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# Narrative Strategies of Decolonisation: Autoethnography in Mamang Dai's *The Legends of Pensam*

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#### Abstract

According to John Quintero, "The decolonisation agenda championed by the United Nations is not based exclusively on independence. It is the exercise of the human right of self-determination, rather than independence per se, that the United Nations has continued to push for." Situated within ontologies of the human right of self-determination, this paper will focus on an analysis of The Legends of Pensam by Mamang Dai, a writer hailing from the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, to explore the strategies of decolonisation by which she revitalizes her tribe's cultural enunciations. The project of decolonisation is predicated on the understanding that colonialism has not only displaced communities but also brought about an erasure of their epistemologies. Consequently, one of its major agenda is to recuperate displaced epistemic positions of such communities. In the context of Northeast India, the history of colonial rule and governance has had long lasting political repercussions which has resulted not only in a culture of impunity and secessionist violence but has also led to the reductive homogeneous construction of the Northeast as conflict ridden. In the contemporary context, the polyethnic, socio-cultural fabric of the Northeast borderlands foregrounds it as an evolving post-colonial geopolitical imaginary. In the light of this, the objective of this paper is to arrive at the ramifications of employing autoethnography as a narrative regime by which Mamang Dai reaffirms the Adi community's epistemic agency and reclaims the human right towards a cultural self-determination.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Autoethnography, Northeast India, Displaced, Epistemic Agency

#### Contextualising Decolonisation as Praxis of Resistance

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The hermeneutics of decolonization has gained impetus from the theory of "coloniality of power", (Quijano, 2000, p.534) subsequently precipitating the idea of "coloniality of knowledge and of being (gender, sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge)" (Mignolo, 2002, p.451). 'Coloniality of power' (Quijano, 2000, p.534) refers to the geopolitical dimension of human history which has led to a colonialist and hierarchical organization of spatialities into First world and Third world entities. Subsequently, coloniality has historically and discursively situated 'being' within the domain of Western philosophy, ordering subjectivities into spaces of silence and invisibility. (Mignolo, 2002, p.451) Located within this dynamics, decolonization must sustain a restitution and recuperation of "silenced histories", subalternised epistemic positions and invisibilised subject positions. (Mignolo, 2002, p.451) In summation, the project of decolonization is to © AesthetixMS 2020. This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For citation use the DOI. For commercial re-use,

recuperate colonially displaced cultural productions of knowledge in certain communities (Quijano, 2000, p.536). In the Indian context, the history of colonial rule and governance has brought about an invisibilisation of the polyethnic, socio-cultural fabric of the Northeast borderlands, entailing a perpetuation of political and cultural alienation in contemporary paradigms of governance. (Pachuau, 2014, p.1-4) The Northeastern borderland states of India, a conglomeration of eight different states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura represent a poly-ethnic and polyglot geo-scape that posit an important post-colonial imaginary unsettling the conception of a liberal, democratic and unified India (Baishya, 2019, p.3). The genesis of the Northeast's separation and isolation from the Indian mainland can be traced back to the British colonial times that refused to acknowledge the region's multiple ethnic assertions (Baruah, 2005, 213). As a result, the colonial governance politics have had lasting political repercussions of militancy, insurgency and a perpetuation of tension between these states and mainland India as stated by Joy L.K Pachuau (2014) -

if *Orientalism* was a mode of representation which helped to create notions of the 'other' and, consequently, binaries of 'us' and 'them', if it was an epistemology that was essentially created to dominate the 'other', then it is my hypothesis that similar forms of representation and assertions of cultural hegemony are exhibited in India's own engagements with its Northeastern margins. In other words, 'Orientalist'-type construction persists within India itself, despite its own subjection to them in the colonial period. (Pachuau, 2014, p.5).

This political imperative of othering the Northeast India has shaped the contemporary cultural imaginary of mainland India which reduces its cultural plurality to a monolithic framework of a conflict ridden zone, "an undifferentiated picture of nameless insurgencies". (Baruah, 2007, p.12) Literary narratives play a huge role in "inquiries on the everyday in states of terror" and exhort us to "readjust the scales of observation and analysis" to significantly "probe the minutiae of everyday life." (Baishya, 2019, p.23) In the context of this, the objective of the present paper is to explore how Mamang Dai decolonises the nomenclature of "Northeast" as an absolute signified which has led to a reductive construction of a people with cultural alterities, as perpetual subjects of ethnic violence and state generated conflict. Mamang Dai is a celebrated author, poet and journalist from the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh who writes in English. *The Legends of Pensam* is a collection of short stories that are a literary record of the cultural enunciations of the Adi tribe and their history of oral tradition.

## Autoethnography as a political lexicon of representation and differential politics

This paper shall first situate the legitimacy of autoethnography as a narrative regime within the hermeneutics of decolonisation. In contemporary scholarship, there have been multiple delineations of autoethnography not only as a mode of conducting research but also as a mode of cultural enquiry as Boylorn and Orbe (2014) state -

We define autoethnography as cultural analysis through personal narrative. We encourage a critical lens, alongside an introspective and outward one, to make sense of who we are in the context of our cultural communities. (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014, p.18)

In this context, autoethnography is an intersection of both objective and subjective modalities of critical and ethical enquiry. As an alternative vocabulary, autoethnography is a form of "collaborative witnessing" (Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013, p.16) that works towards evoking the

experiences of the self with others, through a shared space of storytelling and conversation. As such, autoethnography is a literary conflation of three different genres: a) "native anthropology" – in which people who were formerly subjects of ethnography become the authors of their own communities and groups, b) "ethnic autobiography" - personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups, and c) "autobiographical ethnography" in which anthropologists interweave personal experience with ethnographic writing. (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.2) Situated in this context, autoethnography is legitimated as a tool of decolonisation - as a mode of narrating culture through lived experiences of the self (auto), it responds to a deep seated regime of representational crises in domains of the humanities and the social sciences. (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, p.48) Its legitimacy becomes axiomatic insofar as it can be conceptualized as an alternative mode of representation predicated on the voice of a constitutive self deeply situated within a cultural framework. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2016) state -

Autoethnography represents a significant expansion in both ethnographic form and relational potential. In using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar, the researcher is freed from the traditional conventions of writing. One's unique voice - complete with colloquialisms, reverberations from multiple relationships, and emotional expressiveness is honored. In this way the reader gains a sense of the writer as a full human being." (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, p.19)

What can be further deduced from this theorization is the ethical dimensions of an autoethnographic mode of enquiry of a culture's lived reality. In the light of this, in the decolonial praxis of writing the Northeast, an autoethnographic enquiry through the optics of a reflexive self can be a mode of subverting contemporary nationalist consciousness of the region as "backward" and "violence-ridden". (Oinam and Sadokpam, 2018, p.1) The Legends of Pensam written in the year 2006 is an autoethnographic attempt at narrativizing the oral legends, folktales, myths and rituals of Adi tribal culture. As a strategy of decolonization, the book employs an autoethnographic gaze on the quotidian rituals of tribal village life where Dai's attempt to 'write' them is to foreground the differential facets of tribal ontology. At the opening of the book, Mamang Dai situates herself as what Ellis and Bochner call an "ethnographic exemplar", as one who attempts to narrativize the legends of her tribe as a way to a deeper knowledge of her own subject position -

Arunachal Pradesh in North East India, bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar, is one of the largest states of the country, and also one of its greenest.....The mightiest of its rivers is the Siang, known as the Tsangpo in Tibet, and the Siang valley, stretching northwards to the Tsangpo gorge where the river enters India, is the territory of the Adi tribe who are the subject of this book." (Dai, 2005, p.9)

Within this locus, the present paper argues that autoethnography as a mode of selfrepresentation foregrounds a tribe's polysemic subjectivity and therefore is a significant political narrative vocabulary. Underpinning this theoretical enunciation, is the dialogic dimension of autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2016, p.8-9) which highlights the myriad constituencies of the self in dialogue with the multiplicities, nuances and complexities of a culture. This paper posits that through narrativizing Adi tribal world orders, Mamang Dai is telling stories as much as these stories tell her and her culture. At the beginning of the collection, Dai declares that "I was born in the mountains" elucidating a strong geopolitical consciousness of her positionality. The hills of the Northeast have often been looked at through colonialist ethnography as inscrutable and as abode of hostile and savage tribes (Oinam and Sadokpam, 2018, p.6). In enunciating that she was born in the mountains, and situating her stories in the larger culture scape of her

community, Mamang Dai reclaims the mountains as home to her and to a vibrant and visceral community of people long unheard and misunderstood by the mainland Indian imaginary –

I was born in the mountains, in a village where boys kicked rocks around pretending at football. Every time a vehicle drove up to the school house, there was great excitement, and we flew over the warm stones, thundering down to the edge of the field where we skidded to a halt and stood trembling with curiosity under the old jackfruit tree. (Dai, 2005, p.11)

## Situating Subjectivity in 'Pensam'

In the opening part of *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), Mamang Dai goes on to explain the layered and nuanced meaning of the word 'Pensam' which translated into English means an 'in-between' space.

In our language, the language of the Adis, the word 'pensam' means 'in-between'. It suggests the middle, or middle ground, but it may also be interpreted as the hidden spaces of the heart where a secret garden grows. It is a small world where anything can happen and everything can be lived; where the narrow boat that we call life sails along somehow in calm or stormy weather; where the life of a man can be measured in the span of a song." (Dai, 2005, p. 6)

Pensam becomes a powerful metaphor of that ecumene where the ontologies of a tribal way of life unspools. Pensam helps us to imagine an alternate and different world order where survivance is as creative and magical as a song. This metaphorization of Pensam as a magical land is not an effort at abstraction but a creative reconfiguration of a complex geospatiality animated by fantastical stories and songs and secret gardens; an in-between space where multiple realities coexist harmoniously – "Pensam is the 'in-between' place between myth and reality". (Malik, 2014, p. 127) This is an important aspect of Pensam as the in-between land - where all boundaries between the human and non-human nature are critically probed and dismantled. In Dai's description of Pensam, the magical profundity of the geospatial predominate over the human. Mamang Dai's autoethnographic mode of self/cultural-representation is premised on foregrounding alternate communitarian subjectivities that are geospatially constituted, where land, forests, rivers and mountains and the skies are very significant markers of identity as Dai tells us –

There are few road links in their territory. Travel to the distant villages still entails cumbersome river crossings, elephant rides, and long foot marches through dense forest or over high mountain passes.

But the old villagers who walk miles every day say: 'When you look at the land you forget your aches and pains.' (Dai, 2005, p.9)

Communities, in their vital connection with land have "engaged in sanctification of these spatial demarcations and converting them as representations of revered deities." (Oinam and Sadokpam, 2018, p.4) The creative and spiritual dimensions of the topology of Pensam can be understood significantly in the context that for communities in the Northeast India, "sanctification" or sacralising land is a way of reclaiming their "historical claims over lands" and hence identity. (Oinam and Sadokpam, 2018, p.4) In the Adi tribal context too, land is a sacred cultural signifier. The tribal community's connection with land as a locus of history also embodies a biopolitical communitarian ethics, which can be understood within the framework of

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theorisation of "postmodern biopolitics". (2000, p.413) Hardt and Negri in their analysis of contemporary forms of "biopower" as the power over governance of life and its most intimate spaces (Foucault, 1998, p.133-137) have radically reworked the Foucauldian paradigm which imagines "biopower" as an imposition from above by sovereign agencies. They envision "biopolitical production" through "collaborative" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p.94-95) and often affective frameworks of bodily labour, as a possible vocabulary of resistance and contestation -

Biopower stands above society, transcendent, as a sovereign authority and imposes its order. Biopolitical production, in contrast, is immanent to society and creates social relations and forms through collaborative forms of labour. (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p.94-95)

In the face of "territorial contestations" and "state power", (Oinam and Sadokpam, 2018, p.4) Adi tribal subjectivities can be seen dwelling within the vectors of political contestation of biopower through collaborative modes of labour aiming to build a stronger sociality within communities. In this context, their association with land manifests affective paradigms of communitarian care and collective survivance. In the story, "river woman", Nenem who refuses to elope with her lover, David, a young British officer says, -

Nothing was complete. But there was a comfort in looking at the green hills and the river that she had crossed to become Kao's wife. Together, they would raise a family, guard their land and live among their people observing the ancient customs of their clan. Surely these were enough gifts for one lifetime. (Dai, 2006, p. 120)

In the light of this, Dai's claiming that she was born in the mountains and her evocation of Pensam as a vibrant spatiality, reconfigures the hills of Arunachal Pradesh as the locus of tribal biopolitical subjectivity dwelling within the frameworks of collective affirmative labour and mutual care.

## Storytelling in Autoethnography

Storytelling is an important aspect of tribal cultural practices given that tribal epistemologies are predicated on the tradition of orature. In the essay, "On Creation Myths and Oral Narratives", Mamang Dai claims that storytelling is a creative use of language, metaphors and images that enunciate human feelings - "How do we identify ourselves as members of a community belonging to a particular place, with a particular history? Some of the signs for this lie with our stories." (Dai, 2009, p. 5) Temsula Ao, poet and fiction writer from Nagaland, in her poem "Songs of The Other Life", (2007) writes -

"So I told stories

As my racial responsibility

To instill in the young

The art of perpetuating

Existential history and existential tradition

To be passed on to the next generation." (Ao, 2007)

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In the epigraph to the first part, Mamang Dai says, "We have long journeys in our blood" (Dai, 2006, p.14), elucidating that just as the river Siang cuts through their land in its long journey to the sea, the oral history of the Adi tribe through literary re-articulation will sacralize long journeys chartered by the community towards self-definition. The situatedness of the subject in complex matrices of clan identity, folklore, and communitarian epistemes is at the core of Mamang Dai's art of storytelling. The framework that Mamang Dai uses in *The Legends of Pensam* is situating legends of her Adi tribe within the larger framework of narrative as storytelling. This creative paradigm of stories within a story, is a complex assemblage of the Adi tribe's myths and legends and Mamang Dai's own situatedness within this cultural framework –

There was an air of excitement as we reached the village. They had prepared the moshup, the village longhouse, for our rest. They had lit a big fire in anticipation of our stay and for the long night of stories, when myth and memory would be reborn in the song of the ponung dancers. (Dai, 2005, p.53)

Philosopher Adriana Cavarero has identified a relation between storytelling, "autonarration" (2000, p.15) and subject-formation. Specifically interesting for the focus of this paper is philosopher Adriana Cavarero's articulations in the book, Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood about the art of 'narration' against the practice of 'philosophy' (Cavarero, 2000, p.8) Cavarero posits that 'philosophy' asks, "What is Man?" whereas 'narration' elucidates "who he or she is" (Cavarero, 2000, p.13). Axiomatically, there is a significant connection between the practice of autoethnography and Adriana Cavarero's privileging of 'auto-narration' as a philosophical form of storytelling that is relational to subject formation. Cavarero's concern is with western metaphysics' failure to enunciate the uniqueness of the "Who I Am" (Cavarero, 2000, p.13). For Cavarero, the subject is a "unique existent" (2000, p.9) whose uniqueness can never be captured through any objective representational regime. However, Cavarero in postulating the "unique existent" (2000, p.9) warns against any fallacy of imagining it as symptomatic of a stable and coherent subject invoked by Western metaphysics. Rather, Cavarero begins by claiming that the first consideration for any politics is that human beings live together in collaborative existence and the fact that our genesis lies in another's story. We piece together ourselves through the stories of our early childhood told to us by others. Cavarero's idea of the "narratable self" (2000, p.10) is at the core of a hermeneutics of a self that exists in the complex intersection of narration, textuality and historicity - "a self which .....is exposed from birth within the interactive scene of the world." (Cavarero, 2000, p.14-15) If the core of "Who I Am" lives in stories, then the art of storytelling opens up new horizons in which we might experience alternative realities and new ways of being-in-the-world (Cavarero, 2000, p.15). In one of the stories in The Legends of Pensam, 'rites of love', Dai tells us about the handing down of stories and legends from one generation to another, from mother to daughter. Nenem before her sudden and mysterious death had given her only daughter Losi, a box of stories -

Keep this, this is the box of stories, you can shape them, colour them, and pull them out anytime." (Dai 26). She handed down to her child Losi the small box with the pink jade lid that smelled sweet and comforting, and had held up the big copper-coloured binoculars for her to peer through. (Dai, 2006, p. 116)

This ritual of passing down box of stories highlight the significance of oral traditions in the lives of the Adi tribe. Throughout the book Mamang Dai emphasizes the significance of orature and its creative aspect. The fact that women have been associated with this tradition of orality demonstrates their significance as bearers of culture and traditions. As a tool of decolonization, orality reanimates a culture's rhetoric endowing it with restive creativity and

vitality. The peering through the binoculars is figuratively suggestive of a reconfiguration of life by narrative as the process of composition central to storytelling is completed not in the text but in the reader and the recipient. The binoculars are the social tool of mediation between the storyteller and the listener.

The predominant connection between Adriana Cavarero's philosophical elucidation of storytelling as a project of identity formation and autoethnography as a narrative methodology in The Legends of Pensam is a rethinking of radical and evolutionary regimes of representation of differential subjectivities. Principally aligned with Cavarero's philosophy of "narratable selves", this paper posits that through autoethnography, Mamang Dai radically reclaims positionality of the self imbricated in a unique Adi tribal context of myths, legends and magical tales. Through storytelling newer possibilities for the self to negotiate with being-in-the-world emerges. An autoethnographic mode of storytelling thus embodies an eco-aesthetic practice expressing a deeper ontological understanding of the self's relationality to others in the unifying flow of stories and narratives. The story "a homecoming" establishes this idea as Mamang Dai revisits her relationship with her mother and her estranged friend, foregrounding a relational self in the throes of complex ontological negotiations after her mother's death -

There was great consolation in showing grief and sharing grief.......How unknown every moment was. Experience was not everything. After you had prepared yourself so carefully, life pulled out her greatest surprise and you had to start all over again.....Live, my mother had said. I knew she would always be with me, watching the hard, sad circle of hills and dreaming about moon babies.

## Folklore in Autoethnography

At the centre of The Legends of Pensam, is Mamang Dai's exploration of Adi tribal folklore. Reflected in folklore as "autobiographical ethnography", (Dundes, 2007,p.26) are the dynamic ontologies of a community's identity and cultural expressions. According to Alan Dundes (2007),

In folklore, one finds a people's own unselfconscious picture of themselves. Folklore as autobiographical ethnography permits the folklorist to see a people from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in.... folklore is a rich and meaningful source for the study of cognition and values. Through the study of folklore, we should be better able to understand others as well as ourselves. (Dundes in Bronner, 2007, p. 26).

In The Legends of Pensam, Mamang Dai sketches a variegated socio-cultural landscape cohesively sustained by their vital folklore. The folklore of 'Hoxo' in these tales is that he is "the boy who fell from the sky". (Dai, 2005) The meaning of this lore is to be understood in the context of the creation myths of the Adi tribe. The meaning of folklore should not be based on a literal reading of the narratives, rather a contextualization of the folklore in behavioural and social conditions is imperative (Dundes in Bronner, 2007). The mythical and mystical creation myths of the Adi tribe tells us about a sociality that is deeply located in an ecological consciousness. (M.A, 2018) -

The creation myth of the Adis is similar to other cosmogonical myths of ex nihilo nature. Apart from that it has no allusion to Brahma or Prajapati who is associated with the origin of universe in Hindu mythology. In other words the creation myths of the Adi tribe do not have any relation to other Indian Vedic mythology. (M.A, 2018, p.217)

In the first part of the collection, it is the figure of Hoxo, the boy who fell from the sky, who is the unifying thread of the stories. He has prophetic and mythic powers as he broods over the mysteries of the world and one's situatedness in the torrents of time and progress. Hoxo is a character who has no history or parental lineage and as such can be associated with their tribe's creation myths, their primordial ancestor. In the Legends he is one of the narrators and by thus mythicizing his origin and lending an aura of mystery, wisdom, and knowledge around him Dai enunciates a complex tribal subjectivity biosocially entangled with nature, oral histories, myths and legends –

Hoxo kept talking like this. He seemed to live in a timeless zone and from a great distance, sitting in this village house, in his green galuk and Khaki shorts, he followed his interests in the lives of men, animals and plants, in the origin of the universe, or quite simply thought about how to be a good chess player. (Dai, 2005, p. 31)

The abounding of such mythic characters like Hoxo, Birbik the water monster, Nenem the river woman, in *The Legends of Pensam* can be understood as a posthumanist mode of enquiry into the tenets of anthropocentrism. Biju M.A, in his essay, "Myths and Legends from Netherworld in Mamang Dai's Novel *The Legends of Pensam*", explores how myths and legends offer an alternate epistemological imperative in a world fast accelerating towards a technologically mediated posthuman identity –

It is often highlighted that ours is a posthuman world where human capacities and capabilities are enhanced with the technological innovations. In other words we have to define human beings as technical beings......In this regressive adventure, myths and legends become the threshold of wonderful wisdom and knowledge that lead humanity forward and through which the ordinary and banal activities become quite meaningful. (M.A, 2018, p.216)

In a slightly contrarian spirit, this paper posits that the analysis of the cosmogonical nature of Adi creation myths can themselves be understood through the theoretical paradigms of posthumanism, that of Rosi Braidotti's idea of "nomadism" (2011, p.17) as a figuration for contemporary subjectivity. Braidotti refers to a visualization of posthuman subjectivity outside the realm of anthropocentrism. The lexicon of nomadic thinking is not affiliated to human rational consciousness, (Braidotti, 2011, p.2) as Nomadic theory rejects the concept of "identity" as a narrowly "ego-indexed" privileging of selfhood. (Braidotti, 2011, p.4) Rather it rethinks subjectivity as a "socially mediated process of relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures." (Braidotti, 2011, p.4). In thinking of subjectivity as a social encounter between the self and its relations with multiple others, Rosi Braidotti's posthumanist idea of "nomadism" resonates with Adriana Cavarero's philosophical idea of storytelling as a socially delineated process of subjectivity formation. Adi folklore situated in Dai's autoethnographic narrative mode, thus embodies an epistemological value as it invites readers into the multiple world of the Adi others while also self-reflexively acknowledging their own "non-unitarian" (Braidotti, 2011, p.7) subjectivity. In "songs of the rhapsodist", the 'shaman' or the 'miri', that is the mystic poet of the Adi tribe tells his audience about their origin rooted in nonanthropocentric cosmogenesis -

From nothingness we have come to be born under the stars, and almighty Donyi-polo, the sun and the moon, whose light shines on all equally, is the invisible force that guides each one of us. All life is light and shadow: we live and we die, and the path of destiny is the quest for faith. (Dai, 2005, p.58)

Their creation myths are not a manifestation of anthropocentric images of Hindu gods like either Brahma or Vishnu as already pointed out by Biju M.A., (2014, p.217) rather they decenter the idea of a unified anthropomorphic subject made in the image of either Brahma or Vishnu. Such cosmogonical narratives of origin myths are more aligned with a posthumanist imaginary of a "non-unitarian" (Braidotti, 2011, p.7) situatedness of subjectivity within ecohumanist paradigms. Non-human nature is co-opted in imagining subjectivities and Dai's storytelling embodies an eco-aesthetic social mediation between members of the community.

In conclusion, this paper asserts that through the employment of autoethnography, Mamang Dai both reclaims epistemic agency and delineates the geospatial pluralities of her tribal subject positionality while decolonizing hegemonic essentialist imaginaries that have defined the Northeast as a collective of political unrest and primitive beings. The Legends of Pensam therefore critically probes colonialist semiotics of geography. Significantly, by employing autoethnography as a narrative mode, Mamang Dai has integrated politics with ethics - by reclaiming an agentive mode of self-representation intersecting with an ethical praxis of selfreflexivity and inclusivity of communitarian ethics. *The Legends of Pensam* dismantles a colonially ascribed victimhood and passivity establishing the shifting flux of the borderlands not as oppositional epistemes but as modalities of ethnic difference and dissenting tribal subjectivities. Dai's employment of autoethnography is not only a tool to decolonize the colonialist construction of the Northeast India but a restitution of an alternate representational regime.

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