

Research article

Representing Desire in Minor Literature: Characterisation in *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

The Lacanian subject has two distinct aspects: one corresponds to the structural subject shaped by the symbolic order. At the same time, the other transcends symbolisation or coding, referred to by Lacan as the subject of desire or the Real. Minor literature, defined as the literature of minorities expressed in a major language, also seeks to disrupt dominant codifications and convey the flow of pure desire. Viewed through a Lacanian lens, minor literature primarily engages with the Real. This paper examines *The White Tiger* as an example of minor literature, with a particular emphasis on its characterisation. The central argument is that the novel's characters do not conform to traditional types, identities, or subject positions. Instead, they embody pure desire and are better understood as Lacanian subjects of desire/Real, rather than as ideological constructs within a discourse. The primary focus of the novel is to represent the reverse side of the subject or the desire rather than the discursive formation.

Keywords: Representing Desire, Minor Literature, Characterisation, Indian Novel, *The White Tiger*

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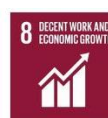
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1. Introduction: Minor Literature and the Lacanian Real

Deleuze-Guattari's idea of Minor Literature and Lacan's subject of desire/Real are the fundamental premises to aid my analysis. The idea of Minor Literature has, by and large, been developed upon the works of Kafka. The latter constitutes deterritorialised flow or what Lacan would refer to as embodied jouissance that promotes radical subversion. Kafka, through his works, has been read as someone who rejected almost all submissions to the symbolic codes. Minor Literature, a concept that was developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1986) in their book on Kafka, is similar to the Real, particularly in the sense that the concept of the latter has developed in the past few decades. Like Žižek, Deleuze-Guattari argumentatively place their emphasis on the way Kafka's writings are subversive in the sense that they defy and subsequently escape all the symbolic codes that determine the sense/meaning. While presenting their reading of Kafka's letter to his father, they demonstrate Kafka's desire to escape the name-of-the-father, which encodes the historical, geographical, and political maps of his world. They quote Kafka's letter to his father where he writes that he feels as if he could "consider living in only those regions that either are not covered by you or are not within your reach" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 10). The regions that are not encoded by the name-of-the-father or that are excluded by it are precisely what Lacan would refer to as the Real.

Minor literature, for Deleuze and Guattari (1986) is not literature written in a minor language but literature produced by a minority within a major language. They identify three key characteristics of Minor Literature. The first characteristic of minor literature is that "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 36). This means that the traditional symbolic or master-signifiers that function as signifying structures and generate meaning are discarded. Consequently, meaning or signification becomes impossible within this literature. The second characteristic is that "everything in them is political" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 17). Unlike major literature, in which individual concerns are often disconnected from larger societal structures, minor literature connects individual actions to political dimensions. Because symbolic structures already occupy most of the cultural and political space, the minority can only find room within the constraints of these symbolic codes. These writers, therefore, politicise this cramped space to challenge larger societal issues. The third characteristic is that "everything takes on a collective value" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 17). The individual acts of enunciation, while expressed by different writers, share a common goal of resisting symbolic codes and promoting deterritorialisation. These individual expressions form a collective voice of resistance, as their collective enunciation, though voiced by a few, represents the subversion of a wider symbolic order (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 17). These acts constitute the deterritorialised flow, which for Deleuze and Guattari is central to minor literature.

The three characteristics of minor literature—"the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 18)—can also be ascribed to the Lacanian Real. The Real is what remains

outside of symbolization, untranslatable or uncoded by the symbolic order (Lacan, 1998). Because the Real is unsymbolised, it is inherently deterritorialised. It represents the internal negation of any discourse, making it fundamentally subversive and political, as it challenges the truth conditions imposed by the symbolic order. The third characteristic of minor literature, the collective enunciation, aligns with the Real in that any individual act revealing the Real can be understood as the enunciation of the subject of the Real. The Real is a collective representation of all that escapes the symbolic, which it cannot capture or symbolise. The Real transcends specific limitations; its scope is infinite compared to the symbolic. The subject of the Real is a fragmented and disjointed entity that subverts the subject of the signifier, disrupting the traditional symbolic subject.

Thus, *minor literature* can be seen as an embodiment of the *Real* in its capacity to challenge symbolic codes. Deleuze and Guattari state, "There isn't a subject," (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 18), referring here to the subject of the signifier. They continue, "There are only collective assemblages of enunciation, and literature expresses these acts insofar as they are not imposed from without and insofar as they exist only as diabolical powers to come or revolutionary forces to be constructed" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 18). The *Real*, in this sense, can be thought of as these collective assemblages of enunciation. Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation. In the case of Kafka's letters, for instance, they maintain the duality of these two subjects: "a subject of enunciation as the form of expression that writes the letter, and a subject of the statement that is the form of content that the letter is speaking about" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 30). Minor literature, therefore, focuses primarily on the subject of enunciation, which corresponds to the subject of the *Real*. This is the realm where writers resist and escape the constraints of symbolic codes and territorialisations.

Also, the principal argument of *schizoanalysis*, in contrast to traditional psychoanalysis, is that desire is not a psychological state but a machine, a desiring machine, and "the order of desire is the order of production" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, p. 296). Deleuze and Guattari criticise psychoanalysis for restricting this order of production by relegating it to the realm of representation, thus stifling its dynamic potential. However, they see something different in Lacan's theory. For them, Lacan doesn't merely turn endlessly within the confines of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, like a "squirrel" in an analytical wheel. Instead, Lacan introduces a crucial distinction: the reverse side of the structural order. On the other hand, according to Deleuze and Guattari, this reverse side is where molecular or desiring production takes place.

Lacan's concept of *partial objects* (or *object a*), which function as the objects causing desire, captures their attention. Unlike Melanie Klein, Lacan associates incompleteness with these partial objects. These objects are "partial" in that they only partially represent the function that produces them. The significance lies in what is left out in their representation—the missing part is what generates desire. All objects, for Lacan, are partial, much like all drives are partial drives. These partial objects do not fulfill desire but serve as its cause. They provide only partial satisfaction,

never fully satisfying desire, but always maintaining their flow. For Deleuze and Guattari, these partial objects are molecular elements that contribute to what they describe as “indirect syntheses or interactions.” They argue that these elements are like intensities that fill space, but in a fluid, unpredictable way, like pure multiplicities where everything is possible. These intensities don’t follow a preordained plan; they work in ways that defy the structures of traditional systems. Their interactions are not determined by a rigid structure but rather are a random sequence of elements, bound together only by the absence of a clear link. This idea is encapsulated in the image of the “body without organs,” where the intensity of desire fills the space, unbound by any specific structural or personal unity.

This “reverse side” of the structural subject in Lacan is the *subject of the Real*. Serge Leclaire refers to it as the “pure being of desire” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2000, p. 309). Lacan’s theory shows that the structural subject—the one who adheres to the signifying constraints imposed by the symbolic order—is ultimately a fiction, an outdated concept through which power is disseminated. In contrast, the *Real* is a subversive force within the structural subject. It is a necessary internal condition that challenges the symbolic order. The *Real* manifests as pre-personal singularities, isolated elements, and indifferent events that do not contribute to or follow the established structure. It is marked by a lack of connection and a lack of meaning. In our analysis of literary characters, we can view them as representations of this reverse side of the subject—embodiments of pure intensities. They do not represent typical identities, structural roles, or ideological types. Instead, their behaviour is driven more by desire than by the symbolic constraints that usually govern the behaviour of traditional characters. This focus on desire and its subversive potential aligns the characters with the *Real*, which disrupts the status quo of symbolic meaning and representation.

2. The Text

Published in 2008, *The White Tiger* is a novel in the form of a long letter from the protagonist, Balram Halwai, from his office in Bangalore to the visiting Chinese premier Wen Jiabao. In the novel, the protagonist, as the first-person narrator, brilliantly recounts his own story, which he incidentally believes to be a story more or less of every half-baked Indian entrepreneur. The novel is an account of an underdog, a half-baked Indian, school dropout who, after working at a local teashop for a brief period, leaves his native place and becomes a driver to the landlord of his native place, who by chance crosses his path while he was desperately looking for a job in Dhanbad. From there, he, as a driver to his employer Mr. Ashok, the son of the landlord, moves to Delhi. In response to his desire to attain freedom from what he calls the rooster coop, he kills his employer and takes away his red bag containing seven hundred thousand Indian rupees. Escaping from the police, he travels to Bangalore, where he starts his enterprise and becomes what he calls an entrepreneur. Besides the story of Balram, the novel presents India as a country

of two distinct parts: darkness and light. It, in particular, is a story of India, which, because of its obscenity, remains hidden from most accounts. Among many others, one of the substantial achievements of the novel is its demonstration of the power of literature to unveil the most obscene face of power and politics. This novel does so with its artistic appeal.

In the very first sentence, the narrator admits that neither he nor the one for whom he writes can speak English “but there are some things that can be said only in English” (Adiga, 2014, p. 3). This is not just a naïve admission but it reveals some fundamental goals that this text seeks to achieve. As the narrator, as well as the assumed reader of this long letter, doesn’t speak English, it is relatively easy for both of them to write and read English beyond its dominant symbolic coding/territorializations. In the Deleuze-Guattarian sense, *The White Tiger* may be read as a Minor Literature. The narrator of the novel doesn’t show any commitment towards any of the symbolic structures/territorializations. The narrator in the opening sentence is precisely making this point. The novel in several other instances makes fun of different master-signifiers/ideologies in several ways. After presenting an irony in what according to the symbolic should happen and what happens, he ridicules all seriousness by saying ‘*What a fucking joke*’. All these gestures and techniques admirably emphasize the fact that it is a narrative more about the Real than symbolic commitments.

3. Characterization and Representation of Desire

The characterization of the novel is perhaps the most striking accomplishment so far as the question of representing desire is concerned. All its characters are bizarrely different. Amitava Kumar (2008), while criticizing Adiga’s unrealistic depiction, writes in *The Boston Review*, “I find Adiga’s villains utterly cartoonish, like the characters in Bollywood melodrama” (p. n.n). In addition to their portrayal as individuals, the characters in novels are usually depicted as types (identities), generally perceived as discursive/ideological positions. In such situations, they act and behave the way they are expected by the collective symbolic. They function as Foucault’s subject positions, representing positions within a discourse/symbolic. Such characterisation is associated with symbolic meaning/sense production. But the characterisation here is remarkably different. Kumar (2008) is right in identifying Adiga’s characters as cartoonish. A cartoonist exaggerates certain prominent features of a person—long nose, prominent eyes, long chin, moustaches, and so on—which define his/her identity, and the rest of his/her features go in the background. Adiga’s characters are also caricatures of their deviances, rather than the subjects of pure signifiers. They are presented as an exaggeration of their pure intensities. In the Lacanian sense, they operate more as subjects of the Real than subject positions. They are what Deleuze-Guattari would refer to as disjunctive flows of desire.

Almost all major characters are labelled as animals precisely to present them as pure intensities. Balram is the white tiger, the four landlords are the wild boar, the buffalo, the raven, and the stork and Mukesh is the Mongoose. Presenting characters in animal expressions serves certain specific purposes for the author. "To become animal," writes Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 13) "is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs." It is somehow given that presenting people as humans means to present them as subjects of pure signifier or subject positions in a discourse because it is hard to imagine humans outside/without a symbolic. The purpose here is not to present a character as pure animal either because that too would not serve the purpose to escape from symbolic coding/territorialisations. Animals as archetypes are not free from coding/territorialisations either. The author instead presents an aspect of his characters which is nonetheless the only aspect significant in this novel as animal. Like Kafka's animals, the animals in this novel correspond to "zones of liberated intensities where contents free themselves from their forms as well as from their expressions, from the signifier that formalized them" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 13). Characters as animals in this novel are quite the opposite of the symbolic archetypes. They are free from coding, which in other words means that they are deterritorialised flows of desire. To put it differently, they are expressions of the subject of reality for the characters in question. While referring to animals, the author also escapes assigning meaning to the aspect of the characters that is expressed through these animals. They simply strive to satisfy their desires, regardless of whether their behaviour has any meaning or significance within a symbolic context. They do not care about anything but their own satisfaction, whatever way possible. There is nothing moral or ethical, nor is there anything immoral or unethical, for them. The author places them somewhere where they cannot be described as either humans or animals.

The four landlords of Laxmangarh had got their names "from the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected" (Adiga, 2014, p. 24) in them. They "lived in high-walled mansions just outside Laxmangarh—the landlords' quarters" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). They are altogether cut off from the surrounding society. They extract everything they desire from the people and lands around. They seem to exist only to satisfy their desire. Apparently, there is nothing that would stop them from doing what they desire. The Buffalo, "a stout one with a bald, brown, dimpled head," (Adiga, 2014, p. 24) was the greediest of them. Anyone who uses the road has to pay him one-third of his/her earnings because "he had eaten up the rickshaws and the roads" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). The second landlord was the Stork. He "was a fat man with a fat mustache, thick and curved and pointy at the tips" who "owned the river that flowed outside the village, and he took a cut of every catch of fish caught by every fisherman in the river, and a toll from every boatman who crossed the river to come to our village" (Adiga, pp. 24-25). The third of the landlords was the Wild Boar. He had

captured all "the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh" and whoever wanted to work on his lands "had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). Not only this but wherever he passed by women, he would stop his car and roll down his window to reveal his grin and two of his teeth, on either side of his nose which "were long and curved, like little tusks" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). The last one was the Raven. He "owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze with their flocks" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). He would go to the extent that "if they didn't have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides, so they called him the Raven" (Adiga, 2014, p. 25). The point here is that there was no effective and enforceable symbolic or territorialisation that would repress what they desire. It seems that there is no other motive than to express what is usually repressed or forbidden. They represent the desire of money, power and sex.

Balram becomes a white tiger only towards the end when he throws away the symbolic/territorialisation of the Rooster Coop and achieves his freedom. Since he has already been half-baked from darkness, but his unbaked part, the Real, was still an enigmatic hole/negative core within the structure/subject. Half-baked Indians are those whose other half is unbaked, which in other words means that the symbolic/master-signifier (western secular humanist education) that they were supposed to embody or be subjects of has failed to capture/symbolize the whole of their being. It is precisely that part, raw-being/unbaked, which the author foregrounds in Balram as well as in other characters from the darkness. "Fully formed fellows," the narrator tells us "after twelve years of school and three years of university, wear nice suits, join companies, and take orders from other men for the rest of their lives" (Adiga, 2014, p. 11). The author is quite awakened to the fact that those who are fully baked/formed become complete embodiments/subjects of the symbolic/secular-humanist-education which makes them subjects/obedient-conformists of that particular symbolic/ideology/discourse. At one instance in the novel, Balram says that part of the narrative deals with the sorrowful tale of how he "was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness" (Adiga, 2014, p. 197). He, in a way, confesses that he has actually transformed into someone who responds more to what was repressed in him than to what the Other (symbolic)demanding him to be. He imagined himself as "the little man in the khaki uniform spitting at God again and again" (Adiga, 2014, p. 87). His decisions and judgments have started to be motivated by his desire rather than his morality. He agreed with Kusum in spite of the fact that he knew she was blackmailing him. He was motivated by the desire of a young girl of seventeen or eighteen and the "twenty-four-karat gold, all that cash fresh from the bank" (Adiga, 2014, p. 192). Initially, he "did not want to obey Kusum" (Adiga, 2014, p. 192) precisely because the superego/law had some power on his decisions, but then he started altogether to think and decide, neglecting its intervention. He learned to respond to nothing but his desire. The desire for the girl and money was much stronger than the demand of the symbolic/law/superego.

Balram as white tiger entails his uniqueness. The white tiger is described as “the rarest of animals—the creature that comes along once in a generation” (Adiga, 2014, p. 30). The novel is “a tale about a rare and exotic character,” and the white tiger is a symbol of power and might (Mendes, 2010, p. 276). The tiger, then, “refuses to stay caged. Balram’s violent bid for freedom is shocking” (Turpin, 2008, p. nn). Balram somehow perceives becoming an animal as the only way to empower himself. An animal, a tiger for instance, is a scary creature for humans and so becomes Balram for everyone after slitting his master’s throat. By overpowering his employer, he “is able to reverse the power relations between himself and his employer” (Walther, 2014, p. 588). At one instance in the novel, Balram sees paw prints of an animal embedded in the pavement. He follows them till they vanish into the raw earth. Balram’s following of the paw prints is another image of his becoming animal which leads him “out of his human subject position” (Walther, 2014, p. 587) into the raw earth or wilderness out of symbolic coding/territorialisation. By abandoning his symbolic, Balram locates himself in the hole/Real (outside symbolic/meaning universe) where there is innumerable multiplicity. It is not like leaving one identity and embracing another but becoming white tiger is to escape categorization and human perspective of the world of meaning/symbolic. As Walther states, “the becoming-white tiger allows Balram to embrace his polymorphous identity; through the tiger, his subjective coherence dissolves into a multiplicity” (Walther, 2014, p. 590). He, towards the end of the novel, has multiple names and a face that is not recognizable.

Animalising behaviour is post-humanist. The purpose of animalising characters is not to understand animal behaviour within humanism, but a change of perspective itself, where human behaviour defies ideology. It is, in some sense, devising a strategy to account for desiring production, which always operates outside symbolic coding/territorializations. From the humanist perspective, Balram’s act of murder as well as the behaviour of the four landlords, termed as animals, is inhuman, unethical, or simply nonsensical. It is the flow of desire or eruption of Real, which has nothing to do with whether it is ethical or sensible. Humanism, as meaning producing symbolic, cannot explain it except by putting it in a category of inhuman/unethical. It challenges the abstract notion of human with an essential human nature, which mediates our interpretation of a real/concrete human being. As Walther puts it, “interspecies identification is thus one of the text’s key representational strategies” (2014, p. 580). Through animalising the behaviour of major characters like the four landlords, the novel foregrounds inhumanity prevalent in Indian social structures as well as the exclusion of the humanity element from India’s economic boom (Walther, 2014, p. 580). Balram’s encounter with the caged white tiger at the zoo was his identification moment. To identify with the tiger, a nonhuman other, “the human protagonist recognizes his own animalization as a result of his subaltern position” (Walther, 2014, p. 580). Walther considers the encounter pivotal in “an interspecies connection of a different order, an alliance that approaches what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a ‘becoming-animal’: Balram and the tiger are caught up together in an ‘irresistible deterritorialization’ that dissolves both of their identities” (Walther 580). Balram realised that his rage was similar to the tiger’s rage of the cage.

Like the tiger “was hypnotizing himself by walking” (Adiga, 276) on the bamboo bars in order to tolerate the cage, Balram has been doing so all his life. He had never experienced the rage he felt that day. He realised his desire through the eyes of the tiger. Animalising or becoming animal suggests a perspective where there is no presumed hierarchy of class/caste or species.

The desire is always the desire of the Other. Balram also realises his desire through his master, Mr Ashok, through the master-servant dialectic. His desire is determined by what he thinks the Other/master desires. Balram desire for golden hair developed when he saw his master, Mr Ashok, losing his integrity after seeing the Russian girl with golden and glossy hair who looked like Kim Basinger. It was because of that incident that the golden hair somehow became the object cause of his desire too. He found a strand of golden hair of the girl in the car and kept it tied to his wrist. He would often rub and smell it. The golden-haired girl then became something for which he would give all he had. It didn't matter whether “High-class or low-class” or “Virgin or nonvirgin” (Adiga, 2014, p. 228). Nothing mattered except the golden hair. After spending all his savings on a golden-haired girl, he was disappointed when he found out that the girl didn't have golden hair, the Object *a*. It was because of the absence of object *a*, the golden hair, that all his desire for her vanished away. He didn't even touch her after seeing that “the roots were black” and the golden colour “was all a dye job” (Adiga, 2014, p. 235).

At one instance in the novel, there is a conversation between Balram as the subject of the signifier or subject position and Balram as the subject of the Real in the novel.

Balram as the subject of the pure signifier (symbolic)	Balram as the subject of the Real
Your father wanted you to be an honest man.	Your father wanted you to be a man.
Mr Ashok did not hit you or spit on you, like people did to your father.	Mr Ashok made you take the blame when his wife killed that child on the road.
Mr Ashok pays you well, 4,000 rupees a month. He has been raising your salary without your even asking.	This is pittance. You live in a city. What do you save? Nothing.
Remember what the Buffalo did to his servant's family. Mr Ashok will ask his father to do the same to your family once you run away.	The very fact that Mr Ashok threatens your family makes your blood boil.

(Adiga, 2014, p. 251)

The conversation exhibits the internal struggle of Balram, in which it is quite visible that the Real/hole in him is overcoming his symbolic/superego. In the first three points, the superego/symbolic is trying to repress the Real in Balram by projecting its demands to be an honest and good servant, but when it realises its collapse and inability to do so, it tries to do so by threats. It exemplifies the usual mechanism of how the symbolic operates and how the repression actually happens. The symbolic/superego in this case nevertheless fails or is made to fail to do so. The triumph of the Real is finally declared when the narrator admits the significance of the Real in the words that "sometimes what is most animal in a man may be the best thing in him" (Adiga, 2014, p. 251).

After hearing a poetic couplet from an Urdu poetry book "*I was looking for the key for years/But the door was always open*" (Adiga, 2014, p. 253) a Muslim bookseller in DaryaGanj, Balram asks him if man can make himself vanish with poetry. He seems to have asked the question with a purpose after hearing the Urdu couplet. It is quite obvious here that Balram did not in any case mean to vanish physically. What he asked was most likely about Man as the subject of signifier/meaning in a structure that compels him to do things against his own desires. The question, however, is why poetry. Balram is hinting at the special power of poetry. Poetry is a prime example of the metaphorical function of language, where emotions and experiences take precedence over meaning. Metaphor is a way to free the signifier from the clutches of the signified. In this way, poetry gives more space to the subject of desire than any other form of writing. To state it differently, we may say that poetry is more about the Lacanian Real than the symbolic coding. If any form of language makes it possible for a person to escape coding or the repressive symbolic/structure, it is poetry. It is in this sense that Balram looks to poetry for escape from the repressive symbolic and superego. The escape Balram seeks is what Kafka sought in his letter to his father. It is the escape from symbolic repression. The poetic couplet would echo in his ears all the time. The couplet seems to suggest that the lock of the symbolic rooster coop was always open because it had a hole within, allowing him to escape at any time, but he was unaware of it. The point that all the conscious thinking and meaning happens within the symbolic minus the hole/void, it was not possible for Balram to know that the lock that has captured him was always already open. The Real/hole was present within the symbolic as its opening but the conscious mind did not know it. The conscious and unconscious are not like two locations or compartments in our mind, but are two aspects of how the mind operates. The hole/void/Real of the symbolic is something without which it cannot exist, which is how the lock was always open, but its hidden/repressed nature kept it away from his thinking.

The secret here is what Žižek calls the sublime-object of ideology which is essential for its functioning. It is his awakening to this secret that makes Balram different from all other servants. He also knew that this hole is the only opening of the lock and the only way of his escape from it. The hole, at the same time, is a presence of positive emptiness. For Žižek (2005, p. 123), it is the

"always already filled by an inert, obscene, dirty, revolting presence." Balram escapes the structure by embracing the obscene emptiness by transforming into a proud, revolting, obscene, guiltless murderer. He becomes and strives to be nothing but pure intensity expressed by his being a white tiger. His freedom was only possible to move out of the human-self/servant that he was. Sara D. Schotland (2011) writes that the act of violence liberated Balram from bondage. Balram achieved freedom by slitting his master's throat. She goes on to say that Balram reveals the act of killing his master as the existential act when he says:

I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant"(Schotland, 2011, pp. 320-21).

He does not become the animal in the sense of an archetype, but does not remain a human caught in the symbolic either. He becomes something that is neither here nor there. He escapes the coding/territorialisations at least to the rooster coop. The emancipated Balram is without a superego, so far as the rooster coop is concerned, which is symbolic.

Apart from Balram and the four landlords, the rest of the characters are also presented in a strange way. His master, Mr Ashok, has also been depicted as an incomplete and unsatisfied being. He was in some way guided by the desire of the Other, the servant. Lacan's reading of desire in Hegelian master-slave dialectic is particularly helpful to understand Mr Ashok's desire here. The master's desire, for Lacan, for an object is not for the object per se, but the desire of the slave involved in the object. It is not the object that the master desires but the slave's desire through the object. The master's desire for the object is precisely because the slave desires the object or at least the master thinks that the slave desires the object. Mr Ashok's desire in same way involves what he thinks as the desire of Balram. Mr Ashok himself, being one of the fully baked/formed subjects of liberal humanist education, embodies it, which certainly represses his irrational being. In other words, it is the liberal humanism that speaks through him. The so-called irrationality or savageness, as a deficiency or hole in liberal humanism, appears as his lack. He comes to comprehend his repressed, irrational self through Balram. His desire as the desire of the Other is precisely his own repressed being that he perceives through the Other/Balram. He says that "the villagers are so religious in the Darkness" (Adiga, 2014, p. 90). He imagines Balram as someone who is naively religious and a believer of supernatural powers, which he himself cannot afford to be, especially after embodying the rationalist discourse of secular humanism. He perceives Balram the way he desires him to be. But in truth, Balram is nothing like that. He just acts to be what his master desires him to be. He is not religious or pantheistic, but he acts as if he were to keep his master's desire involved in him. By acting innocent and naïve, Balram is actually seducing his master by presenting himself as something that Mr. Ashok lacks/desires. It is the Real in him that finds expression through Balram. He once confessed to him that he is "sick of the life" (Adiga, 2014, p. 238) he lives. He desires to escape, but he "just doesn't have...the balls" (Adiga, 2014, p.

238) to do so. His confession implies that liberal humanism miserably failed to subjugate/represent his whole being. Part of his being is left out which he sees through Balram.

4. Conclusion

Unlike humans, animals lack agency; they act instinctively or follow their instincts without assigning meaning or quality (moral or ethical) to their actions. There is no objective of an act for an animal except pleasure. Balram's act of murder after shedding the humanist perspective may also be perceived as a meaningless act whose sole purpose is *jouissance*. It is neither good/moral/ethical nor bad/immoral/unethical. They would, hence, disregard anyone irrespective of their power in the social structure for their well-being. It is probably this power that empowers Balram to act against his powerful master. The landlords likewise do not care for anything except their own desire. There is no ethical purpose to their actions other than *jouissance*.

Adiga unveils the moral/ethical/ideological dress of capitalist behaviour and presents it as naked because no matter what meaning/symbolic/ideological cover they would mask their actions with, their first purpose is *jouissance*.

By animalisation of the characters, the novel attempts to represent pure desire as a character. Unlike other novels, which represent human beings as the *subject of the signifier*—the individual as shaped by societal and symbolic norms- it depicts them as the *subject of desire*, an individual driven by raw, unmediated impulses. By doing so, it reveals the underpinnings of human consciousness and the true motivations behind human action.

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