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THE INTIMATE ENEMY
LIMINAL
NATIVE AMERICAN
AGNOTOLOGY
OEDIPALIZATION
PALESTINE
OTHERNESS
GRAPHIC NOVEL
LAST DAYS OF CAFÉ LEILA
HOME
LETTERS OF TRANSIT
NABOKOV
EXILE
SAMRAT UPADHYAY
MAGIC REALISM
MEMORY
EXILE
MAGIC REALISM

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**LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
(LLIDS)**

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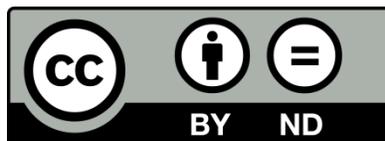
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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

Deeksha Suri

It is with great pleasure that I present the Spring issue of *LLIDS* as publishing an issue of any journal takes a lot of hard work from a team of efficient scholars – to sink its teeth into the task and sail through. As our journal is growing we are also getting better in understanding the nuances of present academic scenario along with its working. With this issue we have registered our journal under the Creative Commons license through which research scholars can access the articles published in the journal and use them for academic purposes, an affirmation of our research goal of making academic scholarship freely and widely accessible.

Our focus in the current issue is the theme of exile, titled ‘Rhetoric of Exile,’ that rigorously attempts to understand the questions of identity, belongingness, and withdrawal. Issues like the problems of exiled, homecoming, and effaced loss that are central to the core of these papers deal with both literal and metaphorical forms of exile. Russian exile’s tour of Berlin in Vladimir Nabokov’s short story *A Guide to Berlin*, for instance, expresses the exiled narrator’s experience and appropriation of space through subjective impressions. Beyond this rendition of physical displacement the concept of metaphorical exile is combatively argued through a study of lack of acknowledgment facing various works of art within their native context overcoming which requires a suppression of dominant conventions, practices, and assumptions.

The complexity of exile’s confessions, embodied within the liminal spaces of their works, do not respond only to intellectual thought but can also be experienced as a feeling of the displaced *other* in both social space as well as creative discontent. Our aim, through this issue, is to expand the scope of discussion upon the theme of exile as it finds its shape within varied rhetorical moulds of expressions and opinions.

It gives me immense pleasure to acknowledge the work of our authors, peer reviewers, editors, and advisory board members, whose efforts have been instrumental in bringing out this issue successfully. We would love to receive questions, comments, and disagreements from our enthusiastic readers!

Memory, Space, and Exile in Vladimir Nabokov's "A Guide to Berlin"

Marianne Cotugno

"What indeed! How can I demonstrate to him that I have glimpsed somebody's future recollection?"

So declares the exile-narrator at the end of Vladimir Nabokov's "A Guide to Berlin."¹ The speaker has just finished celebrating daily life in Berlin to a bar companion, who dismisses his observations, declaring the city boring and expensive. The paradox, "future recollection," expresses the narrator's belief that he will be remembered by a boy in the bar. The moment memorialized in this sentence follows the narrator's production of an exile's guide to Berlin; he maps geographical and social space in unusual ways that resist other efforts to define that space. The speaker's description of Berlin highlights, and works against, the German state's effort to produce space - to organize physical and social structures in society. The conflict between an individual's experience of space and its other, large-scale attempts to create and regulate experience, occurs throughout Nabokov's works, illustrates the exile's imaginative power to transcend collective efforts to control everyday life. This fiction appears during a period that includes the rise of the Soviet Union, the development of the Nazi regime, and the emergence of capitalism as a dominant social force in the United States.

Nabokov's own status as an exile seemed to energize and drive him. Even when he came to the United States, no longer under the threat of communism or Nazism, Nabokov could not bring himself to settle completely. Despite becoming a US citizen, he and his wife, Véra, never purchased a home in part because Nabokov felt he lost his one true home when he was forced to leave Russia. Nabokov's personal embrace of his exile status may help explain why the exile frequently occupies a powerful position in his fiction. Rather than being a site of marginalization, the exile status empowers the individual.

This power is connected with memory. Like Faulkner, Joyce, and many twentieth century authors, Nabokov expresses an interest in the workings and effects of memory; he offers a unique sense of the relationship between memory, space, and time. In works as diverse as *The Gift*, *Lolita*, *Pnin*, *Ada*, and his autobiography, *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov writes about having the sense of something in the present as it will be remembered. For example, in *Lolita* Humbert Humbert reflects, "So there was Charlotte swimming on with dutiful awkwardness (she was a very mediocre mermaid), but not without a certain solemn pleasure (for was not her merman by her side?); and as I watched, with the stark lucidity of a future recollection (you know-trying to see things as you will remember having seen them)" (86). Humbert's remarks overturn a common definition of memory as the present retrieval of past events, and thus disrupt typical temporal associations of memory. The quote, specifically the phrase "trying to see things as you will remember having seen them," draws attention to the effort Humbert makes creating this memory. In Nabokov's fiction, in the hands of the exile, future recollection, as well as other forms of memory, are a source of power for the individual, a means of constituting one's sense of self, or a means of resisting the organizing and often homogenizing powers of the state.

¹Maxim Shroyer notes the story was published in Russian as *Putevoditel' po Berlinu* in *The Rudder*, a leading emigre newspaper, on December 24, 1925 (78).

The line from “A Guide to Berlin” that opens this article raises several issues present throughout Nabokov’s fiction relevant to the rhetoric of exile: everyday life and how it will be remembered; memory as voluntary or involuntary; and memory as art rather than merely recalled experience. Memory often appears to be the product of a deliberate and artistic act, an attempt to constitute identity, as it is at the end of “A Guide to Berlin.” But it can also be an involuntary response, as it is at times for Luzhin in *The Defense* when being in a physical space triggers his remembrance of a childhood event. Regardless of whether memory is voluntary or involuntary, imagined or real, these experiences all function as a means of making sense of the world. As one critic notes, “The classical art of memory was not about mere remembering. It also was about organizing knowledge-of giving priority to some things, while consigning others to oblivion” (Hutton 381). Memory’s connection to the impulse to order suggests why an interest in the production of memory emerges from the desire to organize experience on both large-scale and individual levels.

Marcel Proust’s and Henri Bergson’s treatments of memory provide an important cultural context for Nabokov. Proust is well known for the concept of involuntary memory, epitomized in the *madeleine* incident in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. After eating a pastry soaked in tea, Marcel, Proust’s narrator, recalls eating the same pastry as a child, causing a flood of memories to return to him. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson presents two forms of memory, the first, habit-memory, and the second, pure memory. The past is:

...stored up...under two extreme forms: on the one hand, motor mechanisms which make use of it; on the other, personal memory-images which picture all past events with their outline, their color and their place in time...The first, conquered by effort, remains dependent upon our will; the second, entirely spontaneous, is as capricious in reproducing as it is faithful in preserving (Bergson 88).

Proust’s involuntary memory and Bergson’s pure memory are both spontaneous mnemonic experiences, privileged over more deliberate efforts to recall the past.

Nabokov’s fiction demonstrates a dynamic relationship to memory in response to cultural changes in the twentieth century. For many of his characters, the loss of homeland, specifically pre-revolutionary Russia, represents the greatest cultural change. He anticipates the work of Pierre Nora, who argues that the social and technological advances, which contributed to the growth of totalitarianism and capitalism in the world, have also changed our understanding of, and relationship to, memory. Nora’s discussion in the introduction to *Realms of Memory* separates people’s relationship to memory in terms of a premodern and modern age. The modern age is characterized by “the acceleration of history,” which is “[a]n increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear; these indicate a rupture of equilibrium” (7). For Nabokov, the rupture occurred when he was forced to leave Russia. Nora expresses nostalgia for a kind of memory, particularly, collective memory which he sees as gone, part of the premodern era. He asserts, “We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left” (7). Nora’s “it” is this collective sense or experience of memory.

According to Nora, in lieu of real memory, we have *lieux de memoire*, which “fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness” that “originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives”

(12). Nora seems to be asserting that we have lost the ability to experience the kind of memory valued by Proust and Bergson. Like Nora, Nabokov questions spontaneous memory, but does so because he believes there must be some mechanism for representing the mnemonic image. Nabokov's fiction argues that this mechanism, art, arises in response to other efforts to organize and regulate experience.

Part of experience is a sense of the past or history. Rather than one preserving the other, memory and history become opposed terms, according to Nora, who defines history as the way modern societies organize the past (8). Nabokov shares Nora's view that history is not absolute, but instead is subject to manipulation, especially by totalitarian governments. Nabokov explains:

We should define, should we not, what we mean by "history." If "history" means a "written account of events"...then let us inquire *who* actually, what scribes, what secretaries, took it down and how qualified they were for the job. I am inclined to guess that a big part of "history"...has been modified by mediocre writers and prejudiced observers. We know that police states (*e.g.*, the Soviets) have actually snipped out and destroyed such past events in old books as did not conform to the falsehoods of the present. But even the most talented and conscientious historian may err. In other words, I do not believe that "history" exists apart from the historian (*Strong Opinions* 138).

Nabokov recognizes that history can be defined in multiple ways, and is neither indisputable nor disinterested. History is the creation of those who write it. Nabokov's preferred sense of history is personal; it is not something to be recorded by one for the purposes of all. History, in Nora's view, acts to eradicate memory. "Memory is life," and is constantly changing, subject to remembering and forgetting; "history, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer" (Nora 3). Therefore, memory binds us to the present, and history connects us to the past. According to Nora, "Memory, insofar that it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic, responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection" (8). Nora's description suggests that memory is fragmentary and living, responding to the stimuli that surround it. These stimuli, in Nabokov's fiction, are large-scale efforts to regulate experience.

The struggle between the state and individual can be understood through the conceptual triad describing spatial experience that Henri Lefebvre offers in *The Production of Space*. The German state's efforts exemplify representations of space, the theoretical and practical divisions of space, such as urban planning, as well as rules and prohibitions governing experience. Typically, spatial practice, which includes people's daily routines, the seemingly logical ways of doing things, reinforces the goals expressed through representations of space. However, the narrator shows the conflict between individual behavior and the state, creating what Lefebvre calls representational space (Lefebvre 33, 38-39).

Memory sites respond to the modern age, characterized by the "the acceleration of history," which is "an increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear—these indicate a rupture of equilibrium" (Nora 1). *Lieux de memoire* call attention to deliberate efforts to preserve what has disappeared from everyday experience. In "A Guide to Berlin," the narrator attempts to

preserve the joy and beauty he experiences in daily life through his guide and his effort to share that vision with his companion.

These efforts in fiction parallel the very real threat Nabokov experienced from the communists and the Nazis. The state's presence may be indirect, as in "A Guide to Berlin," or cruelly present, as in *Bend Sinister*. Characters cannot merely flee these dangers, but must work within and against state-building efforts; they must produce alternative spaces that often function as memory sites, connections to a real or imagined past that helps constitute them as individuals. These alternative spaces become necessary when the individual senses one's world being encroached upon or even destroyed. Nora could be describing the situation of Russian émigrés living in exile in Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s when he asserts, "The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de memoire*-that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away" (12). Nabokov's fiction captures the émigré's sense of endangerment and near extinction as an exile as well as a struggle to preserve the self. In "A Guide to Berlin," the narrator's guide and revelation or realization is a kind of "commemorative vigilance."

The story opens with an unnamed narrator announcing he will tell his "usual pot companion" (155) what he finds "important" (155) to daily life in Berlin.² Initially, this piece seems to be a narrative of spatial practice, something that traces the typical routine of an exile in Berlin. We are made aware of his status as an exile in Berlin through details in the text, particularly when the narrator references his memories of St. Petersburg eighteen years earlier (157). What emerges from the narrative are representational spaces that function as memory sites, as the speaker imagines a counter-narrative about the networks of Berlin, represented by the story's five sections: The Pipes, The Streetcar, Work, Eden, and The Pub, where both men sit and drink. The narrator creates a private network using the markers of a public and state effort to organize space. He transforms state attempts to organize society into objects of contemplation and aesthetic pleasure.

The story is not a typical traveler's guide, but "a Russian exile's tour of Berlin," created with specific criteria in mind (Shrayer 76). In some sense, a survival guide, the narration illustrates how he sees beauty and order in the mundane routine of his life. The story highlights the transformative power of imagination and art as well as the relationship between space and memory, embodied in *lieux de memoire*. The speaker sees places like The Streetcar and Eden as vestiges of a lost, or soon to be lost, memory, and attempts to preserve them through his narration. Both are part of a shared collective experience of the sort that Nora sees as being eliminated by modern society. Later in the story, the narrator's failure to get his friend to see the beauty of daily life in Berlin reinforces Nora's contention about the loss of shared collective appreciation.

²Several critics have responded to this piece, noting its significance in the Nabokov oeuvre. Brian Boyd notes that "this story, apparently so unprepossessing, marks the boldest advance yet in Nabokov's art"(250). Maxim Shrayer has looked at this piece for "its insistence on guiding the reader through narrative space" (75). Another critic sees this story as demonstrating a debt to Flaubert, and illustrating Nabokov's interest in representing minutiae (Naumann 11). Explaining Nabokov's interest in the particulars of life, Julian Connolly asserts that the story is "Nabokov's most comprehensive statement about the value of remaining receptive to the everyday flow of life and of establishing channels of communication with external others" (27).

The speaker offers a definition of literary creation that helps understand how he uses the power of art to produce representational spaces that function as *lieux de memoire*:

I think that here lies the sense of literary creation: to portray ordinary objects as they will be reflected in the kindly mirrors of future times; to find in the objects around us the fragrant tenderness that only posterity will discern and appreciate in the far-off times when every trifle of our plain everyday life will become exquisite and festive in its own right: the times when a man who might put on the most ordinary jacket of today will be dressed up for an elegant masquerade (157).

The narrator's explanation links space and memory, because he envisions the role of the artist as someone who imagines how the future will remember the past. The artist *produces* memory. The use of the word ordinary indicates that the stuff of art comes from the everyday. The narrator also recognizes that most people do not view their daily lives as beautiful, because "only posterity will discern and appreciate" what the narrator sees as the "tenderness" in life. People have to be removed from their circumstances, not immersed in them, to appreciate the beauty of their surroundings. These lines suggest that one means of appreciating everyday life is to approach the world with an artist's mind, which the speaker's exile status facilitates.

In the first section, *The Pipes*, the narrator describes pipes stacked outside of his house, waiting to be lowered into the ground. He calls them the "street's iron entrails," (155) which little boys run up and down and crawl through. Comparing the pipes to internal organs indicates the importance of the pipes to the street, and by extension to the life of the city. These pipes will become part of an underground network, which perhaps will transport water or sewage throughout the city. The image also indicates that Berlin is a work in process, subject to the forces that Nora sees as creating the need for *lieux de memoire*. The boys' use of the pipes shows the disjunction between their literal or intended function, water distribution or sewage disposal, and their symbolic function as a site of play. The pipes are metonymic for a network that organizes society. Here they are not used for the purpose for which they are designed, that is, part of the machinery of spatial practice. The boys and the narrator turn the pipes into representational space by creating an alternate use for them.

As alternative spaces, they also become objects associated with aesthetic pleasure. The narrator delights in a correspondence between a name, "Otto," written in the snow on pipes laid in the street, and the physical appearance of "the silent layer of snow upon that pipe with its two orifices and its tacit tunnel" (156). Using both alliteration and assonance, the sentence is beautiful, poetic prose. The image of the pipe mimics the shape of the name's letters, something that the narrator, if not the name's writer, notices. The reader, nor the narrator, know who Otto is, but this does not matter. The name functions as an object of contemplation.

Like the pipes, the narrator's next point of focus, the streetcar, creates a network. If the pipes represent an underground system of transportation, the streetcar represents an above ground one. Nabokov knew Berlin's streetcars very well, because they provided him with transportation between his many pupils. As a means of transportation, the streetcar is a social space in the sense that a corner and marketplace are "terms of everyday discourse [that] serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute" (Lefebvre 16). Yet, the streetcar, like the pipes, causes the narrator to talk about something other than its intended use as transportation.

As representations of space, both the pipes and the streetcar represent attempts by the state to organize and order society. They also produce social space, by helping constitute people's identities through the social relations forged through that space. The narrator transforms these public networks, with utilitarian value, into a private network with aesthetic worth. Utility and aesthetics do not need to be opposed or mutually exclusive. The narrator's description of the streetcar does precisely what he defines as literary creation—note things others probably would overlook or find uninteresting. He describes both the physical space, the concrete characteristics of the streetcar, and social space, the relationship between the conductor, the passengers, and even the sometimes unsteady streetcar itself. In describing the routine he observes, the speaker calls attention to what Lefebvre calls spatial practice, the usually overlooked, but habitual behaviors that provide glue to existence. These behaviors constitute a spatial economy, which encourages and validates certain relationships between people in a space (Lefebvre 56). The streetcar runs a regular route every day. The physical space of the car encourages people to be physically close to one another, perhaps challenging one's sense of personal space. People who regularly ride specific routes at specific times may become familiar with each other, so the streetcar becomes a place to socialize. The passengers come to know each other in a particular context, so that they might fail to recognize each other if they passed on the street.

Rather than merely being the person who takes the speaker's money and gives him a ticket, the conductor becomes an object of contemplation for the narrator. His movements are described in great detail:

The conductor who gives out tickets has very unusual hands. They work as nimbly as those of a pianist, but instead of being limp, sweaty, and soft-nailed, the ticketman's hands are so coarse that when you are pouring change into his palm and happen to touch that palm, which seems to have developed a harsh chitinous crust, you feel a kind of moral discomfort...I watch him with curiosity as he clamps the ticket with his broad black fingernail and punches it in two places, rummages in his leather purse, scoops up coins to make change, immediately slaps the purse shut, and yanks the bell cord, or, with a shove of his thumb throws open the special little window in the forward door to hand tickets to people on the front platform (156).

This passage provides another example of how the narrator discovers the aesthetic in the utilitarian. The use of "chitinous," which usually describes a hard coating on insects, illustrates how the narrator uses a functional or technical term from entomology to describe an aesthetic experience. The fluidity and skill of the conductor's movement is reflected in the prose that describes him. Using active verbs ("clamps," "rummages," "scoops," "slaps," "yanks," and "throws") creates the sense of a seamless, nearly simultaneous action. In the narrator's description, this conductor, perhaps overlooked by most of his passengers, seems to be an artist of the mundane.

As a group, conductors symbolize both the state's increasing responsibility for its citizens, and the state's intervention in their quality of life. Conductors' work lives in Germany were improved by electrification of the trams and by the efforts of the German Empire's social welfare program. Typically, streetcar drivers were former horse-drawn tram drivers, whose workweeks then could be ninety hours long without vacation or health benefits. After the turn of the century, electric streetcar drivers had fewer work hours, and received health insurance,

pensions, and death benefits (McKay 229, 33). Although the conductor can be viewed as representative of state action and ideology, the narrator appropriates him just as he does the pipes; he is interested in the conductor's aesthetic quality, rather than his utilitarian value.

The narrator's nostalgic comment about how the streetcar will "vanish," and then be remembered echoes Nora's arguments about how we respond to what he calls the "acceleration of history." The passage states:

Some eccentric Berlin writer in the twenties of the twenty-first century, wishing to portray our time, will go to a museum of technological history and locate a hundred-year-old streetcar, yellow, uncouth, with old-fashioned curved seats, and in a museum of old costumes dig up a black, shiny-buttoned conductor's uniform. Then he will go home and compile a description of Berlin streets in bygone days. Everything, every trifle, will be valuable and meaningful: the conductor's purse, the advertisement over the window, that peculiar jolting motion which our great-grandchildren will perhaps imagine—everything will be ennobled and justified by its age (157).

The speaker seems aware of the same forces of technological progress that concern Nora. In talking about future responses to the streetcar, this passage illustrates the belief that people come to regard as quaint and intriguing what would otherwise be the most mundane aspects of life once these things are old. The Berlin writer wishes to reproduce space precisely and accurately; "compile" sounds emotionless and mechanical. The narrator seems more artistic and appreciative in his observations. Though this future writer will see nobility in what people today see as an unremarkable part of their routine, the speaker, when describing these same things, expresses the "tenderness" he associates with literary creation.

Additionally, in calling attention to the development of the streetcar from the horse-drawn tram, and the streetcar's eventual demise, the narrative alludes to a poorly studied, but important history, in which Berlin played a significant role. This aspect of spatial experience can best be described as representations of space, which includes the work of city planners, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and bureaucrats. The narrator, like Nabokov, who lived in the city during the time portrayed in the story, witnesses Berlin's part in a technological revolution in urban transit. Berlin was an overcrowded city, and the need for mass transit was obvious to its inhabitants.³ The development from tram to streetcar represents a major technological shift from horse-power to electricity, facilitated by the development of the dynamo in the 1870s, which provided cheap current (McKay 36). Germany electrified its trams most rapidly in Europe, and paved the way for additional innovation (75). About half of all the electric lines in all of Europe were found in Germany (73). Yet, even after the development of electric streetcars, horse-powered trams continued to be used in Berlin at the turn of the century, due to the incredible demand for mass transit.⁴ Understanding this history helps the reader better appreciate the social and cultural significance of the streetcar in Germany as an instrument of ordering space, but it does not explain the tram's and its conductor's aesthetic appeal for the narrator.

³ Werner von Siemens of Siemens and Halske of Berlin was an innovator in the late nineteenth century. In 1879, Siemens built a small electric line to carry visitors around the Berlin Industrial Exhibition, so that over five months, 86,000 people rode the line (McKay 37).

⁴In 1895, horse trams carried 164 million passengers; in 1901, electric trams carried 330 million (McKay 81).

While traveling on the streetcar, the narrator observes another image of Berlin as a work in progress:

At an intersection the pavement has been torn up next to the track; by turns, four workmen are pounding an iron stake with mallets; the first one strikes, and the second is already lowering his mallet with a sweeping, accurate swing; the second mallet crashes down and is rising skyward as the third and then the fourth bang down in rhythmical succession. I listen to their unhurried clanging, like four repeated notes of an iron carillon (157).

The city of Berlin, like many cities in Europe at this time, is being remade. These men, like the conductor, are state workers, and they also perform their task with the same dexterity. The narrator's prose conveys the effortlessness and rhythm of their actions, as he hears music in their labor, like the bells of a carillon.

As the city workers represent the state's ability to shape domestic space, the Berlin Zoo, the most important zoo in Europe,⁵ testifies to the state's ability to conquer and organize international space. A sign of imperial conquest and domination, zoos frequently displayed non-native animals trapped during colonial expeditions. Establishing zoos was a means of advancing an ambitious, prosperous, and strong national identity. Describing their purpose, the narrator explains, "Every large city has its own, man-made Eden on earth" (159). Eden calls to mind the mythic place associated with the Christian bible, which was supposedly a place of perfect beauty and harmony prior to the "fall" associated with the story of Adam and Eve. For some, Eden symbolizes a lost paradise. It might be an apt metaphor for exiles for whom their lost homeland represents a kind of lost paradise. The speaker laments, "The only sad part is that this artificial Eden is all behind bars," but notes that without these, "the very first dingo would savage me" (158). The necessity of constraints emphasizes that this is not the natural state of things, which the narrator recognizes. These trapped animals, prizes of colonialism, represent dangers that the state must control. This image of trapped beauty resonates with exiles' sense of their existence. *Émigrés* left their homelands for a variety of reasons—some were forced by circumstances that made it impossible for them to remain, others felt that in leaving their homeland, they might find a better life for themselves and their families. Some searched for a kind of Eden – a world before the "fall" of whatever forced them to leave. The bars that cage *émigrés* in their new lands are figurative but just as powerful: economic squalor, language barriers, and prejudice. What distinguishes the animals behind bars, from the *émigrés*, is the ability for the individual to transcend his figurative bars through art, which is precisely what the narrator does.⁶

Just as the narrator celebrates the appearance and actions of the conductor, he praises tortoises he sees at the Berlin Aquarium⁷ in descriptive, unusual terms:

⁵The Berlin Zoo opened on August 1, 1844 about one and a half miles west of Berlin. Under the direction of Heinrich Bodinus, the zoo gained great prestige in the late nineteenth century (Kisling 95).

⁶The comparison I make here seems especially appropriate when you know that in the late nineteenth century, zoos exhibited people as well as animals. Hagenbeck, of the Hamburg Zoo, had much to do with encouraging this vogue, by bringing a tour of African tribesmen and their animals throughout Europe. On October 6, 1878, 62,000 people visited the Berlin Zoo to see a group of Nubians from Sudan, along with their animals (Zuckerman 55-56).

⁷The Berlin Aquarium mentioned here is actually the second Berlin Aquarium. The first was established in 1869 and was in direct competition with the Zoo. It became known as the best aquarium in the world, but was shut down at the turn of the century. The Berlin Zoo soon proposed to build another Berlin Aquarium. A large building housed a

Oh, do not omit to watch the giant tortoises being fed. These ponderous, ancient corneous cupolas were brought from the Galapagos Islands. With a decrepit kind of circumspection, a wrinkly flat head and two totally useless paws emerge in slow motion from under the two-hundred-pound dome. And with its thick spongy tongue, suggesting somehow that of a cacological idiot slackly vomiting his monstrous speech, the turtle sticks its head into a heap of wet vegetables and messily munches their leaves. But that dome above it—ah, that dome, that ageless, well-rubbed, dull bronze, that splendid burden of time...(158-159).

The narrator's use of "corneous," a biological term used to describe a horny feature, echoes his earlier use of chitinous when describing the conductor's hands. A cupola is more apt to be used to label an architectural feature, but here functions as a metonym for the tortoise. The description seems to obscure what is being described, suggesting the importance of the aesthetic over the functional use of language. But why does the tortoise interest the narrator? The tortoise is an ancient animal, which can live for a hundred years. Earlier, the narrator noted developments in technology that caused the trolley to be obsolete, and will cause the streetcar to be as well. Unlike them, the tortoise seems unaffected by the passage of time. The narrator might also see a kindred spirit in the tortoise. Both are exiles in Berlin, and both are trapped; the bars that keep the tortoise are just more obvious than those that restrain the émigré.

After the narrator finishes his rhapsodic description of the tortoise, the drinking companion says, "That's a very poor guide...Who cares about how you took a streetcar and went to the Berlin Aquarium?" (159). Offering no response, the narrative continues to describe what the narrator observes in the bar. Despite his dismissiveness, the listener becomes intrigued by something that has caught the narrator's eye, asking, "What do you see down there?"(159). The story continues with the narrator, while describing his surroundings, noting the little boy, sitting in another room, down a passageway from the bar itself:

There, under the mirror, the child still sits alone. But he is now looking our way. From there he can see the inside of the tavern—the green island of the billiard table, the ivory ball he is forbidden to touch, the metallic gloss of the bar, a pair of fat truckers at one table and the two of us at another...Yet there is one thing I know. Whatever happens to him in life, he will always remember the picture he saw every day of his childhood from the little room where he was fed his soup. He will remember the billiard table and the careless evening visitor who used to draw back his sharp white elbow and hit the ball with his cue, and the blue-gray cigar smoke, and the din of voices, and my empty right sleeve and scarred face, and his father behind the bar, filling a mug for me from the tap (159-160).

This passage is not voiced; we are inside the narrator's mind. The speaker imagines how a detailed snapshot of life inside the tavern will be recalled by the boy. This epiphany is a product of the artistic exercise the previous sections, his guide to Berlin, represent. The narrator knows he will be remembered by the boy. Although the reader does not learn the narrator's name, the text provides more details about his physical appearance, which suggests something more about his identity, too. The speaker mentions his "empty right sleeve and his scarred face." He is not merely an outsider because he is an émigré, but because he is physically different.

Terranium and Insectarium on its upper floors and an Aquarium on its lower floor. It lasted for almost 30 years, destroyed by a direct hit from a bomb on November 23, 1943 (Zuckerman 56-57).

Although the story does not explain the cause for his disfigurement, the story's time period suggests that the narrator could be a veteran, and perhaps his injuries are war wounds. Nora describes *lieux de memoire* as fragmentary; because of his injuries, the narrator can be considered not quite whole too. Therefore, he exists as a living *lieux de memoire*, a reminder of a lost past. His lack of physical wholeness parallels his lack of a complete identity. The German state views their efforts to refashion the physical structures of society as a means of restoring German pride, but the narrator reminds those who see him that the state cannot entirely obliterate the remnants of the past.

Although the narrator shared his "guide" with his companion, he does not share this vision. The story concludes: "What indeed! How can I demonstrate to him that I have glimpsed somebody's future recollection?"(160). The phrase "What indeed!" responds to the companion's question, expressing frustration that his drinking partner, and the internal audience for his narrative about Berlin, cannot appreciate the world as he sees and describes it. Without this appreciation, no epiphany is possible.

Although the story's final moment marks an apparent triumph for the speaker, and the story celebrates his ability to see beauty in the everyday, the story does seem naïve in a number of ways. The story carries the reader along in its lyrical treatment of Berlin life, but much is absent from the narrator's vision. More significantly, his friend's failure to share his view represents a fundamental problem—what good is an artistic vision of the world if it cannot be transmitted and shared?

"A Guide to Berlin" shows the triumph of the individual, artistic mind in response to German state-building strategy following the disaster of World War I. Alluding to changes in the city brought about by the war, the story demonstrates the conflict between the ways the state attempts to organize social and physical space, for example, through the establishment of new transportation systems,⁸ and how individuals experience that space. Rather than being oppressive, this clash becomes a source of power and self-preservation for the émigré narrator. The story represents Nabokov's developing interest in how the individual subject, frequently an exile, can appropriate space through the imagination as a means of self-preservation in a world that threatens one's sense of self.

⁸For example, Mierzejewski's *The Most Valuable Asset of the Reich: A History of the German National Railway* details the development of the *Deutsche Reichsbahn* (German National Railway) and its role as an attempt to unite the country.

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Exiles in Our Own Land: Native American Novelists

Rachel Tudor

Today I couldn't handle the pain of being an American Indian—Melanie Fey (Dine); As Indigenous women writers and artists we are continually trying to exist, live, and love in a world that doesn't always show its love for us—Tanaya Winder (Duckwater Shoshone); Even during a time of reconciliation, Indigenous people are faced with having to defend their identities from being mocked, used as a trend or form of entertainment every single day—Jessica Deer (Mohawk); As an Indigenous person, I have to escape in order to survive, but I don't just escape. I hold this beautiful, rich Indigenous decolonial space inside and around me—Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) from #NotYourPrincess (2017).

Native Americans experience a sense of separation from other Americans because we fail to subscribe to the myth of America as an immigrant nation. Many of us live with a feeling of uprootedness because our people were relocated at gunpoint from our ancestral homelands and we often have to migrate to urban areas for employment. We experience a sense of foreignness when we try to explain our cultural values to our neighbours. In mainstream American literature and culture, we are always portrayed as the Other—from sensationalized “Captivity Narratives” to Frederick Jackson Turner’s paradigmatic “Frontier Thesis” to Hollywood’s *The Searchers*—Americans define themselves by their war against us.

Our sense of being exiles in our own land is institutionalized in American master narratives about nation, race, class, gender, language, and sexuality. Colonial and Neocolonial definitions of these fundamental ontological and epistemological concepts constitute a ubiquity of oppression by the dominant classes. Native American authors, however, have created a form of novelistic dialogue that challenge these dominant conceptualizations and expose them as mere forms of enforced cultural hegemony. In addition, Native American authors use the novel as a tool to facilitate their own affirming self-transformation and to gestate the seeds of self-transformation in fellow Native American readers while simultaneously welcoming non-Native readers to become “woke.”

The novel, as defined by Lukács, is the form of narrative that develops in a culture after "beauty" ceases to be "the meaning of the world made visible" (*Theory* 34), before the soul "knows it can lose itself, [before] it thinks of looking for itself" (30). Specifically, "what is given form [in the novel] is not the totality of life but the artist's relationship with that totality, his approving or condemnatory attitude towards it" (53). Unfortunately, authors cannot create a new totality with their words, "however high the subject may rise above its objects and take them into its sovereign possession, they are still and always only isolated objects, whose sum can never equal a real totality" (53). For Native Americans living in this locus (contemporary North America) and time (the present) "loneliness has become a problem unto itself, deepening and confusing the tragic problem and ultimately taking its place...such loneliness is...the torment of

a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community" (45). This is poignantly demonstrated in Native American authored novels by James Welch in *The Death of Jim Loney*, N. Scott Momaday in *House Made of Dawn*, Louise Erdrich in *The Round House*, Leslie Silko in *Ceremony*, and Thomas King in *Medicine River* among many others. In addition, Native American novels also often contain the characteristic quest motif, a hero who searches for meaning, for totality, that is no longer immanent (60). Significantly, the "problematic individual" and the "contingent world" are the hallmarks of the novel (78) as described by Lukács in general but particularly of novels by Native Americans.

According to Lukács, "The inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself...towards clear self-recognition" (80). And, "The immanence of meaning which the form of the novel requires lies in the hero's finding out through experience that a mere glimpse of meaning is the highest that life has to offer" (80). These characteristics sound remarkably like plot summaries of many contemporary Native American novels. Consequently, the real tension in contemporary Native American novels is between the integrating totality of our not too distant past, which is still a part of our living memory, and the fractured existence of our everyday lives. As a matter of fact, Leslie Silko's novels *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead* may even be termed "post-tribal epics," ala Giorgio Mariani, because they are tied to some other-world totality.

However, many Native American novels emphasize a historical component that allows the Native American reader to reflect on their lost homes and civilization as well as exposing the real causes of their unarticulated feelings of loss and alienation in concrete and tangible ways. Thus, allowing individual Native readers to become conscious of the true origins of their anomie. The resulting detachment from dominant cultural discourse enables Native readers to critique oppressive systems and critically reflect on their sense of self, self-worth, and liberate themselves from self-destructive ideation. Ideally, the "woke" reader will generate their own liberating counter-narratives from their own particular vantage point. Non-Native readers of indigenous novels will also be liberated from an irrational and ahistorical conceptualization of American civilization and be able to be full partners and friends in the land and conceptual space we share.

In order to understand Native American literature, it is necessary to be aware of and listen to Native American literary critics. It is not only counterproductive but also injurious to try to understand and explicate Native American literature using conventions, practices, assumptions, and techniques that have long served to oppress the very voices and narratives that constitute Native American literature. For example, non-Native literary critic Christina Patterson agrees with Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little Horse* that "clearly we are in the realm of magical realism; where the wilder reaches of Catholicism mingle with the hopes and dreams of a community whose traditions are in disarray and where the search for rigid classifications—saint, sinner, or miracle—is doomed to collapse in the face of messy reality" (9 March 2002). Well, she does get some things right: Erdrich's novel does address a community in disarray and her narrative does challenge the rigid classifications of the dominant society. However, the critical template of magical realism is anathema to understanding the text on its own terms. Magical realism is a form of literary criticism that colonizes instead of explicates.

To understand why magical realism is a form of literary criticism that colonizes instead of explicates, we have to take a look at its origin. While many articles and books have been written on the topic of magical realism, and some are not as racist as others, it is important to keep in mind that the atavistic origin of magical realism is found in a seminal text on the subject by Amaryll Chanady published in 1985. In *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, Chanady asserts that a dichotomous way of thinking is expressed in magical realism, which she juxtaposes as the so-called "primitive," "archaic" American Indian mentality and the mentality of the "erudite," "rational," "empirical," "super-civilization" of Europe.

Chanady's racist theory of narrative also assumes an exclusive white Western reader for magical realist narratives. White reader's sensibilities, she asserts, will not be challenged because "the reader considers the represented world as alien" and because of the "impossibility of complete reader identification in the case of a Magico-Realist work about American Indians" (163). She claims that "while the [white] reader accepts the unconventional world view [of the American Indian], he does so only within the contexts of the fictitious world, and does not integrate it in his own perception of reality" (163). In critical parlance, Chanady is referring to the focalizer in narrative. In magical realism, for example, the focalizer is European: "The Indians are the object, not the subject, of focalization" (35).

It is important to always ask, "Whose point of view is being expressed?" Chanady is correct to note who a reader is supposed to identify with but is in error in assuming that a non-Native reader will be unable to identify with a Native American character. In Native American novels "Indians" are the subjects, not the object, of focalization. Thus, it is erroneous to use the critical template of magical realism with its attendant racist suppositions to describe or interpret novels by Native Americans. As a matter of fact, the term "magical realism" may only accurately be used to describe a text about Native Americans authored by non-Indians and wherein the indigenous characters are presented as objects instead of subjects. As Mohawk author Jessica Deer writes in *#NotYourPrincess*, every single day "indigenous people are faced with having to defend their identities from being mocked, used as trend or form of entertainment" (Charleyboy 61).

M. Annette Jaimes' *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, suggests that denying the subject status of indigenous people is why acclaimed and Nobel Prize winning non-Native authors of magical realism (strictly defined according to Chanady's paradigm) have ignored and at times even facilitated the destruction of indigenous people and communities. How did Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez fail to note the destruction of indigenous communities by the Colombian government? Where are the crimes Mexico committed against indigenous people documented in Mexican writer Juan Rulfo's oeuvre? More damning is Guatemalan literary giant Miguel Ángel Asturias, who as an official of the Guatemalan government, participated in the razing of Maya villages. Many of Chile's Isabelle Allende's fans may be surprised to find her labeling the indigenous population of her country as "placidly evil" (430-2). Edward Said warns that the "fictional myopia of the real-life suffering of real-life people is simply a continuing white tradition" (55-62).

Although Chanady claims magical realism to be the product of the synthesis of the dialectical relationship between two civilizations, she assumes an exclusive non-Native audience and that Native people will be portrayed as objects, not subjects. In the twenty-first century these racist, unscientific, and irrational aspersions as a foundational theory of literature is simply unacceptable. Because of the inclusion of non-white, non-Western writers and scholars we now know that all people are capable of rational and irrational thought, rational and irrational behavior, and empirical and metaphysical reasoning. No longer may people and races be said to be stereotypically reduced to one or the other. In fact, Chanady's characterization of mental capabilities according to race may be characterized as not simply racist but racist and we cannot use a template based on assumptions about the superiority of one race and civilization over another to explicate Native American texts or non-Western texts. The template and the resulting interpretation are not only erroneous, but underpin dominant concepts that enforce a sense of exile and inferiority on Native American readers while reinforcing the non-Native readers' sense of superiority and dominance.

I am not proposing that we dismiss Western literary criticism in totality. Just as I am not suggesting that Native American storytellers reject the novel for more traditional forms of storytelling. For instance, some of Chanady's critical analysis is not based on race or presumed civilizational hierarchies and is, indeed, helpful. She writes: "The mystery of life does not exist in objective reality, but in the subjective reaction to and interpretation of the world...the amalgamation of realism and fantasy is the means to an end, and this is the penetration of the mystery of reality" (27).

A number of Native American literary critics have proposed a number of ways to really look (non-myopic) at indigenous novels. These are not, as a body of texts, a rejection of rigorous critique or shunning of the integration of scientific literary analysis. Indeed, they, like the Native American novel, are a syncretic cultural manifestation that is dialogical and original, a balm to the centuries-old injuries of the indigenous civilization currently sharing America. For example, Native American authors, storytellers and critics, generally share the mimetic school of literary criticism's view that literature has the power to heal and that moral values that create a sense of mutual care and responsibility through generating empathy and understanding of the cares and pains of other knowing selves are a necessary component of literature. It does this by embracing a realist and subjective aesthetic, the application of realistic historical and experiential sensibilities, and the careful listening for voices embedded in the narrative. Likewise, many Native American authors embrace the postmodern aesthetic of suspending disbelief, fabulation, and an intransitive form of writing inasmuch as it does not really resolve or come together in any finite or circumscribed way. In addition, the postmodern is multi-vocal and polyglot, rejecting any overriding single conception of reality or being in favour of a process of constant discovery and re-creation—a reflection of the incredible diversity of indigenous America.

Native American novelists embracing a spirit of constant discovery and re-creation is necessary for a revitalization of American literature. American literature and criticism are sorely in need of new points of views and ideas. As early as 1967 John Barth claims in his essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" that conventional forms, genres and modes, are "used up" and their possibilities exhausted. Unfortunately, his essay has been widely misinterpreted to mean that literature itself is exhausted. However, as he subsequently explained in his 1979—admittedly, a

long pause—essay, "The Literature of Replenishment," he simply means that new forms of writing, specifically what he terms postmodernist fiction, need to be developed. It is time to welcome America's indigenous authors to participate. Bakhtin wrote in *Formal* that "New means of representation force us to see new aspects of visible reality"(134). Unfortunately, Native American contributions have yet to be commonly accepted or used by non-Native scholars and rarely, if ever, used by mainstream book reviewers. And, how can Native American contributions to literature be fully appreciated if there is not a corresponding working theory of criticism by which to evaluate, interpret, and appreciate the texts?

Harold Schweizer's book *Suffering and the Remedy of Art* encourages authors and readers to reconsider the aesthetics of the novel. It is about "wounds that will not close despite the sutures, scarring, and bandaging, the patchwork and layering of literary technique" (1). Although Schweizer does not examine Native American literature per se, Native American novels demonstrate the power of his thesis. As he explains: "In the experience of suffering the ideology of objectivity, the claims of reason and knowledge, are called into question. Philosophical distinctions of body and spirit, sensation and intellect, the universal and the particular, the physical and the metaphysical, no longer apply" (2).

Also consider, for example, two novels by Pulitzer Prize winning author N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa): *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child*. *The Ancient Child* is the chronicle of a man's journey into madness, facilitated by a world of broken connections and other wounded people, particularly, a tragically wounded young woman, Grey. And, Abel, the protagonist in *House Made of Dawn*, is alone and silent at the end of the novel, just as he is at the beginning: "He was alone and running on... There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song" (Momaday, *House* 191). Abel may have the words to the song of healing, but pointedly he is unable to articulate them, the word remains unspoken. Many non-Native authors, however, remark on Abel and Set's respective triumphs—when the characters are, in fact, tropes of the idea that the average Native American can triumph in America.

Abel's (*House Made of Dawn*) and Set's (*The Ancient Child*) underlying problem is that they do not know who their fathers are and, consequently, do not know who they are either. Critics have long neglected the fact that the father is absent in almost every contemporary Native American novel, which, it should be noted, stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical American novel in which it is not the absent father, but a dominating father that is ubiquitous. Thus, *The Ancient Child* and *House Made of Dawn* are really novels of suffering, but not futile suffering if it awakens a reader's consciousness and conscience. Novels of suffering may perform their function of raising consciousness by reducing the "distances among writer, text, what is written about, and finally, the reader, [so they] all converge on a single point " (Lang xii).

N.Scott Momaday cites his mentor Yvor Winters' assertion that: "Unless we understand the history which produced us, we are determined by that history; we may be determined in any event, but the understanding gives us a chance" (Schubnell xvi). Schubnell describes Momaday's writing as "a way to create an understanding of self and history through language" (xvi). On another occasion, Momaday claims his "authority to write about the Indian world" is "based upon experience" (Isernhagen 52).

Native American authors often provide non-Native focalizers for non-Natives that embrace the universality of many of our experiences, particularly experiences of suffering. For example, Milly, in *House Made of Dawn*, is a fully-developed character with a voice and an attitude. In many ways she is the white, female equivalent of Abel. She has her own broken connections. Like Abel, she, too, has lost her father and mother and child (granting for the moment that Peter is Abel's child). She grew up watching her father "beaten by the land" and daily going into the fields "without hope," until the day he put her on a bus and told her goodbye, and she never saw him again (114-5). And, then she lost her four-year-old daughter, Carrie. As Schweizer explains, in his book's thesis "the experience of suffering the ideology of objectivity, the claims of reason and knowledge, are called into question." (2).

While there is truth to Schweizer's conclusion about suffering being universal, suffering is not necessarily individualized and ahistorical—it is also communal and historical. For example, the passage from the beginning of Louise Erdrich's (Anishinaabe) *Tracks* strikes a familiar chord with many Native Americans because it is part of our shared history:

We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall. It was surprising there were so many of us left to die. For those who survived the spotted sickness from the south, our long flights west...then a wind from the east, bringing exile in a storm of government papers...by then we thought disaster must surely have spent its force, that disease must have claimed all of the Anishinabe that the earth could hold and bury. But the earth is limitless and so is luck and so were our people once (1).

Likewise, Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) describes the phenomenon eloquently in her novel *Power*: "History is the place where the Spanish cut off the hands of my ancestors. The Spanish who laughed at our desperation and dying, and I wish it didn't but history still terrifies me so that I dream it in dreams with skies the color of green bottle glass" (73).

Unflinching realism is vital in Native American novels. It is only through realism that readers are able to "accept the concept of the complete human personality as the social and historical task humanity has to solve; only if we regard it as the vocation of art to depict the most important turning-point of this process with all the wealth of the factors affecting it; only if aesthetics assign to art the role of explorer and guide, can the content of life be systematically divided into spheres of greater and lesser importance" (Lukács 7).

According to Bakhtin a shared view of the world between author and reader, the realist aesthetic or verisimilitude, is then the underlying goal of all socially relevant fiction (135). Jessica Deer (Mohawk) writes, "the highly inaccurate and dehumanizing representations of Indigenous peoples in sports, on television, on the runway, or in costumes on the shelves of a Halloween store shape much of what people know and think about us...and that affects how society understands the real social, political, and economic issues we face" (Charleyboy 61). In other words, meaning matters for the author, the reader, and society. The question then becomes a matter of whose meanings and of what matters. Rodney Livingstone writes that for Lukács what we see is appearance, whereas the great novelist reveals the driving forces of history which

are invisible to actual consciousness (12). In other words, it is the author's job to enable the reader to see through the "veils of reification" that blind one's vision of one's true self and one's true relation to other selves.

Lukács's form of realism involves a genuine love for humanity and a thirst for life. For example, he writes that without "love for humanity and life in general, something that necessarily involves the deepest hatred for a society, classes and their representatives who humiliate and deform human beings, it is impossible for any genuinely major realism to develop" (*Essays* 148). It is also vital to remember that "the tremendous social power of literature consists in the fact that it depicts the human being directly and with the full richness of his inward and outward life" (*Essays* 143). In doing so, a good critic will, in Momaday's words, "enable us to better understand literature," and "show us things that we might not see for ourselves" (Isernhagen 58).

The type of realism that Lukács advocates and those Native American authors aspire to is impossible without including numerous authentic and embodied voices in the text. Bakhtin's term for this is Heteroglossia. Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan explains this concept in her poem, "Tear": "I remember the women/Tonight they walk/out from the shadows/with black dogs/children, the dark heavy horses/and the worn-out men/ They walk inside me. This blood/is a map of the road between us/I am why they survived . . . I am the tear between them/and both sides live" (Charleyboy 14). These voices, sometimes referred to by Bakhtin as languages, are the result of real, lived experiences, personal, communal, historical, that culminate in various particular world-views that are expressed in the words, syntax, metaphors, grammar, and tone of a speaking subject that is, more or less, conscious of his or her subjectivity, or beingness vis-à-vis other beings.

Native American novels are also frequently polyphonic. Polyphony is closely related to heteroglossia, even sometimes confused with heteroglossia. Polyphony refers to a plurality of consciousnesses (Morson 238), not simply languages. In addition, these consciousnesses represent the lived life experiences of embodied voices. Hunkpapa Lakota author Tiffany Midge expresses the concept this way, "When I think of a model of Indigenous womanhood, I immediately think of my mother: a woman who lost her own mother when she was sixteen, became a widow at twenty-one with a baby girl, and no education or prospects...I also think of my grandma Eliza, a woman who grew up dirt poor, who scraped out a living, her clothes threadbare through long, cold winters spent eating the same meal" (Charleyboy 67).

N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) explains a similar phenomenon as a process of learning, sometimes long after publication, "what's really going on" (Abbott 30). He explains: "When a man is writing, he is operating on two levels: he writes out of his consciousness and out of his unconsciousness. And very many times he will not, after the fact, know all about his writing" (30). He explains in a later interview with Gretchen Bataille that while writing there are things he understood "on one level and ha[s] come to understand on a different level and will again in the future understand on yet another level" (63). Along these same lines, Momaday consistently refuses to answer what happens to Abel after the end of the novel *House Made of Dawn*. His typical response is, "your idea is as good as mine" (Bonnetti 140): indicating that Abel has an

existence independent of the author which somehow occurs through the dynamic process of storytelling (Bonetti 131).

False consciousness or inauthentic voices are also a concern for Native American authors. For instance, Greg Sarris (Miwok) warns of his struggle with a false consciousness in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, a Fanonian (Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*) consciousness of internal colonization manifested through self-destructive behavior and self-loathing. Hayles worries that the "disintegration of the subject [authentic consciousness] will precipitate a crisis in representation which makes a traditional novel impossible to write" (*Chaos* 256). However, we should also keep in mind what Sholes notes in *Structural Fabulation*, "in its cognitive function, fiction helps us to know ourselves and our existential situation" (5).

The realism of Native American novels gives added poignancy to the so-called magical element which is not magical at all. As explained, use of the term 'magical', as opposed to the more accurate ascription of the considered use of postmodern sensibilities and strategies by Native American authors to subvert hegemonic cultural discourses in reference to Native American history, ontology, and epistemology, is fallacious and harmful. N. Katherine Hayles warns us that "theories about language which claim that it is free to be interpreted in any way whatsoever are the allies and precursors of state terrorism" (*Chaos* 126). Native Americans have a long experience with state terrorism and it is known as colonialism.

Critics who fail to make the distinction between magical realism and postmodern sensibilities fail to recognize the conceptual ecology of Native American novels. According to Stanislaw Lem a "conceptual ecology" is one in which within any given conceptual space, which he calls a topology, certain forms are facilitated while others are suppressed. The "particularities of history and personality determine which actually appear and which are repressed. All forms that are realized...are linked to each other by the common attributes that define the space" (Hayles, *Chaos* 185). The contemporary Native American novel is an emergent form and the product of a literary community with a common socio-historical experience and facing similar epistemological and ontological challenges to their survival.

Instead of labeling Thomas King's (Cherokee) *Green Grass, Running Water* as magical realism, let's take the postmodern anti-realist elements in the novel seriously. If we do, we see that his novel reveals the absurdity of life, of history; moreover, we often cannot make sense of them, and the harder we try, the greater fools we make of ourselves. For instance, just as the witnesses' differing descriptions of the tricksters vary from observer to observer to observer in *Green Grass, Running Water*, our perception of reality and anti-reality varies. Despite the posturing and polemics of King's characters, in the end chaos and uncertainty, angst, and purposelessness appears to rule the universe and drives what we call history. It is comic only in the sense that it is a maniacal laugh into the maw of the abyss. Similarly, Linda Hogan's (Chickasaw) Pulitzer Prize nominated *Mean Spirit* contains a minor character that the reader is asked to believe is a ghost. However, *Mean Spirit* is not a ghost story. The ghost is there to present a meta-textual perspective on historical events.

Unfortunately, Native American authors are often exiles from the dominant literary community of America. Literary critics and fellow novelists who should be our allies are sometimes our enemies. For instance, in W.J. Stuckey's *The Pulitzer Prize Novels: A Critical Backward Look*, Stuckey claims Momaday was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, not because of merit, but because 1969 "was not a year remarkable for good fiction" (226). He does not cite any of the committee members to support his malign claim. Stuckey's explication of the novel reduces the symbolism, the allegorical functions, and the interpersonal implications of the characters and actions to one single, simple metaphor with the purpose of blaming the white man. Stuckey claims that the scene between Abel and the "white woman" (tellingly, Stuckey does not ever use her name) is an "obvious" metaphor for the corruption of Indians by white society. However, Abel has affairs with two white women: Angela Grace St. John and Milly. Although Angela Grace St. John exploits Abel, Milly represents a clear opportunity for Abel to make a vital, loving connection, which he lamentably fails to seize.

It seems difficult for Stuckey to imagine Momaday as anything but a simple Indian. He repeatedly uses the word "pretentious" in reference to Momaday. However, it should be noted that pretentious means pretending, make-believe, playing-at, in essence Stuckey's aspersion is not a literary one, but a pejorative personal one, one of character: Momaday is an Indian playing at being an author, he is only pretending, imitating, mimicking, being a writer.

As a Chickasaw PhD candidate I almost asked a professor to be a member of my dissertation committee who shared Stuckey's attitude. Fortunately, a white friend informed me that when he told this professor that he selected Native American literature as the focus of his studies, this professor asked him: "You are smart, why don't you study real literature?" Until these attitudes change, Native Americans will continue to be exiles in our own land. A good beginning is to accept Native Americans as equals. Take Indigenous voices and literature seriously. Invite Native Americans to be participants and partners.

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The Formative and Transformative Function of Desire in Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy*: A Deleuzian Perspective

Muhammad Yousri Beltagi Ahmed Aql

Introduction: The Formative Function of Desire

The relationship between desire and resistance provides the primary framework for the critical project developed by Ashis Nandy's book *The Intimate Enemy* (1983). In the psychoanalytical register, desire is often defined in terms of lack and prohibition. In Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex, the infant's sexual desire, or libido, is mediated and prohibited through the intervention of the father. The Oedipus complex, Freud (1989) explains, develops as a result of the entrapment of desire into the family triangle—daddy, mummy and me—in which the subject of desire (the child) is denied access to the object of desire (the mother) through the intervention of the Father (640). The father, therefore, represents the external authority under which the child's libidinal desire is regulated. Conventionally, the Oedipus complex represents a model of identification which "is supposed to reflect the Father's image and one which takes it upon itself to bring order to the house and discipline the psyche" (Friedman 97). Moreover, the subject's desire must be repressed because it threatens to dismantle the authority of the Father. As Eugene W. Holland puts it: "the nuclear family programs its members to submit, as good docile subjects, to any prohibitive authority—the father, the boss, capital in general—and to relinquish until later, as good ascetic subjects, their access to the objects of desire" (56). Thus, by repressing desire, the family produces obedient and docile subjects who are formulated to accept the mediation of any oppressive Authority.

Following Freud, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan also emphasized the prohibitive function of desire. In the Imaginary order, between the ages of six and eighteen months, the subject's ego—that is the subject's perception of itself as a unified being separate from other people—is structured by identifying with its image in the mirror. The image provides the infant with a sense of unity and coherence because it is more stable and coordinate than the infant's sensation of his/her real body over which he/she has not yet developed full motor control. The process of identifying with an-other, that exists outside the Self, is equally important for the subject's articulation of his/her desires. According to Lacan (1988), just as the child identifies with an external image outside him/herself to achieve a sense of identity, the subject's desire "exists solely in the single plane of the imaginary relation of the specular stage projected, alienated in the other" (170). Thus, it is through this process of exchange with the other that the subject's ego is constructed and the subject's desires are obtained. The Oedipus complex represents a crucial stage in the subject's development: the passage from the Imaginary order to the Symbolic order (Lacan 1993, 199). This means that to go beyond the Oedipus complex, and consequently pass into the Symbolic order, is to identify with the 'name of the father'. The subject's sense of identity only becomes functional when the subject relinquishes its relation with the 'm/other' of the Imaginary order so as to occupy a place in the Symbolic realm of identification.

Imaginary-order identification results in what Lacan calls "the ideal ego" which refers to the illusion of wholeness on which the ego is constructed in the mirror stage. After the Imaginary phase, the subject enters the Symbolic order in which the subject learns language and occupies a

position in the social order. In the Symbolic order, the subjectivity of the individual is constructed also by means of identification with what Lacan (1993 [1997], 56) calls "the big Other". Unlike the "little other" or the other with which the subject identifies him/herself in the Imaginary order, the Other of the Symbolic order cannot be assimilated by the process of identification. The big Other represents "the ultimate authority or source of meaning constituted by the Symbolic order" (Bracher 23). Although the Symbolic Other cannot be assimilated, the subject's desire for identification with that Other remains consistent. The result of this urge is the setting up of "a cluster of signifiers as the ego ideal through which the subject wishes to be loved and recognized by the other" (24).

Symbolic-order identification, according to Lacan, results in "the ego-ideal"—that is a set of signifiers that functions as ideal. Lacan called these signifiers "master signifiers". Master signifiers refer to the set of signifiers that permeate the Symbolic order of a certain discourse. These signifiers represent the identity-bearing words in which the subject can recognize him/herself and can be recognized by others as well. The subject's identity and position within a certain discourse is determined by the degree to which he/she affiliates with or fight against the set of master signifiers that construct that discourse, as Bracher explains: "our sense of being or identity is determined to a large degree by what happens to those signifiers that represent us—our master signifiers—particularly the alliance our master signifiers form with or the wars they wage on other signifiers" (25). To a large extent, colonialism was a battle in which the colonizer strove to maintain as dominant a set of master signifier that represent their ideology and worldviews and the colonized resisted, or failed to resist, these signifiers.

Desire and Symbolic-Order Identification in *The Intimate Enemy*

The main point underlying Freud's and Lacan's perception of desire is that one's desire is mediated and prohibited by an external authority. This model of identification stresses the cultural and social function of desire in colonial discourse which provokes certain forms of identification, and suppresses some others, in order to maintain its order. Like the nuclear family, colonization produces oedipalization which, in turn, closes off any potential for resistance and revolution, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) argue: "the colonized resists oedipalization, and oedipalization tends to close around him again. To the degree that there is oediplaization, it is due to colonization" (169). Colonization produces oedipalization as it codifies the colonized's desire into an image of the White man which is also perceived as universal. Therefore, "the effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality" (Fanon 266). Hence, the oedipal and colonial laws of identification function according to the same logic.

In India, the Symbolic order of the colonial discourse produced mastery by constituting the dominance of certain master signifiers and the repression of the other signifiers that are not congruent with the colonizers' values. In so doing, these signifiers ordered knowledge in accordance with the colonizer's values and kept the natives' knowledge, culture and traditions in a subordinate position, as Nandy (1983) shows: "colonialism releases forces [i.e. master signifiers] within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all" (xi). The main purpose of introducing these "forces" in the ideological space of the colonial discourse was to change the way in which both the colonizer and the colonized perceived the world. The key signifier that brought about the major psychological changes that took place in India under

colonialism was the "West". The "West," Nandy (1983) argues, functioned as the main master signifier which was transformed from "a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category" and became "now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds" (xi). The West, as the dominant master signifier, acted as the bearer of ultimate meaning and, thus, bestowed value and meaning on all other signifiers. It represented, Nandy claims, cultural baggage which

...includes codes which both the rulers and the ruled can share. The main function of these codes is to alter the original cultural priorities on both sides and bring to the centre of the colonial culture subcultures previously recessive or subordinate in the two confronting cultures. Concurrently, the codes remove from the centre of each of the cultures subcultures previously salient in them. (2)

The colonial discourse, in turn, enticed its subjects, both the Western and the non-Western, to assume certain positions in the service of the dominant master signifier, the West, in their attempts at self-definition. The Western man is defined as a colonizer as a result of his alliance with the colonial master signifier. The master signifier gives a new self-definition to the Western man as a colonizer by making him "definitionally non-Eastern and handed him a self-image and a world view which were basically responses to the needs of colonialism. He could not but be non-Eastern" (Nandy 71). That is, for the colonizers, identifying with the West as a master signifier means to embody the West's values and convey them to the uncivilized and backward people. "Colonialism", Nandy reveals, "minus a civilizational mission is no colonialism at all" (11). Therefore, the colonizer used the West as the bottom line that anchors, explains and justifies the claims of their subjugation of the Other. Its values were accepted because they were congruent with the needs and goals of the Empire. The master signifier, therefore, authorized and affirmed the superiority of the Western subject over the non-Western Other.

On the other hand, the colonized subject responded to the dominant master signifier in a similar manner. While the colonizers' identification with the West as a master signifier is reasonable as it serves their goal, what seems paradoxical is the idea of the colonized's identification with the oppressive signifier. Because it represented the ultimate source of meaning, the master signifier operated as a psychological incentive which arose in the colonized the urge to have an identity in which he/she can recognize him/herself and be recognized by others. In an oppressive discourse like colonialism, the only way to be recognized as subject is to submit to the dominant signifier which suppressed all other signifiers and sources of references in which the oppressed could invest his/her identity. To invoke Lacan's (1991) language, the master signifier is what makes a story readable and its message meaningful (189). In the colonial discourse, the West determined the readability of the story. Thus, the colonized was forced to identify with the master signifier in order to be able to read both him/herself and the other too. In order to obtain recognition and to get his voice heard, which is necessary for one's well-being as Lacan shows, the colonized was forced to identify with the West since it represented the ultimate authority. Even in enmity and rebellion, the colonized subject acted within the limits set by the dominant master signifier.

Hence, the most salient structural feature of the colonial discourse is the dominance of the West as a master signifier which submits both the colonizer and the colonized to its authority. The process of primary identification with the West operates also on a secondary level in which

the colonial discourse got its subjects to change their position by unconsciously coercing them to give up some of their basic ideological representatives and embrace new codes of identity. Thus, the primary identification with the master signifier is supplemented by the secondary identification with some other signifiers through which the dominance of the master signifier is strengthened. In colonial India, it was masculinity that played the role of the secondary signifier through which the West perpetuated itself, as Young notes:

...the psychology of colonialism...operated within a single culture in which a mutually responsive state of mind developed between colonizer and colonized. For both, colonial culture demanded a specific mind-set, with its own ideology, codes and rules that had to be learnt, distinct from the indigenous cultures of both. In the case of late nineteenth-century British imperialism, the framework of colonial culture was sustained through an ideology of masculinity. (325)

The ideology of masculinity became hegemonic in late nineteenth century Britain. In addition, the development of the masculine ideology in Britain was augmented by the classical Eurocentric theories that represented the European as masculine and the non-European as feminine. Colonialism constructed a homology between these sexual hierarchies and the political domination of the Other with the purpose of producing "a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity" (Nandy 4). The ideology of masculinity supported and justified the dominance of the aggressively masculine European over the cowardly feminine Other. The imperial expansion of Britain was, thus, legitimized as a product of superior forms of knowledge and transcendental categories.

The British colonizers exported the ideology of masculinity to the colonies in the service of their imperial project. Masculinity became the basic differentia of man in the colonial culture. The British colonizer could not be recognized as Western by the Symbolic Other unless he/she embodied the attributes valued by the West, namely masculinity. Thus, in order to assert his Western identity and elicit the Symbolic Other's love and recognition, the colonizer did not only interiorize and embody masculinist appearances and practices, but also strived to enact any other signifier that bear a relationship to masculinity such as toughness, virility, and aggression. Moreover, the colonizer avoided identifying with all other signifiers that are established as incompatible with the Western identity such as effeminacy, meekness, and childhood. Thus, to be Western means to be masculine, tough, virile and adult and not to be effeminate, weak and childlike.

On the other hand, being interpellated as non-Western, the colonized man was defined as effeminate, meek and childlike since he was not able to embody the attributes valued by the master signifier and, thus, failed to win the Symbolic Other's recognition. Yet, under the persuasion of the civilizing mission and the other psychological incentives offered by colonialism, the colonized was enticed to identify with the colonizing master signifiers. Therefore, the colonization of the minds started, Nandy (6-7) argues, when the signifier masculinity dominated the Symbolic order of the colonial discourse and began to assign certain roles to its subjects, as he explains:

Once the two sides [i.e. the colonizer and the colonized] in the British-Indian culture of politics...began to ascribe cultural meanings to the British domination, colonialism proper can be said to have begun. Particularly, once the British rulers

and the exposed sections of Indians internalized the colonial role definitions and began to speak, with reformist fervour, the language of the homology between sexual and political stratarchies, the battle for the minds of men was to a great extent won by the Raj.

Therefore, a common theme in both Deleuze's and Nandy's writings on resistance becomes the question of how can the tyranny of this psychological mechanism be challenged on the psychological level? How can the culture of masculinity and violence be contested in terms other than developing a corresponding cult of hyper-masculinity and violence? The answer does not lie in the rhetoric of revolution but in the intervention into the Symbolic order of colonial discourse, or "the hole from which the master signifier gushes" as Lacan (1991) puts it, transforming its effects in the service of the oppressed (189).

Deleuze and the Transformative Function of Desire

Following Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the repression of desire by the family accounts for all oppressive and despotic social identities. Yet, it is against this aspect of the Oedipus complex—that is its prohibition of the subject's desires—that Deleuze and Guattari developed their concept of anti-Oedipus. For Deleuze and Guattari, to be anti-Oedipus is to reject all oppressive structures, whether they are social, political or psychological, which confine desire into fixed boundaries. Anti-Oedipus is "a guide to living in such a way that we do not yearn for the enslavement of our own desires, or less dramatically the representation and interpretation of our desires by others on our behalf" (Greedharry 119). Transforming the concepts of desire offered by Freud and Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire is a free-floating energy that cannot be regulated by law or prohibition. The aim for Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, therefore, is to free desire from its confinement within the structure of the Oedipus complex because, in its repression of the child's sexual desires, it produces docile subjects that can be easily dominated by other social oppressive systems.

In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari argue that the oedipalized subject functions as the substance of fascist social systems. They claim that the oedipal law is one that complements social oppression since it produces the types of subjectivities that enable oppression to grow (101). The codification of psychic desire by the oedipal law is a means in the service of social oppression and hegemony. Therefore, Oedipus "cuts off all desiring-production" (79) and "wards off desire's potential for revolt and revolution" (120). Like desire, which is masked as incest and thus must be repressed, revolution, which threatens to transform established power relations within a given society, is seen as chaos and must be stifled. The codification of desire thwarts off the alternative forms of both self-identification and social organizations since it channels and orients psychic investments and social relations into ossified forms. The oedipal law supports the maintenance of existing power relations and social structures by establishing rules and limits that block the free flow of desire. Thus, the family is the "bait" or the agent which orders individuals to repress alternative possibilities of becoming in the service of other social agents—the father, the boss, man or the White. As Deleuze and Guattari (1983) put it:

Oedipal desires are the bait, the disfigured image, by means of which repression catches desire in the trap. If desire is repressed, this is not because it is desire for the mother and for the death of the father...The danger is elsewhere. If desire is

repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society (116).

Therefore, in order to retrieve "desire's potential for revolt and revolution," one needs to be anti-Oedipus. Whereas conventional psychoanalytic interpretations posit desire as a negative force that operates in terms of lack and prohibition, Deleuze and Guattari articulate desire as a positive and chaotic rebellion against all forms of hegemony and power. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) refuse the subordination of desire to any mediating authority. For them, desire "escapes all Oedipal, personological references" (361-62). Thus, to be anti-Oedipus is to find lines of escape from the forms of capture and containment prescribed by the oedipal code of identification. Breaking the Oedipal code allows the individual to live beyond the Father's law. Subsequently, it allows resistance to other social despotic figures—the Law, man, the boss, or the colonizer. Moreover, to be anti-Oedipus is to lead "a life style, a way of thinking and living" which contests all forms of fascism—"the fascism in us all, in our heads, and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (Foucault xiii). This way of thinking, as Foucault explains, is explicitly revolutionary and creative since it is not territorialized within fixed laws or codes—personal, familial or social.

Yet, anti-Oedipus is not to be understood as a simple inversion of the Oedipus complex. Rather, anti-Oedipus is an attempt to retrieve the productive potential of desire. Breaking through the boundaries of the unconscious is the principal objective of desiring-production. Desiring-production is a dynamic movement that generates "a positive force, one that can break through the limitations of ego and the family scene and set free the drives to express themselves without being restricted" (Friedman 97). Thus, desiring-production is the unconscious's ability to function anti-oedipally—that is, the unconscious's ability to destroy codes that circumscribe desire and, at the same time, to create new forms of identification. In this mode of production, desire operates like a machine that rips codes apart. When the Oedipal law is broken, the torrents of desire flow and produce, releasing desire into what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call "a permanent inventiveness or creativity" against all attempts of capture and enclosure (214). Desiring-machines produce and their production is a subject that is in a perpetual movement of becoming.

Becoming is the subject's ability to escape capture and enclosure within a fixed image of self-identity—the ability to become-other. It is a process of perpetual transformation in which the subject's identity is formed "through what is not itself rather than always retrieving some lost, mythical and originally unified image of itself" (Colebrook 135). This process of self-transformation creates lines of escape from static and hegemonic moulds of subject-formation. Yet, the becoming-other of the subject does not mean a subservient reproduction or a servile imitation of that other—that is, it does not mean that the subject imitates or reproduces the identity characteristics of the other. Rather, it is a key element in the process of transformation that transgresses the barriers between fixed identity categories such as "white, male, adult, 'rational,' etc." (Deleuze and Guattari, 292). The transformative potential of becoming retrieves desire's potential for creativity and revolution. Because these lines of flight have no territory, they create a hybrid space of identification in which the subject becomes other than itself—becoming-minor, becoming-woman or becoming-postcolonial.

Becoming-postcolonial is a mode of representing identity as an ongoing process of transformation. The first principle of imperial domination prescribes that "there is a clear-cut and absolute hierarchal distinction between ruler and ruled" (Said 82). Becoming-postcolonial offers a critical alternative to this imperial mode of representation in which identity is based on such binary oppositions as Black/White, civilized/savage and ruler/ruled. It designates also the ability to represent the cultural differences and variations pertinent to postcolonial societies without being attached to any essentialist discourse—colonial, anti-colonial or nationalist. Nonetheless, it is not an attempt to simply reverse such binary oppositions for, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) warn, continually confronting "the great dualism machines" of history, society, philosophy and science will only emphasize and reinforce binary relations rather than liberating the colonized from them (276). In that sense, becoming-postcolonial reconstitutes our understanding of resistance. Resistance is no longer restricted to the reversal of "great dualism machines" or the retrieval of a lost sense of identity. Resistance is, as Helen Tiffin affirms, "a process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialect between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them" (95). Resistance as becoming-postcolonial designates a process of self-transformation that is not based on either the exclusion of the other or the appraisal of the self. It is a process of perpetual becoming which offers both the self and the other "an opportunity to redefine their modes of co-existence in ways that contest and transform post-colonial culture, social structures and the colonial identifications, norms, and assumptions these continue to rely upon" (Bignall 213). By adopting the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's anti-oedipal critique, the following section will examine Nandy's transformative use of desire in postcolonial discourse.

Resistance and the Creation of a People to Come

Following Deleuze and Guattari, Nandy insisted that desire is not a property held by an individual subject. It is a force that saturates the entire social field. Social organizations emerge in correspondence with the forms and modes of desire operating within a given society. The way in which desire operates, oedipally or anti-oedipally, directly orients the subject towards particular forms of sociability, as Bignall demonstrates: "desire . . . 'typifies' the [social] relationship, in the sense of giving it a particular character. Different modes of desire dispose bodies to particular types of relationship or sociability" (148). Since desire is rooted firmly within the social fabric, an adequate theory of post-colonial resistance and subject-liberation must attempt to promote becoming and retrieve the dynamic movement of desiring-machines which are blocked by despotic social relations. Therefore, the construction of social arrangements that are not based on segregation and exclusion requires, first, "a revolutionary liberation of society's repressed desiring machines" (Campbell 135). These revolutionary machines function via a collective enterprise that resists "the imperialist Oedipal repressions of state and family" and aims at "a disconnection and deterritorialization of fascist power and a reconnection with collective forms of subjectivity" (155). Thus, in order to achieve a real sense of liberation, the subject needs to resist psychic repression as well as the social structures that suppress desiring machines, as Friedman puts it:

What must be resisted are the reactive forces that resist the structure of family/state and yet recast it nonetheless. What must be resisted is the regime that pairs people, regardless of the types of pairs. What must be resisted is the regime that prohibits alternative forms of life. What must be resisted is a culture that directs the drives into a synthesis or an integrative whole. (101)

To articulate resistance into an integrative whole is the ultimate objective of both Nandy's and Deleuze's projects. The subversive practice that often accompanies resistance has a collective significance for resistance itself is a collective activity. Resistance is collective in the sense that all the values that inform it are collective values rather than personal. This collective 'assemblage' aims at the invention of new forms of subjectivities rather than baptizing dominant forms of identification. The new emerging collective forms urges the individual subjects to give up their personal concerns and engage in a collective enterprise—a collective revolution against the forces of oppression that dominate their society.

According to Nandy, the key element of this transformative process is the natives' capacity to resist absorption into the Symbolic order of colonial discourse. They refused, Nandy argues, to be "psychologically swamped, co-opted or penetrated" (111). The colonized subjects did not accept or interiorize the ideological assumptions of the colonizing culture. They were not fully domesticated by the hegemonic persuasions of the civilizing mission. Thus, instead of being swallowed up by the dominant discourse, the seemingly interpellated subjects were able to intervene in the hegemonic schema of identification, transforming its effects in the service of their own purposes. The intervention in the dominant schema of identification involves the interjection of a new chain of signifiers based on the Hindu perception of gender identities into the basic structure of the Symbolic order of colonial discourse.

In the Hindu tradition, femininity is not as devalued as it is in the West. The Hindu culture is built on a non-binary schema of gender which gives equal weight to both men and women and "the ability to transcend the man-woman dichotomy is superior to both, being an indicator of godly and saintly qualities" (Nandy 53). The boundaries between the man-woman binary are so open and diffused that "one does not ascribe positive moral value to one gender and negative moral value to the other, but rather distributes different moral values between genders" (Greedharry 51). Moreover, according to Nandy, in the Hindu culture, activism, courage and power are perceived as more congruent with femininity than with masculinity.¹ As Nandy claims, the Hindu culture sets "a closer conjunction between power, activism and femininity than between power, activism and masculinity. It also implied the belief that the feminine principle is a more powerful, dangerous and uncontrollable principle in the cosmos than the male principle" (53-54). Thus, femininity-in-masculinity, rather than masculinity or femininity, was perceived as a privileged position, a position of power and activism.² The aspects of Hindu androgyny practiced by Indian men and activists functioned as a counter-hegemonic practice against the ideology of masculinity valued by colonialism.³

¹This concept originated in the Hindu ideology of *Shakti*. *Shakti*, or the feminine principle, represents the Cosmic Feminine Energy. Thus, energy, power and activism are seen as feminine rather than masculine. For more elaboration on the Hindu principle of *Shakti*, see Krishnaswamy pp. 34-44.

²In Hindu mythology, androgyny is a male phenomenon. That is, it is believed that when a man marries a woman, she becomes half of his body, losing half of her own substance. On the other hand, he becomes enriched by her without losing any of his substance. Thus, the feminine aspect of men is considered as a sign of power rather than weakness because power is feminine in the Hindu mythology. See note no.1 above.

³The most salient example of this mode of resistance in the modern history of India is represented by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). Gandhi's principle of *ahimsa*, literally means non-killing or non-violence, is often cited as an example of resistance as a non-violent strategy. Gandhi, according to Nandy, Young, Jefferess and others, embodies an important transformation to the stereotype of the feminized Indian male, drawing on the Hindu principle of androgyny as an alternative to British masculinist ideals. For further discussion on Gandhi's tactics of non-violent resistance, see Young (2001) pp. 325-31 and Jefferess (2008) pp. 95-135.

Femininity-in-masculinity was, then, elected as a new master signifier and a point of reference in which the natives could invest their identities. Thus, in order to assert his self-identity as Indian and elicit the Symbolic Other's recognition, the native subject enacted the new master signifier, femininity-in-masculinity, and avoided identifying with the colonial signifiers, especially masculinity, aggression and violence, because they were established as incompatible with the new master signifier. Hence, instead of developing a practice of hyper-masculinity to counter the colonial ideology of masculinity, the Indian man transformed the standard stereotype projected upon him—that is, the Indian man is effeminate, into effective means of survival, as Nandy explains:

...instead of trying to redeem their 'masculinity' by becoming the counterplayers of the rulers according to the established rules, will discover an alternative frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak, degraded and distorted men trying to break the monopoly of the rulers on a fixed quantity of machismo. If this happens, the colonizers begin to live with the fear that the subjects might begin to see their rulers as morally and culturally inferior, and feed this information back to the rulers (11).

This process of becoming has transformed the basic structure and mechanism of symbolic-order identification in colonial India. First, the interjection of the Hindu order of gender identities tore the old schema of identification apart, with the consequence that the British master signifiers were decommissioned and the Hindu signifiers were enacted as new points of reference and identity-representatives. Instead of trying to contest the British masculinist ideals with a corresponding principle of hyper-masculinity, the Indian subject appropriated the Western stereotype of the effeminate Indian man, drawing on the rich array of masculinity, femininity and androgyny central to the Hindu culture. In that sense, for the colonized, to be effeminate means to break out of the psychological limits set by the dominant discourse. As Young notes, the transformation of the Symbolic order "was accompanied by a strategic, transgressive role-playing at the level of gender which made it difficult for the colonial government to respond in the ways with which it normally dealt with anti-colonial resistance" (325). The over-emphasis laid on feminine strategies in the discourse of the master, whose norms are emphatically masculine, disrupts the order of that discourse. The newly interjected signifiers released new forces into the structure of the dominant discourse and buckled the oppressive master signifier so that it became unable to accomplish its function and, thus, disrupted its authority.

Second, and more importantly, the Hindu principle of androgyny, which does not demean femininity, unmasked the authority of the masculine, virile White man as inferior. Unlike the colonizer, the Indian subject has a fluid self-definition in which the masculine and the feminine co-exist peacefully. As Young explains, the reversal of the order of gender identity in India resulted in "a shift of perspective in which the masculinized culture of the colonizer became regarded as morally and culturally inferior" (326). In other words, by enacting the very stereotype of effeminacy and by overplaying the androgynous aspects of the Hindu culture, the native subject vigorously agitated "the so-called non-masculine self of man relegated to the forgotten zones of the Western self-concept" (Nandy 49). That is, by emphasizing the Hindu principle of androgyny, in which man and woman are equal, the native subjects stand as the living symbol of the other West, the side which has been repressed. This strategy of transformation negated the very basis of the Symbolic order of colonial discourse because, as

Zizek shows, as soon as "the performative mechanism which gives him his charismatic authority is demasked, the Master loses his power" (163).

Therefore, the collapse of the discourse of the master in India was brought about by the very idea that the colonizer commissioned to sustain its authority, namely the ideology of masculinity. The ideology of masculinity, which altered the ordering of colonial discourse, destroyed the social fabric in India, and disfigured the systems of reference of the colonized's traditions and lifestyles, was the same tool appropriated by the oppressed to disrupt the oppressor's authority. It is a "double entendre" which on the one hand, "a part of an oppressive structure; on the other, it is in league with its victims" (Nandy xiv). Instead of being a stabilizing force to the discourse of the master, the ideology of masculinity, ironically, led to the master's downfall. Consequently, colonialism lost its moral and ethical grounds which, as shown above, gave the colonizers an ideological license to subjugate the Other, as Greedharri notes: "the West lost colonialism's psychological battle and its attempts to make up for that loss through aggression and domination made the loss more sustained" (50). Nandy places too much faith in the colonized's ability to transform the formative effects of Symbolic identification in colonial discourse through the process of becoming-postcolonial. The revolution Nandy calls for is located in the virtual rather than the actual which is politically and socially territorialized.

While the actual is about fixity and territorialization, the virtual is about becoming and transformation. An actual body, such as the colonizer-colonized relationship, is based on a plane of composition which seeks to sustain the network of power relations and structures of which this body is a product. The stability of this emergent body requires that the natives' own distinctive social organization be reterritorialized in the service of colonial needs. This process of re-territorialization took a variety of forms: cultural, political, social and, above all, linguistic. Therefore, the colonial order is an assemblage in which the becoming-postcolonial of identity is blocked. It is a plane of representation in which the colonized people are missing. Revolution in a Deleuzian sense does not aim at reversing the colonizer-colonized dichotomy, but aims at the invention of a new people beyond such opposition. The effectuation of this virtual-becoming of the people helps to foster change and transformation of oppressive social relations:

A central task for postcolonialism to employ is the disruption of the problematic post-colonial present that remains tied to the virtual conditions of the emergence of colonialism, and the subsequent reconstruction of an alternative present by drawing upon the resource of an alternative virtual sociability, in order to create new conditions of bodily and community interrelationship and complex social composition (Bignall 114).

Since the dividing line between the actual and the virtual is dissolved, the possibility of actualizing a new collectivity, which is not contaminated by colonial ideology, becomes possible. Virtual becoming offers the possibility of re-assembling the colonial plane of composition in a way that retrieves the becoming-postcolonial of identity, as Bignall states: "the permanent existence of the virtual within the actual denies the self-evident authority of the actual, and opens up the possibility of thinking alternative, virtual modes of existence and actualizing them in practice" (16-17). The revolutionary potential of the virtual lies in its ability to open new possibilities for life. According to Bill Ashcroft (2013), this is the main function of resistance: "to inspire hope: hope for change, hope for freedom, hope for the future. It affirms that another world is possible. The people to come affirm that a different world is possible."

Yet, the concept of the people to come is not to be understood as an attempt to construct the basis of a mythical or utopian community. The alternative community that Deleuze and Guattari seek to construct through their concept of becoming exists in the real world but is kept suppressed by existing social conditions, as Daniel W. Smith states: "if the people are missing...it is precisely because they exist in the conditions of a *minority*" (xlii). Because the actual people are territorialized, "only a virtual people without any relation to present or historical society can be absolutely deterritorialized and thus properly revolutionary" (Aldea 114). The function of resistance, according to Nandy, is to reveal the becoming of those minor people. The people to come is a minoritarian-becoming that has no pre-existing or pre-supposed identity and, thus, revolutionary, "a revolutionary machine-to-come," as Deleuze and Guattari (1975 17-18) put it.

Therefore, the conceptualization of desire as a collective value expands the scope of the function and practices of resistance. The object and locus of resistance should be directed towards the creation of new modes of sociability that are untainted by colonial/oedipal inscriptions—a new social consciousness, as Said states: "liberation which is by its very nature involves...a transformation of social consciousness" (83). Since the modes of desire operating within society determine actual practices and have an undeniable influence upon the emergence of the existing society, the new social consciousness towards which post-colonial critique aspires is achieved through, first, developing a critical awareness of the oppressive forces of desire operating within society. It requires also the transformation of these modes of desire into new associations and assemblages that are revolutionary, as Campbell reveals: "the revolutionary alternative to capitalist [and colonial] hegemony is a deterritorialization of the social infrastructure through the liberation of pure productive desire" (9). Thus, desire, in its collective sense, is directly connected to the liberation of the subject and society as a whole. More importantly, the transformation of the social consciousness involves a process of counter-actualization whereby a new people is created—a people to come.

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“A terrible beauty is born”¹: Interrogating Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza*

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“ISIS in Mosul” reads one suggested story headline as I open Snapchat to mitigate my chronic boredom. Disbelievingly, I click the snap to confirm whether it actually contains short videos from the ground operation against the Islamic State. It does. The extent to which culture has moved towards demonstrating a marked preference for the visual (the networks of creation, dissemination, surveillance, and control of the ‘image’) is unsurprising when contextualized against the rapid advances in technology (military, media, AI, social networking, entertainment, etc). The constant barrage of images also means that newer modes have to be constantly devised in order to retain the punctum²-esque quality of pictures and slow the rate of desensitization in the audience. Within the purview of journalism this becomes an especially important discussion because the readers/viewers’ everyday encounter with multiple tragedies of death, loss, suffering, and torture can render them apathetic to these events if not packaged in a way that forces repeated confrontation with their own humanity. While the Russian Formalists championed “defamiliarization”³ in order to reorient the reader’s response to language, Sacco’s journalistic comics can be touted as an exercise initiating the viewer’s ‘re-familiarization’ with the image and an empathetic sense of self.

Palestine (1993) and *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) belong squarely to the tradition of what has broadly discursively concretized as Graphic Journalism. Also called Comics Journalism, the mode amalgamates the form of the comic book/graphic novel with content culled through a journalistic framework of storytelling.⁴ The burgeoning popularity of the genre is in line with the current generation’s reliance on technology and internet as primary modes of knowledge acquisition. While Sacco is not the only one working with the fecund possibilities of the Graphic Journalism format,⁵ he has definitely been one of its finest executors.

Diverging from the commonly held belief that reportage is a truly objective process, Sacco’s work deliberately inserts the correspondent into the text, proving that all reportage is at some level perspectival:

At a single glance, the reader understands that he is both reporter and innocent abroad, an unlikely combination that propels him not only to ask difficult questions, but to go on asking them long after all the other hacks have given up and gone home (Cooke on Sacco, 2009).

¹Phrase used by W.B. Yeats in his poem “Easter 1916” to denote his conflict over the Easter uprising lead by the IRA in Dublin.

²Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1980. Defined as “that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me/ is poignant to me). p. 27.

³Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Device”, 1917. Though some versions of the essay translate the word as “estrangement” rather than “defamiliarization”.

⁴For a brief but illuminating history of Comics/Graphic Journalism, see Dan Archer’s video on the same: <http://www.archcomix.com/comics-journalism/>

⁵see: <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/08/comic-books-as-journalism-10-masterpieces-of-graphic-nonfiction/243351/>

Interestingly, even as the subjective impressions of the correspondent are incorporated within the frame, Sacco often uses what is called the POV (Point Of View) method of visual narration, making the reader feel directly addressed by the talking interviewees:

Joe Sacco, a pioneering graphic journalist, often lets his subjects tell their stories, letting their words tumble out around portraits of his speaking subjects. By focusing in on facial expressions, the reader is effectively looking over Sacco's shoulder and engaging in a dialogue with the subject. The same principles apply to an "over the shoulder" style of interviewing which is common in documentary films and video journalism. By removing the interviewer from the panel, Sacco is able to increase the readers' identification with the subject at hand (Polgreen, *The Hooded Utilitarian*).

"You can explain a lot with journalism but you can't explain why that person pulled the trigger" (*Dawn*, 2015). In his 2012 work *Journalism*, Sacco appends a Graphic Journalist manifesto (*A MANIFESTO, ANYONE?*) where he discusses how sometimes the most valuable information is gleaned from personal interactions with the interviewees, but which has to be excised from the news copy in pursuit of that elusive journalistic façade of "objectivity" (*Journalism* xi). Ironically, it had been American media's un-objective representation of Palestinians as terrorists that had propelled Sacco to personally visit the West Bank and embark on the graphic project of *Palestine*.

Palestine collates Sacco's experiences in the West Bank across two months in 1991 and 1992. Initially published in serialized form in 1993, the nine editions were finally compiled into one graphic novel in 2001, with an introduction by Edward Said. It is an interesting side note that it had been the prejudiced images of the Arab in Western Media in the 70s that had also been a guiding factor in Said's development of the seminal theory of Orientalism that has radically changed the face of Postcolonial Studies, rendering this collaboration fitting in many ways. *Palestine* covers the events of the First Intifada and the Gulf War through first-person interactions with oppressed Palestinians under Israeli occupation. The narrative seamlessly switches from present day 1991-1992 experiences of physical and economic oppression to stories of incarceration and political conflict during the Intifada in 1987-1988.

Another galling incident of the sacrifice of human life at the altar of arbitrary journalistic ideals is mentioned in the foreword to his second work under consideration; Sacco mentions being enraged that *Harper's Magazine* had inexplicably cut Chris Hedges's paragraphs about the civilian deaths at Khan Younis despite it being the "greatest massacre of Palestinians on Palestinian soil" (*Footnotes in Gaza* xi). It had been this footnoting of the tangible loss of life that pushed him to take it up as his next graphic project, and titling it as he did. While *Palestine* focuses on a broader frame of historical reference, *Footnotes in Gaza* specifically attempts to isolate the facts of the 1956 killings of Palestinians in Khan Younis and Rafah by Israeli soldiers. Focusing primarily on the eyewitness testimonies of the pogroms' survivors, fellow sufferers, and their families *Footnotes in Gaza*, like *Palestine*, is overlaid with multiple layers of storytelling. Unlike *Palestine*, though, *Footnotes in Gaza* was conceptualized and released directly as a compiled graphic novel and not in serial format.

In *Footnotes in Gaza* (hereafter *Footnotes*) the story that he wishes to tell precedes his trip, but *Palestine* is freer and Sacco allows himself to be led to every kind of anecdotal offering. Consequently, *Palestine* sees Sacco being more accepting of Palestinians commenting on their contemporary events even as they talk of '87-'88. But, *Footnotes* is very specifically a graphic novel about the 1956 incident and Sacco insists on only meeting those people who had actually witnessed the screenings and keeping the interviewees strictly to the questions at hand. For this purpose, he and Abed actually curate a list of all the sufferers and only visit those people. This is why the UNRWA official who interchanges '56 with '67 elicits greater frustration from Sacco's character within the narrative (“We can't stay. We've lost interest. 1967 is not our department” (338)). This is not to say that there is anything less artistic in having variegated methods to approaching the conflict, rather these divergences allow us to access different facets of the same larger issue through these strategic aesthetic choices separated by a decade of temporality. *Palestine* is more of a totality that is strung belatedly by compiling the various episodes, whereas *Footnotes* allowed Sacco to apprehend a pre-ascertained larger vision wherein to place his pieces, a la whole to parts and parts to whole approach.

However, one facet that overwhelmingly connects the two works under analysis is their unequivocal agenda of giving voice to Palestinians. Israeli soldiers only find mention in connection to the Palestinian narratives of oppression and are never directly interviewed by Sacco within the texts. There is only one oblique reference to an Israeli soldier in terms of his beauty and his flirtations with an American female tourist in *Palestine*, while in *Footnotes* there is Mordechai Bar-On, ex-Chief-de-Bureau to Major General Dayan, now a historian offering critical insight into Israeli tactics of intimidation and occupation. Both instances are appropriated to bolster Sacco's larger project of uncovering truths lost in the political game of power. His support is squarely with the Palestinians as he picks their stories from the gutter spaces of life and makes panels of their experiential reality.

Balance should not be a smokescreen for laziness. If there are two or more versions of events, a journalist needs to explore and consider each claim, but ultimately the journalist must get to the bottom of a contested account independently of those making their claims...The journalist must strive to find out what is going on and tell it, not neuter the truth in the name of equal time (*Journalism* xii).

Sacco pledges allegiance to truth rather than giving equal footage to both sides of an issue where power is unequally distributed. He feels that the powerful always find the scales of history tipped in their favor and therefore, it is important that those who reside in the margins finally get their day in the sun (xii). He makes it a point to juxtapose (often literally through drawing) any action initiated by Palestinians and the punishment meted out to them vis-à-vis the statistics and outcomes of the same acts committed by Israelis. A notable example in *Palestine* is where a villager whose house has been attacked by Israeli settlers goes to the settlement to lodge a complaint, but is dismissed by the policeman who reminds him that both sides in the conflict have their extremists. The villager responds to the policeman, and Sacco renders it for us: “Well, I hope to hear about the charging of your extremists like we hear about the charging of ours” (*Palestine* 67). Sacco repeatedly uses the technique of placing both ‘sides’ of the argument next to each other (literally), not to uphold the misguided idea of equality of time/space devoted to

coverage, but rather equality in opportunity to the Palestinians to tell their stories, especially when every other narrative has been hijacked by Israel.

Here, a critical excursion must be made to note that the Palestinian experience is not just focalized through the filters of sympathy, and horror at their predicament, but Sacco also depicts the internal contradictions and fissures that characterize their lived realities. One significant arena where this is highlighted is that of gender. *Palestine* devotes entire chapters to it, titled “Women” and “Hijab,” wherein he excavates the patriarchal structures of power that doubly oppress women within Muslim households. They deal with the lack of political and legal representation of women except through men, the over-emphasis on being desirable for marriage, and the debates within feminism of the donning of the hijab. Additionally, the situation is made even more fraught because the feminist factions within the community mirror the larger political factions fighting for Palestine. This awareness of the presence of gendered responses to the same oppression are also alluded to in *Footnotes*, when the old man (pg. 317) refers to Palestinian women as their honor and suggests that death and money are nothing as long as their ‘honor’ has not been attacked. Although, apart from the one chapter in the first text and some off-hand references in the second, Sacco doesn’t allow himself the artistic luxury to fruitfully engage with the extent of the situation of women, preferring to stick to the script so as not to ruffle more feathers than he is already doing.

Apart from gender, Sacco’s work also establishes the uncomfortable disjunction that is birthed when a people under violent occupation don’t think twice before elaborately glorying in a bloody religious ritual. The chapter titled “Feast” in *Footnotes* sees Eid El-Adah celebrations, wherein there is the depiction of a ritualistic slaughter of bulls and the meat is distributed among family, friends, and the poor. There is a sequence when one of the men tries to gut the bull himself but feels queasy at taking the animal’s life. Both these instances across the two works help a nuanced depiction of Palestinian society as three-dimensional, demanding not just straightforward sympathy from readers but some semblance of support borne out of a complex emotional engagement with them as real people with real personalities that are prone to dissonant actions like anybody else.

The unique ability that comics have to allow for time and space to be represented on the same page endows it with exceptional suitability for portraying these narratives of spatial conflict across time.

The characters must negotiate a complex and restrictive urban environment and this confrontation with the city serves as a metaphor for the retrieval of a past knowledge that is itself blocked, policed and obscured (Mather 178).

Mapping is another important tool for portrayal in both *Palestine* and *Footnotes*, but where *Palestine* follows the traditional route of using the locations as chapter divisions, *Footnotes*, apart from having the broad two sections on Khan Younish and Rafah, uses a magnifying effect to shift the reader’s focus from a position of viewing the situation from the top where the entire area looks like specks from the sky, to suddenly plunging us headlong into a ground level scene where we can see the action as if it were happening in front of us. The leading of the men into the school grounds contains some of the most poignant examples of this method

(*Footnotes* 216-217). A complex emotional landscape is thus born and we are never allowed to slip into the comfort of indifference towards the subject. Sacco expertly exploits the form to humanize a conflict that we have hitherto largely apprehended through the media statistics of mortality or maps of geography.

“Events are continuous” (252), says a man in *Footnotes* and Sacco echoes this sentiment repeatedly, not just in the foreword to the book, but also in numerous interviews. The form and content in both of Sacco’s texts reinforce each other to underscore this belief; the images bleed out of the panels, history bleeds out of the past into the present, and Palestinians bleed in the service of both. In *Palestine* the movement from present to past is more choppy as we can see in the Chapter titled “The Bucket” (65) where the Palestinians are reciting the events of the night in one panel and the next panel is the depiction of the incident. However, as the story progresses, this skill of portraiture is honed owing to the broad time frame traversed by the narrative, and by the time we reach “The Fedayeen” in *Footnotes* the staging is almost cinematic. The Fedayeen, half in shadow, and smoking a cigarette, talks about the events of the past that are illustrated in the background and Sacco’s response is also paneled within the same scene. A dialectic between the past and present is instituted as the narrative is converted into an architectonic palimpsest of ‘telling’ with one level that of the past, the other of the present, the third of Sacco’s moment of creation and lastly the reader’s contemporaneity which sandwiches all into one jumbo bite.

... We enter the page, it seems, through the fighter’s body, but his present-day self also occupies the panel, sharing space. Past and present are here contiguous; the younger self has his hand on the shoulder of the older self (Chute 112).

Apart from stylistic and ideological similarities, one factor that binds both texts is the author-character of Sacco. His discomfort with being a journalist peddling the trauma of war is incorporated as a consistent subtext especially in *Palestine*. He paints an exaggerated persona for himself, ironically commenting on his supposedly shark-like pursuit of the “itsy-bitsy details, descriptions of the crunching sounds” (94). Before the reader can throw any punches at him, he confesses to caring only about that which will look good in his comic. Through this convoluted self-deprecating strategy he posits himself in sharp contrast to the Palestinians whom he is there to interview, ensuring that all notions of audience likeability are transferred to them through a slightly negative comparison with this seemingly uppity reporter. The exaggerated swagger of his world-weary personage is obvious, though in tune with the grotesque three-dimensionality of *Palestine*, but it does start feeling too put-on after a while. However, as Rebecca Scherr points out, *Palestine*’s aesthetic, where the panels are often framed as photographs in Sacco’s hand, manages to successfully complicate the ethics of ‘looking’ and consuming other people’s pain (31):

Pg. 32, then, is a moment when Sacco purposely takes on the imperial power of the seer, when the other’s refusal is given representation anyway; the patient is transformed, against his will, into an object of the gaze... And we as readers, who have consented to align our “gazes” with Sacco’s, must confront what this means for us, as we are inextricably pulled into this voyeuristic relationship whether we like it or not (Scherr 32).

Palestine is Sacco's first project and he arrives in the West Bank armed not only with his drawing tools but a whole host of prejudices about the Palestinian natives. Instances where these initial reservations bubble to the fore are shown within the narrative, explicitly highlighting how Sacco's preconceived notions exist but are kept aside to maintain fairness during his talks with Palestinians. The deliberate inclusion of these fulminations within the narrative, like when the woman with the Palestinian boyfriend turns him down and he mutters "Bitch! Terrorist Groupie!" (*Palestine* 7), help to map a developmental schema for his character, as he moves from this point of horrid instinctive stereotyping to understanding the enormity of Palestinian suffering. The Sacco-character at the end of this text would never use the word 'terrorist' for Palestinians again, and the Sacco-character that we meet in *Footnotes in Gaza* is even more righteously determined to establish the brutal truths of the screening operations in Khan Younis and Rafah, preventing 1956 from being reduced to just another historical footnote.

The apotheosis of this character arc are the haunting last pages of *Footnotes*; Sacco draws himself facing Abu Juhish as the old man stumbles over his words. There is a pause as Juhish says, "Fear fear," when Belal asks him what is the worst thing he remembers from that day. The image is striking as Juhish is drawn on the left facing Sacco, looking down while Sacco is on the right facing him. Darkness surrounds them and Sacco has a moment of clarity as shame floods his being "for losing something along the way as I collected my evidence, disentangled it, dissected it, indexed it, and logged it onto my chart" (*Footnotes* 364). This character who had turned a strong critical gaze onto himself for our benefit in *Palestine* demonstrates the rawest of emotions as his aesthetic chokes up from here on, sans page numbers, sans words, Sacco realizes his inability to ever truly be able to render the fear that the Palestinians experienced in the harrowing encounter at the school. The graphic novel ends one panel short, imperfect, and a large black page looms, a somber memorial.

In his interview with Hillary Chute, Sacco states that he feels that *Palestine* is overdone. In other interviews also he has mentioned the feeling that the drawing in it is rough and amateurish:

...My feeling is, only pull the rabbit out of your hat when you need to. When you look at *Palestine*, I'm pulling rabbits out of hats that shouldn't be there... A lot of the drawings I was doing were to amuse myself at the drawing table, so I wouldn't get bored. Over time...I realized you can only use these techniques when it's going to advance the story or heighten it. You squander that sort of thing when you do it all the time (*The Believer* 2011).

While there is some logic to rationing one's techniques in the service of an agenda and not include every novelty into one narrative just for the sake of demonstrating one's artistic merit, I am inclined to disagree with Sacco here for being too harsh on himself by judging the sketches through the convenience of retrospective vision.

Palestine is grotesque, the Crumb style of elongated figurations reaches out and grabs your attention and refuses to let go. Everything about *Palestine* is lopsided, bursting at the seams. The panels are angled, the drawing is rougher and bigger, features of the characters are exaggerated, the headings of the chapters ironically comment on the storytelling and are

typographically merged with the action on the page. *Footnotes* is smoother, the paneling is straight, aligned. The headings, while are still ironic, don't overhang, but rather occupy smaller portions and the typography is sedate. Where *Palestine* is suggestive of the violence, none is actually ever shown. It is all narrated, or the door is shut right before we get a look inside. It shows by not showing. *Footnotes*, on the other hand, is a blood fest in comparison. The graphic assault is interminable as the same scene is repeatedly re-membered from five to six different viewpoints.

Palestine is aesthetically mesmerizing, and *Footnotes* is sleek and cinematic. One cannot deny that Sacco's art has traversed a large terrain between 1992 and 2009. *Palestine* holds the reader's attention as your eyes easily take in the artistic acrobatics of 270 odd pages of a glimpse into the Israel-Palestine conflict through the novel format of a comic. The numerous breaks also allow for breathing space to move in and out of the psychological graphing of pain. Sacco's consistent commentary on his presence helps refract the emotionality engendered by the storyline. Affect is contained as the reader is saved from plunging into incoherence, aesthetically exorcised and made manifest through the excessive formal techniques. *Footnotes* is weary, Sacco is present in only a handful of the chapter beginnings and the commentaries on the task of the journalist are few and far between. The 370 pages are difficult to get through because there is nothing to hide behind. The art is subservient to the story; everything works to enhance the smell of death that tinges the air. The sufferers' eyes hold us hostage in front of the wall not unlike the ones their loved ones were shot against. The impact bubbles, builds, and ultimately bursts in those final moments when we are made to relive the scene, one last time, from within the character, the chaos all around us as we run and that last harrowing image of the bat that swings towards our head before everything goes dark.

Palestine and *Footnotes* occupy two very different places on Sacco's comics aesthetic and serve different functions which, when combined, result in a project that is arguably the most effective rendition of the historical conflict. In one of his interviews with Alex Burrows for *The Quietus*, Sacco talks about his conscious effort to not make the violence in his stories seem beautiful. This is an interesting demand from a comic artist whose work is intricate and eye-catching. If he meant only that he doesn't wish to glorify violence, then his attempt is unquestionably successful, but it does make one wonder whether it is possible to artistically depict violence without making it visually appealing? A slight detour might help to fruitfully orient the discussion.

Kees, Burton, Andrews and Kozup, in their market study on graphic pictorial warnings on cigarette packaging inferred a positive correlation between graphic depictions and the possibility of deterring consumers from smoking. They also determined that combining words with text on the packets increased the impact of the message on the consumers (266).

Although more graphic pictures are predicted to have favourable effects on intentions to quit smoking through the level of fear evoked, highly graphic pictures may have a negative impact on copy test variables, such as message recall and package attitude (Kees, Burton, Andrews and Kozup 268).

However, the concomitant possible result of putting off customers and reducing their recall of the message on the packet were also hinted at. Now their reference point is graphic pictures which are as close to ‘reality’ as photographs. It can be argued that by mediating the violent graphic through drawing wherein the violent ‘reality’ of the photographic image is aestheticized, but still retaining the potent combination of words and images, a positive variation of the aforementioned impact could be engendered. The aim of the graphic artist is not to be so graphic as to make the reader feel that they cannot read anymore but to encourage a continuance of the gaze so as to drive home the message of the narrative. By enacting a visual sleight the immediate selfish disgust at bodily violence created in the readers by the image is contained, combined with words, and then launched back at the readers to allow them to experience the greater violence inflicted on the bodies of others.

The curious power of amalgamating the touchability (both emotional and physical) of the comic mode with the disinterestedness of journalism is best epitomized by Tristram Walker’s reading of Sacco’s graphic style. Walker draws on Scott McCloud’s concept of “closure” to hypothesize the “wound”- like functioning of trauma as Sacco’s comics aesthetic (71):

McCloud uses “closure” to describe the process of gap filling that occurs when the mind completes pictures from limited information...McCloud suggests that by filling in those gaps between panels, the reader becomes complicit in the construction of narrative imagery...Sacco’s work requires the reader to mentally construct the reality of trauma...we are guided in deciding the degree of brutality between frames by the images and written narration provided by Sacco (Walker 69).

The inextricable combination of show and tell in graphic narratives creates a gross fascination to devour the product and yet retain the affective qualities of the story being told. Joe Sacco, in his masterful and variant portrayals of the Israel-Palestine conflict demonstrates the graphic artist’s proclivity for narratives of corporeality by utilizing the inherent tactility of comic book reading to weave a tale that “draw[s] us ever more powerfully *into* the larger world beyond our own small sense of self” (Scherr 34).

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Cinema as Historian: Agnotology and the Politics of Historical and Fictional Representations of the Vietnam War

Naveen John Panicker

It is often the case with most concepts employed to mark, characterise and define notions of humanity to defy all efforts of arriving at conclusive understanding; the concept of memory is no exception to this. It lies at the heart of human subjectivity and is often that silent voice at the back of one's head which fuels and determines notions of identity, influences actions, perceptions and behavioural patterns. It has been codified through the methodological frameworks of various academic disciplines. For all its complexities and simplifications, for all the various shapes that it has been moulded into, for all of the light that has been shed on it and the nature of the resultant shadows examined, it nevertheless eludes a proper, conclusive explanation. It would help therefore to begin with a general/popular definition of memory before one proceeds to examine the echoes it produces in human lives.

Memory is broadly defined as the ability to recall or reproduce in the present what has been learnt or imbibed from the past, recalled from a veritable storehouse of information codified in words or images and sometimes evoking certain sensations or emotions. Time is the axis along which this concept may be plotted or comprehended, as memory is generally tied to an idea of the past. In terms of its role in enabling and determining narratives, several questions may be raised: How does memory feature in the writing of history? How does memory enable a narrative and how does a narrative determine the nature of memory? What factors determine the notions of authenticity primarily associated with academic history, and how does that distinguish it from fiction? How does memory feature in these estimations?

The notion that history is a simple and objective retelling of 'facts' is one that has been problematized in academic circles but it nevertheless continues to hold sway for the general populace. This infuses the discipline of history with a degree of authenticity and narratorial authority and makes for clear distinctions between the 'historical' and the 'literary.' The 'objectivity' of the narratorial voice, however, when brought under question, problematizes these notions and advances the idea of historiography. William Guynn, in *Writing History in Film*, talks about how Paul Veyne challenges this notion with the assertion that historical narratives are essentially stories, and goes on to explain how historical writing is not a scientific discipline, seeing as it is concerned with "...the totality of shared human experience across time, in its infinite variations", and that history is rather "...a critical apparatus that allows the historian to examine whether the meaning he attaches to an event by placing it in a chain of cause and effect is justifiable" (29).

Several theories have attempted to arrive at some possible ways by which fiction may be distinguished from non-fiction. It is not enough for the author to ascribe a fictional or nonfictional character to his work; it must be recognised as such by the readers. At the outset is the understanding that there are no strictly formal characteristics that are unique to either a work of fiction or non-fiction by which a reader may instinctively make distinctions between either work, and that "...the internal organisation of discourse varies relatively little according to whether what is represented is real or imagined; it varies dramatically according to the "vehicle of representation" the discourse puts in service..." (Guynn 57). Therefore, it is necessary to

make distinctions by examining them through other lenses, including but not limited to the underlying concerns that govern the creation of either a fictional or a non-fictional narrative, the function or objective of either narrative, the effect sought upon the audience/reader/viewer, the location and function of the narratorial voice and the extent of responsibility assumed by this voice.

A minor distinction may be made with regard to the functions ascribed to, and the constraints acting upon either genre: “Non-fictional genres are defined by their pragmatism and fiction by its creation of a space where the concerns of the world of real action are suspended in the interest of another kind of experience...fictional narratives are *shaped* (sic), whereas nonfictional narratives are bound by the truth imperative that prohibits such structuring activity” (Guynn 48). According to Kate Hamburger, fiction assumes an imagined time while non-fictional narratives fundamentally locate the speaker in the “moment of enunciation,” thereby placing a greater emphasis on the ‘reality’ not simply of the speaker’s presence but of his/her utterances (Guynn 49). The degree of referentiality is another method through which distinctions are made between the ‘factual’ and the ‘fictional’, for factual discourses are understood to be those that can be verified, that in fact demand verification, and may therefore be deemed referential, while fictional representations do not necessarily require verification and need not, therefore, be referential (Guynn 56). The question of referentiality depends on the relative appropriateness of the ‘vehicle of representation’ employed by the discourse, whether oral, written, or audio-visual. This brings one to the question of historical cinema and the appropriateness of employing the cinematic medium, generally located under the rubric of ‘fiction’ owing to its mechanisms of representation that require ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’, to represent sociological or historical concerns.

Cinema is particularly effective as a medium of communication. It has, and continues to play a rather crucial role in shaping public consciousness and collective memory; this has understandably caused much consternation among academic historians, a discomfort grounded nevertheless in a genuine concern. Can filmmakers be trusted, in their handling of historical material, to stick to the ethics and standards of ‘objective representation’ with regard to their truthfulness as determined by academic historians? To what degree should the act of ‘recreation’, inherent in the process of crafting audio-visual representations, be allowed to interfere with the act of ‘retelling’? To what degree can filmmakers be allowed to ‘bend’ or ‘distort’ historical ‘truth’ or creatively ‘fill the vacuum’ left behind by insufficient historical knowledge in their attempt to not simply narrate stories but narrate them ‘effectively’ and ‘entertainingly’? Often enough, the “...distortion of historical chronology in the interests of dramatic structure, simplification of complex events...emphasis on the spectacular rather than the analytical, reduction of historical observation to the evocation of the picturesque...” can severely affect how certain historical events and the characters in them are publicly remembered for times to come (Guynn 2).

Such narratives may therefore tend to play to spectators’ perceptions or expectations about what is, or ought to be, credible or real, which in turn determine the nature and shape of collective memory through the strategic imposition of certain images of the past upon public imagination. This tendency is succinctly expressed by William Guynn as “...the general tendency in the era of simulation to offer the public packaged substitutes for the act of reminiscence...” through images that “once captured,” are manipulated and repeated” (166). Memory isn’t merely the passive presence of certain images in the mind but is also, more

crucially, an intentional and active process of recollection. Historical cinema offers an image and works to enable that image to encompass a historical event, thereby determining the contours of the form and nature of remembrance. In addition to being a medium that facilitates remembrance, it also enables a certain memorialization, intended towards the preservation of accumulated communal experiences in order to help foster an easily transferrable communal identity. The objective of memorialization through cinema isn't merely to reconstruct the past for the present or future, or determine how it ought to be remembered, but enable *particular* kinds of recollection for the individual and for the community at large (Guynn 168-171).

The cinematic medium, as stated earlier, narrates by showing and not merely telling. There is thus, for the purposes of representation, a need for creating a scene and not merely capturing a scene as it is. This element of manipulation, defended on the grounds of artistic creativity, raises great concerns regarding the authenticity of a cinematic work's claims of historical truthfulness. This does not mean that a work of academic history is necessarily and always more truthful or authentic than, say, a cinematic work. It deals rather with the question of how historians and filmmakers understand their respective roles with regard to what is owed to their readers/spectators on the basis of certain estimations of their readers'/spectators' expectations of/from them. In such a scenario, any claim, no matter what, or from whom, must be met with suspicion. Eric Hobsbawm, in *On History*, briefly touches on this issue when he writes thus:

Historians are the memory bank of experience. In theory the past – all the past, anything and everything that has happened to date – constitutes history...And insofar as they compile and constitute the collective memory of the past, people in contemporary society have to rely on them. The problem is not whether they do. It is what exactly they hope to get out of the past, and if so whether that is what historians should give them (33).

Filmmakers, not conventionally bound by the rigid boundaries that academic historians are ethically confined to, *may* be amenable to give people, in Hobsbawm's words, "exactly what they hope to get out of the past."

The desire to talk about something is the desire to talk about it in a *particular* way. The war in Vietnam has caused the American imagination a fair amount of trouble in trying to decide how to talk about and remember an unpopular war they'd rather forget. American novels, memoirs and films that deal with the Vietnam War generally limit their narratorial perspectives to the vantage points afforded by the American soldiers themselves, and therefore limit their focus to the effects of the war upon the soldiers, and by extension, the larger American psyche. These soldiers are either shown as heroic and victorious, fighting a just war as only Americans do, or in the event of a writer/ filmmaker caught in the liminal space between absolving oneself of responsibility and taking it upon oneself entirely, portrayed as victims. One of the most effective ways of constructing alternative narratives of victimhood was to suggest that the soldiers in the Vietnam war and the general public were ignorant, or were kept in ignorance, of the larger picture; ignorance of the dealings of the political administration, of the motives of those in the higher echelons of power who manipulated them by starving them of pertinent information or by feeding them misinformation. This explains the 'betrayal' that many anti-war protestors, and especially the Vietnam war veterans, were understood to have felt and articulated, a betrayal not just of the American public by the democratic institutions they believed in and

trusted but a betrayal of the larger American spirit itself. This narrative also allows for a certain degree of self-absolution, a pre-requisite for self-redemption.

“The desire of collective memory to preserve the past in the present leads to distortions and “misrepresentations” because memory is steeped in emotion and is often guided by the self-interest of the group” (Guynn 173). Ignorance is generally seen as an undesirable lack or a void that can be addressed through the acquisition of knowledge. But just as light falling upon an object always leaves certain areas of the object in the dark, knowledge of something will always leave something else unilluminated; particular kinds of knowledge, even those that claim to be objective and authentic, foster particular kinds of ignorance. Since the prioritising of certain kinds of knowledge or information over other kinds is inevitable, there is a need to examine the nature of ignorance that inevitably results from this prioritising, in addition to looking at some of the methods and means by which ignorance is constructed and/or perpetuated. Manufactured ignorance can be especially dangerous, for “once things are made (selectively) unknown – by suppression or by apathy – they can remain unknown without further effort. Once lost or destroyed, a document or a species or a culture does not spring back to life” (Proctor 8).

Agnotology, the study of culturally and socially induced ignorance, broadly distinguishes ignorance in three ways: “ignorance as *native state* (or resource), ignorance as *lost realm* (or selective choice), and ignorance as a deliberately engineered and *strategic ploy* (or active construct)” (Proctor 3). Ignorance, in the first category, is generally seen as a form of innocence, a pre-existing void that must be or can be overcome by the simple infusion of knowledge and awareness, while the second category looks at ignorance that result from a conscious prioritising of knowledge to serve one’s particular interests. The third category, one where attempts are deliberately made through suppression, misinformation and manipulation to try and create a climate of ignorance, is more pertinent to the debates around the problematic nature of American representations of the Vietnam war.

It is ignorant to see ignorance itself as an overwhelmingly negative thing, a vice that must necessarily be overcome through reason and logic, just as it is foolish to indiscriminately champion knowledge and its possession. Ignorance is crucial in certain ways, such as in the instance of the notion of privacy; this notion is built on the idea, mutually agreed upon in theory between ‘one’ (an individual or even an institution) and the ‘other’ (another individual or another institution), that ‘one’ has a right to keep the ‘other’ ignorant of certain aspects of one’s life or affairs, aspects that the other has no right to try, by any means, to gain awareness of. A perfunctory examination of the cinematic responses offered by Hollywood opens up to scrutiny two ways by which ignorance can be seen to manifest itself within the American domain: firstly, when state institutions deliberately try to engineer ignorance through manipulation, misinformation and suppression of relevant information, and secondly, when a conflicted public, incapable of digesting a reality that conflicts with their beliefs, chooses to reconcile with certain narratives they believe truthful inasmuch as it aligns with what they want to believe as true.

The logic that guides an official classifier of information for the United States government is fairly straightforward, in that the determination is based upon how a certain classification of information may be seen to add to the “net national advantage” of the country in terms of how it contributes to, or could potentially contribute to, the accumulation of value for the state, its institutions and the general well-being of the country and its public (Galison 41). The essential idea is to keep any piece of information that could potentially harm the national

interests, or could be used counter to it, from falling in the hands of ‘the wrong people’, while leaving such terms as ‘national interest’ or ‘wrong people’ intentionally vague; the ambiguity in such formulations make them extremely effective in suppressing any form of dissent under the guise of protecting larger interests.

The nature of information determines the nature of history. It determines remembrance, that is, it decides forms of memorialization. It evokes intellectual and emotional responses; it inspires or deters action, it convicts and it pardons, it condemns and it redeems. It decides knowledge and it pronounces ignorance. Ignorance is never the absence of knowledge; those deemed ignorant are deemed so by those who possess not necessarily more knowledge or information but rather different knowledge or information. A degree of self-awareness therefore enables one to recognise the insidious and pervasive influence of ignorance manufactured through the simultaneous processes of removal of certain knowledge and infusion of certain other knowledge. Information is therefore powerful in that it not only creates an awareness of knowledge but also a simultaneous awareness of its lack, and how one works with, and through, the other. This is a crucial element of all self-reflective texts.

Films such as Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986), or *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), and Hal Ashby’s *Coming Home* (1978) have been among those films that have received much critical acclaim for its attempt to portray the harsh and unforgiving realities of the soldiers ‘in country’ and their plight ‘back home’. They were praised for cutting through false rhetoric and for being ‘realistic’ depictions of the sufferings endured by an average soldier in Vietnam. These films dealt with the sense of utter disillusionment and betrayal that pervaded the period and the reality of the organisational disorder and drug abuse that plagued the military; they were, in effect, held as authentic representations of the ‘experience’ of the Vietnam war. These films were understood to serve as historical or micro-historical texts in the sense of documenting the experience of soldiers in war and thereby contributing to the archives of, and invariably shaping, the collective memory of the war. But few films about the Vietnam war have self-reflectively examined the mechanisms of suppression and misrepresentation that worked ceaselessly to actively manufacture ignorance about the war, both in America and ‘in country’, save two cinematic representations; these films, namely *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987) exhibit a certain self-reflectivity that transcends the mere ‘authentic’ portrayal of individual experience and briefly examines the politics of representation itself.

Characteristic of the quintessential Kubrickian humour that enjoys playing linguistic games in well-crafted satiric exposes of the excesses of political or military administrations, the ethos of the journalism team of the *Stars and Stripes* magazine that the protagonist Pvt. Joker is assigned to is displayed in a banner thus: “First to go, last to know: We will defend to the death our right to be misinformed,” the replacement of certain phrases such as “search and destroy” by more sanitised expressions such as “sweep and clear,” and the deliberate emphasis on stories that either deal with ‘winning of hearts and minds’ or ‘winning the war’ are emblematic of the extent of misrepresentation, either through deletion (as in *Good Morning, Vietnam*) or through sanitisation (as in *Full Metal Jacket*) that was employed to make an unpleasant and unpopular war palatable to the larger public consciousness.

The censorship of news is more explicitly shown in Barry Levinson’s film, *Good Morning, Vietnam*, where reports of bomb explosions, civilian and military casualties, cases of court-martial, or basically anything not given ‘official clearance’, were kept under wraps while

the troops on the ground, the American public back home, and the world at large, were fed stories that optimistically maintained the success of the American effort in Vietnam. The futility of resistance is shown in the backlash that Robin Williams's character, Adrian Cronauer, faces in the film when he disobeys direct orders and tries to get the news of a bomb explosion out into the airwaves. In Sam Mendes's film about the Gulf war, *Jarhead* (2005), a film very similar in its cinematic structure, characterisation and imagery to *Full Metal Jacket*, the marines, before being interviewed by journalists, are coached in the political position that they ought to adopt, required to not contradict the establishment's views, expected to admire the might of the military and display pride in being a part of it and are encouraged to show that they believe in the necessity of the war effort. The standard responses provided by the marines in this film are an echo of the responses offered by the marines being interviewed in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* and they show that little has changed between the two wars.

James Meek, in his review of Sam Mendes's film *Jarhead*, tries to understand what it means for a war film to be 'realistic': "Perhaps it is asking too much of war films to be realistic when war itself is so unlike the reality western audiences know. It's not that actors are incapable of capturing the intensity of men at war. They are. What they cannot do is capture the vacancy of men at war" (par 10). This may be seen to apply to all narratives, including 'authentic' historical narratives, for any text would inevitably fall short of conveying the reality of an experience in its entirety and in all its complexity. The terms 'realistic' and 'authentic' have been used quite liberally in talking about certain narratives of the war, whether literary, historical or cinematic, but one would be hard pressed to determine the exact basis for these types of judgements.

The estimations of certain narratives and representations as 'true', 'real' or 'authentic', and on the basis of which distinctions are made between these narratives and those that are therefore deemed 'less' true, real, or authentic, are simply judgements that are made on the basis of how certain narratives are determined to align more 'truthfully' with a collective assumption about the 'truth' of a narrative or an experience, in as much as it corresponds to certain 'established' or universally agreed upon notions or 'facts' that act as the foundational background against which these representations are contrasted and their 'value' and 'validity' determined. It is a truth that is judged as 'relevant' in accordance with a certain socio-political and cultural ethic and the term 'reality', or 'realistic', terms that find its validation on account of its association with a particular notion of 'truth', is therefore a matter of convention. These determinations, subject to the vagaries of 'facts' and 'truth', are nevertheless essential in that the 'reality' they present, as truthfully and authentically as they are able, brings it, or is understood to bring it, closest to 'how it actually is/may be'. These notions are problematic and ever elude absolute clarity with regards its determinations, but it is in this manner that one may look at and validate certain representations of the war as 'true' or 'real', or more 'true' or 'real', and therefore more valid or relevant, than others.

In the case of fictional narratives or cinematic representations the extent to which what is presented is, individually or collectively, understood to correspond to a general sensibility regarding the 'genuine' experience may be a determining feature for the award of the label of 'realistic'. In the instance of academic historical narratives the fact of it being an account that bases itself strictly in archival material, the truthfulness of which have already been, more or less, established, would account for the narrative being deemed 'authentic'; one wonders if the term 'realistic' may be appropriately used for judging 'authentic' historical narratives. The former is a concept that is more malleable than the latter. Truth is an element that naturally

factors in estimations of both the 'authentic' and the 'realistic' and at a glance they appear to be terms that could be used interchangeably, for in terms of how these expressions are generally used, they may be understood to refer to the same idea, quality, or attribute of an object or a text.

There is the truth of war as history, deemed 'authentic', and the truth of war stitched together in individual experiential moments, deemed 'realistic'; the 'authentic' (in the form of a historical text and in its estimation) may differ from the 'realistic' (in the form of a cinematic work and in its estimation) in the manner that a photograph may differ from a painting. These 'realistic' cinematic representations of the war, entities that do not fit neatly either within the rarefied category of institutionally determined fact nor within the category of fiction, may then be understood to fall into a liminal space generally occupied by works of popular history, to name one instance. These are works that are truthful in their reference to actual places, people, events or phenomena of historical significance but do not command the narratorial authority of an 'authentic' historical text in its role in the determination of collective historical memory; this is owing to their not being necessarily bound by the strict rules that govern the writing of academic history nor sharing its objectives of the historian's accountability to his/her readers with regards his/her strict adherence to 'verified or verifiable historical truth'. Historical cinema works to produce a certain kind of remembrance through specific acts of memorialisation; the images they create, or recreate, constitute a visual archive that potentially influences public consciousness and determines the nature of collective memory. It influences the manner in which the past is recollected, interpreted, and memorialised as history, primarily by, and to, the self, and then to the other. It is a flawed historian, but is a historian of a kind, nonetheless.

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The Last Days Of Café Leila by Donia Bijan

Reviewed by Anubha Anushree



THE LAST DAYS OF CAFÉ LEILA. By Donia Bijan. New York: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2017; pp. 289., \$15.95, ISBN: 9781616205850.

Donia Bijan's *The last days of Café Leila* (*The Café*, 2017) is like a wafting aroma of your mother's sambhar or pulao, exciting just in the right balance of anticipation and contentment — anticipation of new intimacies through food and contentment of knowing what these intimacies bring. Nearly 300 pages long, this novel is the most recent offer from Bijan, familiar to most in San Francisco for her famous restaurant, L'Amie Donia. Bijan, a graduate from Berkeley, has authored two works of fiction, the first being an autobiography entitled *Maman's Homesick Pie: A Persian Heart in an American Kitchen* (Algonquin, 2011). Although she identifies herself with the thriving Iranian diaspora of California, her life journey belongs to a generation of men and women who were forced to flee Iran during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Termed as “the great joust under traditional

emblems” by Foucault,¹ this Revolution is the epicenter of Bijan's early childhood in Tehran, her journey Westward to California, and her subsequent homecoming later in life. Like those great events whose very lack of spectacle confirms their momentousness, the Revolution remains deeply embedded in her works.

Bijan's work deals with several themes familiar to readers of émigré fiction from Iran — trauma, exile, and loss. But instead of succumbing to the often dark, quirky, and irresolvable fate of exile in the more famous diaspora novels of Marjan Satrape (*Persepolis*, 2000), Manoucher Parvin (*Dard-e-Del: Rumi, Hafez and Love in New York*, 2003) and, more recently, in Porochista Khakpour's works (*The Last Illusion*, 2014), Bijan focuses on the process of return. She chooses to draw our attention to the evolving power of life to overcome and heal. In doing so, she joins the league of a now-growing generation of women writers from Iran who dwell on return as a condition and possibility of exile. For these writers, such as Bijan's more famous counterpart, Azar Nafisi (*Reading Lolita in Tehran*, 2004), return and exile are simultaneous and home and abroad are contingent and contiguous spaces, defined less by physical properties than mental ones. Just as exile is not merely an external phenomenon determined by physical boundaries, so

¹Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*. pp. 203-209. University of Chicago Press, 2005.

is return not only a physical transition. The novel makes us see exile and return as a process and not an end even as it makes us aware that exiles often occur as much within intimate relationships as between international borders. Either way, exiles, whether private or public, coerced or chosen, could be equally painful.

If Bijan's novel presents exile as condition of life, she is also unequivocally committed to the idea of return — the proverbial homecoming — that shapes our exiles, mitigates its hardships, and keeps us human. The narrative focus on return and transition is in part a response to our increasingly globalized world, where, the more things change the more they remain the same and in part a gentle subversion of some of the verisimilitudes that has come to define contemporary politics. Iran and the US epitomize the bipolar and fractious world we inhabit, a world that has increasingly confined us into hollow stereotypes such as those of Muslim oppression and American liberty. *The Café* transcends these stereotypes and reveals to us a much more complex world, where liberty and oppression are not geographic and physical but moral and emotional phenomena. Return is, thus, important if only to allow one to breach the stereotypes and measure the breadth of one's moral journey. For it is in breach, that one learns to belong. For it is in return, that one comes to value going away.

The Café follows a simple story. Noor, the central character of the novel and the narrator, suddenly discovers her husband Nelson, a successful cardiac surgeon in California, to be cheating on her. This discovery leads her to decide to visit Tehran after a gap of nearly thirty years. Initially, the plan is to visit only for the summer, the duration of her thirteen-year old daughter Lily's vacation. But as she arrives in Tehran, she discovers her father dying with terminal cancer. Meanwhile, Zod, Noor's desolate baba (father) has survived a long history of political turbulence, losing his opera-singing wife, Pari, to the bigotry that followed the Iranian Revolution of 1979. After the death of his wife under mysterious circumstances, Zod overcomes his own grief and sends his children to the US to pursue higher studies. Noor's arrival in the café leads to a series of transitions in her family and the people inhabiting the café.

Unlike what is expected, Noor and Lily do not encounter chaos and turmoil in Tehran. In the gastronomical rhythms of Café Leila, they find respite and peace. Café Leila is a world undestroyed by the hatred and hostility that defined Iran in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 revolution. To say this is not to say that Café Leila was not impacted by the events of 1979. The fate of the café and its Russian-origin owner, Zod, are intricately tied to the country and its environment. The café never fully recovers from the loss of Zod's elder brother Davoud and then, later, his cosmopolitan wife Pari. At the same time, Zod's ability to offer comfort and food to everyone re-nourishes Noor and her daughter Lily even as Zod and his café slowly crumble. Zod and the café's citizens exemplify a world that does not follow the calculus of consequences. But even as this inconsequential world nourishes Noor and Lily, this is also a world that revives dark memories of hatred and anger, old wounds or just quaint nostalgia that is out of sync with the world that has moved on. Zod's younger brother and Noor's uncle Morad, never returns, not even to bid adieu to his elder brother and the world he left behind. Nor does Noor's elder brother Mehrdad. His return is that of a tourist, calculated and provisional. So is Nelson's visit, which is instrumentally defined by his desire to see his daughter and alienated wife.

Behind the simple and straightforward exterior, however, Bijan is able to invert a number of stereotypes. It is not quite a coincidence that the only people who really return are women — Noor, Lily, and Morad's wife, Aunt Farah. Although each woman represents a different stage of

return and, thus exile, it is Noor and Lily who find contentment and love, peace and power to continue the legacy of the café. The café offers little to men, especially those who chose to move on. But it is equally remarkable that it is Zod who, with his ability for unconditional love, holds on and offers a space unmoved by time's corrosive consequences. It is fitting then, that the novel opens with Zod and ends with a homage to his ability to "light the stove, cook our meals, and...never be short of company."² There is a serenity and patience in the character of Zod. He, like the other citizens of the café, is marked by a maternal persistence and interest in the seemingly endless chores of the home and the kitchen. Like mothers, his love for his children is so unconditional that he even forces them to leave for a better future in the US. It is this unconditional love that makes Zod stand out in a world where love has been continuously defined by limits and qualified by pragmatic goals. But he is not alone. Naneh Goli, his now-octogenarian nanny, his assistant Soli and his nephew Karim are equally marked by their ability to transcend human qualifications and offer selfless love.

Despite the socially variegated set of characters we encounter — the affluent cardiac surgeon Nelson and his Iranian wife, the protagonist, Noor and their daughter Lily to the poor orphan Karim and Soli in Tehran — Bijan's characters have one consistency, namely their ability to love. Love, however, is not easy. Love demands a price. Sometimes, giving up love is the price we pay to love. That is the price Noor and Zod pay. Karim, Naneh Goli, and Soli are, similarly, beyond the love based on reciprocity and exchange. They know a different love, a love not defined by modern constructions of conditions and measurements. If Zod reminds us of the exemplarity of love, it is Karim, the thirteen-year old orphan working at the café that makes us comprehend what unconditional love looks like. Karim is the force that rebukes us for despairing and compels us to believe in the valor (to borrow a term from Montaigne) and simplicity of love. But, unlike Montaigne's valor, Karim's valor is not born out of pride and neither does it beget pride. Karim's love for Lily is the love that does not demand reciprocity. Karim inherits from Zod his ability to love beyond consequences and measurements and like Zod, Karim is ready to put his life in danger to let Lily fly back to the US. It is, thus, Karim, who teaches Lily and Noor a thing or two about love and nurtures their broken relationship back to that of a mother and a daughter.

In one sense, the novel follows too-neat a binary between the Western and the non-Western notion of love. All the Western or Westernized characters such as Nelson and Lily, Morad and Mehrdad give into the lure of the material modernity and follow a familiar pattern of superficial financial success and its attendant vanity. Similarly, their Iranian counterparts, Zod and Pari, Naneh Goli, Soli, and Karim, the representatives of the non-West, are less guided by their desire to gain than to give. Thus, even when the novel seems to be arguing for expanding the modern assumptions of love, in placing its characters in such clear geographic compartments, it fails to complicate the universal qualities of love. Nevertheless, it is the women, Noor and Aunt Farah, who in their different ways are able to return. It is also significant to point out the change that Lily undergoes because of Karim. Lily is able to give up her Western conditioning and offer support to the acid-attack victim, Fereshteh. It is through this girl-victim that Noor, Lily, and Karim come closer and translate their loves into selfless belonging. Joined in their desire to take care of this hapless victim, the family, including Zod, are finally able to appreciate the similarity of values that binds them together.

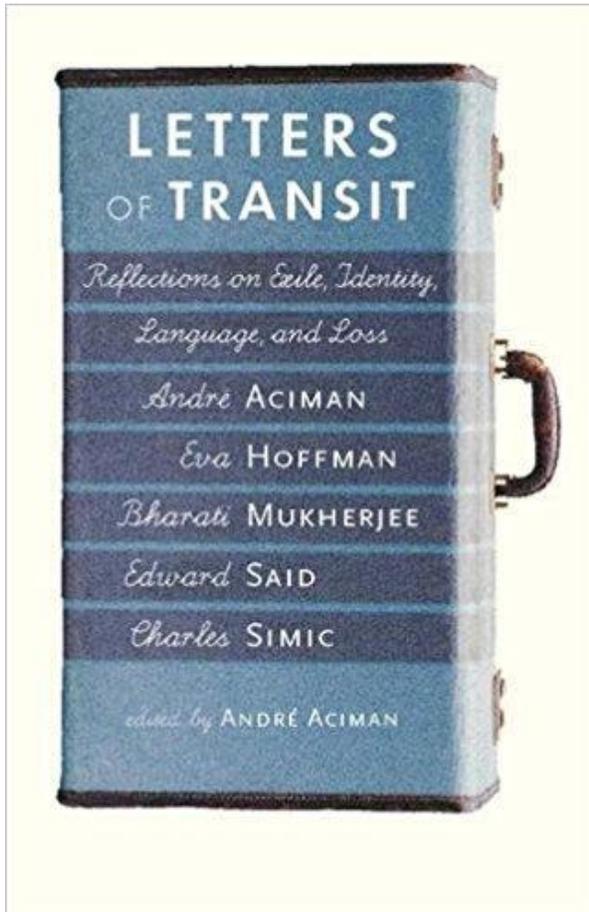
²289.

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Bijan's novel is an aphorism for home. Just as a home is populated by desires and dejections, love and hate, so is Café Leila both a narrative of loss and gain. Noor decides to leave the US, and implicitly her daughter and contrite husband. But, she also chooses to welcome Café Leila as her future and Fereshteh as her adopted daughter. Even as the dialectic of exile and return remains the key element of the novel, it is food and the cooking metaphors that characteristically pervade Bijan's narrative. Homes may differentiate between family members and provide sustenance selectively; Café Leila never refuses food to its customers. For those of us, compelled or chosen to leave our homes, Bijan's work solicits our cracked palettes, nourishing our hearts and stomachs with the memory of our homes, encouraging us to never outlive the love that brought us up. For, to outlive the love that nourished us into becoming who we are, Bijan delicately reminds us, is to outlive our sources of being and live with emptiness and fear.

Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss edited by
Andre Aciman

Reviewed by *Deeksha Suri*



LETTERS OF TRANSIT: REFLECTIONS ON EXILE, IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND LOSS Edited by Andre Aciman. New York: The New Press, 2000; pp.144., \$16.95, ISBN: 9781565846074

Within the range of studies available on the subject of exile, *Letters of Transit* brings to light the individual responses dealing with nostalgia and finding a new voice. In this book, five authors present their meditations on exile, loss, and the meaning of home. As mentioned in the Foreword, these writers hail from different regions and backgrounds, “Yugoslavian in exile (Charles Simic), or a Bengali in exile (Bharati Mukherjee), or a Pole in exile (Eva Hoffman), or a Palestinian in exile (Edward Said), or an Alexandrian in exile (Andre Aciman)” who settled in the United States of America.

Literature on exile almost always includes the aspect of displacement and within this predicament, geographical dislocation is just one estrangement among the multitude that the exiled undergo on this journey. The state of

transit occasions varied perspectives on recreating home and the role of memory in such a recreation. The book begins with Andre Aciman’s narrative on loss and settlement. His essay ‘Shadow Cities’ conceptualizes change as something that takes away the markers of the past while the exiled individuals like “Narcissus leaning over a pool of water, find themselves at every bend, every store window, every façade.” As any change arouses the fear of unfamiliarity, the new home is accommodated, while keeping alive the traces of the past. These roots are built upon certain imaginings. The essay attempts to reach an understanding of how an individual penetrates a city and forms a bond with it by either reminiscing about the worlds left behind or through the worlds which are incidentally found as the author finds himself “no less a figment of time than the city is a figment of space.” Enquiry into recurrent loss and finding of a new reality leads to the second essay by Eva Hoffmann ‘The New Nomads.’ The essay straddles between two facets of exile, one that is enveloped in deep throngs of detachment from one’s land and other that is exciting and gives a sense of new explorations. Through a postmodern view which considers fragmentation, uncertainty, and dislocation as ubiquitous, Hoffmann highlights the exile that each individual goes through because of being unanchored in an unstable reality. In

doing so, a ‘chiaroscuro contrast’ is created where the traumatic experience of exile becomes fundamentally vital for self-reflection. Sustained reflection on the transformed scenario of exile with cross border communication and travel brings forth the conception of a shared world where the strong presence of nation as a unified force is no longer binding. But, even within the changing premise of exile, the dilemma between alienation and assimilation remains unresolved. In this essay the author deals with the conception of a shared world that paradoxically necessitates the experience of being exiled which, in turn, reaps meaning from the ‘tree of life.’

How one stays afloat in a new environment, detached from one’s native culture, is a concern addressed in the essay ‘Imagining Homelands’ by Bharati Mukherjee. Delineating the distinct position of exiles, expatriates, immigrants, and repatriates, the essay weaves the narratives of settlement. Mukherjee discusses the formation of identity for an immigrant who seldom adapts to the foreign culture. The acceptance of the status of immigrant is a stamp of exclusivity, which can prove to be an ‘uplifting narrative’ but always deters one from being a ‘part’ of the new world. The essay presents distinction between the experiences of an exiled, who is apprehensive of his identity from that of an expatriate, who willingly forsakes his/her native land. This duality whether to modify oneself for the sake of settling in or to maintain individual dignity is successfully debated in the essay ‘No Reconciliation Allowed’ by Edward Said. This book particularly focuses upon the internal exile that every individual, and especially an author goes through. To render the wounds productive for a creative output requires perpetual struggle of an artist. The biographical tone of Said’s essay concentrates upon his displacement both in terms of physical movement and language. The severity of loss upon the appropriation of a new world and a new language is expressed in the works of art as the living reminders of the fate of an exiled. Through constant references to Adorno, Said maintains that he learnt, “reconciliation under duress is both cowardly and inauthentic.” The preferred mode of conduct for the author is a private life of self-reflection instead of a provisional sense of ‘permanent ownership.’ It is not considered a mandate for an exiled to either remain attached to a lost past or to build a new identity to accommodate to present. By building a private narrative, Said proposes a life of constant re – invention of oneself as the ‘real’ always remains a temporary construct. It lends an individual to a puzzled state where the past gets somewhat blurred amidst foreign space and culture. Last essay in the book entitled ‘Refugees’ by Charles Simic points to the arbitrary nature of being situated in a place and the impact of new modes of living. The author here does not recount going through the usual dilemmas of separation as he glides through the new culture of America. The essay presents an instance of assimilation for an exiled individual through ‘anonymity’ and ‘difference.’ It narrativizes the quest of existence when the intellectual pretensions of an exile are left for day to day sustenance and adapting to the new environment.

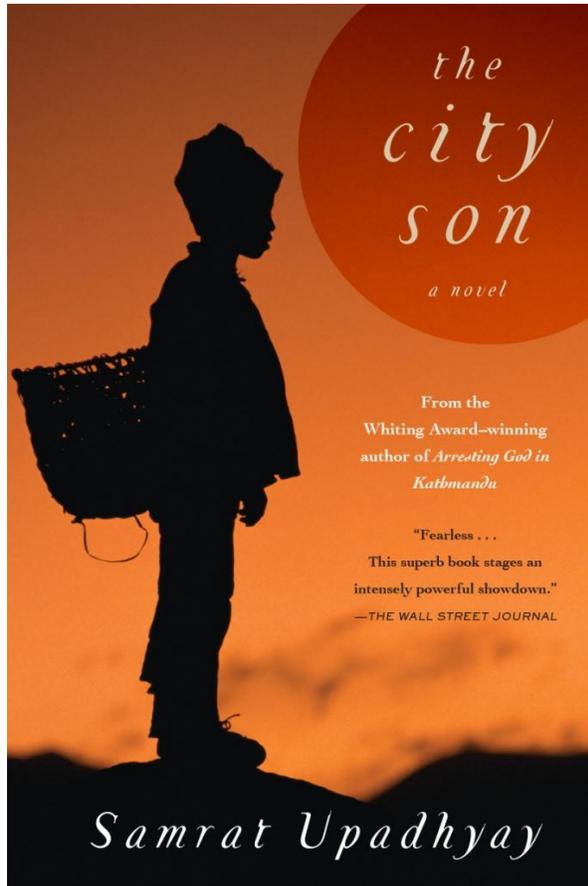
This book has accounts of ‘Otherness’ and of the attempts of bridging the gaps between loneliness and communion. As presented in the book, the condition of an exile can only be exonerated through acceptance, either of oneself or of the space. That is, the predicament of an artist in exile can be unscrambled through artistic expression such as writing, through which the artist comes to terms with his/her own fears and dilemmas and hence is able to recover from them. But, the enigma of social and political estrangement, with the related elements of pain, separation, and loss of the old world are mildly explored in the book as compared to the discussions over settling in. In his the poem ‘Land’ Agha Shahid ali expresses that, “If home is found on both sides of the globe, home is ofcourse here – and always a missed land.” This pain of being in perpetual exile for an individual despite living at ‘home’ is the subject that the book

Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss edited by Andre Aciman

struggles with in its scope. The discourse is certainly about being in transit but the myriad shades of belonging reserve a special place in the book.

***The City Son* by Samrat Upadhyay**

Reviewed by *Prakriti Madan*



THE CITY SON. By Samrat Upadhyay. New York: Soho Press, 2014; pp. 256., \$14.25 ISBN: 9781616953812.

Samrat Upadhyay is a well known creative writer with many short stories and novels to his credit. His first work, *Arresting God in Kathmandu* (2001), is a collection of short stories which won him the Whiting Award, followed by *The Guru Of Love* (2003), *The Royal Ghosts* (2006), and *Buddha's Orphans* (2010) among others. His last novel, *The City Son*, was published by SOHO Press in 2014 and became a finalist for the PEN Open Book Award.

Samrat Upadhyay is the first fiction writer from Nepal to be published in the West. *The City Son* is set in Nepal, amidst the rift between the city of Kathmandu and a village, delineated through the life situations of characters.

The novel begins with the trope of a helpless woman, victimized by patriarchy at multiple levels. She is a misfit within the purview of a conventional sense of beauty and suffers the betrayal of an infidel husband. In the novel, the failure of her marriage can be objectively understood as a result of her not being a 'beautiful' bride. But the story, stationed in a rural background, soon metamorphoses into a narrative of a brutal and unconventional revolt in the city of Kathmandu. The author highlights her predicament through the portrayal of the practice of polygamy which, even though it is punishable under the existing laws, has long been covertly prevalent in the country. Upadhyay brings in an unknown and unexplored image of the society, by making the characters of his novel respond in an "out of the league" manner, which though horrific, keeps the readers engrossed.

The phrase, 'once a victim, always an oppressor,' fits in the lives of each character as all of them are in one way or the other, victims of a close knit, suffocating society and in the struggle to break away from it, they acquire predatory instincts, thus becoming villainous members of the same society which they were trying to escape from. Within such portrayal, the novel explores economic hardships faced by Master ji, and what turn his life takes due to entangled social customs. The novel works on the logic of causality, as the victim becomes an

oppressor, presenting the crude reality of sexual exploitation, which consequently critiques the victim shaming complex prevailing in the society due to lack of awareness.

The element of mystery drives the action throughout the text. Obscurity in the form of absolute inactivity, sudden change in the behavior of Master ji and Apsara, brings in doubt the logical and instinctive behavior of a human. Didi's madness and vengeance for the society which called her "ugly" and her husband's infidelity for an attractive woman, heats up to her obsession for beauty. Didi, being the product of her society also begins to seek 'beauty' in its conventional form. It is this beauty which she could not gain for herself and now wishes to destroy those who possess it. A drastic change from the quintessential housewife, to a revengeful, voluptuous, "beautiful" mother, becomes an unforeseen aspect for the reader.

Upadhyay's novel refuses to play in the grey area and chooses black and white pallets. Master ji and Apsara undergo a voluntary withdrawal from all the duties, responsibilities, and relationships to the point of madness whereas, Sulochana, exercises obsessive control over the household so much so that Apsara, who went against her family to marry Masterji refuses to claim her place in the same house.

Upadhyay's genius lies in the fact that his craft acts as a prism which brings in one issue and refracts a spectrum of behavioral reactions to it. The novel being a horrifying yet engaging narrative, explores layers of madness, exile and identity crisis interwoven in close relationships, with respect to the space they belong to and the space they choose. The politics of cultural, ideological and physical space leads to the downward transposition of an ordinary family to a dysfunctional one.

"When Tarun and his mother, Apsara, arrive about an hour later, Didi is cooking in the kitchen, her back to them. She doesn't turn to look. Amit and Sumit are playing a game of snakes and ladders in the corner, and they stop, their eyes first on Apsara, then on Tarun. The Master ji is sitting on the bed. Apsara pauses in the doorway, her hand holding a bag of spinach she was going to cook. Her instinct is to grab Tarun by his hand and leave." Such simplicity of style to express minute details leads to a stark hard hitting understanding of the horrific events that take place as action proceeds. Use of Nepali language in between the text brings in authenticity and rootedness to the characters and the setting of the novel. Whereas the fast pace of the plot keeps the readers hooked to the novel.

Looking at the sensitivity of the issues highlighted and the web in which the characters are entangled, it can be called a social novel, because of presence of different characters, of different age groups with varied personalities. The life-like situations in the text makes *The City Son* an indulging and relatable read.

CONTRIBUTORS

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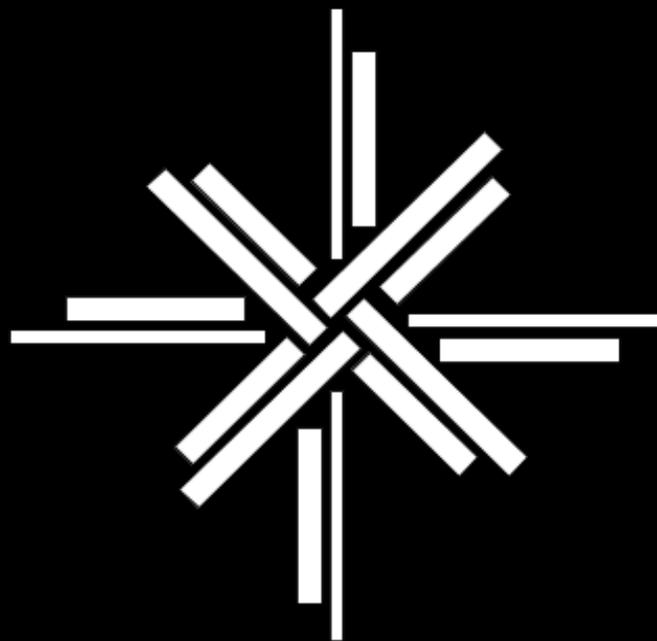
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