explicitly link the genre with Latin America, Flores states that with the advent of magical realist fiction, 'Latin America is no longer in search of its expression . . . [it] now possesses an authentic expression, one that is uniquely civilized' (1955, 116). Carpentier similarly states that Latin American authors 'have forged a language appropriate to the expression of our realities . . . we, the novelists of Latin America, are the witnesses, historians, and interpreters of our great Latin American reality' (1995, 107).

Magical realism has often been considered a genre for postcolonial, subaltern, minority voices. Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, and Derek Walcott being some postcolonial authors who have made the genre more globally popular in recent years. It is a genre where one 'may witness idiosyncratic recreations of historical events, but

events grounded firmly in historical realities, often alternate versions of officially sanctioned accounts' (Faris 2004, 15). Stephen Slemon contends that, in the view of literary criticism magic realism, 'carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial centre and to its totalizing systems of generic classification' (1995, 408). While this is now a controversial position, as the globalisation of the genre means that some magical realist authors do reside in former imperial centres, and as such are surrounded by the hegemonic influences in academia from which monolithic academic traditions are reproduced, it highlights the inherent resistance to literary traditions and normative ideals some would see in the genre. Indeed, Warnes (2005) argues that '[m]agical realism's greatest claim to usefulness is that it enables comparison of texts across periods, languages and region' (8). Magical realism inherently deals with realities built from heterogeneous populations. Its assumed literary beginnings attest to this as Latin American culture is historically built from the amalgamation of African, Spanish and Indigenous culture. Like intersectionality, magical realism literature compels a foray into the previously unexamined. This venture into those unexplored areas suggests a suitability of magical realism to represent intersectional identities that deal with two or more different world views.

Exploring Duality

Perhaps the most defining feature of magical realism is its oxymoronic dual focus on both the world of magic and the real. To combine the two seems impossible as

'magic is thought of as that which lies outside of the realm of the real; realism excludes the magical' (Warnes 2009, 2). Nevertheless, all magical realist fiction is expected to describe the existence of a supernatural element in a recognisably real world. It is what Wendy B. Faris describes as 'an "irreducible element" of magic' (2004, 7) that sets forth a world view in the characters which challenges ideas of logic and reason and 'disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity' (7). It is clear that within magical realism a tension exists, one that not only confuses situations of the real and unreal, but also complicates notions of reality.

A common explanation of magic realism is to describe the genre as a mix of its neighbouring genres of realism and fantasy. Flores describes it as 'an amalgamation of realism and fantasy' (1995, 112). Also, frequently described as a 'hybrid' genre. I argue that the form of magical realism does not cause either realism or fantasy to disappear and be recreated as a hybrid. The literature provides space for two separate worlds to exist simultaneously, creating a dual world tension. This contributes to the strength of the genre that celebrates the distinctiveness of both conditions. Unlike fantasy, magical realism does not ask for a total suspension of disbelief. The reader is not asked to immerse themselves in a world that is obviously, and comfortingly, not their own. Rather, magical realism thrives in the tension between magic and the real. The realms of fantasy and realism work in tandem to hold equal status, yet simultaneously main-

tain the dichotomy between the two, forcing the reader to consider the possibility of the unreal within a reality they recognize. Faris describes the process as experiencing 'unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understanding of events' (1995, 7). It is, according to Leal, 'more than anything else, an attitude toward reality' (1995, 121).

The focus on difference as liberation allows for, what Faris sees as, the 'potential for the development of female narrative [which] is in part an effect of defocalization, in which the authority of strictly mimetic realism is dissolved, so that alternative possibilities can be imagined' (1995, 177). Where fantasy uses magic and the unreal to create new worlds, magical realism uses magic to describe that which currently exists, which in the case of the novels in this dissertation includes complex intersectional realities that have been forgotten, ignored or silenced. It is the acknowledgement of magic as something real, and simultaneously contentious, that sets up the environment within magical realist literature to overcome the binaries of fact and fiction, real and unreal, and the projection of dominant discourses of being correct or an error. As such, viewing magical realism through an intersectional lens emphasises intersecting power relations that fundamentally underly the realities of the characters explored in this paper. Intersectionality allows for difference to be regarded as the basis for empowerment as opposed to the reason for marginalisation.

Dehumanizing Trauma

Magical realism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* functions to recognise, or establish where it is absent, a specifically Black, female testimony of personal and collective trauma due to slavery. Morrison's heart-breaking tale of the trauma women and mothers endured during slavery attempts to reclaim Black historical experiences of slavery for Black women. In Beloved, a young Black woman and runaway slave, Sethe, murders her daughter to save her from the horrors of slavery. The deceased baby Beloved, named after the only word on her tombstone that Sethe sexually pays for from the stone mason, manifests many years later as a ghost. Morrison revises the narrative history of slavery by emphasizing the perspective of a Black, female runaway slave as being not defined by slavery, but rather by her healing from it. Central to the novel is the way in which Sethe's trauma arises from the condition of being considered less than human due to the compounded oppressions of both gender and race. The ghost of Beloved becomes the catalyst for healing and represents the threshold for humanisation.

Crucial to *Beloved* is Morrison's emphasis that trauma, and the memories of traumatic events, is indescribable. Trauma, as '[Sethe] and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so . . . [is] unspeakable' (Morrison 2007, 69). Contrary to Mary Paniccia Carden's claim that '[t]he captive body is rendered genderless' (1999, 403) as both male

and female bodies within the slave system are considered hardly human, I argue that the trauma Sethe faces is specifically defined by the compounded oppressions of race and gender. Based on real-life Margaret Garner – a runaway slave arrested for killing one of her children and attempting to kill the others rather than have them in the hands of the plantation owner – the tale is a harrowing example of the extent of trauma experienced by slaves and mothers. Though celebrated for her 'willingness to risk everything for what was to her the necessity of freedom' (2007, xi), Morrison states that the 'historical Margaret Garner is fascinating, but, to a novelist, confining' (xi). The runaway slave narrative is revised, Faris argues, as 'Morrison endows a former slave woman with the right to violent action' (2004, 200). In rewriting the slave narrative to include intersectional identities, Morrison highlights the potential for a future beyond the trauma, featuring the agency to act for survival and the survival of others, allowing *Beloved*'s slave narrative to become about healing.

Beloved attempts to fill in the gaps of history and address what parenthood for those affected by oppressions of gender and race would look like. Morrison emphasises that '[t]o render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way' (2007, xiii). However, without language, the history that brought about the enslavement and consequential trauma is in danger of being forgotten or suppressed. Gina Wisker (2014) ar-

gues, '[r]ealism and testimony are a necessary response to centuries of silencing and a social habit of ignoring and denying experience. However, feelings, hopes, desires, and fears are a part of lived experience' (275). She implies that for slave narratives, a staunch dependence on realism fails to communicate the emotional side of the experience. Indeed, Rosemary Winslow (2004) argues that, in trauma literature, 'another world is created that is discontinuous: the trauma world . . . exists outside of the ordinary' (609). However, Morrison's emphasises is that it is not another world at all but rather very much rooted in the realness of this world, while nevertheless maintaining the distinctiveness of the experience of trauma, much like magical realism. Magic allows the opening of the world of the dead into the world of the living in order to explore the essence of race and gender-based violence and trauma for women and mothers during slavery, two distinctive categories as the latter requires an insurrectionary decision for slaves to become one.

Margaret Garner's story then becomes a limiting narrative for Morrison that does not address what it meant for a Black enslaved woman to decide to be a parent. Being a mother is a specific state of existence that is irreconcilable with slavery, where 'assertions of parenthood under conditions peculiar to the logic of institutional enslavement were criminal' (Morrison 2007, xi). As the property of white men, slaves had no right to their own bodies.

The women were viewed akin to animals, to function as breeders and 'have as many children as they can to please whoever owned them' (Morrison 2007, 247). The expectation to give birth but not mother renders Sethe's worth, and that of all female slaves, as purely economical for slave owners. Sethe defies the hierarchy conceptualised by white slave owners of slaves as animals by making decisions as a mother and taking ownership of her body. This alters the reading of slave women from a narrative of perpetual victimisation to one describing the attainment of freedom and agency, making it a novel about 'claiming ownership of that freed self' (Morrison 2007, 112).

The commodification of Black slaves as items to be bought, sold and possessed by white slave owners accentuates the racial dehumanisation of Black bodies in the novel. Sethe finds herself deconstructed into her separate features, emphasised when the Schoolteacher directs his students during a lesson to 'put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right' (2007, 229). Though she does not fully understand the implications of the action, her 'head itches like the devil. Like somebody was sticking fine needles in my scalp' (228), suggesting that Sethe recognises the human/animal distinction as pseudo-scientific, essentialised justifications that posit a hierarchy of race based on the conceptualisations of white slave owners.

There are also numerous instances of gendered dehumanisation in the novel where the sexual vulnerability of female slaves is emphasised. For example Sethe's mother, who is 'taken up many times by the crew [of slave ships] . . . threw [the babies] away . . . The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them' (74). The women risk deep psychological trauma from having to carry and birth babies conceived from a dehumanised conception of black individuals, and more specifically, black women. In these instances, Morrison draws attention to the way in which female Black bodies are sexually vulnerable and at the mercy of white people for their worth, safety and identity. In having children with Halle, whom she considers her husband, Sethe attempts to transgress the imposed racial divisions, taking ownership of her body and her life. She creates a white wedding dress to mimic the marriage ceremony, wanting to create 'something to say it was right and true' (71). However, it is not up to her but rather her 'owners' to say whether 'it was alright for [Sethe and Halle] to be husband and wife' (71), emphasising that 'definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined' (225). The struggle to define herself plagues Sethe throughout the novel.

Dehumanised threefold—for being a woman, for being Black, and again for being a Black woman—Sethe is unable to bear the thought of her children going through

the same experience. The trauma Sethe feels is that of being a Black, runaway slave mother; It is specifically the condition of being a mother that her trauma acts upon. From the perspective of the white slave owners, Sethe's worth is of a breeding animal, a compounded state of gendered and racial oppressions. Therefore, Sethe's freedom from Sweet Home similarly means her freedom to be a mother. The taking of her breast milk which left Sethe with 'no nursing milk to call [her] own' (236) signified the theft of her ability to nurse, and hence, mother. The decision to kill her children is a radical reactionary act of mothering, stating her job as a mother is 'to know what is and to keep [her children] away from what I know is terrible' (194). The family system that Sethe aspires to build with Halle is a white family system, including a ceremony of sorts to signify a wedding, but most importantly, children born from love rather than rape. Stamp Paid, notes:

> The more coloured people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, *how human*, the more they used themselves up to persuade white of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and the more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (liveable) place. It was the jungle white folks planted in them. (emphasis my own, Morrison 2007, 235)

The passage offers a psychoanalytical look at white racism, drawing on Franz Fanon's (1952) theory of the internalization of the white gaze whereby, 'Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect' (3). Sethe's aspiration to the white family system is an attempt to assert a racial equality that is violently prevented by the reactions of white folks' essentialised assumptions of an inherent Black animalism.

Sethe's act of infanticide is persistently considered as unhuman. Witnessing Sethe's attempt to kill her children, the Schoolteacher believes that 'she'd gone wild, due to the mishandling of [his] nephew who'd overbeat her and made her cut and run' (Morrison 2007, 177). Similarly, after learning what she had done, Paul D tells her '[y]ou got two feet, Sethe, not four' (194). What Schoolteacher, and the others who pass judgement on Sethe, cannot understand is that her actions are intensely human, brought about by compounded oppressions enacted by white folk. The trauma that she experiences 'engenders a complex conceptualization of life and death" (Łobodziec 115), one that mimics the complexity of intersectionality and magical realism as defined by ambiguity and hybridity. It rewrites the typical perception of life being more desirable than death. Sethe recognises that her decision to 'put [her] babies where they'd be safe' (193) could never be explained; 'she could never close in, pin it down for anybody who had to ask. If they didn't get

it right off—she could never explain' (192). She understands that the specific racial and gendered trauma she faces cannot be understood by those who did not face it. Sethe epitomises a revolutionary attitude towards the traditional slave narrative. Indeed, Morrison writes Sethe as a heroine who 'would represent the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom (2007, xi). The apparition of her dead daughter is the catalyst for Sethe to assume agency over her life, after having accepted the consequences of infanticide, but never being able to forgive herself for it.

Voicing the Unspeakable

Beloved embodies the magical realist nature of duality with most elements in the novel appearing in opposite pairs: fact and fiction, past and present, victim and offender, slavery and freedom, dead and alive, child and woman, male and female, and human and animal. The dualistic forms are not mutually exclusive and hence complicate notions of binaries, presenting instead a fusion of contraries. Like all magical realism, the duality of fantasy and realism, is paramount to the novel. Morrison describes how 'the acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with either taking precedence over the other . . . is indicative of the cosmology, the way in which Black people looked at the world' (1984, 342). Stating that the experi-

ences of slaves has been historically discredited and ignored 'because Black people were discredited therefore what they knew was "discredited"' (342), magical realism then offers 'another way of knowing things' (342). Moreover, it similarly offers the opportunity for 'a radical critique of history' (Faris 2004, 138) where dominant narrative ignores the presence and experience of intersectional identities. Morrison's use of opposites brings attention to 'a desire for narrative freedom from realism . . . a critique of totalitarian discourses of all kind' (Faris, 1995, 180). In doing so, the novel represents complex identities more dynamically and accurately due to the inherent resistance to normative discourses.

The interjections of magic are Morrison's attempts to communicate the female emotional baggage of slavery and subsequent healing. Instances of magic in the novel are unassuming but pervasive, such as a baby's handprints in the cake and 'the house [itself] pitching' (Morrison 2007, 21). Even the arrival of the ghost of Beloved is undramatic, marked only by Sethe's unusually immense need to pass water, when her 'water broke' (239), a metaphorical birth. These instances are effortlessly integrated within the novel, with the magic diffused 'among different figures, so that the magic circulates through ordinary activities' (Faris 2004, 121), making it appear as if these moments of magic are commonplace.

Centred around 124 Bluestone Road, the household is the conduit for the ghost's powers, merging the histor-

ically female domestic space with the magical, situating women at the centre of the supernatural. Moreover, Daniel Erickson (2009) argues that 'the spectral figure is not used as an ornamental or antirealist gesture, but instead underpins the entire narrative and its thematic structure' (16). The unique form of the novel creates multiple narratives around the climactic revelation of Beloved's murder in the middle (a kind of centre) of the novel. The circle Sethe constructs in the kitchen around the subject of Beloved's death, which Paul D confronts her with, mimics the circle constructed by the multiple narratives in the novel describing their realities. Morrison places Beloved's death, memory and ghost at the centre of the circle of narratives to convey the essence of Sethe's trauma. However, importantly, Beloved is an absent centre as she is both there and not, real and unreal, human and inhuman. The central figure of the story is not Sethe, or Denver, but rather Beloved, 'the murdered, not the murderer' (xii), representing one 'who lost everything and had no say in it' (xiii).

The disjointed narrative where the concept of time is renegotiated is closely tied to the memory of trauma that is clouded and difficult for the victims to recall. In *Trauma Fiction,* Anne Whitehead (2004) argues that 'the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms' (3). It is only through the slow reveal, the oscillation from past to present and the disjointed accounts from numerous characters, none of which are prioritised over another,

that an understanding of the infanticide can occur. The multiple narratives provide the 'essence' of the communal slave experience that Morrison is attempting to convey. In *Beloved*, memory is given a physical dimension where it can be witnessed even by those whose memory it is not. Sethe explains this to Denver, describing a scene where, '[s]omeday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But not. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else' (43); it is simultaneously a personal and communal memory. Winslow (2004) argues that '[a]lthough a traumatic event may happen to large groups of people, it always happens to each person–to each body, mind and spirit' (608). Sethe falls into the trap of thinking that with Paul D's arrival, '[h]er story was bearable because it was his as well—to tell, to refine and tell again' (Morrison 2007, 118). However, her story is specifically female and her own and cannot be told in tandem with Paul D's.

Memories, or rememories, are described as entities of their own that act out the pervasiveness of trauma and the difficulty to distinguish whose trauma it is in the case of widespread atrocities like the inter-generational trauma of slavery. The altered temporal dimensions of trauma in the novel reflect the hybridity of past and future, where the present is a space in between where the trauma can be redefined for the future. For Sethe, 'the

future was a matter of keeping the past at bay' (51). The arrival of Beloved's ghost forces Sethe to confront the past and create a narrative about the trauma on her own terms. Cathy Caruth (1996) defines trauma as something registered but not experienced, as it overwhelms the person who goes through it (4). The constant presence of memories and ghosts manifesting in physical spaces, like Beloved in 124 Bluestone Road, are examples of the confusion of notions of time and space and, therefore, of realism. The alteration of time is similarly representative of the characters' inability to confront their traumas directly, instead circling the issue through the narrative structure which alternates from past and present.

Notably, Sethe's perspective during the description of the murder is non-existent until closer to the end of the novel. Rather, it is told through the eyes of the schoolteacher who viewed her and other slaves as '*creatures* God had given [him] the responsibility of' (emphasis my own, Morrison 2007, 176). His denial of humanity in comparing slaves as animals further emphasises the horror of the white perspective that sees infanticide only as a gruesome horror rather than the reaction to unspeakable trauma that it is, nor their hand in it. This is furthered by their ability to provide an explicit description of what they witness, making it clear that are unaware of the action being a consequence of trauma. As the events of trauma are unspeakable, the voices of those experiencing it are lost in their inability to describe it. Hence,

their healing and reclamation of their voice from that trauma must be achieved without a direct explanation of the event itself. The narrative is about what is yet to come, the hope of a redefined sense of self away from the imposed dehumanisation by white slave owners.

Who is Beloved?

Beloved uses magic specifically in the form of a ghost to depict the indescribable effects of trauma. Moreover, Beloved is a catalyst for partial healing from trauma. Beloved's physical manifestation is the representation of the effects of trauma; she is the 'literalization of the haunting past' (Bast 2011, 1070). Ghosts, say Bennett and Royle (2009), 'are paradoxical since they are both fundamental to the human, fundamentally human, and a denial or disturbance of the human, the very being of the inhuman'" (160). As a ghost, Beloved is both real and unreal, human and inhuman. The tension between the real and unreal in magical realism complicates notions of reality and Beloved's ghost is fundamental to that complexity. Erickson (2009) argues that 'while it is clear that we are reading about a ghost, it is referred to as if it were the reification of externalized sentient emotion, extended into physical space' (18). This becomes clearer when Beloved's ghost is revealed to be constructed from a combination numerous of intergenerational traumas and the emotions of a spiteful, murdered baby girl compound into a single entity.

The ghost of Beloved is both the manifestation of Sethe's personal trauma from killing her child to save her from the hands of the slave owners and the collective trauma of slaves who suffered the 'middle passage'. The birth of Beloved's ghost is a consequence of past and present meeting and becomes both the hope for healing and reconciliation and the risk of traumatic repetition. Prior to Paul D's arrival, she is the spirit of a baby haunting 124 Bluestone Road. However, Paul D brings with him the memory, and the trauma, of Sweet Home. The disembodied chapters narrated in first person by Sethe, Denver, and Beloved (also referred to as 'lyrical chapters') describe Beloved's return to the world of the living after inhabiting the traumatic memory of being on a slave ship. Beloved describes the state of past and present playing out simultaneously where she states,

> I am not separate from her [Sethe] there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too a hot thing All of it is now it is always now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too (Morrison 2007, 248)

The lack of periods and the blank spaces indicate a collective stream of consciousness, highlighting the effects of intergenerational trauma. Denver recognises that Beloved is not only her sister, noting that 'at times I think

she was–more' (314). With both Paul D's return into her life and Beloved's appearance, Sethe is given no choice but to confront the memories of her suffering and those of her ancestors. The passages emphasise that trauma cannot be captured through language and its limitations of grammar and expression. Both kinds of trauma are sustained and felt across generations and time and are beyond language and realism. Beloved represents slaves of different generations at all times.

The story is about Beloved's death, the very state of no longer being. Whether or not she returns as a ghost, she will always be outside the world of the living, breaking the boundaries between life and death. She is trauma personified, and 'fill[s] herself up with her mother's energies, drained her of her mix of love and guilt, and prevented her from realising her own self worth' (Wisker 2014, 270). Sethe's self-worth is tied with her decision to murder her children and struggles to recall that her decision was that of a mother and not, as everyone else sees it, that of an animal. The manifestation of Beloved's ghost allows the trauma to be described, as she is not a part of the world of the living, and additionally allows it to be felt as unambiguously Black and female, representing those who lost everything.

Intersectional Healing

The trauma Beloved represents is specifically a Black, female one that recalls violations of the female slave's

body and the consequences to their children. The lyrical passage in which Beloved's ghost describes the slave ship recounts the state of being one of the older women on the ships and subsequently being a woman who would have been about the age of Beloved had she survived. She is simultaneously woman, child, and baby. Moreover, by the end of the novel Beloved has 'taken the shape of a pregnant woman' (Morrison 308), implying that she has transcended from child and sister to mother. She is all women, in all different states, just like she is past and present simultaneously. The product of her presence is to revise the history she is born from, critiquing the events that created the trauma. Beloved's presence is the catalyst for the atonement and reconciliation of mother and daughter and the female community.

The community of women, who become Sethe's saviours, share the burden of her trauma as a mother and a former slave. When Beloved is exorcised, it is, 'the community's shared belief in magic that enables them to save Sethe from its negative effect' (Foreman 1995, 299). Beloved represents a past that would not let go of Sethe and could not be ignored by the community who, led by Ella, 'didn't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present' (Morrison 2007, 302). Where Baby Suggs' preaching had once brought the community women together in the forest clearing for another kind of magic, Beloved now brings these women together again to repair the divide her death initially brought.

The link between mothers and daughters is emphasised as their trauma is shared between them. Faris (2004) argues that 'the healing power of narration is celebrated in the lyrical passages where Sethe and Denver and Beloved speak their own histories' (203), solidifying the relationship between them:

> You are my sister
> You are my daughter
> You are my face; you are me. (Morrison 255)

It is a realm where speaking is not required. Nevertheless, Sethe demonstrates growth whereby she imagines explaining her actions to Beloved, whereas she had previously resigned herself to the belief that no one would understand. Similarly, earlier in the novel, Beloved causes Sethe to remember knowledge she had forgotten like that her mother experienced the transatlantic slave crossing first-hand. In these moments, she simultaneously experiences both the grief of being a daughter and losing a mother, and of being a mother who loses her daughter. Denver similarly feels the effects of Beloved's return and subsequently Sethe's guilt and shame, further emphasizing that the suffering of the mother is felt by the child. Though she cannot talk about her past without feeling pain, Sethe is surprised to find that she has an urge to do so to Beloved. When Sethe is able to finally recall memories of the murder, 'what it took to drag the teeth of that saw under the little chin; to feel the baby

blood pump like oil in her hands' (295), it indicates the beginning of her healing from that trauma. It is through the reconciliation that begins with Beloved's manifestation and continues with the physical and emotional connections between Beloved and Sethe that Sethe is able to articulate personal narratives she was previously unable to voice. The physical reunion of all three women allows for partial healing of the atrocities they have suffered through acknowledgment of the events rather than their suppression.

Conclusion

Beloved demonstrates how magical realism is a crucial tool to articulate historical intersectional identities that have been suppressed or ignored. Magic in Beloved articulates a subjective voice of the experience of female-based violence and trauma during slavery. Sethe's trauma arises from the dual oppressions of race and gender and her healing from that trauma is similarly an intersectional experience, supported by a community of intersectional women where a belief in some form of magic is inherent in their culture. Magical realism represents a new way in which to portray their experiences, which takes into account their culture and beliefs, embedding it directly into the narrative form. The story Morrison tells aims to find within the traumatic history of slavery a specific narrative for Black female history. It is a narrative of trauma and healing, but most importantly about articu-

lating a suppressed and ignored narrative from the indescribable, where the Black body can take ownership of their body and actions, just as, Sethe takes back control of the narrative of her body from the slave owners.

Beloved uses magical realism to rewrite, articulate and create narratives of intersectionality to, not only acknowledge their importance, but additionally to accurately portray the complex realities of those facing compounded oppressions. The novel demonstrates the potential to describe complex realities by developing our reading of traditional forms of literary genres, such as magical realism, to coincide with developments of identity politics. Moreover, ignored and suppressed voices cannot be acknowledged solely with a subscription to literary realism without recognising its complicity in the suppression of marginalised and intersectional voices. Hence, magic, which inherently defies the rules of realism, can reveal the fiction of the dominant discourse and construct accurate narratives of complex intersectional narratives. In using the term 'intersectional magical realism', which I have defined as magical realist fiction that uses magic in a world rooted in realism to present an opportunity for unspecified intersectional identities to be explored without disbelief and/or resistance, I have emphasised how magical realism sets up the environment in which new conceptualisations of gender, race, sexuality, class and identity can be imagined and represented.

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Review of Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb's, Epidemic Empire. Colonialism, Contagion and Terror 1817-2020*, The University of Chiacago Press, 2021, pp.396. ISBN-13: 978-0-226-739496 (paperback).*

Vincenzo Maria Di Mino

The medical field and the imagery associated with it, have cultivated a fruitful relationship with political power, both as elements composing the various doctrines of sovereignty, and as fundamental articulations of the government's activity of management and control of populations.

Clearly, the porous relationship between health and administration is what determines the very status of power, in a continuous exchange between exception and normality: the emergence of illness, in fact, is what allows power to redefine its regulatory powers, to limit, neutralize and categorize it, thus making it governable (or to exorcise the spread of harmful effects). In the context of the colonial archive, much more intensely, the evocation of disease, as a medical and social issue, was the device used to mark the distance between the center and the peripheries of the empires, and to stimulate those specific pedagogical, or 'orthopedic' practices to civilize the colonized.

Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb's powerful and challenging study *Epidemic Empire* brings into focus the political, cultural and historical effects of this relationship. The book proposes an interesting re-reading of the Foucauldian concept of *biopolitics*, comparing the different gradations assumed by epidemiological and immune metaphors in specific colonial and imperial events and domains: British India, Algeria during the war of national liberation (thus with France as a counterpart), the United States and more generally the West after 9/11, within the folds of the global wars on terror and their effects. The metaphorical epidemiological code, according to Raza Kolb, enables to inscribe revolt and counterinsurgency movements in historical and cultural registers, as an excess with devastating effects in terms of stability and multi-

plication (14). The logistical dimension of mobility associated with epidemics and diseases, in these narrative patterns, is racialized, hence associated with a specific typology considered inferior in racial (and obviously class/gender) hierarchies; the effects of the spread of rebellions/diseases are the real objects of police or military operations, and disciplinary/humanitarian interventions. To look at the current situation, the catastrophic Covid-19 epidemic has 'militarized' public discourse on prophylaxis and prevention measures, accentuating the war dimension of the medical issue (Biden), or, as in Italy, entrusting the management of the emergency to an army officer. The central enjeux of the scholar's work, which runs throughout the book, is the association of the epidemiological code with a specific geographical location, the East, and a specific religious belief, Islam, constructed as elements capable of corroding the political structure and corrupting the cultural basis of Western culture.

The first section of the book (the first three chapters) deals with the construction of this device along the axis between the Indian Subcontinent and Britain, discussing the impact of the virality of radicalism and its material and discursive transformations along imperial routes. The first part of the analysis highlights the importance that media and political discourses attribute to the passivity of populations complicit with Islamic terrorism, depriving them of the disposition to act and portraying

them as prey to a contagion. Raza Kolb, through Guha's historical writings, underlines how the deprivation of the agency of the insurgent or revolutionary masses is one of the effects of the counter-insurgency prose, by which they are naturalized and therefore reduced to ordinary phenomena (38-42).

In this sense, the neutralization of the effects is symptomatic of the greater fear of contagion that they may unleash. This aspect is deepened through the examination of R. Kipling's 'Kim': in this story, with a linguistic register that the author considers fully inserted in the colonial order of discourse, the characters associate the peasant revolts with a Plague, to which Kim himself is exposed, but by virtue of his 'white' origin, he manages to escape and fight it.

The second part deals with the spread of cholera in nineteenth-century London, highlighting its ambivalent nature as a cultural construct and a health problem. In this case, the historical observation made in the eastern colonies is connected to the first medical-epidemiological analyses carried out in the metropolis (Kennedy's), and this leads to the logistical dimension, in this sense purely commercial and capitalist, of the disease. The origin of the disease, associated with Hindu and Muslim religious pilgrimages, spread through the movement of the faithful, and even touched the port hubs of capitalist circulation, so as to bring the disease to the heart of

the empire (64-70). The localization of the origin of the disease allowed scholars of the time to associate it with the increasing poverty of the indigenous populations and thus with the intrinsic poverty of the inferior races, with a twist in the language that could easily shift from the medical to the military register and vice versa. Thus, in the third part of the analysis, the literary construction of monstrosity in the Romantic era is connected to the ubiquity of danger, bringing to fruition what Raza Kolb calls 'circulatory logic'. Stoker's vampires, in fact, under the horror of existence, hide the fear of a shadowy and liquid enemy, invisible and therefore able to take possession of both the individual and the collective body, thus materializing social danger. Further, the capitalist dream of the transformation of every commodity into monetary abstraction culminates in the search for a sanitary and political immunology, transfigured through a clinical gaze attentive to catching the pathologies and preventing their spread (122). The anthropomorphization of danger in the figure of the vampire is characteristic of a particular social imagery for which the bite of the vampire is, at the same time, contact with absolute otherness (as in the classic Orientalist script), and the vector of transmission of possible infection.

The second section of the book is devoted to an analysis of Algeria and the struggles that pitted the Algerian population against the French army and the colonized. This series of events, spread over a handful of years,

in which the FLN- related groups did not hesitate to make use of armed struggle in the big cities and guerrilla warfare in the desert and mountains, were ideologically used by French official public discourse to organically link political struggle and religious faith. As a result, the desire for self-determination was interpreted as Islamic fanaticism, as evidence of a disease of civilization that had to be eradicated. Narrowing down the historical focus en passant, before delving into the author's analysis, it is useful to recall President Sarkozy's statements during the riots in the Parisian banlieues in 2006, when he called the protesters '*racaille*', raising the suspicion of a religious matrix of the uprisings. Raza Kolb initially tackles one of the most important philosophical literary works of existentialism, *La Plague* by Albert Camus, proposing an innovative reading. For her, in fact, between the lines of Camus' existential emptiness lies a deeper horror for the Algerian colonial dimension, his homeland, which the French author experiences as an ambiguous and suffered relationship. The plague is the metonymy of the disaster and catastrophe of the desire for independence, and not just a mere epidemic taxonomy (134-135). In fact, Raza Kolb underlines how the colonial dominions were the spaces in which the French administration experimented with the emergency management of mass health problems (P.Rabinow, in an important study, delved into the construction of colonial hygienism as the basis of French normativity). Oran, the city in which the novel is set, is a divided city, in which

the spread of the plague is a literary metaphor for the terror of the concrete manifestations of the Muslim population. Moreover, the inertia of the subjects represents the author's indifference to the condition of the colonial cities, and the ontological crisis as Camus' own inability to choose a side (150-155).

The metaphor of the infection, in fact, is easily displaced in the military jargon of the counter-guerrilla, and is reinforced by the derogatory term '*brown*', which alludes both to the color of the skin and to the dehumanization and destructiveness of the Plague (160). Camusian rejection of the violence of the colonized, according to the author, led him to turn a blind eye to the violence of the French army, and consequently to defend the superiority of colonial civilization.

Continuing the discourse in the second section, Raza Kolb starts with G. Pontecorvo's important film *The Battle of Algiers*, as a plastic representation of the molecular nature of the struggle, also involving women, and cleary showing, at same time, the physical dimension of the French army's reaction, with the scenes of torture of militants or citizens. These scenes, in fact, represent what was materially for the military the infected body, the pathology of a society in the grip of revolutionary fever, and the surgical need to remove it (173). This analytical frame is linked both to Fanon's writings on medicine and the colonial gaze, and to the true story of Djami-

la Boupacha, a woman tortured by the French army. Fanon's reflections, in fact, traced back to the gaze of the colonized the first form of recognition of the latter, in a negative form, which then becomes the psychological and material process of elimination of the colonizer. In this context, the medical gaze combines both the inferiorization of the observed body and the sexual desire to possess it, so as to justify the violation of female bodies. For the Martinican revolutionary, the refusal of Algerian women to remove their veils in the presence of the doctor becomes the symbolic representation of the irreductibily of the desire for liberation, contagious and collectively experienced (188-192). The story of Boupacha's violence, is symptomatic of the double violence of the colonial mentality - psychological and erotic/sexual – and treacherously hides the victimization of Muslim women, who, meta-historically, always need preventive salvation, and a cultural over-representation that paradoxically removes the reasons of their suffering (203).

The third part of the book is concerned with contextualizing epidemic metaphors within the contemporary emergencies of Islamic fundamentalism, jihad, and Western military and cultural responses in the name of freedom. This dualism has run parallel to the rise of neoliberal globalization, which, as some theorists point out, has structured itself through an imperial hierarchy that fuels the exploitation of former colonial domains, and those of the Global South. Primarily, Raza Kolb's

criticism is directed towards Salman Rushdie's fiction, interpreted as '*postnational allegory*'.

The Indian writer, victim of a fatwa by the religious authorities, uses the imaginary community of '*Selfistan*' in his novel *Shalimar the Clown* as a metaphor for the internal struggles of post-colonial states, whose fragility is represented by the ambivalence between being the sacrificial object of religious violence and, at the same time, being the subject who exercises violence (the situation of Kashmir is the object of Rushdie's analysis). In this sense, he interprets the Muslim religion as a metastasis capable of worsening existing tensions, radicalizing populations and driving them to violence against the infidel (211-213). Once again, the phenomena of social radicalism are represented in medical and religious form, as expressions of a Manichaeism functional to the description of human nature as 'cruel and unaccountable' (222). The metaphorical transfiguration of the terrorist tragedy, an element of a cancerous nature, is the simulacrum of this order of discourse. The viral dimension of the terrorist epidemic requires a securitarian cure, both in terms of social immunization and collective self-immunization, reinforcing the image of a cancer that assaults the social body globally, and the immunity of the singular body as a protection and limit to the disease (236). Clearly, the narrative imagination of this post-colonial geography necessitates the constant prevention of the violence of Islamic radicalism, and refers to the construction of a white and purely intellectual cosmopolitanism.

The last part analyses the Anglo-American reactions to the traumas of 9/11, highlighting how the different ghosts of biopolitics, from *immunization* to *thanatopolitics*, are actually reactions to the interpretation of Islamic terrorism as a virus and as an absolute enemy, which must be destroyed. The epidemic phenomenon, for the strategists of the preventive war, is, in fact, the most suitable to describe the trans-national diffusion of the Islamic militancy (259). In this sense, the accentuation of the medical and epidemiological dimension of the military intervention hides the physicality of the shock of the population, both the western population and the population being bombed, who are, in particular, completely deprived of the ability to express themselves. Even more than the crude images of Pontecorvo's film, the annihilation of Muslims, first moral, with the denial of their cultural and religious identity, and then physical, of which the photographs of Guantanamo were only the iceberg (not counting the black sites and extraordinary renditions), have made visible the costs of war operations in the name of global health. Against the imperial epidemiology and the cruelty of jihad, post-colonial writings, playing on the registers of rhetorical figures, try to disassemble the canons of both narratives, putting at the core both the subversion of bodies (as Raza Kolb partially acknowledges in Rushdie) and the positive circulation of minor and marginal languages.

To conclude, we must return once again to the present day. The hunt for *Islamo-gauchisme* in Europe, in fact, re-

inforces the critical power of this important study, and pushes readers and scholars to follow the path indicated by the author: opposing the political use of medical language, within a global catastrophe, means deconstructing the divisive and racializing categories of common sense. In this sense, the *Derridean* concept of *auto-immunity,* evoked in the book, is useful for manifesting the power of the '*openness*' of the living as a collective praxis, for attacking the different forms of immunization that permeate social formations.

Review of Dastarkhwan: Food Writing from Muslim South Asia, *edited by Claire Chambers, Beacon Books, 2021, pp 200, ISBN-13: 978-1912356614 (Hbk), £ 22.95, $32.37.*

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Dastarkhwan: Food Writing from Muslim South Asia (2021) is a collection of Anglophone essays and stories assembled under the central assertion that food is intrinsic to the fabric of South Asian Islamic communities, metaphorically embodied by the collection's title, which refers to a tablecloth spread before a meal. The collection is edited by Claire Chambers (2021), who describes its various fictional and nonfictional contributions as universally ap-

pealing, differing from the "issue-based or problem-centred topics Muslims are often expected to write about" (xxii), and contends that *Dastarkhwan* presents a variety of experiences that defies monolithic representations of Muslim identity. Indeed, the authors collected in this text are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir, the US and the UK, and the thematic threads which span the eighteen pieces range from the most ubiquitous-- identity, love, death, religion, gender, and nostalgia-- to the most food-specific-- leftovers, food waste, or hunger.

Part essay collection, part anthology of fiction, part cookbook, *Dastarkhwan* often blurs the lines between the genres it is positioned within. Its opening, a series of epigraphs from Mohsin Hamid to the Quran, promises a conventional literary collection, but the following page, several measurement tables including conversions from Imperial to Metric to US cups, both reflects the wide audience of the text and reveals its hybrid nature. The collection begins with an "Appetizer" forward by Bina Shah, a highly topical, wisely conversational introduction by editor Claire Chambers, then moves into "Part One: Essays" and "Part Two: Stories," with a "Dessert" afterward by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley rounding out the culinary-literary contents. Each chapter is followed by a recipe, ostensibly supplied by each author, such that dishes mentioned in the text's body can be reproduced by readers at home.

Though individual perspectives vary across the collection, topics reappear regularly, lending a sense of cohesion to the project. Of these, the relationship between gender and food is the most commonly broached, in essays and stories alike, with authors from Claire Chambers to Nadeem Aslam, Rana Safvi, Sauleha Kamal, Kaiser Haq, Asiya Zahoor, Farah Yameen, and Sophia Khan all entering the conversation. They consider the ways women develop unique culinary styles (Aslam, "The Homesick Restaurant"), or the still-common practice across South Asian religious traditions of serving the patriarch first (Safvi, "Qissa Qorma aur Qaliya Ka" and Yameen, "The Night of Forgiveness"), or the ways in which cooking, "as a largely female occupation" traditionally, "has not been associated with power" (Kamal 2021, 19) despite the control inherent to deciding what another person will consume. Though South Asian women traditionally have been involved in every stage of food production-- from sowing seeds and tending crops, to harvesting, preparing, cooking, and serving-- there remains a scholarly inattention to issues related to women's experiences necessarily raised by discussions of food and hunger within postcolonial literature. *Dastarkhwan* is a notable exception.

This consistent meditation on gender almost necessarily leads to another one of the collection's major themes: nostalgia. As authors, such as Bina Shah, Farahad Zama, and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, reflect on the way food

transports one to a particular time or place, they are simultaneously reminded of the mothers, aunts, grandmothers who prepared the food of their memories. Essays and stories oscillate between desire for crystalized tradition and childhood nostalgia, as is the case in "The Homesick Restaurant," by Nadeem Aslam, to those which emphasize the adaptability of cuisine, such as Sarvat Hasin's "Stone Soup," without landing on any single conclusion about the role of food in South Asian Muslim culture or writing. In their ruminations on food-infused memories, these authors join the existing dialogue perhaps first demonstrated by Salman Rushdie's (1981) chutnification of memory in *Midnight's Children*, which later manifested as food memories of the homeland--tortillas, menudos, and tamales-- in Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and was further theorized in food-centric monographs such as Sidney Mintz's (1996) *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom* or Anita Mannur's *Culinary Fictions,* whose first chapter "Culinary Nostalgia" highlights women as arbiters of national consolidation of food nostalgia (2010, 30). This is to say, *Dastarkhwan* contributes to the dialogue surrounding nostalgia, a long-standing one in both postcolonial and food studies, whose multivalent contributions are relevant for scholars of either field.

Most pieces included in *Dastarkhwan* are characterized by realism. While this is to be expected in the essay section of the anthology, where the mode of writing re-

quires verisimilitude, many fictional pieces also remain firmly ensconced in realistic representations. A large portion of the stories might fall into psychological realism (Dastgir, "A Brief History of the Carrot") or social realism, (Zahoor, "The Hairy Curry"), but there are two memorable exceptions, "Hungry Eyes," by Sophia Khan and "The Origin of Sweetness," by Uzma Aslam Khan. The latter depicts a young woman who begins to travel through space and time after her father, a mithai shop owner, commits suicide. In each place she travels, Zulekha encounters food, such as condensed milk, almonds, cardamom, later revealed to be ingredients of her father's barfi recipe and, as she recreates the recipe herself, her time-traveling comes into focus as a profound connection with her lost father and her cooking both a registering of his death and ceremony in celebration of his life (Khan 2021). It is a message delivered by a slow drip of magical movement and is all the more poignant for its extra-realist genre elements. As two of the stronger fiction pieces in the collection, "Hungry Eyes" and "The Origin of Sweetness" stand a testament to what is gained not just when differing experiences are juxtaposed, but varietal genre features as well.

Dastarkhwan's strengths lie in its refusal to accept a single notion of Muslim South Asian identity, so often codified and enshrined in food. Some essays, as in the above example of nostalgia, productively contradict one another, and recipes range from the most straightforward

imperative style to those which read as extensions of the text's body. Some recipes also establish rules that others break: where Rana Safvi's "Qissa Qorma aur Qaliya Ka (All about Qormas and Qaliyas)" mandates that a garnish of coriander leaves must be "reserved for those dishes which use turmeric as an ingredient" (2021, 13), Tabish Khair's recipe flauts the prescription, garnishing a turmeric-less broth with coriander leaves (2021, 59). Approximately equal space is given to authors from India and from Pakistan (with an additional two from Bangladesh and one from Kashmir) which promotes Chambers' goal in presenting a variety of experiences by offering a regional selection, rather than one defined by national borders. Both the selection of voices and inconsistencies among them emphasize the heterogeneity of South Asian Muslim food traditions and leave room to extrapolate outward; as *Dastarkhwan* demonstrates that South Asian Muslim food is no monolith, essentialized notions of the larger geographic and religious community are similarly undermined.

Within the exception of the collection's accompanying materials, and one essay, "Jootha," by Tabish Khair--who cites both B.R. Ambedkar and Sidney Mintz, and broaches the underrepresented topic of "jootha," an untranslatable term whose meaning is perhaps closest to leftovers-- most contributions do not explicitly enter theoretical discussions within food studies. As such, it is likely to be more useful for those interested in the selec-

tions as primary texts. In fact, almost the entirety of the pieces included in *Dastarkhwan* are previously unpublished, marking a conscious, and refreshing, break from food anthologies such as *The Table is Laid: The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food Writing* (2007), or *A Matter of Taste: The Penguin Book of Indian Writing on Food* (2004), which tend to gather previously published, though often lesser known, works by well-known authors. Scholars of Postcolonial studies, of the Global South, and South Asian literature will take interest in themes of identity, domesticity, hunger, national identity, and questions of religious difference that pervade these newly minted pieces. If, as Tabish Khair identifies in "Jootha," "food has become a marker of South Asian fiction" and, to an extent, "is a marker of postcolonial fiction in general," *Dastarkhwan* should find a large audience indeed (52).

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(in order of appearance)

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