Themed Issue on

"Desire and Deceit: India in the Europeans' Gaze"

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C O N T E N T S

Nostos

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The word "desire" suggests a distance between the appetitive subject and the object commanding attention, that possession does not remove. The newly acquired "asset" may fill a collector with pride, or serve utilitarian ends in the absence of any sense of empathetic identification or admiration. A case apart, and a more redeeming one, is what René Girard calls "triangular desire", induced by a mediator's influence: desire according to another, opposed to desire according to oneself (Girard 4). The object is not desired for its unmediated appeal, but for what it represents in the eyes of a third party that dictates the table of values and carries the staff of institutionalized authority. In time, India was alienated into an empty sign of imperial prestige ("jewel in the crown"), a target of religious conversion invested with the mandatory mission of prophesying Christianity (the "star in the east"), the application ground of ideological experiments carried out by reformists, such as Madame Blavatsky and her American theosophists, etc. Even the "Indomania" of eighteenth- century Germany has been interpreted as a symptom of compensatory Narcissism under the occupation of French revolutionary and Napoleonic armies (Germana *10*).

The opposite of desire is the mirror scene, or the *anagnorisis* of spiritual dissent or affiliation. India is recognized as racial cradle and origin of the European linguistic community. Analogies are sought out among India's foundational myths, spaces of knowledge or of symbolic representation. The phenomenon exceeds by far the significance of a search for an Arcadian past triggered by the alienating effects and psychological pressure of technological progress in the advanced civilizations. Actually, in the later nineteenth century Indian thought was being perceived as tangent upon the latest scientific theories. The remark was made by Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu, whose notebooks jotted down during his studies in Vienna and Berlin (at Humboldt University, named after one of the founders who had been enthralled by *The Bhagavad Gita)* add up to a "biographia literaria" of about twenty thousand pages. This encyclopaedic work, which gives a comprehensive picture of emerging theories in all disciplinary fields, includes references to Rudolf Clausius and Heinrich von Helmholz, who elaborated on the second law of thermodynamics (the law of entropy). Indian cosmogony, alternating creation and regression of the universe to an immaterial form of existence, a vibrating nothing which nowadays is called quantum singularity or indestructible structure of information, was not the only Indian correlative of the rapidly changing scientific picture of the universe:

> He, the One and Undifferentiated, who by the manifold application of His powers produces, in the beginning, different objects for a hidden purpose and, in the end, **withdraws the universe into** Himself (*Svetasvatara Upanishad*: Ch.4) (our emphasis).

In Eminescu's time Romanian culture was oriented to the German-speaking world, maybe because the country was enthusiastic over the recent ascension of the Hohenzollern dynasty. It was in this space inhabited by scholars who had earned the reputation of being the "Indians of Europe" (De Careil 102) that the young

student appropriated Indian philosophy to the point where it was allowed to shape his own world outlook. The protagonist of his poem *Hyperion* travels back in time, absorbed by the thirst of the Demiurge who draws things back to Himself. His beloved is a Blue Flower who dies to the world of matter and acts as the poet's mediator to a transcending one of meditation, as in Novalis. Death restores humans to their true selves, while the loss of kingdoms (whether in *King Lear* or in the recent revolutionary events in Paris) breeds thoughts on the vanity of the world, which is deception, a dream of eternal death. Poetry is an objectified form of the mind, a revelation of the essential Self (*Tat tvam asi*). Love brings disappointment like everything else in an illusionary world. His beloved is no Maitreyi (*The Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad*), Yãgnavalkya's philosophically-minded wife, but a sensuous creature, born in the likeness of Kãtyãyani, Yãgnavalkya's mundane wife, who blames him for sinking into deep thoughts, and meditating on the Assyrian fields ...

Hindu philosophy comes to mind many times, as we survey the ideas that shaped the cultural history of the West since the eighteenth century to the present.

German and English Romanticism shared a web of metaphors in response to India emerging from behind the veil through enhanced cultural ties. The proccess of self-realization and progress to the supersensuous domain, which is central to the Krishna myth in *The Bhagavad Gita,* out of which Novalis drew his rapidly disseminated "blue flower motif", preceded the Hegelian growth of the mind philosophy, while the Wordsworthian "recollection in tranquillity" motif is analogous to the Purusha/ Prakriti dichotomy. The connection is more explicit in the soul/ Over-Soul relationship in Emerson's poem and essay of the same title, where he echoes "the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us" (Goldberg 32). P.B. Shelley, the author of *Lines to an*

Indian air, used both representations: Epipsychidion, to which the soul returns, and the female alter-ego associated with the blue air of the dawns (*I arise from dreams of thee).*

Heredity as destiny was perceived as a modern version, decked with biological evidence, of the ancient belief in metempsychosis, which, according to *The Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter 8), preserves features of previous incarnations, by writers who thematized the topic (Robert Montgomery,Theophile Gautier, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Bram Stoker, Mihai Eminescu, Liviu Rebreanu ...). The solipsism of the self shut up in a dream of the world (Walter Horatio Pater," Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance)* induced by the senses, the illusionary nature of the world of experience ("for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were" - Ch. XIII of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy) bridged Vedic thought and the late nineteenth-century school of physiological psychology (pragmatism), which fuelled the synaesthetic poetics of the impressionists and of the aesthetic decadence. In *The Bhagavad Gita,* Rudolf Steiner saw the "unified plan of world history", as in it mingled three spiritual streams: Veda, Sankhya, Yoga (Steiner 1).

The two levels of consciousness theorised by Henri Bergson in *Les données immediates de la conscience* - the "moi" immersed in the here and now of immediate experience and the "moi" of memory that discovers patterns and meaning in recollection – go back to the often quoted allegory of the two birds (one hyperactive, collecting food, the other watching it eat in perfect composure) in *The Mundaka Upanishad.* In the age of quantum mechanics and polyvalent logics, analogies increase by geometrical progression. The schooling of Svetaketu in *The Chandogya Upanishad, VI* (Sections 8 to14) upon the existence of what cannnot be perceived by the senses is realised in the form of a parable. The disciple wants to

know the nature of the ultimate reality, and his father practises a sort of midwifery. Let the disciple think of salt dissolved in water. Such is the essence of the universe which cannot be seen but pervades all things. The disappearance of melting salt and its recovery through evaporation has a modern correlative in David Bohm's ink experiment (Pratt: web) whereby he demonstrated the existence of an implicate order enfolded into the viscous fluid of a turning cylinder, an operation similar to the turning of a glove inside out. The American physicist concluded: "[I]n the implicate order the totality of existence is enfolded within each region of space (and time)" (Bohm 172). The explicate order of the physical universe we live in is only a lower dimensional surface appearance.

The inner essence of existence is revealed through images, reads a passage in *Vishnu Samhita* (Chapter 29, v 55-7), an ancient ritual text, which may have been unknown to Alfred Binet (1857-1911), the Paris psychologist who replaced categorical syllogism with syllogistic reasoning through images (Binet 130-145), but not to imagist William Butler Yeats, a member of the Theosophical Society founded by Blavatsky:

> Without a form how can God be mediated upon? If (He is) without any form, where will the mind fix itself? When there is nothing for the mind to attach itself to, it will slip away from meditation or will glide into a state of slumber. Therefore the wise will meditate on some form, remembering, however, that the form is a superimposition and not a reality (Kamlesh 301-302).

The New Physics, with its descent at the unseen, subatomic level, of immaterial particles, of interchange between mass and energy, with its unpredictabilities, uncertainties and superposition of states favoured the rise of postformal logic. The origin is back there, around the year 200 CE, when Buddhist Nāgārjuna reformed the Vedic tradition, deconstructing categories, denying the autonomy of a stable self and the self-identity and autonomy of everything ("emptiness"), for whatever exists is related. Nāgārjuna worked, ahead of Leibniz, with two logics, two truths (existence suspends non-existence, and the other way round, the two states being alternatively realized as is light's double nature)

> The existence of the third alternative, of the middle way is essential to Nagarjuna's Mūlamādhyamakakārikā, for example, which begins by denying both p and not-p in various cases: these eight negations do not correspond to an eight-valued logic, but to four examples where both p and not-p are denied: [...] Briefly, the middle way requires the rejection of the "law" of the excluded middle, it is the "law" that is wrong, and not the path that is non-virtuous! [...]

> The second point is that the empirical decision need not necessarily be in favour of two-valued logic. Naturally, to make this empirical decision regarding the logic underlying deduction, we would like to use our most sophisticated physical theories, such as quantum mechanics. And for this we might need to allow for the possibility that Scrödinger's cat can be both alive and dead at a single instant of time. Though I no longer believe in formalism, a more formal statement is that the axioms of quantum mechanics are derivable from a quasi truth-functional logic, of which Buddhist logic may be regarded as an example (C. K. Raju. Web).

The logic of the included middle is rooted in Hindu ontology, the dialectical nature of Brahman being explained in a deconstructionist philosophy of language with the sign defined as difference, non-a being embedded in a, which includes its counter in negated form:

> In the beginning this universe was water alone. That water produced Satya. Satya is Brahman. Brahman produced Prajapati and Prajapati the gods. Those gods meditate on Satya. This name Satya consists of three

syllables. Sa is one syllable, it is one syllable and ya is one syllable. The first and last syllables are the truth. In the middle is untruth. This untruth is enclosed on both sides by truth; thus truth preponderates. Untruth does not hurt him who knows this *(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:* Part 5).

The structure of the universe in the Upanishads is a spatialized form of Brahman, individual souls occupying parts of it, plots. All souls participate in the divine essence, which resembles Deleuze's body without organs. Following his father's advice, Svetaketu decomposes things to seeds which, when broken, reveal the nothingness at the heart of everything:

> The father said, "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there - in that very essence stands the being of the huge nyagrodha tree. In that which is the subtle essence of all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou Svetaketu art That" (*The Chandogya Upanishad*, Chapter XIII).

A familiar echo is sent by Nietzsche's gloss on the individual's will to power, whose supreme form is the will not to will anything , thereby proving the supreme mastery which is exercised over the self. This self-control and repression of desire are the condition for the Hindu to achieve freedom from the world of false illusions and suffering:

> Commanding, which is to be sharply distinguished from the mere ordering about of others, is self-conquest and is more difficult than obeying [...] What the will wills it has already. for the will wills its will. Its will is what it has willed [...] Hence the will to power also cannot be cast aside in exchange for the will to something else, e.g., for the "will to Nothing" ; for this latter will also is still the will to will, so that Nietzsche can say, "It (the will) will rather will Nothing, than not will" (Heidegger 108).

Indian scholars are nowadays some of the most persuasive discourse makers in general

systems theory or in interdisciplinary studies, coming naturally to minds shaped by the holism of Vedic philosophy. Buddhism is actually a substantial chapter in contemporary physics and mathematics (set theory, systems theory, number theory, string theory …)

Is this Indian revival the nation's entry under the favourable sign of an affined and worldwide regime of knowledge? Or is it the *nostum* (homecoming) of the prodigal West?

This homecoming started in the late eighteenth century with German romanticism, whose transcendentalist aspiration received a codified form in the blue flower metaphor – the colour of Krishna whose flute is calling humans to the awakening of the soul within themselves, which is the realization of their community in one universal spirit: Atman is manifested in the form of jivas, which may be likened to the akasas enclosed in pots (*Adavaita Prakarana*. Ch. 3 *On Non-Duality*).

The scene in Count Hohenzollern's library, where time can be entered at any point, narrated by Novalis in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (originally entitled "The Blue Flower") links up through time with Eliot's universal library at the end of *The Waste Land*. "Who is the third who walks always beside you?". The mediating third is the teacher initiating disciples into the meaning of the Vedas, into the order of culture, the reified centres of consciousness in which is manifest the "voice in the thunder": *The deity fire became the organ of speech and entered the mouth (Aitareya Upanishad,* 4). The upanishads end with a peace chant (Shanti Mantras) for the protection of the line of teachers, descending from divinity *(May He protect us both <teacher and the taught!>),* and for peace between teachers and disciples, the meaning of peace being the overcoming of duality between pure consciousness and maya:

> May my speech be fixed in my mind, may my mind be fixed in my speech! O self-luminous Brahman, be manifest to me. O

mind and speech, may you bring me the meaning of the Vedas!

Teacher and disciple become free, acceding to transcendental consciousness, and that means putting an end to suffering. The Book is the fusion of subject and object in the spatialized time of consciousness, not of the individual jiva, but as intersubjectivity (Dia-Logos).

....

Encased in a loop of memory, there is a girl, not yet out of her teens, who is reading Louis Bromfield's novel, The Rains Came*. The vivid characters and scenes have not faded in my mind, but the interpretation has changed. A party of westerners are there, with a missionaries' agenda, but it is they who get converted to a moral life. The pages from the one on which Lady Edwina Esketh falls ill to the last were missing. Why have I never looked up the book in a library to read the missing plot? Is it because I would have liked Edwina to be rewarded for her exemplary conversion to virtue ? Or because I want to treasure untouched an experience of the golden age? It may be that I have finally realized that incommensurate India will always be a book with missing pages ...*

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"*The Upanishads* - A New Translation" by Swami Nikhilananda in four volumes. Web: http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/leonj/theistic/upanis hads.pdf

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The Age of the World Picture

Early America, American Theosophy, Modernity—and India

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Abstract

The history of East-west relations in general and between America and India in particular is one of cultural, literary, and philosophical encounter. Using a post-colonial and postmodern theoretical lens, this essay charts American intellectual constructions of India from the colonial period to the present, with an eye on how American transcendentalists, theosophists, and Hindu spiritual leaders negotiated Hindu and Christian belief systems. It argues that over time, as individuals and cultures came into contact with one another, the historical assimilation of their religions testifies to the dialectical, syncretic nature of modern belief.

[**Key words:** Philosophy, religion, East-West, theology, modernity, transcendentalism, post-colonial approach, postmodernism]

> "For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him"
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> --Matthew II. 2, *Bible*

Early American contact with India

India has long been a source of fascination to the West, dating back to 1492 and Christopher Columbus's plan to reach the East Indies and its riches by sailing westward over the Atlantic Ocean and establishing trade. Similar to how the "New World" was imagined by Europeans, over the centuries American travelers, missionaries, and writers have each looked to India with different motives and represented its history, people, and culture in a variety of ways.

During the colonial era, observes Susan S. Bean, "American merchants and their customers were familiar with Indian products," including various spices, teas, and cotton and silk goods (Bean 31). As early as 1711, for instance, newspapers such as the *Boston News-Letter* regularly advertised "Hollands for Shirtings and Sheetings, fine Cambricks, Musings, India Chints" (1711: [2]) and "Garlix, Sugar, Cotton, India Counterpanes, & c" (1716: [2]).Booksabout India were published in Londonand also part of the commercial exchange.[1]

In terms of non-commercial interest in India though, Cotton Mather's pamphlet *India Christiana. A Discourse Delivered unto the*

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[1]Typical of the books published in England and then sold in the American colonies is Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique: Describing especially the two famous empires, the Persian and great Mogull: weaved with the history of these later times also, many rich and spacious kingdoms in the Orientall India, and other parts of Asia; together with adjacentiles. Severally relating the religion, language, qualities, customes, habit, descent,fashions, and other observations touching them. With a revival of the first discoverer of America* (London: Printed by R. Bip. For Iacob Blome and Richard Bishop, 1638)

Commissioners for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians which is accompanied with Several Instruments relating to the Glorious Design of Propagating our Holy Religion in the Easter as well as the Western Indies. An Entertainment which they that are Waiting for the Kingdom of God will receive as Good News from a far country(1721) was among the first to represent India or the East, like the wilds of America, as a territory needing the word of God and spiritual salvation.

Several decades later, after the American Revolution, India was largely viewed through the eyes of missionaries, British travelers or military personnel, and other figures and depicted as an object of cultural marvel, appropriation, or conquest. To be sure, newspapers provided accounts of the East India Company, and oriental tales increasingly appeared in periodicals in the 1780s and 1790s. Publications such as Donald Campbell's *A Journey Overland to India, partly by a Route never gone before by any European* (1797) intrigued American readers with accounts of shipwreck and imprisonment with Hyder Alli, along with other adventures.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, India became a major focus of missionaries. A sermon on February 26, 1809, by the Reverend Claudius Buchanan (1766-1815) of India at the Parish Church of St. James in Bristol,England, for the benefit of the "Society for Missions to Africa and the East" ran into no less than twelveAmerican editions. Entitled "The Star in the East," it explained how the "ministry of *Nature*" led three eastern wise men to Jerusalem to honor Christ's birth and how such prophecy was foretold in the "ancient writings of India" (Buchanan 4-5).In addition, some American editions added an appendix entitled "The Interesting Report of the Rev. Dr. Kerr, to the Governor of Madras, on the State of the Ancient Christians in Cochin and Travancore, and an account of the Discoveries, made by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan of 200,000 Christians in the Sequestered Region of Hindostan." By 1812, the publication was

expanded and retitled as *The Works of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, LL.D. Comprising his Christian Researches in Asia, His Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India, and his Star in the East, with Three New Sermons. To Which is Added, Dr.Kerr's Curious and Interesting Report, Concerning the State of Christians in Cochin and Travancor, Made at the Request of the Governor of Madras.*

In India around this time, Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), a Brahmin who alienated himself from his family because of his willingness to forgo traditional beliefs and who pushed for social and religious change, published *A Defence of Hindoo Theism in reply to the attack of an advocate for idolatry at Madras*, along with *A Second Defence of the monotheistical system of the Vedas. In reply to an apology for the present state of Hindoo worship* (Calcutta 1817). According to Joscelyn Godwin, Roy was "the first Brahmin to fall under the spell of Enlightenment ideas, and the first emissary from India to the West" (Godwin 312). He upset Christian missionaries because while he admired the teachings of Jesus and the gospels, he also embraced Islam and Hinduism. His actions, however, might also be understood in light of what Homi Bhaba calls a strategy of "hybridity," a position in which the colonized subject takes on the values and language of the colonized in order to subvert them (Bhabha 112).[2] In that sense, Roy was accommodating Christian colonizers by sanitizing Hinduism through the lens of Western monotheism.

If Roy's argument was that Vedic culture had been originally monotheistic but had fallen into a corrupt polytheism or idolatry, his inclusive, and essentially Unitarian belief

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[2]Other postcolonial studies, in addition to the work of Edward Said, that illuminate East-West relations include: Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India, and the Mystic East* (New York: Routledge, 1999) and Jane *Iwamura's Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

in God and the divine in every person, amounted to a "combination of deism, religious tolerance, and social justice" that would contribute to India's embrace of democracy (Godwin 315).His ideas "prompted commentaries that appeared in the *North American Review* in 1818 and in the *Christian Register* during the 1820s" (Bean 20-21).In fact, it was his translations and "Wilkins's *Gita* that were read by the American Transcendentalists and gave them an appreciation for Hinduism, or at least for Vedanta, for which there was as yet no parallel in other countries" (Godwin 313).

As interest, therefore, in India's political and cultural history as well as its missionary potential increased so did interest in Eastern religions such as Hinduism or Vedic scriptures as they pertained to Brahma, or an understanding of God, the creator. Nowhere is this more evident than with the American Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862).

If, for instance, Emerson's earliest familiarity with Hindu thought came from what he read in the *Christian Register* about Rammohun Roy during his years at Harvard, his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, challenged him further to reconsider his stereotypical views of Indian culture in "Indian Superstition" (Rusk 93).

Two decades later, Emerson, in an October 1848 journal entry,observed of the Vedic texts and the *Bhagavad-gita* or "song of God" in particular that "It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us[,] nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent[,] the voice of an old intelligence which in another age & climate had pondered & thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us. Let us not go back & apply a minute criticism to it, but cherish the venerable oracle" (Emerson 1848: 360).[3]

According to Richard Geldard, "Seeking answers to the nature of God and the human relation to God, Emerson found in Eastern texts a confirmation of his own intuitions, and it is in the Gita that the concept emerges" (2001: 55-56).

In his later years in "Essential Principles of Religion" (1862), Emerson shares his more mature beliefs, especially about the universality of spiritual truth. He wrote: "Can any one doubt that if the noblest saint among the Buddhists, the best Mahometan, the highest Stoic of Athens, the purest and wisest Christian,—Buddha and Menu in India, Confucius in China, Spinoza in Holland, could somewhere meet and converse,—they would all find themselves of one religion,--would find themselves denounced by their own sects, and sustained by these believed adversaries of their own sects" (Emerson 1862: 273).

Of Emerson's gradual awakening to Hindu scripture, Lawrence Buell remarks that Emerson "allowed India the last word in defining his own religious beliefs" or "spiritual deparochialization" (Buell 176-177), and that his "understanding of the core vision of Hindu mythology—the material world as an illusory mask of the God that lay within all beings—spoke to him most powerfully" (Buell179). "Hinduism,' says Buell, 'and to a lesser extant Islamic and Confucian texts, helped him toward a greater critical distance on western Protestantism and toward a more catholic spirituality" (Buell 180).[4]

Kreeshna and Arjoon was first translatedinto English in 1785 by Sir Charles Wilkins. By contrast, the four Vedas, also written in Sanskrit and older than the Bible, are the oldest Hindu scriptures, dating back orally to around 1500 BCE. H.H. Wilson completed the first English translation (6 volumes) from 1850-1888.

[4]For an in-depth account of how American Unitarianism influenced Roy, how Roy influenced Emerson's transcendentalist principles, how Emerson and Thoreau affirmed or departed from principles of Hindu belief, and how Vedanta societies developed in America at the end of the nineteenth century, see Carl T. Jackson's *The*

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[3]Written in Sanskrit approximately 500 years before the teachings of Christ, *The Bhagavad-Gita, or Dialogues of*

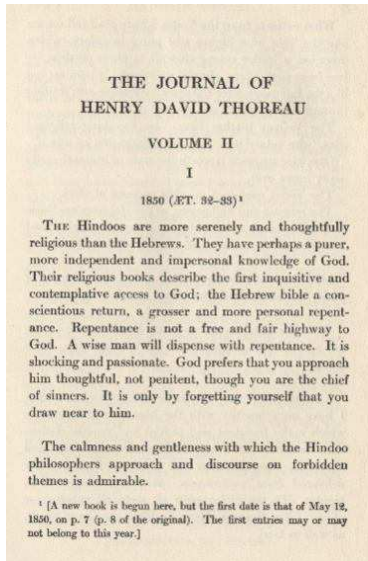[Illustration of *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, originally published in 1850]

Henry David Thoreau, on the other hand, approached an appreciation of Hindu theology, and the *Bhagvat-Geeta* in particular, through nature. His earliest observations appear in his *Journal* (1850), and contrast conventional Christian beliefs with Hindu philosophy.

He writes of the Hindus and their beliefs, especially from the *Vedas*:

> The Hindoos are more serenely and thoughtfully religious than the Hebrews. They have perhaps a purer, more independent and impersonal knowledge of God. Their religious books describe the first inquisitive and contemplative access to God; The Hebrew bible a conscientious return, a grosser and more personal repentance. Repentance is not a free and fair highway to God. A wise man will dispense with Repentance. It is shocking and passionate. God prefers that you approach him thoughtful, not penitent, though you are the chief of sinners. It is only by forgetting yourself that you draw near to him.

> The calmness and gentleness with which the Hindoo philosophers approach and discourse on forbidden themes is admirable.

> What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum,--free from particulars, simple, universal. It rises on me like the full moon after the stars have come out, wading through some far summer stratum of the sky.

> The Vedant teaches how, 'by forsaking religious rites,' the votary may 'obtain purification of mind'.

> One wise sentence is worth the state of Massachusetts many times over.

> The Vedas contain a sensible account of God. The religion and philosophy of the Hebrews are those of a wilder and ruder tribe, wanting the civility and intellectual refinements and subtlety of the Hindoos (Thoreau a. 3-4).

In *Walden* (1854) several years later, Thoreau wrote in "Economy" that material "luxuries" obstruct higher thinking and that "The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward" (Thoreau b. 25). "How much more admirable the Bhagvat-Geeta than all the ruins of the East!," he remarked (Thoreau b. 92). In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," he uses an anecdote from "a Hindoo book" about a prince's mistaken identity to explain how one's soul can be revealed. He writes, "So soul', continues the Hindoo philosopher, 'from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until

Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations(Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), Arthur Versulis's *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Elizabeth De Michelis's *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), and Ann Gleig's unpublished dissertation "Enlightenment After the Enlightenment: American Transformations of Asian Contemplative Traditions" (Rice University, 2011).

the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*.' I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things" (Thoreau b. I: 152). In "Higher Laws," addressing the alienation humans feel from their own body because of social mores and shame, he remarks, "We are so degraded that we cannot speak simply of the necessary functions of human nature. In earlier ages, in some countries, every function was reverently spoken of and regulated by law. Nothing was too trivial for the Hindoo lawgiver, however offensive it may be to modern taste" (Thoreau b. II: 345).

It is, however, in "The Pond in Winter", where he most fully expresses his desire to read the *Bhagvat Geeta* and absorb its truths, Thoreau observes of Walden and Brahma:

> Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! There I meet the servant of the Bramin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges (Thoreau b: 459).

For Thoreau, Walden's waters represents the kind of metaphysical truths that the *Bhagvat Geeta* contains, if one is willing to meditate upon them. Symbolically, the waters and truths of the East and West commingle, and with "favoring winds" they circulate the globe.[5] Thoreau's desire, suggests Eric Leigh Schmidt, to "move beyond the usual ligatures of New England Protestantism and to question standing religious authorities" ultimately represents "a wider cultural convergence and realignment, a crossing from Christian exemplars of holiness to more diffuse sources and inspirations" (Schmidt 66-67).

Indeed, just as Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859) fueled skepticism about religion in general and the authority or divinity of Biblical teachings in particular, so "Philosophical speculations like those of Herbert Spencer, the esthetic revolt of men like Ruskin, the penetrating truculence of Carlyle, and the rejection of conventional attitudes by such writers as Dickens, Eliot, Balzac, Tolstoy, Whitman, and Dostoevsky, all aided in the pioneer work of the Theosophical Movement" (Cunningham Press).[6]

However, while these individuals contributed to an ethos of independent spirituality, it would be a group of bohemian intellectuals and spiritualists who physically travelled to India that would result in real, not imagined, cultural and religious assimilation.

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[5] In his essay "Walking" (1861), Thoreau remarks "I walk out into a Nature such as the old prophets and poets, Menu, Moses, Homer, Chaucer, walked in," highlighting how "Menu" originally authored Hindu religious law and is regarded as primordial (250). *Essays*, by Henry D. Thoreau. Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

[6] Of the poem "Passage to India" (1881) and its emphasis on brotherhood and the voyage of the soul to the "seas of God," Walt Whitman said to Traubel WW that "There's more of me, the essential ultimate me, in that than in any of the poems. . ." (411, 421). Walt Whitman. *Leaves of Grass*, Ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett. New York: W.W. Norton, 1973.

The American Theosophical Society

In 1875 Helena P. Blavatsky (1831-1891), a Russian immigrant with an aristocratic background, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), an American lawyer, William Q. Judge (1851-1896), an Irish immigrant who became a lawyer, and individuals familiar with Jewish and other forms of mysticism organized in New York City the Theosophical Society, or a society devoted to seeking God's truth about the universe.[7]As Stephen Prothero points out, it initially was not devoted to promoting Eastern religious beliefs; instead, it challenged, along with "religious populists" like the Methodists and Baptists, conventional belief structures in favor of a more individualistic understanding of God (Prothero 199). Olcott and Blavatsky, he asserts, "discovered that they shared an interest in spiritualism, a disdain for its popular manifestations, and a commitment to its reform" (Prothero 203). Such was their interest in addressing "false science" and "false religion" that Olcott equated their search for knowledge with William Lloyd Garrison's cause against slavery (Prothero 206).

Toward this end, members were initially interested in how Neoplatonism, spiritualism, and other esoteric beliefs could reveal universal spiritual truths and wisdom. However, if Olcott had reform in mind, Blavatsky was, overtime, more interested in how the occult and rituals might yield spiritual truths. Toward this end, in 1877 Blavatsky published*Isis Unveiled*, where she explains the origins and secrets of the world's

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[7] For a history of the American chapter of the Theosophical Society, see *100 Years of Theosophy: A History of the Theosophical Society in America*, by Joy Mills. Wheaton, Ill: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987. Michael Gomes's *Theosophy in the Nineteenth Century: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994) also provides a useful historical synopsis, along with a comprehensive bibliography. Also see Gershom Scholem's book *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), which discusses the ways Judaism and Theosophy intersected from the beginning, i.e., beyond sharing the seal of Solomon symbol.

major religions and philosophies (Stein 106).Her philosophy attempted to reconcile the conflict between science and organized religion by "spiritualizing evolutionary theory and emphasizing self-reliance in the quest for moral and spiritual perfection" (Wakoff 364).
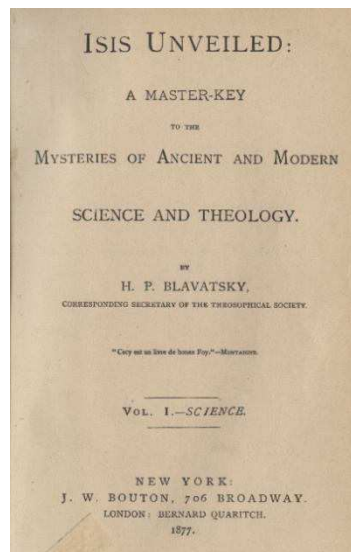
[**Illustration of the title page in***Isis Unveiled*, **originally published in 1877**]

Illustrative of the dialectic between American interest in alternative religious or metaphysical thought and Eastern religion, Blavatsky and Olcott left New York in 1878 and travelled to Indiaand Ceylon, where she converted to Buddhism, and in 1882 established in Adyar the headquarters of the Theosophical Society.As explained in her *Key to Theosophy* (1889), the society had three objectives: "(1) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed. (2) To promote the study of the world's religion and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, namely, of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies. (3) To investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man especially" (24). Over the years, the wording of these objectives would change some, and in 1884 the Society for Psychical Research would issue a report highly critical of

various psychic feats or phenomena associated with Madame Blavatsky, including formal charges of deception and fraud in regard to the paranormal. Still, she was popular as a spiritual medium and religious philosopher, and promoter of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.

On June 16, 1880, for example, *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, India, reported in an article entitled "Theosophy in Ceylon" that:

> The visit of the delegation of Theosophists to Ceylon has stirred the native society of the island to its depths. The local officers declare that they never saw such gatherings in the southern district before. The visitors were expected on the 11th, on which day 4,000 people gathered at the landing-pier, the boats in the harbor were decorated with flags, a native committee boarded the P. and O. steamer as soon as she dropped anchor, and great preparations were made to give the delegates a proper welcome (3).

While the article reports that a schedule change occurred and that a different crowd of similar size greeted them elsewhere, it also details how Olcott spoke to "3,000 Buddhists" and how his message on "Theosophy and Buddhism" was received by the "entire English colony." His argument, it is reported, "was to the effect that the universal yearning of humanity for some knowledge of divine things was satisfied pre-eminently in the system which Buddha bequeathed to the world," and that a society of Buddhist should be formed to spread the Hindu gospel. Olcott, says the report,

> was happy to say that this suggestion had received the entire approbation of the greatest Buddhist priests and the most respected laymen, whose presence at this time showed the state of their feelings. Megittuwatte fully corroborated Colonel Olcott's statements, and bespoke the good-will of every true Buddhist for the Theosophical Society, of which he himself

had been a fellow for the last two years (1880: 3).

The article ends with a listing of the delegation, including Blavatsky and several Indian officials. Its importance here is the manner in which Indians represented the arrival of theosophy in Ceylon, and makes clear the motives and actions of those involved.

Schmidt observes that

> "Over the next decade Olcott especially emerged as a pivotal player in his support for an anticolonial revival of Buddhism in Ceylon and even produced his own Buddhist Catechism for use in schools there and elsewhere. His catechism—by 1897, it had been 'published in twenty languages, mainly by Buddhists, for Buddhists'—was a strange mix. On the one hand, it showed Olcott's immersion in the life and teachings of the Buddha and displayed his considerable sympathy with basic Buddhist precepts...it could easily have been read as a primer on Transcendentalist spirituality in its evocation of "wise and dignified hermits in their forest solitude and its emphasis on mystical experience" (Schmidt 159).

Regardless, he gained many followers and converts who were eager to revive Buddhist teachings.[8]

In American newspapers and periodicals, the progress of theosophy in India, England, and the United States was reported on widely from the *New York Herald* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* to the *Kansas City Times* and *San*

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[8] For a more detailed account of Olcott's life and his efforts to reform Buddhism and Hinduism in Asia; his fall out with Anagarika Dharmapala, a native theosophist who left Olcott to lead his own Buddhist revival movement in India; and how "cultural contact and interreligious interaction" in general resulted in a philosophical and social "'creolization'"(ix), see Stephen Prothero's *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Francisco Bulletin. In 1885, for instance, the Reverend J. P. Jones published "Theosophy in India," which critically examined Blavatsky's and Olcott's efforts in India while defending that of Christianity. Jones observes that "it is a remarkable fact that few towns of any significance can be found in South India in which there is not a branch society of this movement" and that "the same is true, to a lesser degree, of other parts of India." Further, he writes:

> These branches may not be strong in numbers, but their members are, almost to a man, possessed of influence and education; and they are enthusiastic in the use of both these agencies for the advancement of their cause. The daily papers of this presidency constantly print hazy expositions and senseless platitudes from these Theosophists in advocacy of their so-called religion. Nor are the Hindus the only ones who are won over to it. The leading English daily in South India finds it politic to-day to defend Theosophy. It does this, however, as a patron rather than as a devotee.
>
> Englishmen of literary and journalistic fame, and of high military rank in this land, have been duped by it, and identify themselves with it (1885: 5).

While he remarks that it is "hard to understand how Christianized Europeans can by duped by Theosophy," his exposéis aimed primarily at illustrating the tactics used by the "proselytizing agency" of Blavatsky and her "method of deceiving the people" (Jones 6). Despite, he says, that the "active adherents" of Theosophy are drawn from "the heathen," Christianity in India is "undisturbed": "yea, more; it feeds upon this new opposition and spreads more deeply and widely its roots in every direction, showing that even Theosophy is one of the means which God will indirectly use to further his own blessed cause in India" (Jones 6).

By contrast, also published at this time in the United States was "Religion in India. A Native's View of the Situation—Christianity and Theosophy," which appeared in the *Trenton Evening Times*(October 1, 1885). After explaining how "Christianity has been losing all charm for the educated Indians" and even Indians of the lower classes, the author remarks that "The Theosophical society has done one great good in India—it has turned the attention of many an educated Indian to the treasures which the literature of their great ancestors contain. English educated Indian youths have been in the habit of condemning everything Hindu as unscientific or superstition, or worthless, and the Theosophical society has been doing much to cure the Indian youth of this wrong habit, and in this work I wish the society all success" (Jones 5).

In India, newspapers also widely reported the struggle between Christian missionaries and members of the Theosophical Society, and the impact of the movement upon Indian culture. For instance, in the *Amitra Bazar Patrika* (January 30, 1879) of Calcutta, it was reported that "The doctrine of Theosophy is in bitter antagonism with Christianity, and hence it is easy to believe that Mdme Blavatsky is in no great favour with those who would 'let things be as they are.' A coalition is said to have formed between the Theosophic Society and the Ayra Samaj of India, and it is expected that the author of *Isis Unveiled* will make quite a sensation in religious India by her presence"(1879: 6).The *Madras Mail* (April 22, 1884), in an article entitled "Religious Movements in India. Brahmoism and Theosophy," reported how, after a lecture by S. Sathianadham, various native and non-native speakers discussed Theosophy relative to Christianity and Hinduism. In response, for instance, to Sathianadham's observation that Theosophy was "originated by foreigners" and, strangely, "Hindus took more to Theosophy than to Brahmoism," others responded by observing that the "moral precepts" of Christ

were "as high as those of Buddha and every other religious teacher" and that "true Christianity, i.e., the precepts of Jesus Christ, was nothing else than Theosophy, pure and simple." While a Christian minister "rose to defend his Church," the "audience became impatient" and the Chairman of the lecture turned discussion back to the advertised topic (5).[9]

Over time, Blavatsky published in London *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), which attempted to explain various themes concerning the world's major religions and which inspired Annie Besant to join the Theosophical Society and to be an advocate for its causes, particularly in regard to women's roles in society. After Blavatsky's death in 1891, Olcott and Besant led the Theosophical Society that was based in Adyar, India, and Judge led the American chapter. Although the movement in the U.S. declined, Judge "revived the Theosophical organization by conducting public meetings and publishing a monthly magazine, the *Path*, which appeared regularly from 1886 to 1896. Through Judge's efforts as a lecturer and a frequent contributor to the *Path*, an increasing number of middle-class Americans found Theosophy to be a viable

alternative to the religious cultures in which they were raised" (Ashcraft 7228). In 1896, the Theosophical Society of America was formally established.

While it would take much of the nineteenth century for Indian leaders such as Dayananda Saravasty (1824-1883) to reclaim the ancient teachings of the Vedas and denounce the caste system, the Theosophical Society played, according to Leah Leneman, "an important role in the Hindu renaissance of this period." Of the belief that Christianity was the "only true religion," she remarks, "The Theosophists vehemently disagreed with this view. By their dissemination of Hindu religious writings they created a new interest in Eastern religion throughout much of the Western world, while their unqualified admiration for Hinduism created a feeling of confidence and worth which helped to revitalize religious life in India" (1980: 24).

To illustrate: Swami Narenda Vivekananda (1863-1902) was heavily influenced by Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), a visionary Brahmin of Dakshineswar. He travelled through India where he witnessed poverty, developed a sympathy for the diversity of Indian peoples and beliefs, and advocated social justice. Of his impact in India, Bruce F. Campbell observes that,

> "Members of the Theosophical Society or persons strongly influenced by Theosophy were central to the founding of the Indian National Congress, to the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, to the consolidation of the Indian independence movement after World War I, to the development of educational systems to serve the native populations of in India and Ceylon, and to the creation of campaigns for the revival of Sanskrit and for the betterment of the position of women, outcastes, prisoners, and others in India" (1980: 172).

Vivekananda, however, also made a significant impact in the West when he appeared at the1893 World's Parliament of

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[9] The December 30, 1886, issue of *The Madras Mail* reported that "The eleventh anniversary of the Theosophical Society was held yesterday evening in the new Council Hall at the Adyar. There was a large attendance of native gentlemen and students—including about 120 delegates who had come from different parts of India." The Secretary reported that while the Society had increased "25 per cent," there was "also an increased attempt on the part of the members to lead a higher life and to unite themselves with the everlasting *logos* through which alone man could obtain immortality (Loud Applause)." It also reported how the "spread of western education had made most of the young men born in Hindu—in Brahmin families—give up their daily rituals enjoined by the Shastras, but the Theosophical Society had already succeeded in bringing such men back to a sense of their religious observances." The society meeting concluded with Colonel Olcott affirming that "the star had already begun to shine in the East, in the literary and religious as well as political sense" and that the Theosophical Society's "ideal" or goal was to "learn the truth and proclaim it at all hazards" (5).

Religions in Chicago, a part of the Columbian Exposition at the World's Fair. Intended to showcase "Christian triumphalism," the parliament instead became, ironically, "the first public rebuttal in the United States to colonialism and Christian missions by representatives of Asian religions" and, says E. Allen Richardson, an opportunity to "establish their own faiths in the heartland of America." Vivekanada, Anagarika Dharmapala, and Kinza Hirai in particular challenged Western Orientalism or assumptions about Eastern peoples and religions as being inferior, deceitful, or immoral, and charged Christian missionaries and Christianity with ethnocentrism, intolerance, and institutional idol worship (2012: 417-419).[10]

After the conference, he toured the United States and in 1897, he established the Vedanta Society in New York—the first Hindu-lead organization that aimed to promote Hindu beliefs. In defending the religions of India against Western ethnocentrism, he became "an ally of liberal universalists at home and abroad," and "proved a crucial broker of Hindu-inspired 'practical spirituality' in the United States" (Schmidt 162).

Modern Representations of India and Hinduism

In the twentieth century, while social reformer Katherine Tingley took the reins of the society in the United States, and was the driving force in 1897 behind the Theosophical utopian community in Point Loma, near San Diego, California, the Vedanta movement that Vivekananda began in New York expanded to San Francisco with the building in 1906 of the first Hindu temple in America, along with other cities.[11]

In 1934, after several splits and changes, the American Theosophical Society was renamed "The Theosophical Society in America." Its current headquarters are in Wheaton, Illinois, where it is largely focused on "revitalization of the ancient religious traditions of the East and the worldwide realization of interreligious harmony" (Prothero 1993: 210). It publishes *Quest*, a periodical that seeks to explore "the common ground between philosophies and religions, between East and West, between science and religion." While the movement is no longer as robust as before, it played an important role in westernizing Eastern religions. As with Emerson and Thoreau, however, one can argue that it could not always meet Indian religions completely on their own terms and instead affirmed a Western metaphysical ideal of the East in general and Hindu beliefs in particular.

Several decades later, as a response to Christian exclusivism by preaching tolerance and religious universalism, Yoganda (1893-1952), who had started the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920 published his *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), which become a best-seller on spirituality (Wessinger 1975: 173-177). In 1959, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi first introduced Transcendental Meditation to the United States, helping spread the practices of yoga and meditation.[12] Of this time, Ann Gleig

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[10] At the end of his talk on "Hinduism," Vivekananda asserted that if there ever were to be a "universal religion" its God would shine his rays upon "the followers of Krishna or Christ; saints or sinners alike; which would not be the Brahman or Buddhist, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all of these. . . . It would be a religion which would have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, and would recognize a divinity in every man or woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force would be centered in aiding humanity to realize its Divine nature" (1893: 133).

[11] For a discussion of how the Point Loma Theosophical community was founded, see W. Michael *Ashcraft's The Dawn of the New Cycle: Point Loma Theosophists and American Culture*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002.

[12] In 1968, the Beatles met with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh, India, as part of their desire to learn Transcendental Meditation—a method for achieving inner peace. The embrace of "TM" by Western celebrities accelerated its popularity. For a basic overview of the period, see Philip Goldberg's *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation—How*

and Lola Williamson observe that if Swami Vivekananda "demythologized Hinduism" and replaced "devotionalism" with "western values such as rationality, ethics, and tolerance," most "second wave" gurus of the 1960s and 1970s "placed a universal mystical experience at the core of all religions and offered meditation techniques as scientific tools for accessing higher states of consciousness" (2013: 4-5).

By 1966,the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) emerged, primarily as a result of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada travelling in the West (International Society 1999: 2).As stated in one of its brochures, "The movement's main purpose is to promote the well-being of human society by teaching the service of God consciousness (Krsna consciousness) according to the timeless Vedic scriptures of India" (1999: 1).
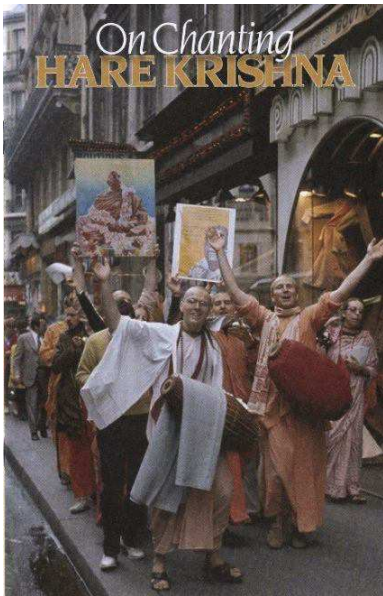
[Illustration of a brochure cover entitled "On Chanting HareKrishna." International Society for Krishna Consciousness]

Indian Spirituality Changed the West. New York: Harmony Books, 2010. Also see Trout, Polly. 2000. *Eastern Seeds, Western Soil: Three Gurus in America*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Pub. Co.

Over the decades, centers for study opened in major cities in the U.S., along with Europe, Africa, South America, Asia, and Australia—and ISKCON also returned to India, established cultural centers in Mumbai, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, and other cities, and now influences modern day Hinduism (1999: 8-9).

During this period, as postmodern philosophy and secular thought has evolved, organized American religion as a whole also changed and become less homogenous.[13] Despite, for example, the ecumenical movement and the rise of megachurches since the 1970s, interest in the United States in mainstream Christianity (as measured by attendance) declined, and institutional Christianity paid, and continues to pay, little, if any, attention to other world religions.[14]

However, even as Christian evangelical outreach has increased and become more humanitarian in focus in underdeveloped countries, more conservative groups such as the Jack Van Impe Ministries have waged a religious media war with world religions other than Christianity. On TV and in other media,

[13] Besides Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, the writings of Martin Heidegger, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Frederic Jameson, Richard Rorty, and Michel Foucault are often considered as being the most influential postmodern thinkers, especially in regard to how society, ideologies, and knowledge are constructed relative to power and language. While ethnocentric, Nels F. S. Ferre's *The Sun and the Umbrella* (1953) is representative of Cold War era efforts to think critically, relative to other world religions, about how Christian theology and the Bible can become idols and obscure truth. Catherine L. Albanese, by comparison, argues *in A Republic of Mind and Spirit* (2007) that various metaphysical traditions, alongside evangelicalism, shaped American religious history and the rise of alternative spiritual traditions.

[14] A May 15, 2015, Pew Research Center study entitled "America's Changing Religious Landscape" reports that the number of Americans who describe themselves as Christian has dropped from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014 while the number of individuals who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" has increased from 16.1% to 22.8% during that same time period.

they routinely represent Hindus and Muslims as "Other," evil, or deceptive. In its *Perhaps Today* series, for instance, the Van Impe ministry asserts in its "World Report" that "Mohammed is dead. Buddha is long gone. Hinduism's 100,000,000 (one hundred million) idol gods are not the answer (*Perhaps Today* 2012: 14). Further, Gandhi's praise of Muhammed is evidence of what Peter meant in the Bible when he said "there were false prophets also among the people" (*Perhaps Today* 2013: 27).

By sharp contrast, the Unitarian Universalist Association, established in 1961 as a result of a merger between the Universalist Church (founded in 1793) and the American Unitarian Association (founded in 1825), has created a religion that is inclusive of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and other faiths. It embraces a range of principles compatible with American transcendentalist beliefs about nature and Theosophist ideas about individual conscience, human rights, liberty, and justice. Unitarian Universalism worship today draws from Hindu poetry, scripture, philosophy, and *kirtan*, and affirms, like Hinduism, "the personal search for spiritual truth, the idea that all things are connected, and a respect for other religious paths."[15] Recent books such as Brian McLaren's *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross the Road* (2012) also attempt to understand the relationships between these traditions and promote interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance over conflict or hostility.

In the end, and in a postmodern world where "universal truths" are in question or subject to multiple interpretations, distinguishing philosophical mimicry from assimilation, or how different generations and populations of Americans constructed India in general and Hinduism in particular, is difficult. Just as the American encounter with Eastern religion has been dialectical and marked by the assimilation of India to Western categories of belief through Christian exceptionalism and affirmative Orientalism, so Hinduism itself has undergone change. Therefore, as Ronald Inden observes, we need to be careful about creating essentialist ideas of Hindu belief, of "equating Indian thought with Hinduism and equating Hinduism with the monist pantheism and idealism attributed to Advaita Vedanta" (130).

Indeed, while institutional Christianity, in its many forms, remains the one true religion for many in America, others "have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him" in a way that is more consistent with Eastern religious belief itself and an individual relation to the universe.[16] Still others, both Christian and Hindu alike, question the role of holy books, institutions, and philosophical metanarratives in representing "the truth"— or, at least, the illusion of knowing it—and desire a simpler spiritual existence.

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[15] There are three types of Unitarianism in India: the Unitarian Christian Church of Chennais in Madras (founded in 1795); the Brahmo Samaj (founded in 1828 by Rammohun Roy); and the Unitarian Church of the Khasi Hills (founded in 1887 by Hajom Kissor Singh).

[16] I would like to thank Maria-Ana Tupan, Bruce Janz, Jim Mory, Ann Gleig, Ranjit das, and Joanne Goetz for their helpful comments, questions, and suggestions in regard to this essay. I am also indebted to David Loiterstein of Newsbank and Readex Corporation for access to Early American Newspapers, Series 1-11 and South Asian Newspapers, from the World Newspaper Archive in partnership with the Center for Research Libraries.

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Indo-Greek Culture and Colonial Memory, or, Was Alexander a European?

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Abstract

Alexander's conquest of northwest India in the fourth century BCE was often cited by the British in post-Enlightenment England to trace their own identity as conquerors back to the Greeks. Taking a revisionist approach, this paper endeavours to show that the invocation of Alexander's memory to legitimize European hegemony over the Indians was enmeshed in imperialist ideology and involved a distortion of the past. The contexts and motives of the two types of colonization, the Greek and the British, were fundamentally different. The state of Greek thought in Alexander's time could not have sustained the notional binary between India and Greece, 'reason' and 'unreason', to justify a thoroughly hostile form of colonization. The Greeks engaged constructively with the cultural life of the Indians, and the resultant Indo-Greek civilization involved a rich fusion of Indian and Hellenistic influences. Modern European historiography has been extremely averse to acknowledging any fruitful dialogue between ancient Greece and non-Western cultures. This paper will strive to locate the genesis of Indo-Greek culture in the complex intermingling of ancient peoples and ideas.

[**Keywords:** Alexander, ancient Greece, Indo-Greek, imperialism, historiography]

Introduction: Ideological Contexts

In his Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1837/2004), Hegel defines history as "none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom" (Hegel 19). In this teleological view of history, India is ahistorical, in other words not part of the dynamics of rational progress that is essential for the self-manifestation of the Spirit. The tensions that have driven European rationality from its Greek beginnings in the *polis* through the evolution of the free human subject to the upheavals of the French revolution have been lacking in India. So lost has India been since ancient times in the "Substantial Unity" of the Brahm (or *brahman*) that everything has been "stripped of rationality" (141) and "the Spirit wanders into the Dream-World, and the highest state is Annihilation" (148)[1]. Comparing India with the "almost unearthly beauty" to be found in women – "a transparency of skin, a light and lovely roseate hue ... in which the features... appear soft, yielding, and relaxed" – Hegel claims that "the more attractive the first sight of it had been, so much the more unworthy shall we ultimately find it in every respect" (140). The spread of Indian culture is "only a dumb, deedless expansion", since Indians "have achieved no foreign conquests, but on every occasion vanquished themselves" (142). Just as "Alexander the Great was the first to

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[1] It is intriguing, as Halbfass (1990) notes, that Hegel conveniently ignores the concept of *ātman*, and the dialectic between *ātman* and *brahman*, in this context. Also see Sen (2005) for ancient India's argumentative tradition.

penetrate by land to India", the English are now "the lords of the land", for it is the "necessary fate" of Asia to be subjected to Europeans (ibid.).

Hegel was not alone in this regard and many of his European contemporaries reiterated this stance. The alleged absence of an argumentative tradition in India coupled with the perceived lack of an independent self-consciousness gave Europeans a model, a projected Other, against which they could define their own rational (hence, superior) selves. It is intriguing that even Sir William Jones, founder of the Asiatic Society in 1784, who was otherwise so enthusiastic about a common Aryan heritage between Indians and Europeans, does not fail to privilege Europe when it comes to what he considers to be useful knowledge. He remarks that "whoever travels in Asia, especially if he be conversant with the literature of the countries through which he passes, must naturally remark the superiority of European talents: the observation, indeed, is as old as Alexander" (Jones 3). As in Hegel, the time of Alexander's conquest is cited to give validity to British claims. In Jones' view, therefore, Aristotle seems perfectly in the right when he "represents Europe as a sovereign Princess, and Asia as her handmaid" (12). Jones' approach was, nevertheless, by and large sympathetic towards Indian culture. In the later decades, England's colonial strategy towards India was to become far more rigid. Edmund Burke prosecuted Warren Hastings on charges of misgovernment; Hastings was allegedly too sympathetic to the natives.

The ideological construction of an undeveloped India became a vehicle for justifying its annexation by Britain as part of 'the white man's burden'. In his highly influential *History of British India*, James Mill (1858) reiterates the Hegelian view of India as a land mired in its past, in its fantastical legends, and therefore, as a place devoid of any sense of history. Only an external, superior power could shake it out of its perpetual stupor. Mill infers from his research that the Indians have never been fit to rule themselves, and that the Indian civilization has never prospered except under foreign rule. Here too, Mill supports his claim by invoking the memory of Alexander. He quotes Captain Francis Wilford, who contributed several articles on Indian history in the journal *Asiatic Researches*:

"According to Plutarch, in his life of Alexander, Chandra-Gupta had been at that prince's camp, and had been heard to say afterward, that Alexander would have found no difficulty in the conquest of Prachi, or the country of the Prasians, had he attempted it, as the king was despised, and hated too, on account of his cruelty" (Mill 136).

Going on to highlight the natural passivity of Indians, Mill remarks that they "have always allowed themselves to be conquered in detail" (141) and that they now need the British to infuse in them a sense of history and help them attain a higher level of civilization. For the utilitarian Mill, the measure of civilization is scientific progress, an aspect in which he sees the Indians as singularly lacking. He writes:

Exactly in proportion as *Utility* is the object of every pursuit, may we regard a nation as civilized. Exactly in proportion as its ingenuity is wasted on contemptible and mischievous objects, though it may be, in itself, an ingenuity of no ordinary kind, the nation may safely be denominated barbarous (105).

The overblown literary style of the ancient Hindus is therefore nothing more than the extravagant outpourings of a barbaric race: "It has several words to express the same thing. The sun has more than thirty names, the moon more than twenty" (63). Mill dubiously claims that this excessive verbosity contrasts with the clarity of Greek and Latin which supposedly have "one name for everything which required a name, and no more than one" (64).

Mill never visited the subcontinent. He derived his supposed objectivity of ancient India by reading "the scattered hints contained in the writings of the Greeks", from which he concluded that "the Hindus, at the time of Alexander's invasion, were in a state of manners, society, and knowledge, exactly the same with that in which they were discovered by the nations of modern Europe" (107). The intervening two millennia had passed by without leaving a trace on Indian culture, Mill inferred. The British must therefore step in to complete the 'civilizing mission' that Alexander had left unfinished. They should, however, maintain an appropriate distance with the natives lest they too get stuck up in the quagmire of Indian traditions. Unlike Jones' belief in a shared tradition between the ancient cultures of Asia and Europe,

Mill defined the two cultures in terms of binaries which he thought he derived from the Greek distinction between rational and irrational, progressive and static, *nomos* and *physis*.

Bruce Lincoln (1989) has shown how the repeated invocation of select moments from the past can be used to construct social identities. By repeatedly referring to Alexander's conquest, the British tried to identify themselves as the last in a long tradition of European conquerors. This claim to an Alexandrian heritage was, however, deeply enmeshed in British colonialist ideology and, to use a phrase by Romila Thapar (2007), was 'historical memory without history' (Thapar: web). This memory was founded on the belief in a shared European connection with Alexander, a view entirely anachronistic. As Gotthard Strohmaier puts it, "The Greeks were no Europeans" (cited in Toner 16). Strohmaier refutes a widely held misconception that there is an exclusive cultural continuity between ancient Greece and modern Europe. Europe as a cultural and political entity is a modern construct that took shape after the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in the fifteenth century. The ancient Greeks never saw themselves as Europeans. Moreover, it is not just Europe that can claim a cultural continuity with antiquity; the interactions between ancient Greece and non-Western cultures, as Martin Bernal (Bernal 210) has influentially shown, have been no less potent. In fact, Britain had hardly any connection with the Mediterranean world until it became a part of the Roman Empire. The invocation of Alexander's memory in an attempt to legitimize British hegemony over the Indians was, therefore, spurious and involved a distortion of the past. In order to revise such narratives, it is important to look back and read the interactions between ancient cultures in the light of current theoretical perspectives.

Looking Back: Classical Greece and the Irrational

In his influential study on the origins of Greek rationality, Vernant (1984) has illustrated how the need for social unity in the face of internal rivalries and external aggression created conditions favouring the emergence of rational thought and the rise of the Greek polis between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. The polis was centered on the agora, the public square, where problems of general interest were debated. The creation of this new social space helped to bring many royal prerogatives, including the right to debate, *es to koinon*, to the commons (Vernant 47). Politics was no longer the exclusive privilege of the king, whose power was now in rapid decline; politics was now set down *es to meson*, in the middle, at the centre of the polis, to be dissected by anyone who could argue with words, oppose speech with speech (Vernant 127). Politics and *logos* were thus inextricably linked, and argument by speech became the defining factor of the city's political life. The next two centuries would see the steady shift from mythological to rational thinking among the Greeks.

The common man, however, was not impressed by such astute reasoning. The breach between intellectual and popular beliefs reached its zenith in the late fifth century. With the Peloponnesian War looming large on the horizon, an unflinching reliance on reason and the denial of the supernatural was no longer tenable. Dodds (1951) writes:

> To offend the gods by doubting their existence, or by calling the sun a stone, was risky enough in peacetime; but in war it was practically treason – it amounted to helping the enemy. For religion was a collective responsibility. The gods were not content to strike down the individual offender: did not Hesiod say that whole cities often suffered for one bad man? (Dodds 191)

The period during the Peloponnesian War (431BCE – 404 BCE) also witnessed a sudden inclination towards magic and certain foreign, "orgiastic" cults (193). But the "reaction against the Enlightenment" (189) was nowhere more evident than in the systematic prosecutions of numerous intellectuals, including Socrates, on religious grounds during the late fifth century. "The evidence we have", writes Dodds, "is more than enough to prove that the Great Age of Greek Enlightenment was also, like our own time, an Age of Persecution – banishment of scholars, blinkering of thought, and even … burning of books" (189). Relevant for the purpose of this paper, Dodds also notes that the knowledge of such radical reactions against rationality "distressed and puzzled nineteenth-century professors … because it happened at Athens, the "school of Hellas", "the headquarters of

philosophy", and, so far as our information goes, nowhere else" (189). At a time when the ethical justification of empire was largely contingent on the idea of Europe's absolute commitment to rational pursuits since antiquity, such evidences of blatant violation must have proved singularly embarrassing.

To return to classical Greece, a close study of the evolution of Plato's thought shows how it underwent severe transformations under the influence of contemporary events. The crisis in Greek politics compelled Plato, in his later works, to acknowledge the importance of the irrational elements in our psyche, and he extended his rational framework by giving it a metaphysical dimension. While an early work like *Protagoras* revels in the optimistic, rational, and utilitarian spirit of the past, the mood of the middle and the later dialogues, written in the early fourth century, is much more ambiguous. Even in Book IV of the *Republic*, which is otherwise well-known for its banishment of poets, Plato admits that there are two parts of the soul; the passions, unlike in the early *Phaedo*, are no longer seen of bodily (hence, extraneous) origin, but constitute an half of the soul itself. In the *Laws*, he dismisses the idea of the philosopher king as an impossibility, and says that the behaviour of human beings must be controlled by a diet of healthy incantations. And in the *Phaedrus*, his *daimonion* makes him give an apologia for attacking the passionate lover as foolish; in the ensuing recantation or 'palinode', he rejects the simplistic binary between *sōphrōsunē* and *mania*, and allows not only that "the best things we have come from madness" (Plato 522) but also that the person who "comes to the gates of poetry ... without the Muses' madness, he will fail, and his self-controlled verses will be eclipsed by the poetry of men who have been driven out of their minds" (Plato 523).

Aristotle too, like his master before him, understood the significance of studying the irrational factors in human behaviour. The reality of war and the threat of Spartan dominance created tensions that sensitized Aristotle and his pupils, including Alexander, to the necessity of acknowledging the irrational faculties of the mind in order to reach a realistic understanding of human nature (Dodds 238). In Alexander's time, therefore, the distinction between Greece and the East, reason and unreason, could no longer be sustained. It could be safely argued that when

Alexander invaded the East in the late fourth century BCE, his response towards rationality was ambivalent at best.

Earlier in the late sixth century BCE, the powerful Persian Empire had stretched from the Mediterranean in the West to the Indus in the East. The Ionian states in Asia Minor and various North-western regions of India were included in the list of the twenty satrapies of Darius. Greeks and Indians met each other in Persian courts and probably exchanged scientific, in particular medical, information (Vassiliades 127). Indians became well-known for their sound health, and there are references to Indian medicines in Hippocrates (Vassiliades 214). However, as far as evidences go, the Greeks at this point never actually visited India, and their scant knowledge of the subcontinent led to exaggerated accounts. Since Greek rationalism in the sixth and fifth centuries were on a high, the Greeks conveniently defined themselves in relation to an exotic Other. Herodotus (484 BCE – 425 BCE) wrote of the huge gold-digging ants of India and of various strange customs like the Indians' habit of cannibalism and of having sexual intercourse in public (McCrindle, 1979).

Alexander and *Homonoia*

Alexander's conquest of India in 326 BCE opened up a whole new world before the Greeks, a world that was far more complex and plural than they had been led to believe by previous records. Accompanying Alexander's huge army were a number of Greek philosophers, namely Kallisthenes (Aristotle's disciple and nephew), Onesicritos and Anaxarchos, among many others. Though the tradition of exoticizing the Indians continued, it was gradually superseded in the post-Alexandrian era by numerous newer kinds of narratives that emerged as a result of the increasing dialogue between Indian and Greek thought. The original Greek records of Alexander's campaign were all destroyed when the Hellenistic libraries in Antioch and Alexandria were burnt down. A few fragments of those works, however, have been preserved in the works of later writers like Strabo, Plinius, Arrian, and Plutarch. While some of these texts accentuate the differences between the worldly concerns of Greek philosophy and the asceticism of the Indians, this is not the

only picture. Megasthenes (350 BCE – 290 BCE), the famous ambassador who visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya, concludes after examining the similarities between Greek and Indian philosophies:

> [O]n many points their opinions coincide with those of the Greeks for like them they say that the world was created and is liable to destruction, and is in shape spherical and that the Deity who made it and who governs it, is diffused through all its parts. They hold that various first principles operate in the universe, and that water was the principle employed in the making of the world. In addition to the four elements, there is a fifth agency, from which the heaven and the stars were produced. The earth is placed in the centre of the universe. Concerning generation, and the nature of the soul, and many other subjects, they express views like those maintained by the Greeks. They wrap up their doctrines about immortality and future judgement in Hades in allegories in the manner of Plato.

> [...] All that has been said regarding nature by the ancients is asserted also by philosophers outside of Greece, on the one hand in India by Brachmanes [the Brāhmanas] and on the other in Syria by the people called the Jews (McCrindle b. 100-103).

The belief that the Indian philosophers had no interest in worldly matters was contradicted by Nearchus, a navarch in Alexander's army, who wrote of certain Brāhmanas who took active part in political life and acted as counselors to the king (McCrindle, 1979). Aristoboulos of Paneas, living in the third or second century BCE, also noted that he observed two Brāhmanas at the market-place in Taxila who, like the Greek sophists at the agora, were acting as public counselors (McCrindle, 1979).

The recognition of cultural parallels and the need for a cosmopolitan society was facilitated by Alexander's development of the concept of *homonoia,* or unity of mind and heart. In 324 BCE, he gave a banquet at Opis to nine thousand generals and leaders representing various ethnicities–Persians, Indians, Medians, Phoenicians, and Egyptians. Giving a political dimension to the spirit of *homonoia,* Alexander addressed the vast audience at Opis thus:

Now as the wars come to an end, I wish that you will live happily in peace. All mortals, from now onwards, should live like one nation, in amity, for the common progress. You should consider the world as your country, with common laws, where the noble ones will govern. I do not divide the people into Greeks and Barbarians as the narrow-minded do. I am neither interested in the origin of the citizens nor concerned with the race into which they were born. I classify them with only one criterion, Virtue. For me every good foreigner is a Greek and every bad Greek is worse than a Barbarian. If ever there would be disputes do not take resort to the use of weapons but solve them peacefully. If there is a need I shall stand as your arbitrator...From my side, I consider all white and black as equal. I do not want you to be merely the subjects of my state but participants and partners. (as cited in Vassiliades 64).

The substance of the speech comes from Plutarch, but is also referred to in Arrian and Eratosthenos. Some scholars have expressed doubt over the veracity of the speech, but Tarn (Tarn 32) believes it is certainly Alexander's. Even if the speech was a later fabrication, its spirit is remarkably Alexandrian. Though Aristotle had claimed in the first book of the *Politics* that the barbarians were natural slaves and the Greeks their natural masters, a counter-tendency was also prevalent in contemporary Greece. The early Stoic philosopher Antiphon, for instance, wrote in the fifth century BCE that all people, both barbarians and Greeks, are created alike by nature in all respects (McEvilley, 2008). Theophrastus (371 BCE – 287 BCE) claimed that all human beings are of common ancestry, while the Cynics emphasized that all human societies form a single world-community, the *cosmopolis*, and that the enlightened soul would not discriminate among them (McEvilley, 2008). Even Socrates in the *Phaedo* advised his students to consult foreign teachers. There was also a shift, as Vassiliades observes, in the meaning of the word 'foreigner'; from 'barbarian', it gradually evolved to mean 'guest' or 'host' (Vassiliades 63, 64). Tarn writes that "Aristotle told Alexander to treat Greeks as friends, but barbarians like animals; but Alexander knew better, and preferred to divide men into good and bad without regard to their race" (Tarn 12). In his epic study on the cross-currents of ancient

thought, McEvilley too notes that the xenophobic distinction between Greeks and barbarians "had lost much of its force on the Greek scene by the time of Alexander and his Successors" (McEvilley 351).

Historical records attest to Alexander's syncretic approach to foreign cultures. Alexander probably realized that treating the conquered people as free men rather than slaves would make it easier to deal with the problems of administration. Ever keen to learn, he incorporated the organizational tactics of the Persians in his own scheme of administration. He himself adopted Asian customs, habits, and attires (McCrindle, 1979). Moreover, unlike the commercial colonies of the British in India, those of the Greeks were all settler colonies. They were not interested in draining wealth from the colonies back into their country. Many Greeks became subjects of the Mauryan empire, and Megasthenes tells us that a separate department in Chandragupta Maurya's court looked after foreigners (McCrindle, 2008). Greek artists, physicians, and astrologers too probably settled permanently in India, establishing vibrant commercial centres (Vassiliades 14 - 32). Recent excavations reveal the presence of palaces, theatres, and gymnasiums in the Greek style in what is now Afghanistan. Numismatic evidence shows that several Indo-Greek kings like Pantaleon and Agathocles issued coins depicting Buddhist stūpas and legends, while some coins had inscriptions both in Greek and Brāhmi. During the Alexandrian phase itself, many discharged soldiers had married into the Indian community and, by the time of Asoka in the mid-third century BCE, still more had joined Indian religions, in particular Buddhism. This is attested by the Indianised names of several Yonaka (Greek) monks found in Pali texts and inscriptions. Yonaka Dhammarakkhita Thera preached the *Aggikkhandopama Sutta* and is reported to have converted thirty-seven thousand people into Buddhism (Vassiliades 58). The *Anguttara* commentary tells us that many of these people followed a mixture of Greek and Buddhist customs (Vassiliades 61), and the *Milindapañha* records conversations between the Indo-Greek king Milinda (or Menander) and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena. Very soon, the Graeco-Buddhist sculptures of Gandhāra and Mathura emerged as the expression of the rich fusion between Greek and Indian creative impulses. The Greeks were thus permanent immigrants, often converts to Buddhism, engaging constructively with the cultural ethos of the community.

Conclusion

Even though ancient Greeks at times expressed prejudice against foreign cultures, the concept of racism was not as institutionalized as in post-Enlightenment Europe. "The intensity and pervasiveness of ... colonial racism since the 17th century have been so much greater than the norm that they need some special explanation" (Bernal 201). Most eighteenth century English-speaking intellectuals, including John Locke, David Hume, and Benjamin Franklin, were openly racist and claimed that dark-skinned people were naturally inferior. The dominant discourse of British imperialism was centered around racism and the fear of miscegenation. While the Greeks had erected no strong cultural barriers against intermingling with the natives, the British insisted that 'never the twain shall meet' and were constantly under the dread of 'going native'[2]. In order to justify empire, therefore, the British created an Alexander in their own image. An admission of cultural syncretism between the Greeks and the Indians would have upset the neat dichotomy between Europe and the Orient that was so important for sustaining the imperial discourse. England's dominance over India was mirrored – and reinforced – by the way the British chose to remember and (mis)represent Alexander's campaign.

Modern European historiography, likewise, has been extremely averse to acknowledging any fruitful dialogue between ancient Greece and non-Western cultures. The Hegelian view of civilization, with its emphasis on cultural purity and disapproval of hybridity, has brushed aside the question of possible influences between Indian and Greek cultures. Even as late as the mid-twentieth century, Heidegger could militantly designate the Asiatic as the "most foreign and most difficult" and as the "greatest opposite" of Western culture

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[2] This is not to imply that only the 'exoticist' and 'magesterial' approaches defined England's relationship with India. See Sen (2005) for the 'curatorial' approach. This paper, however, is concerned only with the ways in which the British appropriated the memory of Alexander's campaign in order to give legitimacy to their own imperialist designs.

(Heidegger 228). Our own time has seen the rise of far-right political groups – like the Golden Dawn in Greece and the Hindutva movement in India – promoting a narrowly chauvinistic narrative of the nation by disregarding or demonizing foreign influences. Communal identities, however, are neither permanent nor static. It is important to locate the genesis and evolution of cultures in the complex web of identities, in the dialogic intermingling of ancient peoples and ideas.

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Marvelous India in Medieval European Representations*

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Abstract

To the Europeans, throughout the Middle Ages, India represented a fabulous country, a realm of wonders, an "oneiric horizon" (Jacques Le Goff). By using varied traditions inherited from Antiquity, the Fathers of the Church, the encyclopedists (from Isidore of Seville to Brunetto Latini or Vincent of Beauvais) or the authors of extraordinary travellogues peopled this imaginary land with a marvellous flora and a monstrous fauna, as well as strange human races. A (psycho) analysis of these fantastic figures (dog-headed men, one-legged ones, men with eyes, nose and mouth on their chest, hermaphrodites, pygmies, giants, Amazons, cannibals, etc.) would uncover the fantasies, scare, frustrations, unconscious complexes, prejudices and stereotypes that the Europeans projected on the figures of some "others", whom they situated at the antipodes of Europe – not so much geographical, as cognitive, moral, cultural and spiritual, antipodes.

Keywords: European medieval tradition; Fabulous India; Marvels of the East; Monstrous Races.

The Church Fathers and the encyclopedists of the European Middle Ages saw India as a fantastical rather than a real land. In that age, on the so called T-O maps of the world (Terrarum orbis), India lay at the antipodes of Europe. On these maps, representing the known world (Europe, Asia and Africa, as a disc surrounded by the river Okeanós), Europe and Africa each occupied a quarter of the disc, with Asia occupying the remaining half. India, in its turn, occupied the southern half of Asia, therefore a quadrant of the *oïkoumènê*. Attribution of a quarter of the known world surface to India goes back to Ctesias, who, as Strabo commented, assumed that "India equals in grandeur the rest of Asia as a whole."[1] Other authors were still more enthusiastic: Onesicritus, according to Strabo again, stated that India "made up the third of the inhabited world"[2], an estimation that was taken up by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*[3] and by Solinus in his *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*.[4]

These global approximations, whose role is mnemonic rather than systematising, were taken up by almost all the mediaeval

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[1] "L'Inde égale en grandeur tout le reste de l'Asie", in Strabon, *Géographie*, II, 5, 5, Texte établi et traduit par

Germaine Aujac, Paris, Les belles lettres, 1969, tome II, p. 83-84.

[2] 'Inde "fait le tiers de toute la terre habitée", in Strabon, *Géographie*, XV, I, 12, Traduite du grec en français, à Paris, de l'Imprimerie Royale, 1819, tome V[e], p. 13.

[3] Pline l'Ancien, *Histoire naturelle*, VI, 59, Texte établi, traduit et commenté par J. André et J. Filliozat, Paris, Les belles lettres, 1980, p. 33.

[4] Julius Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, Iterum recensuit Th. Mommsen, Berolini, Apud Weidmannos, 1895, p. 184.

mythographers and geographers who dealt with India. As graphic plans of the world seen through the Christian religion, T-O maps were not at all interested in the practical representation of distances and connections. These world maps offered a simplified description of India. Starting with Isidore of Seville, who set the standard image of India[1] for several centuries, some descriptive traits were kept from the whole ancient tradition, being relentlessly and stereotypically reproduced. India became an asset of mediaeval science, but mostly as a name and as a malleable, abstract graphical space, capable of garnering study-room fantasies, rather than a physical geographical reality that might provoke real journeys.

Most medieval treatises and encyclopedias rehearse the same composite sketch of India, reduced to a few characteristics taken from the classical geographers. Firstly, India continues to occupy a fourth of the *oïkoumènê* and half of Asia (see Fig. 1: Isidore of Seville[5], *Etymologiarum*, 7th century, Ed. Augsburg, 1472). As T-O maps of the world face east, India covers the top right-hand *orbiculus* section on the map, contained between the two perpendicular radii going from Jerusalem (the center), follow the *diaphragm* line eastward, *i.e.* from the Nile southward. This geometrical simplification, framing India within two classical continental demarcation lines, stretches over a huge territory, which, in modern geography, belongs to other areas and continents. Medieval "India" included three large regions that the Church doctors used to call: Higher, Minor or Intra-Ganges India, which corresponds more or less to the present-day Indian peninsula; Lower, Major or Extra-Ganges India, *i.e.* Indochina and present-day Southeast China; and Middle India, or the space stretching between the Nile and the Indian peninsula.

Fig. 1

Thus India's arc of a circle starts from the higher cardinal point of the terrestrial orb, from the east, where lies the earthly paradise, going all the way to the cardinal point situated to the right of the orb, the south, on the level of the sources of the Nile, more precisely the "Mountains of the Moon". This is the arc of the circle directly opposed to the section occupied by Europe. Posidonius and Solinus[6] stated that India is diametrically symmetrical with Gaule, while Eratosthenes[7] and Martianus Capella[8] surmised that the circumnavigation of the *oïkoumènê* would lead from Spain to India. On T-O maps, which reduce the terrestrial three-dimensional globe to a flat projection, India becomes nothing less than the Antipodes of Europe, with one of them resting on the south-east, and the other on the north-west arc of the terrestrial disc.

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[5] Reydellet, 1984 ; Livre XII, Texte établi, traduit et commenté par Jacques André, 1986.

[6] Julius Solinus, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[7] Strabo related that, according to Eratosthenes, "if the immensity of the Atlantic Ocean were not an obstacle, we could travel by sea from Iberia to India: it would be enough to follow the same parallel and to cross the rest of the [globe's] section, once the distance defined above is over [the distance India-Iberia by land]" ("si l'immensité de l'océan Atlantique n'y faisait obstacle, il nous serait possible d'aller par mer d'Ibérie jusqu'en Inde : il suffirait de suivre le même parallèle, et de parcourir la section [du globe] qui reste, une fois ôtée la distance définie ci-dessus [la distance Inde-Ibérie par terre]"). *Géographie* (1969), I, 4, 6, p. 170-171.

[8] Martianus Capella, *The Seven Liberal Arts,* vol. II *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, Translated by William Hanis Stahl and Richard Johnson with E. L. Burge, New York, Columbia University Press, 1977, p. 230-231.

Diametrically opposed to Europe, India became the perfect symbol of alterity, the European Other. Jacques Le Goff shows that the Indian Ocean was perceived as an anti-Mediterranean, a region governed by the rules of the oneiric worlds, directly opposed to the laws of reality and rationality assumed by the civilisation of *"mare nostrum"*[9] In this antipodal land, Europeans projected not only their paradisial dreams, but their nightmares as well. As it was hard to control by means of pragmatic experience, this space became a kind of dumping ground or an attic of medieval representations, used as a projecting screen of all the dreams and marvels of the Europeans. Thus a magical geography was born, with unknown regions and mythical islands, an exuberant flora, monstrous and terrifying fauna, teratomorphous human races and all kinds of other magical objects and settings.

It is in the 6th century B.C. that the make-up of a "Indian" dossier starts, with the *Histories* of Herodotus[10], a historian and mythographer with access to Persian sources, with the *Indica* by Ctesias of Cnidus[11], doctor at the Persian court in the 5th century, and with the *Indica* of Megasthenes, emissary of king Seleucus at the Indian court of Chandragupta in the 4th century. Alexander's expedition and the Hellenistic, and later Roman domination in the Middle East enriched this dossier by military and historical accounts, such as those of Arrian, of Deimachus, of Onesicritus and of Nearchus, more or less accurate, more or less truthful. The geographers of Late Antiquity, Pomponius Mela in his *Description of the World*[12], Strabo in his *Geography*, Ptolemy in his Tetrabible[13], collected and systematized this physical, as well as mythical information. Finally, there came the essential contribution of the encyclopedists of late Antiquity, such as Pliny, with his *Historia naturalis*, the « polyhistor » Solinus, with his *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, and Martianus Capella, with his comprehensive treatise *Seven Liberal Arts*. Even though common sense told them that accounts of certain fantastical animal or human race were scientifically unaccountable, the most skeptical of these scholars, such as Strabo[14], could not afford to ignore the legacy of these sources. Having expressed their doubt and misgivings and proffered their witticism and sarcasm, they would always conclude by quoting at length the incriminated fantastical accounts.

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[9] Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, chap. III. Voir aussi Idem, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

[10] Jacques Lacarrière, *En cheminant avec Hérodote*, followed by *Les plus anciens voyages du monde*, Paris, Hachette, 1981.

[11] Ctésias, *Histoires de l'Orient*, Traduit et commenté par Janick Auberger, Préface de Charles Malamond, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1991. Fragments of Ctesias' lost writings, *Sur l'Inde* et *Histoire des Perses*, were preserved, in quotations and summaries, in different ancient and medieval authors, such as Aelian, Arrian, Pausanias, Pliny, etc., or Photius, patriarch of Constantinople in the 9th century,

[12] Pomponius Mela, *De Situ Orbis* [*Description de la Terre*], Traduit en français sur l'édition d'Abraham Gronovius. Le texte vis-à-vis la traduction, Avec des notes critiques, géographiques et historiques par C.-P. Fradin, À Paris, chez Ch. Pougens, À Poitiers, chez E.-P.-J. Catineau, 1804.

[13] Ptolémée, *Manuel d'astrologie. La Tétrabible*, Préface de Elizabeth Teissier, Traduction de Nicolas Bourdin au XVIIe siècle, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1993.

[14] Strabo treats all these authors as "inveterate liars" ("fieffés menteurs"), that one must be wary of, "because it is them we owe the mention of men with ears like beds, or mouthless, or noseless, single-eyed men, long-legged or with outward-turned fingers; they have also brought back to life the Homeric battle of the cranes against the Pygmies, who they say are three-span tall. It is also they who talked of gold-burrowing lions, fauns with pointed heads, snakes able to swallow cows and deer, with their antlers and all." ("car c'est à eux que l'on doit la mention d'hommes aux oreilles comme des lits, ou sans bouches, ou sans nez, d'hommes à l'œil unique, aux membres allongés, ou aux doigts recourbés en arrière ; ils ont fait revivre également le combat homérique des grues contre les Pygmées qu'ils disent hauts de trois empans. Ce sont eux aussi qui ont parlé de lions fouilleurs d'or, de faunes à têtes pointues, de serpents capables d'engloutir des vaches et des cerfs, cornes comprises"). *Géographie* (1969), II, 1, 9, p. 16-17.

In the Middle Ages, the collapse of the « global » society of the Roman Empire dramatically reduced the interest in and the relations with the areas outside of Europe and the Mediterranean. Having no possibility of acquiring new, first hand information any longer, on India and the Middle East, the Christian doctors had to content themselves with pre-existing descriptions and syntheses. What with the compilation of inherited sources, they proceeded to a spontaneous selection of the amount of information, keeping only the traits that tallied or that appealed to the religious representations and the inquiring spirit of their age. Thus a simplified image of India was born, stereotypical in the extreme, which fulfilled the function of a breviary for the whole of the first millennium, up until the Mongolian invasions and the reconnection with the Asian empires in the 13th - 14th centuries.

The descriptive pattern of India for most of the medieval treatises was given by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies*. In book XIV, concerning *"De terra et partibus",* within the framework of the description of Asia, having spoken about the earthly paradise, Isidore brings together, from the ancient geographers and encyclopedists, the traits that will remain emblematic of the medieval image of India.[15]

The Indian "continent" takes its name from the river Indus, one of its great water courses, together with the Ganges and the Hyphasis (the last frontier of Alexander's expedition). Its limits are, to the west, the Indus (the border between Middle India and Lower India), to the north, the Caucasus (which connects the Middle East with Middle India and Lower India), to the south the southern sea and to the east the earthly paradise (thus Lower India is attached to Higher India). The great islands of the Ocean also belong to India – such as the famous Taprobana (seemingly Ceylon, as transfigured by the magical imagination of the Middle Ages) and the mythical Chryse and Argyre, whose soil would be covered in gold or silver, respectively. The dominating wind (information taken from Posidonius) would be Favonius, a most agreeable, pure, healthy southeast wind. The climate would be mellow, with seasons that are propitious for two harvests per year, keeping vegetation evergreen.

Several juxtaposed enumerations suggest a richness and abundance that are due not so much to the tropical climate, as to the mythical atmosphere embracing India. These enumerating series summarise the lists of lapidaries, bestiaries, human catalogues and other encyclopedias of the Antiquity and Middle Ages. There are spices: cinnamon, pepper, sweet flag, ebony wood; precious stones: gold, beryllium, chrysoprase, diamond, ruby, fine or large pearls; exotic or fantastical animals that are often guardians of these natural treasures: elephants, rhinoceros, parrots, dragons and griffins; finally, monstrous human races, impossible to list, because of the immense numbers of the Indian population (Pliny explains the multitude of Indians – nine thousand tribes and five thousand large cities – as a consequence of the Indians' being the only people never to have migrated from their territory[16]). This descriptive pattern will allow

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[15] « *5. India vocata ab Indo flumine, que ex parte occidentali clauditur : haec a Maridiano mari porrecte usque ad ortum solis, et a Septentrione usque ad montem Caucasum pervenit, habens gentes multas, et oppida, insulam quoque Taprobanam elephantis refertam, Chryseus et Argyram auro, argentoque fecundas, Tylen quoque arborum folis nunquam carentem.*

6. Habet et fluvios Gangen, et Indum, et Hypasin illustrantes Indos. Terra Indiae Favonii spiritu saluberrima, in anno bis metis fruges ; vice hiemis Etesiis potitur. Gignit autem tincti coloris homines, elephantes ingentes, monoceron bestiam, psittacum avem, ebenum quoque lignum, et cinnamum, et piper, et calamum aromaticum.

7. Mittit et ebur, lapides quoque pretiosos, berillos, chrysoprasos, et adamantem, carbunculos, lychnites, margaritas, et uniones, quibus nobilium feminarum ardet ambitio. Ibi sunt et montes aurei, quos adire propter dracones, et gryphas, et immensorum hominum monstra impossibile est. »

[16] Pline, *Histoire naturelle*, VI, 59, p. 33.

medieval scholars to fill in every compartment and every class with exuberant, fantastical examples, taken up from the whole tradition of Antiquity, the legends imported from the Orient or simply to the fantasies and nightmares of European representations.

The standard digest drawn up by Isidore of Seville will offer, both on the conceptual and the imaginary level, the systematised framework that will be used by the coming encyclopedists in order to present India[17]. In the 12th century Hugh of Saint Victor, in his *Excerptionum Allegoricarum*, reproduces Isidore's text word for word.[18] Vincent of Beauvais, in his *Speculum naturale*, faithfully follows the same descriptive procedure.[19] Honorius of Autun, in his *De imagine mundi*, does not allow himself more than minimal innovations, such as the inclusion within India, together with the Caucasus Mountains, of the peoples of Gog and Magog that Alexander's epic places beyond the "Caspian gate".[20] Finally, as a last example of the medieval *locus* for the encyclopedic description of India, I am quoting the respective passage from the *Livre du Trésor* by Brunetto Latini: « And in India there are five thousand well peopled and inhabited cities; and it is no wonder, because the Indians were never removed from their land. And the great rivers of India are: the Ganges, Indus and Hyphasius, the most noble river that hindered Alexander's advance, as the landmarks that he threw over the river amply demonstrate. [...]

Off the coast of India are the isles of Chryse and Argyre; where there is such a lot of metal, that most people think that the whole soil is of gold and silver [...] And there is another island in India called Taprobana in the Red Sea, crossed by a great river; on one side of this river there are elephants and other wild beasts, on the other side there are men with such a great amount of precious stones. And you might know that, in that country, there shine no stars, as there is only a very big, bright one, by the name of Canopus."[21] (Fig. 2: Brunetto Latini, *Livre du trésor*).

Fig. 2

Among all the lists of (geographical, mineral, vegetal, animal and human) Indian marvels, it was the catalogue of monstrous races that

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[17] For a corpus of texts on fabulous India, see the list established by Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident*, in the chapter "L'Occident médiéval et l'Océan Indien : un horizon onirique".

[18] Hugo de Saint Victor, *Excerptionum Allegoricarum*, Liber III, cap. II, *in PL* 177, col. 210-211.

[19] Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum naturale*, Liber XXXII, cap. III, *in Speculum quadruple: Naturale, Doctrinale, Morale, Historiale*, col. 2401, Dvaci, Ex Officina Typographica Baltazaris Belleri, anno MDCXXIV, réproduction photo-mécanique par Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria, 1964.

[20] Honoré d'Autun, *De imagine mundi*, Liber I, cap. XI-XIII, *in PL* 172, col. 123-125.

[21] Brunet Latin, *Le Livre du Trésor*, livre I, quatrième partie, in *Jeux et sapience du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1951, p. 767-768. "Et en Inde avoir .V^m. [5.000] villes bien poplées et habitées de gent ; et ce n'est pas merveille, à ce que li Yndiens ne furent onques remué de lor terre. Et li grant flum qui sont en Inde sont : Gange, Indus et Ypazius, li très nobles flums qui detint les aleures Alixandre, selons ce que les bones qui il ficha sor le rivière demonstrent apertement. [...] Hors de Inde sont .ij. [2] isles, Erile et Argite ; où il a si très grant chose de metal, que li plusor cuident que toute la terre soit or et argent. [...] Et encore a en Ynde une autre isle qui est apelée Oprobaine dedanz la Rouge mer, où il court parmi .i. grans fluns ; et d'une part sont li olifant et autres bestes sau-vages, de l'autre part sont home a grant plenté de pierres precieuses. Et sachiez que en celui païs ne servent nulles estoiles, car il n'en i a nules qui luisent fors une grant i clere qui a non Canopes."

exerted the greatest lure. The man of the Middle Ages had an image of the peoples situated at the limits of the known world quite different from ours. All the travellogues and descriptions from encyclopedias conveyed a discourse of places away that raises a question of imagology. According to Vincent Fournier, "the enunciation of the travellogue (the deictic marks that underline the different modalities of the subject in time and space) is a true cultural (ideological) statement. It conveys a stale social discourse that will colonise the foreign space".[22] Every age projects its own *Weltanschauung* on the territory and the civilisations that it discovers, every cultural movement imprints its own fantastical goals on the travellers that it sends beyond its own geographical contour.

The geographical discourse establishes a representation of the Other through the cultural stereotypes of the traveller. Far from being "objective" accounts, travellogues of the age, whether real or fictitious, were, rather, internal documents testifying to the mechanisms that shape self-awareness through the confrontation with the other, to the projection processes of depreciating images, to the springs of the eurocentric mentality. The image of the other was modelled, beyond empirical experience and direct contacts, on a complex system of mythical stereotypes and cultural clichés. The European mediaeval man saw the inhabitants of the peripheral worlds as monstrous races whose figuration was inherited from classical Antiquity or from Christian mythology. These troubling, menacing unknown people, guardians of fabulous lands, personified the anxieties and the terror of the medieval world. The description of Indian wonders would

stage a complex cognitive grid that arranged, by means of fantasies, a practically unknown geographical space.

On the disc-shaped maps of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the world developed from its sacred centre, Babylon, Delphi, Jerusalem, etc. Starting from the ancient writers already, from Homer and Herodotus to Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Ptolemy, the scale of civilization would descend from the center of the world (Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, etc.) towards the hidden limits. The medieval maps of the world did no more than organise this cognitive procedure on a perfectly circular general survey. The more the explorer's imagination, whether real or in his study, peered into the faraway lands, bordering on the river Okeanós, the more it plunged into a primitive, chaotic universe. A luxuriant or perfectly barren flora, a monstrous and terrifying fauna, an amphibious humanity, dominated by bestiality, peopled these regions. Ancient and later medieval man projected in the image of the other, of the unknown individual who inhabited the unexplored areas of the world, all the desires and anxieties that he would censure in himself. Every time he left, whether on a practical or imaginary journey, towards the frozen north, the fabulous India or Saharian Africa, he would explore not so much an external geography, as a map of images and symbols of his own unconscious. The array of *mirabilia*, carefully passed on by all the medieval encyclopedists and scholars, worked as a raster of mythical clichés and cultural stereotypes, by whose means the European individual perceived and interpreted what he discovered.

All these eccentric habitats are peopled by monstrous human races, placed on the edge of animality, having an amphibious condition between beast and man. Devised by geographers, encycopedists and men of letters, the vague information about the border countries of the known world were rapidly and inexorably amplified up to the point where

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[22] Vincent Fournier, *L'utopie ambiguë. La Suède et la Norvège chez les voyageurs et essayistes français (1882-1914)*, Clermont-Ferrand, Adosa, 1989, p. 48. 9 ("l'énonciation du récit de voyage (les déictiques qui marquent et soulignent les différentes modalités du sujet dans le temps et dans l'espace) est un véritable énoncé culturel (idéologique). Par elle transite un discours social banalisé qui va *coloniser* l'espace étranger").

they became myths of fantastical beings. Pondering over the maps of the Middle Ages, there is an impression that the *oïkoumènê* was literally besieged by the hordes of a chaotic ad regressive humanity, that only the force of civilisation and armies could keep at bay. Starting from Homer and Herodotus, from Ctesias, Megastheses and Arrian, up until Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Solinus and Martianus Capella, Antiquity devised, of bits and pieces, a true *panopticon* of bestial humanity.

Fig. 3

This "human bestiary", that not even the most skeptical of scholars could afford to ignore, out of reverence for the received tradition, acquired an astonishing stability. Along the ages it changed into a constellation of *loci* that configured medieval representations. The Christian Fathers and the medieval encycopedists, from Isidore of Seville up until Brunetto Latini and Vincent of Beauvais, took over the teratomorphous gallery as a whole, with the standard description and the fixed iconography of each species. One particular characteristic (dog head, absence of mouth, huge ears, single leg, etc.) sufficed to devise the facial composite of every figure. Certain maps, such as that of Ebstorf (Fig. 3 : *Mappa mundi*, Ebstorf, 1240), itemised these races in a series of frames ("*cartouches*") unfolding on the southern

perimeter of the *oïkoumènê*.[23]

What are these monstrous races?[24] A more or less general distinction can be drawn from the start: the monstrosity of the populaces inhabiting the north of Asia is most often of a moral nature; that of the populaces inhabiting fabulous India, to the south, is physical. Northern races do not differ from the Europeans by their bodily aspect, they have a perfectly recognisable and homogeneous anatomy: their bestiality manifests itself in morals and behaviour. The barbarity of the Scythians and Siberians is summarised in an emblematic characteristic that puts an irrevocable stigma: cannibalism. Attested by Herodotus, Strabo, Mela, Pliny, Ammianus Marcellinus and others, anthropophagy is conceived of as the most repulsive stamp of human degeneracy. These tribes, of whom Alexander the Great is supposed to have said "never have we seen such cruel creatures since God created the world", are grouped together under the name of Gog and Magog, the impure peoples that will make up the army of the Antichrist. As legend has it, Alexander, having vanquished them, inclosed them behind a gigantic metal wall in a valley on the northern outskirts of Asia. This gesture has a civilising significance, with the same bearing as the eating taboos and hindrances instituted by the gods in *illo tempore*. Alexander's wall expresses the revulsion against a dietary behaviour that separates the civilised from the animal world. Like the Titans imprisoned by the Olympians in Tartarus, the peoples of Gog and Magog shut behind closed doors personify

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[23] In order to gouge the formation of medieval representations of the "marvels of the East", see "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters", *in* Rudolf Wittkover, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, New York, Thames & Hudson, 1987.

[24] From the immense bibliography on the theme, see for instance Claude Kappler, *Monstres, démons et merveilles à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Payot, 1980; John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) & London, Harvard University Press, 1981; Rudolf Wittkover, *L'Orient fabuleux*, Paris, Thames & Hudson, 1991.

the suppressed terrors and panic of medieval man. In the representation of the Middle Ages Alexander became a *numinous* character, bearer of light, who, like an archangel, censures the evil that threatens to spring out of the collective unconscious. By this subtle Christian contamination of Alexander's figure, the peoples of the north are assimilated to nothing less than demonic hordes.

Amyctyrae   **Astomos**

Blemmie   **Cynocephalus**

Fig. 4

By contrast, the peoples of the south no longer appear as demons (moral evil), but as beasts (physical anomaly). The races that inhabit the fabulous India and "Libya" (Trans-Saharian Africa) have a half-anthropomorphic condition. Ancient and medieval man imagines a series of mutants, in a combinatory game that experiments all possible permutations between man and beast. Men of letters and draughtsmen graft animal organs on the human body: snouts, horns, fangs, paws, claws, talons, tails, fur, etc. Thanks to such cloning, these creatures acquire functions and abilities that relate them to non-human kingdoms (Fig. 4).

To such an organic chaos, with no genetic delimitation, belong the *amyctyrae* (men with gigantic lips that are used as an umbrella), androgynies, *antipodes* (who walk upside down), *artibatirae* (who walk on all four) , *astomi* (mouthless men, who feed only on the flavour of fruit) , *blemmyes* (headless men, having eyes, nose and mouth on the chest), centaurs and satyrs, cyclopes, *cynocephales* (dog-headed men), *enotocoetes* (men whose feet are turned heel first), *epiphagi* (with eyes on the shoulders) , bearded women, giants, himantopodes (with straplike legs), *hippopodes* (with horse paws) , horned men, *ichtyophagi* (they swim for hours underwater and only eat fish), *macrobes* (who live for hundreds of years), eaters of raw meat, *microbes* (they live for only eight years, their women conceive at five years old), *monoculi*, *ocypodes* (they run faster than horses), *panoti* (with gigantic ears that cover them when they sleep), *parossites* (noseless, mouthless men, with only one orifice, which they eat through, with the help of a straw), *pygmies*, red-legged men, *sciapodes* (one-legged men; the leg being quite large they used it as an umbrella at noontime), *sciritae* (noseless), women whose eyes glow at night, six-handed men, velvet-legged, dog-tailed, *troglodytes* (living underground), men who are born old and die young, etc.

In order to speak about monstrous races, it is necessary to establish criteria capable of differentiating humanity from the fauna. Although the borderlines of the human were generally unstable, the scholars of the Middle Ages established a real grid of distinctions that displays the differences between the animal and the human kingdoms. By using Aristotle's categories, they came up with a minute casuistry reifying and nominalising the slightest anatomical and behavioural accidents and peculiarities. Nevertheless, the great categories that distinguish man from a beast remain quite general and vague. Saint Augustine, for instance, does not feel the need to resort to supplementary criteria to

Aristotle's definition, according to which, man is a mortal rational animal. That the ape and the sphinx are beasts and not humans is not the subject of a practical inquiry or a scientific debate, but a convention generally admitted by the collective common sense. Without the "consciousness" of the animality of their objects of meditation, says Saint Augustine, scholars would easily err and boast of having discovered new human species.[25]

On his fantastical journeys to the lands of monsters, medieval man would explore the permanent and the limited features of the human condition. The teratological humanoid typologies are the result of an imaginative game of permutation among different animal species. Like imaginary laboratories, with specimens preserved in vials, the maps of the world of the age displayed, in iconographic series of frames, the *homunculi* resulting from the fantastical cloning of human nature with the animal and vegetal ones. Each monstrous race was set in a description and a standard visual icon, representing its specific genome, its facial composite. The descriptive code functioned impeccably, like a perfectly structured scientific idiom, allowing explorers (whether in their study-rooms or in the field) to find their bearings in an unknown landscape. Monstrous races, together with the geography, mineralogy, botany and zoology, made up a true scientific apparatus, the best adapted and most functional one at the time. If we attempted, as in a game of mental simulation, to remove from the theoretical education of explorers and missionaries their knowledge of *mirabilia*, under the pretext that they might be simple clichés and superstitions that falsified the genuine, immediate perception, what we would get would not be more accurate, likelier accounts, but an almost deafening "silence". In fact we would be depriving these explorers of mental and verbal

instruments that allow for a first identification and verbalisation of experience.

It is the refinement of the medieval cognitive apparatus that explains the reason why, most often, the system of marvellous categories superseded empirical experience. In the 13th-14th centuries, for instance, when *pax mongolica* reopened the routes of Asia to the Europeans, not only adventurers and men of letters, but also diplomats, missionaries and traders did not hesitate to include in their travellogues the *topoï* of the "enchanted thought" ("*pensée enchantée*") of the Middle Ages. In the writings of both regular travellers on a diplomatic mission, such as John of Plano Carpini[26], Odoric of Pordenone or William of Rubruck, as well as adventurers, whether real of fictitious, such as Marco Polo[27] or Sir John Mandeville,[28] the monstrous races are always there. Obviously, all these explorers are more or less manipulated by the desire to validate the *loci* of scholarly tradition on location (or in the imagination). After all, the protocol of the fantastical geographical accounts did not change as a result of real journeys and concrete experience. The paradigm turn only occurred when the instruments of thinking, the magical epistemological apparatus, were replaced, in the 17th century, by English empiricism and the new Cartesian science.

Beside these cognitive causes, the representations of monstrous races nurtured by Europeans can also assume a subliminal explanation, of a psychoanalytical type. The

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[25] Saint Augustin, *La Cité de Dieu*, Livre XVI, VIII, Traduction nouvelle par L. Moreau, Édition avec le texte latin, Paris, Librairie Garnier Frères, 1929, p. 456-457.

[26] Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei mongoli,* Edizione critica del testo latino a cura di Enrico Menesto, Traduzione italiana a cura di Maria Cristiana Lungarotti e note di Paolo Daffina, Introduzione di Luciano Petech, Studi storico-filologici di Claudio Leonardi, Maria Cristiana Lungarotti, Enrico Menesto, Spoleto, Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1989.

[27] Marco Polo, *La Description du monde*, Édition, traduction et présentation par Pierre-Yves Badel, Paris, Lettres gothiques, 1998

[28] Sir John Mandeville, *The Travels*, With three narratives in illustration of it : *The Voyage of Johannes de Plano Carpini, The Journal of Friar William de Rubruquis, The Journal of Friar Odoric*, New York, Dover Publications, 1964.

wonderful creatures are the projection of suppressed desires and aspirations, as well as of the terror and anxiety of the European man. Jacques Le Goff underlines, among other functions of the mediaeval *mirabilia*, their compensating function. The extraordinary journeys present a "world upside down" a country where flow milk and honey, characterized by dietary abundance, nudity and sexual freedom, in a word, the age of gold.[29] These fantastical accounts restore the image of the lost Paradise. They allow for the materialisation of fantasies of immortality and Edenic felicity, inhibited by Mosaic and Christian theology. In the maps of the world, in encyclopedias and medieval accounts, the ancient script of the quest of initiation reappears exuberantly. The concept of *mirabilia* functioned as a kind of theoretical master key that might sidestep religious censure, thus allowing readers to get away with the joy of the pagan material preserved within the exotic wonders.

Claude Kappler identified in the medieval human bestiary the projection mechanisms of fantasies and of the satisfaction of drives, defined by Sigmund Freud. The ambiguous fascination, where the attraction is akin to repulsion, appears to him as the combined result of desire and censure, of Eros and Thanatos. Through the antipodean peoples, the European man expresses libidinal drives, suppressed by a double process of censure: geographical (these monsters are set in inaccessible places) and biological (they are thrown out of the human kind). Beside the function of the fantastical satisfaction of desires, teratological representations are also a means of exorcising anxieties and nightmares. Visualising and verbalising the objects of anxiety can bring about decompression, changing the course of anxious energies towards external referents, scinded from the I. "The creation of such a being equals the incarnation of anxiety, *i.e.* doing away with it

to a certain extent, enjoying the fantastical, unreal, sometimes even the whimsical, amusing aspect of this "creature". The monster, by manifesting the anxiety, also succeeds in denying it".[30]

According to Claude Kappler's analysis, the accounts of extraordinary journeys, just like tales and myths, allow the individual to organize his unconscious mental life. In this context, "the monster also offers a way of access to the knowledge of the world and of the self. The monster is an enigma: it conjures reflection, it demands a solution. Any monster is in a way ... a sphinx: it inquires and stands on the wayside of all human life".[31] Strange places, astonishing creatures, terrifying ordeals that the protagonists have to undergo, facilitate the activation and structuring of the unconscious formations of the readers. The geographical quest follows a route of self-knowledge, the initiation journey is an objective correlative of the interior exploration.

It would be risky to attempt a global analysis of the unconscious of the European medieval man, starting from bestial anthropology. The traditional status of these figures, the stereotypical nature of their textual and visual conveyance system, bring them closer to statue-like images than to living fantasies. They do not have the energy of a spontaneous enactment, but merely the residual charge of a massive initial investment, worn out by reiteration. Nonetheless, they still point to and manifest collective fixations.

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[29] Jacques Le Goff, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

[30] Claude Kappler, *op. cit.,* p. 286. "Créer un tel être revient à incarner l'anxiété, donc à s'en débarrasser partiellement, et à jouir de l'aspect fantaisiste, irréel, parfois même saugrenu et amusant de cette 'créature'. Le monstre, tout en manifestant l'angoisse, parvient également à la nier".

[31] *Ibidem*, p. 12-13. "Le monstre offre lui aussi une voie d'accès à la connaissance du monde et de soi. Le monstre est énigme : il appelle la réflexion, il réclame une solution. Tout monstre est en quelque sorte... un sphinx : il interroge et se tient aux lieux de passage de toute vie humaine".

These fixations stem from a pagan pool, suppressed by the dominating culture, *i.e.* by Christian theology and ideology. The result of this pressure of the Christian religious super-ego was the acculturation of the pagan material. One of the symptomatic situations in this respect is the "demonization" or "satanisation" of monstrous races, the transformation of certain mythical figures, undoubtedly terrifying, but not necessarily maleficent, into devils.

Monstrous races testify to a process of collective projection, carefully wrought by European culture. The internal enemy, opposing either the individual or the social corpus, is scinded between the social super-ego and the conscious I, materialised by external enemies. The projection of the collective shadow is obvious in the legend of the impure races of Gog and Magog. Borrowed from the ancient traditions about the anthropophagous Scythians, grafted on the Judaic legends referring to the ten tribes that did not return from the Babylonian exile, the myth was attached to the quest of Alexander. The Macedonian king, according to this narrative corpus, would have enclosed these peoples behind iron gates (the Caspian gate), until the coming of the Antichrist. Now every time a historian treated the Asian invasions in Europe, he identified these warrior tribes (Cimmerians, Scythians, Huns, Khazars, Turks, Hungarians, Mongolians, Tatars, etc.) to the peoples of Gog and Magog.[32] These names functioned as the image of the arch-enemy, the Mongolians being attached, by fantastical folk etymologies, to Magog, the Tatars to the Tartars, *i.e.* to the inhabitants of classical Tartarus, etc.

The "barbarian" pagan peoples represented rather the moral aspect of the collective shadow of the Europeans. Yet, according to C. G. Jung, the shadow contains not only the suppressed drives as moral evil, but also the physical traits felt as physical stigma, as organic misshapenness, as monstrosity. The bestial races are the expression of this "abnormal" biological component repressed in the shadow. One must not forget that medieval Europe was wrecked by wars, famines, undernourishment, plagues, leprosy and all kinds of diseases that created a numerous population of lame and crippled individuals.

The representations of monstrous races allowed for the exorcism of the fear of misshapenness. The edges of the earth became a kind of faraway leper colony, where the fantasies of malformation were kept in quarantine. The series of frames with teratological humans, pictured on the edges of the maps of the world played the role of penal colonies and prisons that, in the collective representations, isolated the wished-for normality and health from the abhorred abnormality and degradation.

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[32] See Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), The Medieval Academy of America, 1932.

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Transforming Men: The Anglicisation of Bengali Masculinity in the Colonial Era

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Abstract

During the colonial era, when the British were in control of the administration of Bengal, they launched discourses meant to convince one and all about the drawbacks of Bengali men. In such discourses, the body of Bengali men became a countertype to the emerging ideals of masculinity prevailing in Europe in the nineteenth century. With ardent belief in the narratives popularised by the Colonisers, many Bengalis sought to reconstruct their manliness in order to fit into the normative model of masculinity. The paper, therefore, is an exploration of the ways in which Bengali masculinity went through processes of radical masculinisation during the 19th century till the independence; and how proximity to English language and culture shaped up the imagination of Bengali men.

Key-Words: Masculinity, Orient, Sexuality, hyper-masculinity, heteronormativity

I. Jobe Charnock and the Rise of Calcutta

It was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I — also known as the age of discovery—that the British started to vie for more prudent economic circumstances concomitantly tinkering with the idea of broadening their dominion all around the world. The British started their sojourn in India, especially in Bengal, with the hope of substantial economic proliferation. The obsession with the 'exotic' native lands of Asia and Africa is very much prevalent in British culture if we carefully read literary texts and other historical documents of the period. For instance, Andrew Marvell (1681) wrote in 'To His Coy Mistress':

> Had we but world enough and time,
> This coyness, lady, were no crime.
> We would sit down, and think which way
> To walk, and pass our long love's day.

> Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
> Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
> Of Humber would complain

The reference to the rubies found on the banks of the Ganges clearly reveals that the West was unambiguously aware of the healthy economy that prevailed in the east; and the seed of the desire to usurp these lands was probably planted during the late 16th and the early 17th century. The dream was starting to take shape as a realistic scenario after Jobe Charnock came to the village of Sutanuti[1] on 24th August, 1690[2] (p.23). Calcutta[3], back then,

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[1] Calcutta, or today's Kolkata, was predated by three villages—Sutanuti, Gobindapur and Kolkata.
[2] I am indebted to Sripantha's wonderful study on the history of the city.

was a 'barbaric'[4] village, and Charnock, against all odds, dreamt of setting up his business there. Perhaps, deep in his mind, he also envisioned making Calcutta a city of note. Though Charnock did not live long (in fact, he died in 1692) to realize his dream, the British had found a strong footing, fromwhich they would rule this country for more than two centuries.

II. Educating the 'Brutes'

For a century or so the British were happy doing business in this country. However, the victory at the battle of Plassey gave them an immense boost as they started fostering the dream of ruling India unanimously. In the year 1813, the East India Company was dissolved andthe British Empire started a large-scale expansion of their territory. The Christian missionaries were already coming in, as the British were looking for a cultural overhaul of the native land which they considered primitive and unsophisticated. The intention was undoubtedly to reduce the 'uncouthness' of the natives by proselytising them. For the purpose of this paper, I would be focusing on some of the projects taken up by the British (along with Christian missionaries), especially by T.B Macaulay, that played a major role in transforming Indian cultural spectrum. In 1835, Macaulay published his notorious *Minute on Indian Education* where he proposed to refurbish the education system by introducing advanced and more scientific studies through the English language. However, Macaulay's project was never as benevolent as he tried to make it look. It was laced with colonial prejudice; an attitude which, in Edward Said's words, can be called 'Orientalism'. Macaulay was so prejudiced against the Indian/Oriental

culture that he literally ignored the presence of the treasures that Indian literature contained back then. He [Macaulay (1835)] famously quipped in his *Minute*:

> I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education. (para 10)

With his belief in the superiority of the Western literature and culture, Macaulay planned to circulate their cultural values amongst Bengalis. His main purpose, however, was to create a class of Bengali men who would perpetuate the ideology of the Colonisers amongst the native folks by rendering themselves as weak and ineffable. These men were later known as the *babu*[5] class who, Macaulay imagined, would be brown in colour but white in taste. In short, he wanted to create slaves out of those Bengali men by training them in Eurocentric knowledge.

Macaulay was not content merely by advocating such an overtly prejudiced and arbitrary academic system; he went on to define Bengali men in his own inimitable style. Sudipta Sen (2004), in his essay "Colonial

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[3] By Calcutta, I mean the conglomeration of three villages mentioned in the previous footnote.

[4] Any non-European place was deemed barbaric back then. However, Calcutta was indeed in dearth of civilisation during that period.

[5] *Babu* class refers to the class of middle class Bengali men who miserably failed while trying to mimic the Colons. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay offered a satirical picture of this class in an essay with the same title.

Aversions and Domestic Desire", quotes Macaulay:

> "...the physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour- bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance."[6] (Sen: 49).

If we fuse these two prejudices of Macaulay—regarding education and Bengali men— his intentions become obvious. He wanted to project Bengali men as weak and effeminate; a bunch of brutes who would never be able to become their own masters and who are in need of divine benevolence to take them out of their misery. In order to perpetuate his belief, he had a system in place— a system of education— that methodically convinced Bengali men of their alleged inferiority. The Anglicisation of the Educational spectrum was indeed a garb of benevolence underneath which the British were planning to fulfil their political imperative. Therefore, it is obvious that Macaulay's projects were Orientalist in assumptions, as they posited the natives as uncivilised creatures and promised to bring them out of their slumber through an arbitrarily imposed education system.

III. The polarisation of Cultural (masculine) Spectrums

The question that beckons me at this point of time is how and why Macaulay could form such a hypothesis. The answer perhaps lies in

Bengali culture itself. Bengal has never been a land of hyper-masculine prerogatives. For instance, the effeminate postures in the images of Sri Chaintya[7], the medieval mystic, reveal an alternative spectrum of male body. On the other hand, the Victorian era (19th century) saw a Renaissance of hyper-masculinity in the West. With the aspiration of gaining success in Professional life—in a competitive Industrial and post-Darwinian world—men tried to attain physical strength. Certain stereotypes started to emerge during this time as George L. Moose (1998) identifies in his book *The Image of Man:*

> Modern masculinity helped to determine, and was in turn influenced, by what were considered normative patterns of morality and behavior, that is to say, typical and acceptable ways of behaving and acting within the social setting of the past centuries. Though, as we shall see presently, the middle classes were instrumental in the formation of that society, its standards spread to both the aristocracy and working class as well. Indeed, the manly ideal was so well established from the start of the nineteenth century onwards, that every western European movement had to face it and accept it, emphasizing at times one or another of its attributes or even trying a change in direction. (Moose: 4)

However, not only the economic need, but also emerging discourses on sexuality expected men to be straight[8] (pun intended) and strong. Any form of bodily and sexual deviation was generally looked down upon. Macaulay and other British administrators were able to smuggle in these discursively

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[6] Sudipta Sen has taken this passage from *Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays and Poems*, Vol.2 by T,B. Macaulay (Boston, Estes and Lauriet, 1880), pp. 566-67

[7] Sri Chaitanya or Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was a Hindu monk and social reformer of the 16th century West Bengal. He was a major figure in popularising the Vaishnava school of faith based on the teachings on ancient Indian scriptural text *Gita*.

[8] The terms straight and gay perhaps came into existence in the 20th century. However, the meanings they refer to—heterosexual and homosexual respectively—came into existence in the 19th century.

constructed ideals of Manliness, based on patriarchal hypotheses, into the native lands. The idea of hyper-masculinity was gradually holding its own to become the 'hegemonic masculinity' in the Victorian England. R.W. Connell's (1995) explication about this critical concept must be taken into consideration:

> The concept of 'hegemony', deriving from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamics by which a group claims and sustains leading positions in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than other is culturally exalted...which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell: 77).

Connell's analysis, that cultures produce 'hegemonic masculinity', becomes very handy in analysing the cultural spectrum of Bengal during the 19th century. The idea of masculinity that slipped into the Bengali culture through English discourses was enough not only to subordinate women, but also to subordinate those men who did not fit into the hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Bengali men, obviously, did not fit into these budding ideals of manliness that dominated in the West. Thus, they became the feminine antithesis of the hyper-masculine British. The physical organization of the Bengalis, undoubtedly, made it easier for Macaulay to polarise the 'manly Englishman and the effeminate Bengali'[9].

   If hyper-masculine bodily feature was one aspect of British Masculinity, then self-discipline and strong moral conduct became another prerequisite to Manliness. Having control over one's sexual desire was also a very important factor of the Victorian world order. Such strict code of moral conduct was perhaps inspired by the popular religious beliefs of the age—namely Evangelicalism. Evangelicals were extremely suspicious of pleasure. In the

introduction of his book *A History of Victorian Literature*, James Eli Adams (2009) reports that Lesley Stephens (Virginia Woolf's father) talked about his father who had never smoked a cigar but once as he found it highly pleasurable after smoking it for the first time. Such an attitude to life gave rise to an austerity that influenced both public and the private life, creating a moral dictum that relied on resisting temptation and mastering desire. I am of the opinion that this growing discourse on body and desire had a huge impact on how masculine behaviours were being shaped up. Both discourses, however, had one thing in common—they wanted men to be strong and resilient. Through cultural osmosis the fluids of the British culture got mixed with the Bengali culture and the stronger fluid of the British culture emerged as triumphant as Bengali men were gradually convinced about their inferiority.

IV: Colonisation of Sexualities

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1998) talks about how the frank discussion on Sexuality—which prevailed even at the beginning of the seventeenth century—was derided in the Victorian era. As 'the monotonous nights of Victorian bourgeoisie' (Foucault, 1998, p.3) fell upon the discourse on sexuality, it became confined within the domestic sphere. The heterosexual, monogamous and reproductive sexuality became the accepted models of Sexual behaviour. In short, a 'repressive hypothesis' was constructed about sexuality; as sexuality was started to be defined within the parlance of medico-juridical discourse. In order to describe this situation, Foucault uses a term-*Scintia Sexualis*[10]- which is in direct contrast to *ars erotica*[11]. Foucault and various other scholars found out that several pagan

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[9] The phrase is borrowed from Mrinalini Sinha's book of the same title.

[10] Science of sexuality! Perhaps talking about the reproductive domain.
[11] Art of Lovemaking. Such arts are to encountered in many pagan cultures including Greek and Roman.

societies, such as those that prevailed in China, Japan, Rome, Greece, treated sexuality with an air of frankness. India was no exception as proved by the presence of texts such as Vatsyan's *Kama Sutra, which* is a classic example of *Ars erotica*. The presence of *ars erotica* can also be found in the sculptural brilliance on the walls of ancient temples of Konarak[12] and Khajuraho[13]. However, with the emergence of the modern scientific views on sexuality, this acceptance and frankness gave away to a rather prudish outlook toward sexuality and gender. Hence the world of men and the world of women were clearly demarcated within the heteronormative[14] society. However, when the West encountered the East, they saw that men and women of the Oriental world do not always fit into this normative world order. The bodily features of Bengali men, that Macaulay blatantly critiqued, were deemed as a symbol of inferiority. Interestingly, like Sri Chaitanya's, bodies of many iconic Bengali men showed signs of alterity. Take for instance, Sri Ramakrishna's bodily construction! Ramakrishna, a mystic and the priest of Dakhineswar temple[15], often debunked (perhaps unconsciously) the Western views regarding manliness. Through his uninhibited preaching in colloquial Bengali, this untutored representative of a Bengali village, called Kamarpukur, would talk the world over to his unorthodox viewpoints. When most Bengali men—especially the elite ones (known as *bhadralok*[16])—were starting to imitate the fervour of British masculinity, Ramakrishna remained independent of all Western trappings. A lot of questions have been raised

over Ramakrishna's sexuality; while some Western scholars do not shy away from calling him a homosexual as well[17]. Be it as it may, his non-materialist outlook to life; unique sartorial appearance; homoerotic undertones that run throughout his preaching[18]; and the denial of reproductive heterosexuality make him a man who can easily be posited as an antithesis to the dominant European ideals of masculinity. Though the British had to recognise the enigma in Ramakrishna, that was not sufficient to reconcile them to his alterity and as the century went along, the puritanical ideas on sexuality were emboldened even further.

V. Inspiring Men

Though Ramakrishna was able to stand out as a unique individual—especially because of the immense popularity that he enjoyed amongst the elite Bengali class— many privileged English-educated Bengali men[19] sought a paradigmatic shift in their bodily features. These Bengali men were indeed convinced about their inferiority and sought to reconstruct their masculine appearance. The British were not merely content with writing about the difference between a Bengali man's body and the body of a Briton; as they incorporated and circulated various images all across Bengali culture to inject the sense of inferiority more convincingly. If we go back to Macaulay's notorious passage on Bengali men, we would identify a certain desire prevailing on him to homogenise the native culture for

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[12] A 13th century sun-temple situated in the state of Odisha, India.

[13] A group of Hindu and Jain temple situated in Madhya Pradesh, India.

[14] A term surfaced by Gayle Rubin and popularised by Michael Warner, heteronormativity refers to the belief that considers heterosexuality to be only natural form of sexuality. In the poststructuralist era, Queer Theory emerged as a critique of heteronormativity.

[15] Situated in West Bengal, India.

[16] Elite, intellectual, city-bred Bengali men.

[17] Many western scholars of eminence have written biographies on Ramakrishan. Romain Rolland, Max Mueller, Christopher Isherwood are some of them. However, the most controversial book on Sri Ramakrishna has been written by Jeffrey Kripal, titled *Kali's Child,* where he has raised questions over Ramakrishna's sexuality.

[18] This view is especially proliferated by Jeffrey Kripal. Though some of Kripal's conclusions seem rash at times, they cannot be blatantly overlooked.

[19] Many Bengali men converted to Christianity as well. Michael Madusudhan Dutt's conversion is perhaps the most famous of them.

their own benefit. The situation gave the colonisers a privilege of becoming the 'signifier'; while the colonised natives became the 'signified'. Homogenisation of the male body, however, had bigger consequences as it became a site of political discourses. When compared with the various images of Western men—that started to come in through several means—Bengali men indeed appeared to be weak. Judith Ohikuare (2013) quotes David L. Chapman and Douglas Brown, who, in Hunks, write that the "'male body factored prominently in the construction of modern national identities,' and as the imperial powers of the day disseminated their own religious and socio-political standards, they also strove to shape the actual bodies of the people they encountered" (para, 2). In the same wonderful review of the book, Judith Ohikuare (2013) further writes:

> In India, Sandow's gospel of personal strength became interwoven with Indian nationalism and independence. In Senegal, where wrestling has its own tradition that predates European photographers. And in the United States and beyond, models posing in men's magazines celebrated physical health and wellness, but also doubled as pin-ups for consumers of gay subculture. All of these photos generate a syncretic view of buffness that reveals the ways in which muscled men are more than stereotypical gym rats; they can also be cultural ambassadors (para 3).

It is evident from the quoted passages that the physical appearance of people like Sandow became a yardstick of masculinity that 'effeminate' natives would perhaps try to emulate. There was indeed a sustained effort to construct a universal aesthetic of masculinity based on the bodily features of the 'hunks' like Sandow. The formulation of such aesthetics indeed seems to be more political than philosophical (in the Kantian sense, of course).

As mentioned earlier, through the images of the muscular male body, the British were able to construct an aesthetic of masculinity based on hegemonic ideals. Umberto Eco (2004) writes, "The Victorian world (and especially that of the bourgeoisie) was a world underpinned by a simplification of life and of experience in a bluntly practical sense: things were right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, with no useless self-indulgence in mixed characteristics or ambiguity" (pp.361-2). Religious prudery also played a major role in defining the gendered roles. Victor Seidler (2006) explores the way the project of masculinisation was intricately linked with the act of Christian proselytisation. The British did not consider any form of alterity. The new aesthetics of hyper-masculinity based on the Eurocentric principle of male beauty had no space for the unorganised, 'effeminate' Bengali men and hence, I believe, it became almost imminent for Bengali men to reconstruct their emotional and physical features to be recognised. With the help of Bhabah-ite discourse, we might say that the desire of the colonised to be like the colonial master was an act of 'mimicry'. This desire stems from the fact that the colonised is always deemed to be inferior. Therefore, it was not astonishing for Bengali men to mimic the manly gestures of the British; as they tried to erase the tag of effeminacy that was inevitably earmarked as the essential cause of their alleged weakness and ennui.

VI. Reframing Bengali Masculinity

Many Indian/Bengali men, especially those who were at the helm of the political supremacy, started to believe in this Western prejudice regarding native masculinity at large; and Bengali masculinity in general. The real impetus, as far as the reconstruction of Bengali men's bodies is concerned, came from the spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda. Though known for his spiritual teachings, Vivekananda's rhetoric was steeped in a strong

political imperative as he wanted to oversee the resurgence of Bengali men who would be strong and fearless in countering all the obstacles of the world. Though a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who showed signs of masculine authority himself, Vivekananda perhaps believed that effeminacy and lack of strength would be nothing but detrimental to the progress of the state. The same view is constantly expressed by Gora— the titular hero of Rabindranath Tagore's novel— who is often thought to be a literary reincarnation of Vivekananda. If we compare the physical features of both Gora and Vivekananda they appear starkly similar. Here's how Tagore (2010) describes Gora at the initial stages of the novel:

> He seemed to have surpassed everyone else, to a disproportionate content. His college professor had named him the silver mountain. His complexion was rather blatantly fair, not softened by the slightest hint of yellow. Almost six feet tall, he was heavy boned, with fists like tiger paws. His voice was startlingly deep and resonant, enough to give one a fright if heard suddenly. His facial contours were also unduly large and excessively firm, the chin and jawbone resembling strong bolts on a fortress gate...The eyes were small but strong, their arrowlike gaze seemingly fixed on a remote, invisible target, yet capable of turning instantaneously, like lightning, to strike an object close at hand. Though not exactly handsome, Gour was impossible to ignore. He would stand out in a crowd. (p. 8).

Romain Rolland and other western and Indian scholars have also eulogised Vivekananda in the same manner.Vivekananda's masculine oeuvre was indeed essential in stirring up a new aesthetic of Bengali masculinity. Ironic though it may seem, Vivekananda's masculinity follows the Victorian ideals of manliness. It is perhaps because of his quasi-European physical features that he fascinated the West. Swami Tathagatananda (2014)

quotes from Vivekanda's *Complete Works* to show how he was repeatedly emphasising upon strength and fearlessness:

> ...in spite of our greatness of the Upanishads...we are weak, very weak. First of all our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work; we cannot combine...this sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it...Be strong...you will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of *Gita*[20]...you will understand the *Gita* better with your biceps, your muscles...(p.12-13)

There is a startling similarity between what Macaulay said and what Vivekananda proposed about Bengali men. Through his repeated emphasis on the resurgence of strong Bengali masculinity, he transcended all the negativity that surrounded Bengali men. His rise to fame, even in the Western canon, created euphoria around him; and inevitably many Bengali men went on to replicate his ideology. However masculinist and proselytised[21] his discourses may seem, through his call for stronger men, this spiritual leader indeed gave a new dimension to the nationalist struggle. It would not be wrong to suggest that Vivekananda's spirit anticipated the violent backlash that was impending due to the overtly repressive and sedentary views on native men and the country expressed by the Britons.

At this juncture we must stop and take a closer look at the way Vivekananda's body functioned in comparison to the body of Ramakrishna and others, whose bodies were ambiguous to say the least. Being a rustic, Ramakrishna had very little or no access to the English language. Hence, he probably did not come across the Victorian and bourgeois

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[20] Ancient Indian scriptural text.
[21] I use this word to show how the thought Vivekananda and the British about men were in sync with each other and to trivialise his motives.

ideals of gender or sexuality that ran riot in nineteenth century Calcutta. Sartorial and physical appearance made Ramakrishna an emblem of effeminacy[22]. Vivekananda, on the other hand, was English educated and was also aware of the Colonial rhetoric on Bengali men. The discourse must have forced him to believe that physical reconstruction of Bengali men was essential for them to have a significant position in the world. In short, the English-ness of Swami Vivekananda might have contributed to his overt masculine agency[23]. Will it be grossly inappropriate, then, to suggest that Vivekananda was blatantly mimicking the Western values? A one word answer to this rather complicated question is almost impossible. Vivekananda came at a time when India was struggling as a nation and— as the British had shown— the cause was the lack of strength, discipline and resolve. What Vivekananda wanted was a synthesis of values of both the East and the West. Hence, he wanted the *Gita* to be understood with muscles and biceps. Though Vivekananda's message was full of passionate intensity to see his country come out of insomnia, the fact cannot be ignored that the western education must have had an impact on him. We must remember how images of the bodybuilders like Sandow were used to stir up Bengali men's imagination. Vivekananda, who was very much a part of the age where such discourses took place, might have felt that the country could come out of slumber only if there was resurgence of manliness.

Vivekananda's rhetoric indeed gave birth to a brand of masculinity in Bengal as many young boys tried to emulate his formula. One of the boys, of course, went on to become one of the leading patriots of the nation. He is none other than Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The resurgence of masculinity took a whole

new turn under the influence of Bose, who wanted aggression from his comrades. Young Subhas Bose was deeply influenced by Vivekananda and he revealed this debt time and again. Netaji felt that the British, who won over the world with their strength and courage, and of course through their spirit of militant aggression, could be defeated only with the help of militant nationalism which would be based on a force of physically strong men. Even when Gandhi started to gain prominence all across the country by spreading his message of non-violence, Netaji stuck to his idea of virile resistance to the British. Even today, theories and counter-theories are produced on the importance of their respective philosophies. However, reaching a mandate on who played a more important role is impossible. I am of the opinion that any straightforward answer to this issue will merely be showing one's naivety. Neither does the scope of this paper allow indulging in the debate.

VI. Conclusion

Sixty-eight years of independence has not been enough to eradicate all our colonial tutelage. Some of the beliefs still remain the same. We are still obsessed with the English language; and in some spheres of life knowledge of English is considered to be prestigious. On the other hand, the multi-billion dollar fairness industry reveals how we still fantasize about the European aesthetics of male beauty. In short, the minds of the natives have not been completely decolonised. However, the situation is not completely gloomy. In films and popular media, there are growing discourses that are projecting alternative versions of gender and sexuality rather conveniently. One cannot but imagine that there would be a day when the country will be able to defy the values of gender, sexuality and manliness hegemonically imposed upon the natives.

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[22] There are several moments in *Kathamrita* (translated as The Gospels of Sri Ramakrishna) that bear proof to Ramakrishna's effeminate gestures.
[23] Niladri R. Chatterjee's essay gives a more comprehensive perspective. (see References)

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Representations of India in the Female Gaze: Four Women Travellers

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Abstract

This paper will explore the question of how recent Western women travel writers represent India, while comparing this post-colonial gaze with that of writers during the colonial past. We will consider the work of two female writers from each period and discuss how their view of the country shows their personal sense of alienation, both within the foreign culture they encounter and, as women, with regard to their own culture. The writers are Fanny Parkes: *Begums, Thugs and White Mughals: The Journals of Fanny Parkes*, 1850 and Emily Eden: *Up the Country: Letters from India*, 1866; contrasted with Dervla Murphy: *On a Shoestring to Coorg*, 1976 and Robyn Davidson: *Desert Places*, 1996.

[**Keywords**: Women's travel writing, India, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, alienation, gaze]

Within the general theoretical outlook of Said's Orientalism, we shall consider to what extent these writers actually challenge many of the preconceptions readers today have of writers of a specific historical and cultural moment. The particular situation of the woman writer, both in the period before female emancipation and in the post-war context of popular feminism, also influences the way Western women approach the East, and India in particular, in terms of their reasons for travel, their desire to become part of another culture, their sense of identity when travelling, and their attitude towards their native society. The idea of the special importance of the "interior journey" has dominated recent women's travel writing, at the expense of an objective approach to the country visited. Similarly, Holland and Huggan have commented on the importance of travel writing due to its "defamiliarizing capacities" (1998 viii) and this ability to consider a foreign culture from an alienated perspective is one of the great merits of the genre.

Carl Thompson argues that women's travel writing in the colonial period had a different focus from that of men's:

> [T]here is a greater tendency for women travellers to concern themselves with domestic details, and with the minutiae of everyday living arrangements [...] This narrative focus is often closely bound up with a keen interest in the conditions of life for women in the cultures that they visit, an interest which can embrace topics ranging from the fashions adopted by foreign women through to the social roles they must perform and their legal and political status (Thompson 186).

Thompson goes on to affirm that "Many women travel writers in the imperial era take up a more conspicuously humanitarian position than their male counterparts,

evincing in their travelogues a greater concern with the plight of native peoples, and especially with the plight of native women" (ibid: 193), though he points out that this did not necessarily imply any opposition to empire, as this concern often went no further than criticism of native practices that went against Western values, such as suttee or polygamy, rather than questioning the nature of the colonial project and its negative effects on local people.

Tim Youngs and Glenn Hooper also touch on the "defamiliarizing" capacity of travel writing when they refer to the concept of "othering" in quoting Trinh T. Minh-ha who has argued "Identity is largely constituted through the process of othering" (in Robertson 15), and go on to clarify, "It is a process that can evolve within societies, but which is especially evident transculturally, at the point of contact, when our sense of Self is most under threat, frequently in need of reassurance, and likeliest to resort to binary modes of discourse as a form of defence" (Youngs & Hooper 5). We can see examples of this process of Othering in the context of foreign women in India in all the texts referred to below.

Any discussion in the 21st century that deals with foreign, especially British, historical views of India inevitably begins with reference to the Orientalist discourse of Edward Said, whose writings transformed the debate about how Westerners view the East. Said was very aware of the importance of India in the British colonial project:

> (B)y the late 19th century India had become the greatest, most durable, and most profitable of all British, perhaps even European, colonial possessions. From the time the first British expedition arrived there in 1608 until the last British viceroy departed in 1947, India had a massive influence on British life, in commerce and trade, industry and politics, ideology and

war, culture and the life of the imagination (Said, 1993: 160).

Elleke Boehmer is another valuable voice on historical perspectives of views of India: she writes

> (U)p till the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, perspectives on other lands continued to be directed through prisms of inherited tropes: Utopia, or the lawless wilderness; the Noble Savage or the unregenerate Primitive; the Garden of Eden or the Holy City; and Britannica as regnant over all. The interlinked symbolic codes of imperial writing created a textual environment which, while interactive, was also self-repeating, and often self-enclosed. The enclosedness mirrored the insularity of the arguments legitimating Empire (Boehmer 45).

The present paper looks at two moments in the history of Western accounts of India. Firstly in 1839, Emily Eden, the sister of the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, and Fanny Parkes, the wife of a minor official, offer two contrasting versions of their experiences travelling under the auspices of the East India Company. Secondly, in the second half of the 20th century, Dervla Murphy, with her small daughter, and Robyn Davidson, with camels and nomads, travelled in India independently, looking for the authentic experience of travel off the beaten path.

Emily Eden

Emily Eden was a British aristocrat, born in London in 1797 to the first Baron Auckland, an influential politician and diplomat. She moved in the highest social and political circles in Whig circles, but never married: her deepest commitment was to her brother, George, and went with him to India for a six year period from March 1836 to March 1842, accompanied also by her sister Fanny. She wrote hundreds of letters home, to another sister, Mary

Drummond, in the form of a journal of her travels. The letters mainly describe Lord Auckland's two-and-a-half year tour of the "Upper Provinces" with his entourage of his sisters and thousands of people, 850 camels and 140 elephants: from Calcutta to Simla via Delhi, on to Lahore and back to Calcutta, beginning in October 1837. The journal was published under the title *Up the Country* in 1866.

The motivation for travel to India for women in the 19th century in general was simple: they were dependent on a man and had no choice. Emily Eden would far rather have remained in the English countryside she loved, but duty to the Empire called and she could not abandon her beloved, unmarried brother who needed a Burra Lady Sahib to accompany him in the social demands of his position. In October, 1834, Emily wrote:

> I always said it was too bad to be true, which is a dangerous assertion to make in most cases; it only hastens the catastrophe. […] Botany Bay would be a joke to it. *There* is a decent climate to begin with, and the fun of a little felony first. But to be sent to Calcutta for no cause at all! (Dunbar 11)

Emily never got over the shock of leaving her comfortable life in England, and found it hard to adapt. In particular, she hated camp life which consisted of 2 years in tents with a procession of 12,000 people. "I thought I never had seen such squalid, melancholy discomfort" (ibid: 22). She makes no attempt to learn local languages and customs, and describes her time in India as "banishment" (284) and a "waste of four good years" (325).

We tend to assume nowadays that colonial power was unquestioned by its participants, but Emily was her aware of the surreal contradictions, if not downright evils, of colonialism, and the fragile nature of the minority Christian power. On a Sunday, stopping in Goofrein and listening to the Church of England service celebrated in a large tent, she writes,

> It was odd and rather awful to think that sixty Christians should be worshipping God in this desert, which is not their home, and that 12,000 false worshippers should be standing round under the orders of these few Christians on every point, except the only one that is of any importance; the idolators too, being in their own land, and with millions within reach, who all despise and detest our faith (35).

Later in the journal, on the same theme she comments, "I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off, and say nothing more about it" (294). She deals with her sense of unreality with daydreams of home or bursts of black humour: at a boring evening's entertainment she comments sarcastically: "Luckily the band plays all through dinner, and drowns the conversation (71)", and in a British cemetery: "It may give Lady A.D. pleasure to know that Sir R.'s first wife is dead and buried – at least she is buried – under a remarkably shabby tomb" (90). She shows sympathy with the Delhi kings, trapped in the Red Fort without power: "Delhi is a very suggestive and moralising place – such stupendous remains of power and wealth passed and passing away – and somehow I feel that we horrid English have just 'gone and done it', merchandised it, revenued it, and spoiled it all. I am not very fond of Englishmen out of their own country"(98).

We are given occasional glimpses of how the English appear to the local people. In Lahore, for example, where she wants to do some sketching (her favourite pastime) but is prevented by the enormous crowds, she writes about how people laugh at her skin colour and clothing:

> It is not an uncivil crowd, all things considered – we merely threw them one and all into genuine fits of laughter; but X., who understands their language, says

they did not say anything meant for impertinence, only they had never seen a European woman before, and 'what an odd thing it was to be so white!' And then my Leghorn bonnet was a great subject of wonder and dispute (229).

Despite her problems adapting to India, and her lack of communication with local people, the British stiff upper lip and sense of duty to the nation win out, and Emily keeps her thoughts to herself in order to fulfil her role as the Burra Lady Sahib until she finally gets back to England.

Fanny Parkes

Fanny Parkes came from a very different social class from the Eden sisters, but coincided with them in India in 1838. Her husband was a junior officer in charge of ice-making in Allahabad, although Fanny did not find herself restricted to traveling with him: she frequently took off on her own to explore, learnt some Hindustani, and wrote an account of her travels which was published as *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* in 1850 and re-edited as *Begums, Thugs and White Mughals: The Journals of Fanny Parkes*, by William Dalrymple in 2002. Fanny Parkes met the Edens in Calcutta in December 1836. Fanny Eden mentions her condescendingly in her *Journals* (also republished as *Tigers, Durbars and Kings: Fanny Eden's Indian Journals, 1837-1838)*. She writes, with all the hauteur of the aristocrat looking down on her social inferior,

> We are rather oppressed just now by a lady, Mrs Parkes, who insists on belonging to our camp. She has a husband who always goes mad in the cold season, so she says it is her duty to herself to leave him and travel about. She has been a beauty and has remains of it, and is abundantly fat and lively. At Benares, where we fell in with her she informed us she was an

Independent Woman (quoted in Parkes: Introduction).

William Dalrymple suggests she is "a woman whom they [the Eden sisters] would like instinctively to look down upon, but who is clearly having more fun – and getting to know India much better – than they are" (Parkes: vii). Later, she acts as interpreter for their visit to the Baiza Bai, and describes the meeting in a way that gives us some idea of the luxurious excess and stately protocol involved in such a meeting:

> December 8th: The Gaja Raja Sahib went on an elephant in state to bring the Misses Eden to call on the Baiza Bai. They arrived with Lord Auckland in all due form; his Lordship and Appa Sahib sat in the outer room, and conversed with her Highness through the parda. I introduced the Misses Eden to the Baiza Bai and her granddaughter, with whom they appeared pleased and interested. Twenty two trays, containing pairs of shawls, pieces of cloth of gold, fine Dacca muslin and jewels were presented to the Governor-General; and fifteen trays, filled in a similar manner, to each of the Misses Eden. They bowed to the presents when they were laid before them, after which the trays were carried off and placed in the treasury for the benefit of the Government (Parkes 301).

Mrs Parkes genuinely fell in love with India, and stayed from 1832 to 1839. From the very beginning, everything is seen as a delight:

> On arriving in Calcutta, I was charmed with the climate; the weather was delicious, and nothing could exceed the kindness we experienced from our friends. I thought India a most delightful country, and could I have gathered around me the dear ones I had left in England, my happiness would have been complete (15).

Later, she continues to rhapsodize about the charms of the country: "How much there is to delight the eye in this bright, this beautiful world! Roaming about with a good tent and a

good Arab, one might be happy for ever in India […] Oh! The pleasure of vagabondising over India!" (311). Another example of her enthusiasm comes with her visit to Agra in January 1835: "I have seen the Taj Mahal; but how shall describe its loveliness? Its unearthly style of beauty! It is not its magnitude, but its elegance, its proportions, its exquisite workmanship, and the extreme delicacy of the whole, that render it the admiration of the world" (187). Parkes showed great respect and appreciation for the Islamic culture she encountered in India.

Her lack of social status enabled her to travel freely and widely, mix with Indians of all castes, and make her own judgements. We learn little about her private life, but a great deal about her love of horses, and her penetration into the secret world of Muslim and Hindu women in their closed-off lives, since, inspired by her reading of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, she gained entry to the zenanas, the harems. She learnt the language of her servants so as to be able to communicate: "It appeared curious to be surrounded by servants, who, with the exception of the tailor, could not speak one word of English; and I was forced to learn to speak Hindustani" (16) and to play the sitar despite being laughed at: "My friends laugh at me when I play on the sitar, and ask, "Why do you not put a peacock's feather at the end of it?" (141). She gradually becomes more Indianised: "I study the customs and superstitions of the Hindus so eagerly that my friends laugh and say, "We expect some day to see you at pooja in the river!" (126) and identifies herself as Indian: "What would the people at home think of being up at five o'clock, and in church by six o'clock! […] To us Indians accustomed to early rising, it is no fatigue" (137). Parkes is fascinated by local wildlife and collects examples: "Killed a scorpion in my bathing-room, a good fat old fellow; prepared him with arsenical soap, and added him to the collection of curiosities in my museum" (p.38). "I caught a small venomous whip-snake in my dressing room today and put it into the bottle of horrors" (140). "The low sandbanks in the river swarm with crocodile; ten are basking on a bank to the left of our boat […] What a monster there is very near us, and such a winsome wee one by its side! I want a baby crocodile very much for my cabinet" (117). The usual aspects of life in a foreign country that are supposed to horrify gentile English women do not inspire fear in her, but rather scientific interest and enthusiasm.

Fanny Parkes, perhaps due to her unorthodox marital situation, makes connections between the situations of married women in England "the white slaves" (256) and India: "It is the same the world over; […] a woman is a slave from her birth; and the more I see of life, the more I pity the condition of the women" (284). She is scandalised by the news that the Governor-General is selling off Mughal treasures: "If this be true, is it not shameful? The present king might as well sell the chapel of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey… By what authority does any Governor-General offer the Taj for sale? Has he any right to molest the dead?" (128) Even the way she compares Mughal culture with British culture as being equally valuable is exceptional for the age she lived in, and once again reflects her open-mindedness and ability to take a cosmopolitan perspective when traveling. In another section of her journal, Fanny Parkes is disgusted by the lack of respect shown for the Taj by the English who hold a party there: "Can you imagine anything so detestable? European ladies and gentlemen have the band to play on the marble terrace, and dance quadrilles in front of the tomb!" (193). In general her work is full of praise for Indian clothes, the grace of the women, the many details of Indian life that leave her feeling England is a grey, cold, dismal place that she has grown away from.

Dervla Murphy

Dervla Murphy has been writing about her travels since 1964. This Irish writer, who is fond of travelling by bicycle, with a donkey, and with her young daughter, is an anti-tourist snob: most of her work comments on her dislike of the "beaten track" of tourism, and her scorn for travellers who carry modern rucksacks or soft toilet paper with them. Her first travel account, *Full Tilt: Dunkirk to Delhi by Bicycle* (1965) describes her first journey to India. *On a Shoestring to Coorg* (1976) opens by reminding us how little she likes the country:

> Far from having fallen in love with India during my previous visit I had been repelled by some aspects of Hindu life, irritated by others, uneasily baffled by most and consciously attracted by very few [...] Nor had I forgotten the grim details of everyday Indian life - the dehumanizing poverty, the often deliberately maimed beggars, the prevaricating petty officials, the heat, the flies, the dust, the stinks, the pilfering (Murphy 3).

Her justification for the trip is that "we are more attracted by complexities and evasions, secrets and subtleties, enigmas and paradoxes, unpredictability and apparent chaos than by simplicity, straightforwardness, dependability and apparent order" (ibid: 3). This is late twentieth century Orientalism: the unquestioning division of the world into the binary oppositions of East and West, Us and Them; "their Chaos" and "our Order". Murphy sees India as a challenge "that I, like countless other Europeans, had run away from. However, unlike the impregnably self-assured Victorian imperialists I could not convince myself that a failure to appreciate India was a mark of virtue"(3). Despite her avowed intentions to come to terms with India, contradictions arise between her stated values - anti-materialism, authenticity of culture, anti-tourism - and her actual experiences.

Her initial response on leaving Bombay airport is disgust at "scenes of poverty, filth and squalor which make exaggeration impossible" (8). In the slums of Bombay she focuses on her own sensitive reactions, rather than concern for the locals: "Yet I was not overcome by that nauseated depression which similar scenes induced ten years ago. Perhaps I am no longer quite sure that India's dire poverty is worse than the dire affluence through which we had been driving twelve hours earlier in London" (p.8). Murphy's work is marked by her frequent rejection of society, her inability to communicate with local people, and her preference for communing with nature while travelling. Her attitude to colonialism is ambiguous, and she refers to the subject frequently and nostalgically: e.g. quoting a local: "'We old people don't mind remembering that the British built all our roads [...] Imperialism there has to be. It is part of the evolution of mankind. It is a necessary evil.'" Murphy is surprised not by his political views but that an Indian capable is of Western thought processes: "for such a historical approach is rather un-Indian" (53).

Her goal is "freedom from the abominable effects of industrialisation, the consumer society and the internal combustion engine" (41), yet spends her time moving by bus or car from tourist haven to expatriate comfort: "According to Tim [her expat host], the place was a wilderness when the Fosters took over; now it is a thriving example of what can be done in India with not much money but a great deal of thought and hard work" (62). While breakfasting on bacon and eggs, along with other European guests, Murphy is aware of the presence of the locals but is in another world:

> Files of almost black-skinned men and women servants passed to and fro, their bare feet noiseless on the dewy grass, their ornaments tinkling and flashing, their eyes respectfully averted from the sahibs and mem-sahibs, who were putting away more good food in fifteen minutes than the

average Indian can lay hands on in a month (63).

As she watches daughter Rachel "boss" the local children around, she thinks that is the way the relation between whites and blacks will always be: the children never seem to resent the domineering white child. Plainly the British control of their Indian Empire was based on something more than Might, though I honestly don't know whether I believe that 'something' to have been a defect in the Indian character, or a virtue in the British, or a combination of virtues and vices on both sides that just happened to make possible the domination of millions by thousands (64).

Murphy uses an Orientalist trick of putting words in the mouths of local people that are presented as direct speech but are in fact composite arguments that suit her own agenda. For example, on the delicate subject of caste, she uses phrases like "Most educated Indians are now hypersensitive on caste issues" (205) without explaining how she can substantiate this generalisation, and goes on to invent the thoughts of "most" Indians:

> Often an Indian will [...] accuse a foreigner of over-simplifying and misinterpreting caste, and will then himself add fuel to the fire of misinterpretation by asking defensively 'Don't you have your caste system? But you call it class! Where do you send your children to school? Who would you like them to marry? Who do you invite to have meals in your house? What part of town do you live in?' (205)

This is a tricky technique, as it superficially offers an insight into Indian attitudes to the English, while in fact being nothing more than a convenient generalisation that is not backed up by being the words of an actual individual. It is suggestive of the way Murphy avoids contact with ordinary Indians, preferring the company of expatriates who do little to question her pre-existing views or make her aware of the complexity of the question of Otherness and its representation.

Robyn Davidson

Desert Places by Robyn Davidson (first published 1996; edition referred to, 1997) describes a journey made by the Australian writer, with nomads (the Rabari or Raiki) and their camels in north-west India. The justification given is her romantic image of the nomadic life, about which she knows nothing:

> A wish was forming. It took the shape of an image. I was building a little cooking fire in the shelter of soft, pink dunes, far away from anything but a world of sand. It was twilight, the lyrical hour. The nomads were gathering beside me by the fire. There was fluency and lightness between us (Davidson, 1997: 3).

Like Murphy, she is looking for an alternative reality superior to Western culture; an escape from materialism and industrialization.Similarly, the book reveals many contradictions in this project. Despite its romantic intentions, *Desert Places* is not an account of a Western woman's intrepid spirit triumphing over hardship and cultural difference to reaffirm the bonds between her and her third-world sisters. Although this is her aim, the journey turns out to be a personal nightmare and an admitted failure: "I had passed through India as a knife does through ice and it had closed behind me at every step. How does one write about failure?" (275).

Davidson represents herself as a new kind of nomad, whose 'desert places' are interior, existential states, as much as foreign landscapes. But we learn little about Davidson's interior journey and less about the minds of the Rabari. Amit Chaudhuri points out the fundamental flaw in the project:

> It is not difficult to imagine what it would be like for a middle-class Australian woman were she to find herself for days on end with a group of nomads; and there is very little in the book to subvert our expectations. It is more difficult, perhaps, to imagine what it is to be a Rabari, sleeping among five thousand sheep

and drinking Guinea-worm-infested water; but Davidson, constrained by her ignorance of their language, and their ignorance of hers, offers few insights on this subject. From time to time she laments that her journey has provided her with no 'illumination'; yet it is not illumination one seeks in this account, but something more humble, a small-scale but sustained going-out-of-oneself into other people's lives. To me, the idea that living in the most trying conditions with a group of strangers, and getting infected with the same diseases and sores as they have, will lead to a greater knowledge of oneself, or others, or a culture is simply wrong-headed (Chaudhuri, *London Review of Books.* Vol.19, No. 18, Sept. 18 1997: 20).

This is a fundamental critique of Davidson's travel writing project. In trying to cover the interior existential journey, while dealing with the politically correct agendas of feminism and environmentalism, the writer falls between the two discourses and fails to provide either an insight into how a different culture affects her self-definition, or an objective account of how it constructs its world.

One of the main themes throughout the book is Davidson's attempt to find acceptance within a 'family', or sisterhood, to become an insider, to be, as she puts it, "allow[ed] inside the frame" (279). This episode is similar to one in Davidson's famous account of her travels across the Australian bush with camels in *Tracks*: during her stay at an Aboriginal camp Davidson is shocked and disappointed when, after being shown a dance by some Aboriginal women, she is asked for money: "I felt it as a symbolic defeat. A final summing up of how I could never enter their reality, would always be a whitefella tourist on the outside looking in" (1980: 148). In the same way, in India, the actual relationships developed with the Rabari women she meets hardly move beyond bemused incomprehension on both sides, breaking at times into direct hostility:

> They had welcomed me into the warmth of their communion; now I was out in the cold watching them through a window. [...] The truth was I was going under. There were more than forty people on the dang. Jaiva said disparagingly, 'We can remember all our sheep. How come you can't remember our names?' (134).

Davidson is offended that they are too ready to reject their traditional ways and 'exploit' her as a free taxi-service. "In my notes I wrote 'I am their milking cow'" (163), when she wants them to offer her the 'genuine' nomadic experience (as long as she can get off the camel and into a jeep and a hotel whenever the reality of poverty becomes too painful or boring). If Davidson herself questions her motives, the Rabari are completely bemused by what seems to them complete insanity:

> Men would come and sit with me, polite as ever, and gradually get round to asking, 'You have lakhs and lakhs of rupees, and you have a jeep. Why do you want to live with poor people? Why do you want to walk?' I never found a suitable reply to this but it did indicate how far from enviable they saw their own lives and how incomprehensible they found mine (48).

There is little room left for an objective study of their lives and concerns. In the last phase, she stays in a Western hotel, wears earplugs, and drives out with the photographer to the tribe for photo-shoots that reconstruct the journey.

The clash of expectations on the part of Davidson and her tribal hosts is at times unconsciously funny: she cannot believe the women will take the bus to Pushkar, and they cannot believe that anyone would walk if there is an alternative (25). She shows no awareness of how the whole tribe's efforts in putting up with her deserve to be rewarded with something more than being photographed for a book they will never read. It is to the author's credit that her doubts about the nature and value of her project are

eventually foregrounded. However the level of anger, complaint, insult, and unhappiness revealed in the text raises difficult questions about the role of travel writing by Westerners in the East in general.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by juxtaposing these four texts, I hope to indicate something of the richness and variety of work on India by Westerners, in particular by Western women. At the same time, I want to point out that not all work in the colonial period was homogeneous and pro-British. The question of class, of social status, is a complicating factor in the way individual travellers approached the foreign culture. There is a great contrast between the experience of the freedom of travel and contact with local people achieved by Mrs Fanny Parkes, who made no claims to aristocratic status, but enjoyed being able to move in all levels of British and Indian society, and the restrictions and negative attitudes of the women at the highest levels of the Raj such as Emily Eden. We should be wary of assuming that all British travellers in India in the 19th century merely accepted the standard imperial view of life in the subcontinent, without having the capacity to question attitudes and form their own opinions.

In contrast, much work in the post-colonial period does little to challenge the old binary ways of perceiving the Other, through a gaze which perpetuates the binary oppositions still current in travel writing. Despite the historical differences encountered when traveling in independent India, there is still a strong tendency to present the country merely as an exotic backdrop to the travellers' own concerns, rather than as a complex and ever-changing culture. Both Dervla Murphy and Robyn Davidson fall into the trap of idealizing a romantic dreamscape in which economic progress is seen as the enemy (until it comes to their own needs for comfort and security), as they travel in search of a lost paradise of simplicity and anti-materialism, which many modern Indians are probably only too keen to move beyond. Travel writing still falls into the trap of assuming that a brief, superficial stay in the country, with no attempt to learn languages or get to know individuals, is sufficient to be able to pronounce generalizations about the local culture which offer little more than traditional Orientalist tropes of difference. Finally, late twentieth century travel writing by women as considered here offers few new insights into a reading of travel which is presented as an interior journey in which the author has a responsibility to be self-critical and show some humility as she moves through a foreign landscape.

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A Deconstructive Perspective of India in the French Gaze in Tasleema Nasreen's *Farashi Premik* (*The French Lover*)

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Abstract

Our paper discusses the [mis]representation and the imaginary notions of India constructed through the European gaze in Tasleema Nasreen's *Farashi Premik* or *The French Lover*. As the protagonist Nilanjana Mondal begins her search for love and independence far away from her home, in Paris, she feels herself continuously trapped within a prison-house of European gaze—where her motherland India is simply a barbaric land of beggars, poverty and prostitutes. It doesn't take her long to realise that the French have a subconscious awareness that the Indian culture and civilisation is in some ways, far better and older than theirs and their gaze is an attempt to mask this schizophrenic fear behind a superiority complex. It is easy to give in to this gaze, like many of Neela's Indian fellow diasporic Indians in Paris do, but much more difficult to deconstruct it, but that does not mean Neela would not try.

Keywords: India, French, gaze, Neela, Benoir Dupont, European, oriental

> "They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."
>
> ---Karl Marx, "*The Eighteenth Brumaire*
> *of Louis Bonaparte*"

The Europeans' view of India, Indians and everything associated with the subcontinent can be summed up exactly in the quote above. The tendency of Europeans has always been to speak and write in stereotyped and dehumanizing ways about "The East", in order to construct an imaginary other and India too Edward Said's "*Orientalism*" makes it clear. According to Said, the "rational west" has to be distinguished from the "irrational" oriental countries like India, simply for the purpose of the construction of an European identity that is superior to non-European cultures like India, which have always been portrayed as

which is amply borne out by Kipling's portrayal of Indian characters and his unforgettable comment loaded with colonial overtones - "... East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". India no longer remains a geographical entity, rather it becomes an European invention--- a land of "romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes ..." (Said 1). At the same time, India was seen as an oriental land of wish-fulfillment, as Jimmy Porter, the hero of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* points out in his process of "looking back" with longing and nostalgia at the days of India's colonization:

> All home-made cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. Still I regret it somehow, phoney or not" (I/6).

It is in the light of this ever pervading desire mixed with disgust that has always framed the European gaze and it has been further incensed by the "us-verses-them" contest that we, in this paper, would analyse the (mis)representation of India in the eyes of the French in Tasleema Nasreen's *Farashi Premik* (*The French Lover*).

The French Lover is the tale of a woman's search for love and independence in Paris, far away from her home. The plot centres around the protagonist Nilanjana Mondal, a young Bengali woman from Kolkata who moves to Paris after her marriage to Kishanlal, a Punjabi restaurant owner in Paris. After the breaking up of her marriage she meets Benoir Dupont, a blonde, blue-eyed handsome Frenchman, and is swept off her feet. What follows is a passionate and sexually liberating relationship with Benoir which ends with her realisation that they both love the same person---she loved Benoir, Benoir too loved himself and only himself and she was nothing but an exotic taste for him.

During her long stay in Paris, Neela is continuously confronted by the European's [mis]conception about her motherland---they consider it to be an exotic yet uncultured civilization full of poverty, beggars, hunger and diseases. As Greenblat explains, we define our identities always in relation to what we are not---who must be demonised and objectified as "others" (Selden 164) The "unruly" and the "alien" are internalized "others" who help us consolidate our identities; their existence is allowed only as evidence of the rightness of the established order. That is exactly the reason why the Europeans have always sought to hide their fear of an alien culture behind the mask of a superiority complex. For the French, as Neela comes soon to realise, the poor India is the real India. This attitude of the French towards India surfaces when Neela watches a documentary film on India broadcast by a French channel with some of her French friends. The documentary begins with a close-up shot of an empty broken tin plate which diffuses into the picture of naked and bare-feet starved Indian children begging for alms and returning at the end of the day to a dirty unhygienic slum. It is also interesting to note that before his visit to India, Benoir had got himself vaccinated against almost all diseases known to medical science because, according to him, "We Europeans need it"(162) and in spite of the vaccinations, he says that he considers himself lucky to have come out hale and hearty from a disease-ridden country like India There is a reference to yet another documentary on India in the novel---on the life of prostitutes in India and their agitation for their rights causing Benoir to remark:"Holy Earth! There are so many prostitutes in your country, Neela!!"(278).

Though the word "gaze" literally means an exchange of looks, in the post colonial perspective, it can be taken to mean a gaze that gives primacy to the European look. Thus,

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[1] Our translation of all quotes from the Bengali original.

when talking about India in the European "gaze", the word "gaze" actually is the look which denotes the dominant position of the European who controls the Orient as an object of desire and deceit. Thus India is always the object of the gaze---she can never look back, because she has no subjectivity. On the contrary, India and the Indians are expected to model themselves according to the Occidental gaze. The interesting point is that usually the Indian is co-opted into the occidental point of view.

The European gaze is a kind of whirlpool, into which many Indians, including Kishanlal, Sunil, and Choitali had already been sucked in. Comparing Paris to Kolkata, Kishanlal once says: "Do you think this is your dirty Kolkata that I have to wash my hands and feet every time I come home from outside? Ha Ha!" (30). Again, during her visit to Sunil and Choitali's house, Neela notices that their baby daughter Tumpa does not respond at all to Bengali words. Choitali and Sunil inform her that Tumpa does not know Bengali, she has only been taught French. Since, according to her parents, two languages might confuse the child, they had stuck to French and had decided to leave out Bengali because "of what use would that language [Bengali] be of to her?"(44). Kishan's view about the Bengali language is also no better; according to him, Neela shouldn't be proud that she had been a Bengali major in her graduation, because "What can you do with your degree of Bengali literature? Would you be able to earn a Franc with it? You can't…. So stop showing me your temper"(55). Actually, in spite of being Indians by birth, the European gaze towards their motherland had been thrust on them and they had begun to see India, Indian culture and Indian languages with the spectacles of disgust that the French had lent them, because, after all, it is far easier to swim with the current than against it.

Once when, after a fight with Neela, Benoir walks out of her flat, he turns down her invitation to leave only after having had his

meal with the words: "Food and eating is not as important to us [Europeans] as to you [Indians]. People die in your country out of hunger and that is precisely the reasons why you all have never learnt to think beyond food."(227) What is beyond Benoir's understanding is that Neela comes from the country where guests are treated as one's God - *atithi devo bhava* - and Indian culture and manners do not allow a hostess to let anyone (even her enemies) leave her house with an empty stomach. Yet, it is Danielle who, from her artificial notions and the way she had been taught to "gaze" at India and Indian culture accuses Neela that Indians are barbaric because they cannot give due respect to human beings. That is why after going out to Danielle's friend Nikol's house for dinner with Nikol, Neela had not explicitly thanked her host, because she had considered him her friend and Indian culture demands what can aptly be summed up in a very popular dialogue from Salman Khan's first commercial hit "Maine pyar kiya" - *"Dosti mein no sorry, no thank you"* (There is no sorry, no thank you in friendship.) She had not meant to demean Nikol in any way, but that is exactly how Danielle interprets it, because she had had a pre-conceived idea of Indians as ill-mannered and barbarous drilled into her from her childhood. When Neela announces her intention to Danielle to go to Kolkata to visit her sick mother Molina, Danielle advises her against it: "No point going now. You can go during her cremation"(120). When Neela argues that the question of cremation doesn't arise, because her mother is not dead, but the question is of nursing and spending time with her sick mother, Danielle's inevitable question is: "Aren't there nurses in your country?"(120). What Danielle's view of Indian culture, restricted by her colonial glasses doesn't allow her to see is that no matter how "barbaric" they might see Indian culture and civilisation to be, in this country, a nurse cannot be a substitute for a daughter's care. What she doesn't realise while throwing up her hands in the air and shouting *"La famelia! La*

famelia!"(121) or when sarcastically mimicking Neela and her love and obligations towards her family ("My mother, my father, my brother, my sister, all rubbish!" (121) is that in India, family is the longest surviving institution irrespective of the ages, transformations, religious and political views. Moreover, respect and obligations towards one's mother are one of the essential characteristics of Indian upbringing.

Neela's emphatic protests that "India is not just a country with poor starved people; there are so many rich Indians. Moreover, while talking about India, it would be unwise to leave out the middle class" (97) falls on the deaf ears of the French. As Danielle points out, "Why on earth should a French documentary show rich Indians? If at all they have to show rich people, why not Bill Gates?"(97). What Danielle, unable to see beyond the European constructed artificial image of India she had grown up with, had absolutely ignored is that, if Bill Gates is the richest person on earth, the nineteenth richest person is the richest Indian - Mukesh Ambani. Interestingly, Ambani had also won the laurel of being the richest person on earth following the bull in the Indian Stock market, surpassing the American software czar Bill Gates and could have proved as interesting a subject for a documentary as the poverty of India. Therefore, as Neela understands, the question for the Europeans is not what India is, rather it is what they want to see India as.

This representation, or more appropriately misrepresentation is justified by the French with the same logic with which the Europeans had for ages justified their colonization of the Orient---that it was their duty towards the world to civilize the uncivilized world. Danielle too tells Neela: "It is for **India's own good** that we are portraying India's poverty in these documentaries. India, after all, is going to profit, it would get economic aid."(97) (emphasis: ours)

Although at the beginning Neela is deceived into thinking that it is the Europeans' magnanimity and their concern for the third world countries, she gradually realizes that it originates in a kind of schizophrenic fear of a culture far older and in many ways better than theirs which has to be negated and hence Benoir says: "You Indians have nothing other than Taj Mahal to boast of. I never got to see anything very old in India …. yes of course, I saw the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, but that was also made by the British"(256). On being asked by Neela his views on the Harappa Mohenjodaro civilization, Benoir replies that Indian history does not interest him. What he had forgotten is that the civilization of Harappa and Mohenjodaro is a golden chapter of the book of world history, not just Indian history. Therefore, Neela's counter argument that the civilization that they called barbarous had already produced some of the finest gems of world literature when his French ancestors, still in their savage stage, were fighting over pieces of raw flesh is met with a violent outburst from Benoir, and he throws the book that Neela was reading out of the window. Like most other Europeans, Benoir too had been conditioned to believe in a certain picture of India, and any attempt to shake him out of it disorients him and is met with a violent response.

Indian women, to the Europeans, remain an oriental mystery—with their light brown skin and "Mississippi long hair", serving as an ideal metaphor for feminine beauty, fidelity, patience, love and trust, and both Danielle and Benoir fall in love, not with Neela, but with the myth of exotic beauty that they had constructed around her. The European culture had actually managed and even produced the picture of an India and its women to suit their needs. Benoir, in fact, on his very first meeting with Neela had informed her that it was his intention in life to find himself an Indian girlfriend (or, to be more precise, an Indian mistress, because Benoir was already married

and had no intention whatsoever of severing ties with his wife Pascal. Rather, he only wanted a woman with whom he could maintain a merely sexual relationship, absolutely devoid of feelings and commitments). Both Benoir and Danielle emphatically praise Neela's skin colour which is brownish and not white. This surprises Neela because it is a known fact that grooms have always been harder to find for Indian girls with a darker complexion. That is precisely the reason why, when Benoir tells her that she is beautiful precisely because she doesn't have a white European skin, Neela is absolutely swept off her feet. But it doesn't take her long to realise that all he had merely wanted was to lock her within the mould of an eternally bewitching exotic Indian doll (Benoir jokingly calls her once "Neela, the Indian beauty" (161) -- a paragon of beauty only to be placed on a pedestal and to be simply desired, not as an individual woman of flesh and blood, with her own priorities and wishes. We cannot, in this context, forget Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan—who could have served as an ideal model for an Oriental women in the eyes of the Europeans; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for her, and that is exactly what Benoir had also wanted from Neela. She realises that she had simply been an object of the European gaze, a mixture of desire and deceit. Neela had probably never, in her long relationship with Benoir, understood him better than when she proclaims: "You had thought that I have come from a poor country, you thought that she probably doesn't get two square meals a day or proper clothes to wear. It wouldn't be difficult to draw her to bed with a few sweet words of love"(183). East, for the young European men, had once simply been a career, and in the post-colonial age, Indian women, simply mistresses, not wives. Like a child whimsically deciding that a toy would now stand for this thing and now for that and beginning and terminating a game at will, so had Benoir thought that he could cuddle

Neela whenever he wanted and stamp her beneath his feet at his own sweet will, while Neela, being the "Indian woman" - the epitome of virtue and patience that Europeans had woven around her - would continue to endure his whims with a smiling face. What he had forgotten was that human beings, unlike toys, have feelings that can be hurt beyond repair. The moment Neela starts resisting the web of fictions being created around her and her country, both Benoir and Danielle start misbehaving with her.

It is extremely difficult to resist such a European gaze, but that does not mean that Neela would not try. She rejects the temptation of flesh offered by Benoir, because a life as his mistress and the shame and humiliation associated with it in return for the comforts he could offer her had filled her with disgust and was not acceptable to her. Therefore she rejects Benoir with the firm words:

> "You always need a Madame Butterfly, isn't it Benoir? ... For a long time I have given you a different kind of taste, you have enjoyed the smell and taste of an exotic species for a long time, but enough is enough now. Because I had not an ounce of faith or self-respect for myself I had allowed myself to be carried this far in my desire for you. But now you must release me, I don't want to spend the rest of my life weeping for you as your Madame Butterfly...You had thought that you would derive fun by watching a foolish exotic girl from the Orient love and endure separation pangs"(296).

Neela's rejecting of Benoir is an obvious example of the Orient "writing back" and deconstructing the Occidental gaze that had relegated it to a position of passivity and irrationality. The same way the rationalist in Poe's "House of Usher" turns out to be a mad-man, so does Benoir (who had been European rationalism personified) act like a mad-man— he calls Neela a "slut" and a "murderer"

(because she was aborting his child), accuses her of having transmitted AIDS to him, breaks the furniture of her house and attempts to murder her----because he, who had only been accustomed to gazing at India, was being unable to bear its counter-gaze. Neela resists the co-option (which Sunil, Choitali and Kishanlal could not) by creating an oppositional point of view, which constitutes a challenge to the European gaze. It is thus, that she had found a key out of the prison-house of gazes in which she had been trapped and she is ready to fight back this psychological colonization by the Europeans.

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The Star in the East

The Image of India & Hinduism in William Jones' "Hymns" to Hindu Deities

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Abstract

William Jones' hymns to Hindu deities of India use ideas of translation and originality in order to provide a poetic and cultural space where the hymn syncretically demonstrates both a British and Hindu religious exegesis. A few fundamental questions arise: how was Hinduism represented? Who was representing it? From what sources were the poets gaining their impressions and understanding of religion? In what way were religion, in general, and the poet's representation of it specifically received? Jones's importance in my thesis lies in the fact that it would be utterly impossible to answer any one of these questions without mentioning his name and giving some account of his life and works. Drawing upon Michael J. Franklin's *Sir William Jones: Selected Prose and Poetical Works* and *Romantic Representations of British India*, I want to emphasise Jones' syncretic tendencies within the multi-cultural and multi-faith environment of metropolitan India rather than in the ideals of European Enlightenment.

[**Key Words**: Hinduism, Sir William Jones, politics and poetics of representation]

During the early nineteenth century India's sudden geopolitical and economic importance led to a burgeoning interest in and study of its culture by British and Europeans alike – particularly on the subject of religion. As Joyti Mohan writes, because of his stature in Europe's intellectual community, Voltaire's writings on India were widely read and they enhanced the charm of Hinduism to begin its ascent into the intellectual mainstream of European Enlightenment thinking. There have been a number of worthy critical studies investigating India's influence on the British literature. For example, Raymond Schwab's pioneering *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (1958) first broached the subject by recognising and identifying the frequency with which India was a topic of literary concern. Schwab argues that "The Orient served as alter ego to the Occident" (Schwab 43), suggesting the way in which the two complemented each other, rather than competed with – or controlled – the other. As Dalrymple writes:

> Beneath the familiar story of European conquest and the Rule in India, and the imposition of European conquest and the rule in India, and the imposition of European Ways in the heart of Asia....the Indian conquest of the European imagination...widespread cultural assimilation and hybridity: what Salman Rushdie-talking of modern Multiculturalism has called Chutni-fication. Virtually all Englishmen in India at this period Indianised themselves To some extent (Dalrymple 123).

Thus it is relevant to contextualise Jones' *Hymns* within a framework of bi-lateral and

unilateral assumptions of postcolonial theory laid out in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which views Jones as the leading architect of Britain's imperial ideology. Warren Hastings, the governor general of East India Company, implemented a policy of ruling India on its ancient laws, according to their own ideas and prejudices. From these policies, Hastings led a sustained effort to fund and support attempts of the British to learn, read and translate Hindu mythology into English. In 1787 "The Monthly Review" exhibits such an attitude when they write that

> An acquaintance with Indian literature in general might have the most beneficial effects. It might even tend to redeem the national character, by teaching Englishmen to consider the nation of India as men, as beings entitled by heaven with the same facilities, the same talents, and the same feeling with themselves (*The Monthly Review* :35).

In the midst of such colonial attitude, Indian literature like the *Bhagabat Geeta* offered not only a way to learn about another religion and culture, but also redeem the national character from these offences in the fostering of a cross-cultural appreciation of each other's common humanity--one sanctioned by both a British and Hindu "Heaven". These policies find their greatest success once Jones took up the study of Sanskrit, Hindu mythology and Hindu folklore. The eleven years Jones spent in Calcutta were the most productive of his literary life, which almost singularly centred on introducing, explaining, and representing Hinduism to a British and European audience, as exemplified primarily by his composition of nine hymns to Hindu deities. While other missionaries, such as William Carey, undermined Sanskrit as "sacred nothings", Jones prided himself upon saying that he spoke "the language of Gods" (Jones 167). In this way Jones becomes synonymous with Hinduism in the Romantic period. Sir William Jones was the pioneer of philosophical studies in India and was, finally, the first Englishman to respond poetically to the Indian setting. He is the first Westerner to render Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* into English and make the Occident aware of the richness of Sanskrit to Anglo-Indian literature.

The translation of Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam* by Sir William Jones in 1789 was an epoch-making event in the history of cultural relations between India and the West. Indeed its impact on history has been more profound and far reaching than even that of the French. Jones had unveiled the vistas of a new world of ideas—a new era in Oriental scholarship and historical writing as well as a new movement in the spheres of comparative philology, comparative literature, English poetry, Sanskrit poetry and Indian historical writing (Ranganathan 3).

Jones's nine hymns to Hindu deities, which belong to the late eighteenth century, are addressed to Camdeo, Prakriti, Indra, Surya, Lakshmi, Narayana, Saraswati and Ganga. His first hymn, addressed to Camdeo, is the first view of Hindu Mythology presented in English poetry. I shall prove his mastery in intermingling East and West by suggesting that the Sanskrit word 'Dipaka'---one of the several names of Kama---and the English word 'Cupid' have an original linguistic connection. The Hindu god Camdeo is no doubt the counterpart of the Grecian Eros and the Roman Cupido, but in Hindu mythology a peculiar course of events attends his life and attributes so that his very name rouses romance and beauty. This hymn recalls to one's mind the description of love full of romantic exuberance in Swinburne's *Atlanta in Calydon.* His second and third hymns are addressed to Prakriti in her two aspects: Durga and Bhabani. "Prakriti" is the cause of creation and the means of discrimination, and "Purusha", the manifestation of the Parabrahman, assumes the body and experiences the dualities of the world: good and bad, joy and sorrow, which are the contrivance of Prakriti as "Maya". The theme

of the first of these two hymns, "The Hymn to Durga", is borrowed from Kalidasa's *Kumarsambhavam* in Sanskrit. The second hymn, "The Hymn to Bhabani", manifests the destructive side of the Mother, the third hymn is devoted to her benevolent aspect. The conception of a female power or "Sakti" being responsible for the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe is not uncommon in both Eastern and Western mythologies. Sri Aurobindo assigns *The Mother* the attributes of Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, and Perfection. Robert Graves similarly conceives of an all-powerful, all-pervading Female power in his poems, while Swinburne depicts the picture of "Aphrodite" like that of Bhabani: at the emergence of these goddesses the whole universe leaps into life (Mukherjee 87).

In his fourth hymn "The Hymn to Indra", Jones tries to establish once again a linguistic affinity between 'Jupitar' of the West and Indra or 'Dyupatir' of Sanskrit. Both of them are the rulers of heaven, the god of thunder and rain. "The Triple Divinity" of the Eastern mythology is the personification of the sun. The sun is a visible symbol of light, and can be supposed to be the manifestation of the Almighty who is light. His fifth hymn is addressed to Surya, which echoes the sacred Gayetri incantations, such as *Asavadityo Brahma* (Brahman is the light). The hymn opens in praise of the power of all-pervasive Surya, which is called Karmashakti (the observer of all doings):

> Lord of the lotus, father, friend, and king, O Sun! Thy powers I sing

> ...Since thou, great orb! With all-enlightening ray/ Rulest the golden day, How far more glorious He, who said, serene, Be, and thou wast/Himself unformed, unchanged, unseen (Rangnathan 4).

His sixth hymn, "A Hymn to Lacshmi", is a celebration of Lacshmi or Sri as the Ceres of India. Jones salutes the goddess and describes the wonder of her birth when the Milk Sea was being churned by gods and demons for gaining nectar:

> Daughter of ocean and primeval night, who fed with moon beams dropping silver dew, And cradled in a wild wave dancing light, Saw'st with a smile new shores and creatures new (Rangnathan 5).

Jones presents Lacshmi as the goddess of plenty, but I shall show how she manifests her fierce aspect also. His seventh hymn is addressed to Narayana, with whom Lacshmi is united, and they both take upon themselves the protection of the world. The hymn is an ineffable vivification of the miracle of creation. Whenever man slides into folly and the film of sin covers his eyes, God does descend to redeem him. Jones utilised his knowledge of *Gita,* as he writes: "Whenever there is damage to Dharma, O Arjuna! Then indeed I am born in every yuga for the establishment of Dharma". Actually these lines are the English rendering of "*yatha yatha hi dharmasya Glanirbhavati bharata! Dharmasamsthaparthaya! Sambhavami yuge yuge...*" (7). Referring to heaven's messengers and the lot that attends them when they descend in human incarnation, Sri Aurobindo too expresses the same idea in *Savitri*: "To live with grief, to confront death on her road, / The mortal's lot became the Immortal's share" (Naik 83).

Jones's "Hymn to Saraswathi" is composed in a poetic idiom which reaches beyond the personal: "These are thy wondrous arts, Queen of the flowering speech/ Thence Saraswathi named and Vani bright! Oh, joy of mortal hearts,/Thy mystic wisdom teach" (Rangnathan 6). His description of the 'Ganga' in *Hymn to Ganges,* is intimate; the feminine imagery is expressed in the motions of assured language:

> "How sweetly Ganga smiles, and glides,/ Luxuriant o'er her broad autumnal bed!/ Her waves perpetual verdure spread,/ Whilst health and plenty deck her golden sides" (7).

In "A Hymn to Narayana", Narayana is presented as the Omnipresent, Omnipotent and the Omnisciernt. My objective is here to bring out the poetic sensibility of Jones with which he skilfully presents his incandescence which may dazzle and blind someone's eyes. According to the Vedas and Puranas and even according to the Egyptian and Persian theology, the world is the visible manifestation of the Invisible God, and Narayan is this "Spirit of Spirits" (Johnson 34). Jones romanticised Religion, his poetry is subsumed by philosophy, and his hymns clearly inspired Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Shelley's transition from the early atheistic materialism to the mystical pantheism of the later mature works might have been due largely to the influence of Jones. Again in a *Letter* to John Thelwall (added to an autograph copy of "Kubla Khan"), Coleridge describes Narayana's ideal imaginative state using Hindu mythological imagery:

> "I should much wish like the Indian Vishnu to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of lotus and wake once in a million year ... just to know that I was going to sleep a million more years" (Coleridge 228-229).

The holy text Wilkins translated, the *Bhagvat-Geeta*, tells the story of Krishna, an earthy incarnation of Vishnu the Preserver:

> "I am generation and dissolution, the place where all things are reposited, and the inexhaustible seed of all nature ... I am death and immortality: I am entity and non-entity ... I am the soul which standeth in the bodies of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things"(80).

The omnipresence which Krishna symbolises and embodies here represents a monotheistic Hinduism which Wilkins, Hastings, and Jones were all eager to promote in terms relative to Unitarianism, which Europeans and Britons alike could understand. There was a perfectly sound reason for such comparisons to be made, namely, there was no other language available to contextualise a foreign religion such as Hinduism within terms comprehensible to Europeans, or enunciate, and thereby translate, accurately its theology which delved deeply into unfamiliar esotericism and mysticism. P. J. Marshall notes in *British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth century*:

> The attitude of the great mass of Europeans who came into contact with Hinduism was always either ridicule or disgust. Books were filled with accounts of a multiplicity of deities, repellent images and barbarous customs (Marshall 99).

In contrast, Jones advanced a representation of Hinduism that was monotheistic, moral, and pious. Jones's fascination with Hinduism impels him to find and negotiate a constant mode of expression in order to translate faithfully Hinduism's spiritual validity in the face of prejudices. First, the concept of religion is problematic in that it is not free from Western Christian theological presuppositions and is inextricably bound up with colonialism and modernity. Secondly, orientalists and Christian missionaries construct Hinduism with their own biblical presuppositions. Fourth, Hinduism is perceived largely through the lens of Brahmanical textual and ritual traditions or textual Hinduism is given primary consideration. Fifth, there is a hermeneutical issue concerning the interface between reason and imagination. Whereas Western oriental thought is represented as rational and masculine, Indian thought is considered as associated with imagination - a bit feminine.

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The 'Good' European and his 'Disinterested Mistress': Mimicry and Aporia in John Masters

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to critique John Master's representation of India by analyzing three of his novels and his autobiography. As a member of the Indian army, Masters lived in India for a long time in the final phase of the British Raj. He wrote great many books based on his experiences in India, and the four texts chosen for this paper are central in this regard. This paper isolates Masters's own emotional trajectory, especially how his initial disinterestedness changes into a passionate engagement with India, which he later describes as his mistress. The underlying dualities in the autobiographical narrative are linked to those in his fictional accounts of India, since in all his writings he deliberately blurs the factual and the fictional. However, such attempts to blur binaries are critiqued from Master's own subject position to show how notions like mimicry and interstice, in the colonial context, define not only the colonized subject but implicate his colonial superior as well who has his own ways of encountering aporias.

[**Keywords**: Mimicry, Aporia, Imaginary, British Raj, Colonial India, Orientalism]

'It was awful trying to be an Indian. No one understood me.'
Bhowani Junction (Masters, 1956, p.238)

Introduction

John Masters (1914-1983) was a fifth generation English settler in India, who served in the Indian Army in the twilight phase of the British Raj in India. He was not just a soldier. He was somebody who initially felt compelled to work in the Indian Army, then gradually fell in 'love' with India while working in the Army, and finally decided to passionately write down his experiences in the form of 'factual story'. In his autobiography *The Bugles and A Tiger: A Personal Adventure* (1956), Masters states his initial reluctance to join the Army: 'I was destined for Indian infantry. I use the word "destined" with intent. I did not want to go to Indian infantry – I thought

myself far too clever to waste my life in that backwater' (35). However, for financial reasons he eventually joined the Army. 'The Indian Army got more pay...And as I have said, we were broke...' (37) Pages after, Masters's attitude towards India would completely change as he would narrate his sense of rootedness in India and his newly developed love for India: 'If there was a justification for my family's long guestship here, for my making so free with the Indian wood in the fire...We removed many fears... I was in love with India, and she'd have the hell of a job getting rid of me' (314). His self-proclaimed love for India would grow to such a degree that he would acknowledge his unavoidable

'Europeanness' to be a bar. He would describe India as his 'lusty, disinterested mistress', since she could not be his 'mother' (314).

An analysis of Masters's autobiographical narrative would indicate how his attitude towards India changed from disinterestedness to a sort of passionate engagement accompanied by a feeling that India herself might be 'disinterested' in him. His artistic urge for 'story-telling' to a great extent derives from this new found love, and in his 'fictional' narratives one discovers similar emotional trajectories on the part of the protagonists. In terms of studying three of his novels based on his experiences in India – *Nightrunners of Bengal* (1951), *The Deceivers* (1952), and *Bhowani Junction* (1954), this paper would accordingly examine Masters's attitude to, and representation of, India.

Critiquing Fictionalised Histories

To begin with, one of the primary aspects of Masters's fictional accounts of India is that his narratives reveal a deliberate blending of the imaginative with the factual and autobiographical. Such a blending blurs the binary of fact and fiction and generates what Masters himself calls the 'fictionalised histories'. In the 'Foreword' to *The Bugles and A Tiger*, Masters states: 'This is a factual story, but not a history. Please do not pounce on me with scorn if it turns out there were seven, not eight, platoons of Tochi Scouts on the Iblanke that night of May 11th-12th, 1937.' He adds: 'In the course of the story I hope to have given an idea of what India was like in those last twilit days of the Indian Empire, and something more than a tourist's view of some of the people who lived there'. If this is how he writes his autobiography which should be strictly historical, he has similar ways of dealing with the fictional. In the 'Postscript' to his novel *The Deceivers,* Masters notes:

> In a story of this sort the reader has a right to know how much was fact, how much

fiction. My purpose in this book, as in *Nightrunners of Bengal,* was to recreate the 'feel' of a historical episode rather than write a minutely accurate report. To do this I had to use the novelist's freedom to imagine people and create places for them to live in... (Masters d. 80)

The risk of this deliberate mixing of history and story is manifold. Such an admixture could certainly be considered a postmodernist gesture (the famous notion of 'historiographic metafiction' as described by Linda Hutcheon) to indicate that both history and fiction are human constructs. However, insofar as John Masters's own subject position is concerned, such a representation of colonial India could be read in conjunction with the colonizer's motivated rewriting of the colonial past (Crane 3). On an obvious level, one could talk about a specific form of 'projection' of India on the part of Masters as he exploits and exaggerates the facts and colours them with his own imagination. For example, in his first novel *Nightrunners of Bengal,* the character of the Queen of Kishanpur, Sumitra, is only loosely based on the historical figure Jhansi ki Rani. Masters in this novel also exaggerates the chapati events that played an instrumental part in building up the tension in the early months of 1857 (Crane 16).

Consequently, fictionalized histories would be derivative of what Jacques Lacan would have called 'imaginary' identification with, and projection of, an idea. Imaginary, as part of the Lacanian R-S-I schema (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary – three orders or registers that Lacan had repeatedly talked about throughout his career including in his Seminar XXII, *RSI*), is related to images and the ego, and identification with the idea of wholeness and coherence as opposed to fragmentation and inconsistency. Initially Lacan formulated the notion of Imaginary in relation to the mirror stage. A mirror stage occurs with the infant's first encounter with the mirror that gradually leads the child to become fascinated with its own reflection on the mirror. The

image gives the child a sense of security and wholeness as opposed to its fragmented self in reality, where it has not yet achieved full control over its body. The identification with the false image of its self is crucial at the same time for the child as it comes at the price of alienating the child from its own self/image (or true self or fragmented, split self) and forming an image of its 'other' self:

> [...] the mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure (Lacan 78).

According to Lacan, this imaginary (false) identification leads to a rivalry that is established between the infant and the image of the infant and this same rivalry anticipates the future relationships between the subject and the others, as the 'specular I turns into the social I' and 'this moment at which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates ...the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations' (Lacan 79).

In a sense, the 'India' that Masters and his protagonists identify with or even fall in love with is a carefully projected and fictionalised idea (for Lacan, the imaginary is essentially a fiction or falsity) with respect to which they posit and define themselves and assert their own superiority. Masters's repeated attempts to blur fiction and facts hide this unconscious intention to create a romantic image of India with respect to which the white man can assert his imaginary sense of heroism and virility. The situation is quite closer to Edward Said's conclusion that '[T]he Orient was almost a European invention' (Said 1) which functions as a culturally and ideologically

coherent doctrine, and that Orientalism 'depends for its strategy on the flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand' (Said 7). Even though, Said's main target is those Westerners who never visited the East yet wrote books on the East, in the case of John Masters it would be seen how an Englishman residing in the East is sometimes drawn to represent the same 'flexible positional superiority'.

While it would be interesting to examine the 'orientalist' in John Masters, what is most remarkable in his case is how he and his protagonists posit a sort of reversal and critique of the existing notions about the psychological experiences of the colonizer and the colonized. Frantz Fanon in a number of famous passages in *Black Skin White Mask* (1952) suggests how the colonized Other has a desire to identify himself with the white or the coloniser. The black-skinned colonised man wishes to put on the white mask or the façade of the white man because he has internalised the idea that the coloniser stands for innate superiority. (Fanon 2-3) However, such a desire is at the end self-deceiving. The colonised can never really leave aside his native connections manifested most prominently through his skin colour, even though psychologically he attempts to develop a western intellect. The colonised can become white but 'not quite', as Homi Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture* (1994). The imitation of the coloniser is sometimes uncanny and not blind, which is why Bhabha uses the term mimicry to describe the ambivalent attitude of the colonised towards the coloniser. On the one hand, to have a native body and a European intellect is a first step towards constituting a 'hybrid' identity, which would eventually belong neither to this nor to that but somewhere 'in-between'. Such an interstitial space where the colonised would eventually be suspended is a problematic

zone. Here the colonised is neither purely native nor purely white, but rather a threat to both (Bhabha 2). While his desire to become one of the whites is inevitably thwarted, there is possibly no unproblematic return for him to his native people. In this interstitial zone the colonised can experience anxiety, can 'write back', can feel how his desire is thwarted, or or can stay suspended in a love-hate relation both with his native people and the colonisers. Bhabha puts it succinctly:

> "[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence;* in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha 86).

What if this desire to identify with the coloniser on the part of the colonised is reversed and an Englishman himself desires to imitate the native, redefining the idea of 'mimicry'? What if the white man falls in love with the native people, even when he cannot leave aside his Englishness or his sense of superiority? What if he himself, and not just the colonised native, is suspended in an interstitial zone, albeit temporarily? The narratives of John Master touch upon such questions. The following discussion of three of his novels would address these issues.

The Deceivers: William Savage, his Disguise and Deception

The desire of mimicking the Indian man by the European is deftly presented by Masters in the portrayal of William Savage, in *The Deceivers,* who tries to slip into the 'identity' of Gopal the Weaver. 'He [William] wore a white loincloth and a white turban...His chest and legs were bare, and his skin – every square inch of it – had been stained by Mary and "the woman of the Patel's house". (Masters d. 10-11)

However, the very first attempt to become an 'Indian' is thwarted at the beginning, where Masters highlights the difference between a native man and a European. William's 'High-ankled Bandelkhand slipper' presents a stark contrast to the bare footed Gopal the Weaver. He could manage to walk barefoot, but "William's souls were soft and European" (Masters d. 10-11). Masters's emphasis of the attempt of identification of William-turned-Gopal with the sorrow of Gopal the Weaver's wife once he sees the dismal condition of her is a subtle presentation of the desire to be a part of the 'savages'. 'But her face was vivid before him. The heat of its love burned him [William].'(Masters d. 12)

Ironically, it does not take much time on William's part to forget her poor plight as soon as he meets the thugs and when Mary, his wife, asks her whether the poor widow is all right or not, he asks her 'She? Who?' However, what started as a trial to save the poor woman from becoming a Suttee gradually leads to the chain of the greater events, with William finally attempting to embrace the identity of a thug. The Thugs (originally derived from the Hindi word *ṭhag,* which means 'deceiver') were an organized gang of professional assassins, who would lure their victims, plunder them, and strangle them to death. William would become one of them only to catch them.

The desire to become something one is not and to deceive the deceivers is further complicated by Masters. Hussein, who helps William in his thug-hunting business, points out the qualities already possessed by William in order to 'become' an Indian – William speaks good Hindi and has dark eyes. Here Hussein instills in William the desire of mimicking an Indian in him. He further instructs William that, for this, what he has to do is to 'leave your [his] law behind and become an Indian'(Masters, d. 38).

William ruminates that only by being exposed to the culture of the thugs, could he

understand the 'real' India. He now considers himself truly a part of India which 'his race had held him back from complete absorption in it' (Masters d. 39-40) until now. His approach till then had been like an Orientalist, who has 'accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point …concerning the Orient, its people, customs… (Said 2-3)

William's encounter with goddess Kali highlights the tension between William's dual identities – the Indian and the European. During a ritualistic prayer to the goddess, Yasin, one of the deceivers, offers consecrated sugar to William and 'icicles of sweat' start to pour down William's head. He desperately wants to hold a cross amongst his fingers and does not want to swallow sugar, in the name of a goddess, who is strange and an alien figure. For him, she is the goddess of the 'Other', irrespective of William's attempt be a part of 'true' India. William tries to step out of his essential Englishness and takes the sugar offered to him by Yasin and swallows it. He hopes it to taste like death, but after he is finished he finds all his nausea accompanying him until now is gone. He comes back to his senses and prioritizes his mission over his religious inclination that his European identity ties him to. He could drink the milk offered to him without any hesitation, because now he is sure it 'was all rank superstition, and only the chill of the dawn and the remembered horrors of last night had upset his stomach.' (Masters d. 49)

The initiation of William into the discourse of Indian culture and his everyday attempt or hesitation to be a part of it is clearly illustrated when he murders Gopal the Weaver, the disguise of the man he has put on. Confronting him at the whore-house, William kills him in the exactly same manner a thug would kill his victim:

> The weighted end of the rumal flew into William's left hand with a precise and simple mastery. His wrists met, he jerked

them in and up against the side of Gopal's neck, under the ear…Gopal's head snapped sideways. His head cracked (Masters d. 52).

Though he attempts as an act of self-defense to continue to preserve his identity as a secret from the thugs, yet the act performed by William gives him warmth hitherto unknown to him. He has seen the thugs practicing them, but this is his first murder and he almost takes pride because he has done it 'cleanly, single-handed'. Only Hussein's bewildered gaze at him shakes him out of his 'exultation' (Masters d..52) and leads him back into the skin of William Savage, the Englishman.

The wavering between two different identities altogether at the same time grants William, in this case not a colonized but an Englishman, what Bhabha calls an 'interstitial space' and 'the overlap and displacement of domains of difference' (Bhabha 2). The feast where William sits to eat after murdering Gopal the Weaver highlights this overlapping of different spheres of identities for William. On the one hand, he was 'William Savage, taking ritual part in a blood-bathed, decorous fantasy.' (Masters d. 53) On the other, 'he was Gopal the Weaver, eating contentedly, with respect' (Masters d. 53).

William's disguise (as Gopal the Weaver) deceives many including Gopal's wife who initially mistook William to be Gopal. At the end William has to clarify this to her: 'I am not Gopal. I am William Savage. It was I who came last time to deceive you' (Masters d. 78). However, this disguise deriving from identification with an Indian also generates moments when William experiences conflict of identities. Such conflicts, however, are not long-lasting. William's imitation of the Indian is a form of mimicry which he sometimes engages in with a purpose, maybe to test his own standard as a soldier or to showcase the superiority of the English people.

Nightrunners of Bengali: Rodney Savage and his Love for India

In *Nightrunners of Bengal* too, there is an attempt on the part of Rodney Savage to identify with the Indians, to understand them and 'do good' to them. The goodness of Rodney is highlighted as early as in the beginning of the novel, where the hero of the novel dismounts his horse to pick up a 'pot-bellied brown infant' (Masters c. 17), the gardener's youngest son. The character of Rodney and his attempt to 'belong' to a different culture altogether is darkly contrasted with her wife Joanna's attitude right after this incident. She pledges Rodney to put the hat on their infant son, otherwise 'He'll get sunburnt and brown, like a subordinate's child' (Masters c. 18). Joanna's manners clearly disturb Rodney, as Masters deftly puts in when Joanna calls the Indians 'blacks' and in return is reprimanded by her husband, 'Joanna, will you *please* remember to call Indians by their race and caste, or, if you don't know, 'natives'?' (Masters c. 19)

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the destruction that came along with it shook Rodney's foundation in India and he went through almost a fit of insanity and rage after witnessing his wife and colleagues being murdered in front of his eyes. Unlike William Savage, the protagonist of *The Deceivers*, here Rodney has to put the dead sepoy Rambir's uniform in order to hide his European identity and escape. Hence, deceiving himself and also at the cost of deceiving the 'Other', can he retain his Englishness. His encounter with the rebels of Mutiny makes him forget his philanthropic purposes for India a while. Piroo, a former thug and now a subordinate under Rodeny, murders a sepoy so that his hat could fit Rodeny, as the uniform of Rambir was smaller for him. There lies an inherent tone of colonial superiority, where a man of Indian origin is murdered by an Indian to help the European escape. Only by slipping through the identity of an Indian and hiding his own and deceiving himself and the other

Indians – much in the manners of his father William Savage – Rodney can escape. To assume an Indian identity turns to be a compulsion for him and not a choice anymore.

But how does Rodney redeem himself and become the hero again? Peter Morey nicely states in *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (2000) that the village Chalisgon, where Rodney briefly stays during his flight, acts as 'the white man's fantasy island in a sea of troubles' (Morey 84). In a fit of insanity for what he has seen the Indians do to him, Rodney murders Prithvi Chand, a former friend of his and then he kills a young villager from Chalisgon who has indeed come to help him find food. Yet, no one form the village threatens him or tries to hand him over to the mutineers. Hence, Chalisgon is a place, where Rodney's faith in humanity, particularly in Indians can be restored. When the village is cholera-struck, Caroline urges Rodney to help them because

> At Gondwara victory is a stake; here, it's understanding, love. They're more important. They're more important for England too…We may all die. But if we're to be accepted in India it will be because of things like this – not victories or dams or telegraphs or doctors (Masters c. 296)

Rodney finds his faith back, adhering to Masters's good European myth, and at the end emerges as a true hero by letting the rebel Queen of Kishanpur, Sumitra, escape. He even promises to take Sumitra's boy, but not before slipping into his own clothes, with the finality of acknowledging his identity as a European: 'I'll take him, if you wish. I'll raise him with my own son. You [Sumitra] and I [Rodney] will never understand each other, but perhaps they will' (Masters c. 371)

Bhowani Junction: the Eurasian and her divided self

The racist attitude that Joanna, in *Nightrunners of Bengal*, manifests towards the

Indian community is repeated by Patrick Taylor, the Eurasian male protagonist of *Bhowani Junction*. This novel, however, is unique in the sense the protagonists are neither purely Indian nor purely British. They rather have a hybrid identity due to their Anglo-Indian or Euro-Asian roots. The novel portrays the twilight years of the British rule in India and it represents three communities and their struggles – the Indians, the Europeans and the Eurasians. Here, the novel's Eurasian female protagonist Victoria is in a failed search of her 'true' identity which apparently lies beyond her 'hybridity'. This quest for her identity makes her go through three different relationships – with the Eurasian Patrick, the Indian Hindu Sikh leader Ranjit and the European Colonel Rodney Savage. Her brief encounters with all these three men finally end up making her realize that she should stick to her Eurasian identity, itself a hybrid identity.

Victoria wears a sari which symbolizes her adherence to the Indian culture, though deep down she knows it can never be her true identity. She even goes to the extent of marrying Ranjit and changing her religion, to become a Sikh herself. But she leaves the ceremony midway and is quite sure of the fact that Ranjit did not need her. She can at the most be sympathetic towards the Indians or chide the racist Patrick who absolutely loathes them, but she can never become one of them, nor can she ever become one of the members of British community. Her short affair with Rodney highlights this fact even more. Her relationship with him is overtly sexual and does not have much of affection or love as part of it: 'To use Masters's own metaphor, they can meet in the same room, but they cannot live together in it' (Crane 128-129).

In the end, Victoria decides to get reunited to Patrick, another Eurasian, because she understands he alone could give her 'true' identity, because that is what she is – an Anglo-Indian, neither Indian, nor European.

Ranjit's mother, the sirdarni, tries to remind her of where she truly belongs:

> Have you ever met an Englishman who didn't insult you? Haven't your people worked for them for a hundred years? And now how they are going to reward you? You know. They're going to leave you here to us. And what do you think we're going to do? We're going to make you realize that you are Indians- inferior Indians, possibly disloyal Indians, because you've spent a hundred years licking England's boots and kicking us with your own boots that you're so proud of wearing (Masters a. 123-124).

Victoria receives a jolt, when Ranjit's mother picks up a mirror and hands it over to her. Her mind splits into two, as she contemplates over what actually her true identity is: 'I could appraise her [she herself as her own other] as honestly as she had been any other woman I might see in the street, because she was not 'me', Victoria Jones, the Anglo-Indian.' (Masters a.124)

Her half-Indian, half-English identity creates a gap between 'she and herself' as well between she and Ranjit whom she almost ended up marrying. She understands that there will always be a 'very delicate gauge screen or curtain hanging' (Masters, 1954, p.192) between Ranjit and herself. The barrier that exists between them is further echoed by Victoria when she narrates her experience to try to be Indian to Rodney 'it was awful, trying to be an Indian. No one understood me" (Masters a. 238).

Conclusion

A study of John Masters's three novels – *The Nightrunners of Bengal, The Deceivers,* and *Bhowani Junction* – reveals some underlying patterns and tropes, two of which can be summarized in conclusion.

First: Masters tells the story of the 'good European'. The idea of the European being a

father figure or a hero who desires to save the Indian race from their distress permeates the *Nightrunners of Bengal*. The essence of the 'good' European is illustrated through the character of Colonel Rodney Savage, who ultimately forgives the Indians and tries to understand them even after they have killed his wife and colleagues in front of his eyes, shortly after a brief spell of insanity and rage. He even helps the Queen of Kishanpur, Sumitra who rebelled against the Europeans, to escape. And in *Bhowani Junction* the female Eurasian protagonist Victoria chides the racist Eurasian Patrick every time he insults the Indians or calls them 'Wogs.'

In a positive light, these attitudes could also be understood as a 'genuine love' for the Indians and an attempt to break down the binary of the ruler/ruled. However, these attitudes of sympathy, forgiveness, and assistance are partly indicative of an attempt to project the idea of innate superiority of the European. These two opposite tendencies are strangely accommodated in Masters's narratives, creating, as they do, a set of 'aporias'. Indeed, as Jack Reynolds points out in his entry on Jacques Derrida in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, in the Derridean understanding, 'aporia' (originally meaning 'puzzle') is a kind of impasse or paradox associated with the notions of gift, hospitality, forgiveness. For Derrida, *genuine* gift, *genuine* hospitality, or *genuine* forgiveness involves the impossible. The idea of gift for example is paradoxically undermined by the demands of giving and taking or by self-interest and calculative reasoning. Idea of hospitality is undermined by the demands of superiority, mastery, ownership that create the self-identity of the host. Idea of forgiveness is also caught in an aporia insofar as forgiveness depends on calculative reasoning and not on any purely unconditional, self-less motive. The point here is that the feelings of sympathy, forgiveness, or love of Masters and his protagonists in relation to India or the Indians are suspended in an impasse where the genuineness of such feelings verges on the impossible.

Second: These aporias are linked to an impasse and irresolvable contradiction which set the self-defeating and self/other-deceiving desire in motion. In this connection, the motif of disguise or clothing into a new identity could be analyzed. The two Savages (William and Rodney) and Victoria are found changing into the Indian cloths to appear Indian. However, mere outward imitation does not guarantee one's acceptance among the 'natives'. There has to be a genuine desire to 'go native', to become one of them. To experience such a desire, let alone to fulfill it, is to experience psychological conflicts. This is because, in the end, no one can truly give up his 'roots' and fit himself into an altogether different culture and lifestyle. The question is not only about an Indian failing to completely become a European or vice versa. The problem is further extended to somebody who is born as Euro-Asian and desiring to belong either to the Indians or to the Europeans. Be it for an Indian or an Englishman, or an Anglo-Indian – the desire to identify with the 'Other' is shown to be self-defeating and self-deceiving. They might meet in the same room, or in the same narrative space. But they cannot do away with their diversity and get united. This seems to be a logical as well as a practical impossibility. This is true not only for the fictional narratives but also for John Masters himself – he who spent such a long time in India, fell attracted to India but in the end felt that India was disinterested in him, and that he should eventually adhere to his European identity. By recording the colonial experience from the perspective of an Englishman, John Masters helps re-visiting the ideas like mimicry, ambivalence, and interstice which define not only the colonized but can also help make sense of the colonizer as well.

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The Metempsychotic Birds: An Exploration of Samuel Beckett's Allusions to the Upanishads

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Abstract

This paper discusses references made to Indian culture and philosophy in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, tracing them back to their sources via Arthur Schopenhauer. The allusions induce a rethinking of the conventional Cartesian interpretation of *Murphy*, and reconsider the usage of compulsive voice and situational irony within the novel from an Upanishadic point of view. The paper then analyses *Waiting for Godot*, and questions whether Beckett might have effaced his early allusions to Indian religious thought or could he have ironically personified the Upanishadic allegory of dualism as Vladimir and Estragon confined to a stage containing a single tree?

[**Keywords:** Samuel Beckett, Indian philosophy, Upanishads, dualism, allegory]

Establishing Textual Parallels

In his German letter dated 7 July 1937, Samuel Beckett notes, "For in the forest of symbols that are no symbols, the birds of interpretation, that is no interpretation, are never silent" (Beckett 2009: 519). He writes this in a context where he appears to censure people, critics in particular, or the birds of interpretation, as being "hard of hearing" and incapable of remaining silent. This paper magnifies Beckett's choice of words and considers whether he might have allowed these birds of interpretation to travel through his first published novel *Murphy* and into his later play *Waiting for Godot*.

In another letter dated 17 July 1936, Samuel Beckett writes that he chose to keep Murphy's "death subdued and go on as coolly and finish as briefly as possible [. . .] because it seemed to me to consist better with the treatment of Murphy throughout, with the mixture of compassion, patience, mockery and 'tat twam asi' that I seem to have directed on him

throughout" (Beckett 1983: 102). Whilst *Murphy* along with Beckett's other works have yielded various critical exegeses vis-à-vis themes ranging from humour, ethics and aesthetics, scholars have so far largely ignored the phrase *tat twam asi*, loosely translated as "that you are", originally from the Chandogya Upanishad. Based on empirical evidence from Beckett's letters and the *Whoroscope* notebook, past critics have observed that Beckett adopted the phrase from the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, without intending any direct reference to Indian thought.As John Pilling notes for example, by the time Beckett began writing *Murphy*, his grasp of Schopenhauer had become "second nature", so much so that he dispensed with specific references (Pilling 1992: 14). My objective, on the contrary, is to expand this Schopenhauerian influence in *Murphy* and have it flow into a limited tract of Indian philosophy, as discussed in the Upanishads.

First, however, it is necessary to establish empirically the relation between *Murphy* and

Indian philosophy. One must account for the fact that there is as yet a complete lack of archival material to suggest that Beckett studied the Upanishads, although the Bangladeshi playwright Sayeed Ahmed recalls in a newspaper interview that during his meetings with Beckett in Paris, Beckett would ask him probing questions about the Upanishadic philosophy. A major advantage is that *Murphy* and the Upanishads are essentially works of art, not cut and dried philosophical treatises, and consequently merit a comparative literary analysis, if nothing else. Beckett is not interested in delving into ontological disputes, just as the Upanishads "would not be considered philosophical in the modern, academic sense" (Britannica).Also, Schopenhauer, who stands as a common denominator that links Beckett to Indian Philosophy, is often compared to "a wisdom writer" rather than a philosopher (O'Hara 254).

At the start of *Murphy*, there are several references that are directly relevant to the Upanishads. In the first chapter, we learn that Murphy visits Neary several times and sits at his feet (Beckett 1957: 3). This, as annotated in *Demented Particulars*(2004), might refer to the term "Upanishad", the Sanskrit etymology of which can be translated as "sitting down near" or "sitting close to" the guru or the teacher's feet in order to gain spiritual knowledge (Ackerley2004: 32). Thus, if an immediate parallel is to be drawn, one could regard Murphy as a character curious about the Upanishads, and could further claim that the author was at least aware of the existence of this central body of early Sanskrit text.

In addition to the general definition, the term "Upanishad" also originally meant "'connection' or 'equivalence' and was used in reference to the homology between aspects of the human individual and celestial entities or forces that increasingly became primary features of Indian cosmology" (Britannica).This second meaning markedly coincides with the fact that Murphy

pedantically follows the astrological chart or "ThemaCoeli With Delienations Compiled By Ramaswami Krishnaswami Narayanaswami Suk" (Beckett 1957: 32).What's more, the first three parts of the compiler's name are Indian, with the suffix *swami* signifying "holy man". The prefix of the first two parts from left to right are the major avatars of Vishnu – Rama, from the Ramayana, and Krishna, from the Mahabharata – while the third, Narayana, is an alternative name for Vishnu, the preserver of the cosmos in Hinduism. The Vaishnavas or the monotheistic followers of Vishnu regard their God as the personification of the Brahman, the all-pervasive self beyond verbal grasp, or the *tat* from *tat twamasi*, a concept immediately relevant to Murphy's design as a character.

To further this heuristic approach, Neary's ability to stop his heart in "situations irksome beyond endurance" is relevant, added to the hand gestures that he practices corresponding to *murdras* (3). As annotated by Chris Ackerley, "the relation between heart rate and respiration permits the individual to exercise some control by means of sustained expiration" (Ackerley 2004: 32), which contextually refers to *pranayama*, the control of breath or vital power. In the Chandogya Upanishad (I.5), breath plays a central role, as elaborated by Max Müller, a nineteenth century German scholar of comparative language, religion, and mythology (Britannica), "The breath in the mouth, or the chief breath, says Om, i.e. gives permission to the five senses to act, just as the sun, by saying Om, gives permission to all living beings to move about" (Müller 1879: 12). Thus, having control over his breath, not only is Neary capable of stopping his heart, but he can also supposedly liberate his self from quotidian necessities such as drinking water and he can also annul "the pangs of hopeless sexual inclination" (3). What is more, Neary has acquired his knowledge of *pranayama* "somewhere north of the Nerbudda" (3), more commonly known as the river Narmada that

runs across the central states of India. However, as far as the plot is concerned, Neary has clearly failed in his venture of suppressing his desires, which are directed instead "'To gain the affections of Miss Dwyer'" (4).

Lastly, the narrator reveals that Neary's "first deserted wife was alive and well in Calcutta" (61), and Miss Counihan is said to have a clandestine correspondence with "a Hindu polyhistor of dubious caste. He had been writing for many years, still was and trusted he would be granted Prana to finish, a monograph". His inspiration is that his feet " ''ave gut smaller than the end of the needle''', so that his chances of levitating seem distinctly possible (196). It would not be implausible to suppose that the Hindu, following Beckett's interpretation of the Vedic trend, is allegorizing rather than speaking literally. The feet, in this context, represent the *sthulasharira* or the gross body, which the Hindu needs to reject in order " 'to be up in the air'", or metaphorically to identify with the Brahman. Thus, the novel contains a series of allusions to Indian religio-philosophical culture throughout much of the text.

The Dual World of *Murphy*

In *Murphy*, Beckett sketches two worlds: "the big world", the macrocosm, or the phenomenal world of "*Quid pro quo*", and the "little" world, the microcosm, or Murphy's mind as detailed in the sixth chapter of the novel (6-7). The conventional interpretation of this duality stems from the Cartesian system advocating, in Beckett's own words, the split between "a body and a mind" (109). However, considering that Beckett was immersed in Schopenhauer around this time, if *Murphy* is examined from a Schopenhauerian perspective, it is ascertainable that the phenomenal world or "the big world" depicted in *Murphy* also resembles the world as will, "a mindless, aimless, non-rational urge at the foundation of our instinctual drives, and at the

foundational being of everything" (Wicks 2010). As distinct from "the big world", the little world corresponds to the world as representation, "the world of appearances, of our ideas, or of objects" (Wicks 2010). These two worlds are reworded by Schopenhauer as "*The Inner and Outer Nature of the World*", which is exactly the phrase Beckett uses in the sixth chapter of *Murphy*, while describing his protagonist's mind.

The association between Beckett and Schopenhauer rather than Beckett and Descartes is further established by the fact that Beckett jotted down a short passage in German in August 1936, shortly after completing *Murphy*, which Mark Nixon translates: "There are moments when the veil of hope is finally torn apart and the liberated eyes see their world, as it is, as it must be. Unfortunately it does not last long, the revelation quickly passes. The eyes can only bear such pitiless light for a short while, the membrane of hope grows again and one returns to the world of phenomena" (Nixon 2006). As Mark Nixon indicates in his notes, the concepts discussed in this short passage are not wholly dissimilar to the Schopenhauerian idea of the " 'veil of Maya', which normally keeps human persons in the world of illusion, i.e., the world of phenomena" (Pothast 2008: 14). Thus Murphy is also restrained to the world of *illusion*, despite his attempts to shift to the "little" world.

By equating the phrase *tat twamasi* with the concept of *Maya*, illusion or appearance of the phenomenal world, a correlation is manifested between Murphy's "Separation order" (34), which is based ironically on the suggestion of an astrologer with Indian names, and the Upanishadic concept of Brahman and Maya. On the one hand, there is the world constituted of characters that are *composmentis* according to "the complacent scientific conceptualism" of mainstream psychology (176-7). They conform to the mechanisms of *prakriti*, which can be loosely

juxtaposed to the Western concept of Nature: they belong to the world as will, as epitomised by Celia, around whom much of the novel revolves. On the other hand, there is the world of pure perception, as personified by Mr. Endon: he belongs to the world as representation. Murphy, in Beckett's words from *Proust*, solicits the pure subject (Mr. Endon), so that he "may pass from a state of blind will to a state of representation" (Beckett 1931: 89). This state of representation, moreover, is distinct from the worldly thinking minds that Neary and Wylie possess, which regard the existential angst caused by impending death as a preeminent impasse. In *Murphy*'s often-cited sixth chapter, Beckett describes Murphy's mind as "a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without" (107) in contrast to Mr. Kelly's clockwork cerebrum or Celia's brain congruent with the body (18), both of which are "not what he (Murphy) understood by consciousness" (110). Furthermore, Beckett explains, "Wylie's way of looking was as different from Murphy's as a *voyeur's* from a *voyant's*" (90). In this case, again, a link between Beckett and the Upanishads can be drawn via the Schopenhauerian interpretation of the world as representation (*voyant*), or the Brahman, that which Murphy is trying to attain, in contrast to the world as will (*voyeur*), the world of *prakriti* governed by illusions, or the fictive world captured in the novel.

Moreover, the relationship between Murphy and the rest of the characters can be juxtaposed with the intimate bond connecting the Hindu polyhistor to his monograph and by extension Beckett to his novel. Just as Murphy is restrained to the *prakritic* world, Beckett is forced to cater to "demented particulars" (13), or designate actual details and incidents in order to comply with the praxis of the novel as a literary genre. Again, a similarity can be retraced in *The World as Will and Representation*, where Schopenhauer suggests that since the concept of *tat twamasi* is

beyond words, the Vedic writers were forced to allegorize (Schopenhauer 1966: 55-6). And since Beckett is similarly restricted in terms of his authority as an author, he is forced to allegorize the *tat twamasi* attitude of Murphy. By associating Murphy with a molting bird migrating from one cage to another at the start of the novel, Beckett is able to capture, as indicated in his subsequent *Three Novels*, "a gallery of moribunds. Murphy, Watt, Yerk, Mercier and all the others", as they migrate from one story to another (Beckett 2009:132).

Beckett's Upanishadic Characters

What is intriguing at this point is that Beckett's metaphorically metempsychotic birds are not only restricted to his own oeuvre, but they date back to the Upanishads. In order to describe the duality between what Beckett calls *voyeur* and *voyant*, the Svetasvatara and the Mundaka Upanishads use the allegory of two birds: "Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating", as translated by Müller whom Beckett might have read (Müller 2, 38). To elucidate the passage, the following verse of the Upanishad compares the first bird eating the fruit to a grieving man, immersed and bewildered by his own impotence, or in Schopenhauerian terms self-driven by will and condemned to suffering. The second bird is the observer, or a self in will-less contemplation. However, the two birds are inextricably attached to the same tree, which represents *prakriti*.

On considering this Upanishadic image, one cannot help wondering whether Beckett might have had the scenario in mind while writing *Waiting for Godot*, first staged in 1953. The play, like the verse from the Upanishad, involves two characters, who appear to be circling around a single tree. The first, Estragon, represents the self, driven by will and immersed in *prakriti*. In contrast to the Hindu of dubious caste in *Murphy*, Estragon is stuck to gross materiality, symbolized by the

fact that his feet have grown so large that his boots no longer fit him. The second character, Vladimir, personifies the person engaged in contemplation. Despite knowing that there is nothing to be done, he keeps thinking out of his hat, as it were, and raising philosophical questions that his partner Estragon fails to reciprocate. The single tree on stage could then symbolize *prakriti*, which the two characters cannot escape throughout their two acts, just as the birds remain perched on the same tree in the Upanishads, and similar to the way Murphy cannot stop thinking of Celia until his death.

However, the two characters from the drama are equally chained to their common pursuit for Godot, the "effaced" Brahman, that which cannot be encountered or described. Consequently, the question that supersedes the question of whether the two characters would ever meet Godot or whether Murphy might have identified with the Brahman shortly before his death is whether it is possible for Beckett or any artist to capture in words or on stage the phenomenon of such a meeting? Or is Beckett perpetually condemned to recreate the image of the two birds in the Upanishads, at best by effacing it?

According to Vedantic philosophy, "it is *netineti*(not this, not that) [...] that characterizes [...] language in relation to the real" (Coward 1990: 86). Similarly, Beckett's points of departure are Geulincx's "Ubinihil vales, ibinihilvelis", and Democritus' "Nothing is more real than nothing'" (Murphy 1994: 224). However, while Beckett keeps his audience entertained with an endless regression in *Waiting for Godot*, he is forced to overcome the inevitable verbal impasse of having to describe Murphy's possible unity with the Brahman by sacrificing his protagonist to fire. Here again, there is a conspicuous homogeneity between this sacrifice and the depiction of aspirants of the Brahman state in the Chandogya Upanishad (4.15.5): "Now, whether or not the funeral rites are performed for such men as these, they

merge into a flame" (Zaehner 1966: 109). Consequently, it remains to be decided whether Murphy attains the state of Brahman, just as it remains to be seen whether Vladimir and Estragon will ever encounter Godot. What could be asserted (at least within the bounds of this paper) is that *Murphy* and *Waiting for Godot* depict undertakings to attain the Brahman, both of which result in unavoidable failure.

Beckett might have written his "drama" or "play" of *Waiting for Godot*to coincide with the Indian concept of *lila*, loosely translated as "a self-chosen play at bondage" (Aurobindo 2003: 305), or as per Beckett's direction of *Warten auf Godot*by the Schiller-Theatre Company, "It is a game, everything is a game" (Asmus1975: 23-4). (In fact, there is a UK based group called Lila Dance who have performed "The Incredible Presence of a Remarkable Absence", a re-imagining of the world created in *Waiting for Godot,* based on the Indian perspective of *lila*.) As for *Murphy*, the thirteen chapters of the novel can be regarded as the thirteen Upanishads, which begin with a salutation to the sun, as in *Murphy*, and end with "Shantihshantihshantih" echoing Beckett's recurrent *"All out. All out. All out"* (Beckett 1957: 281-2). In this final case, Beckett might have drawn the association to the Upanishads via T. S. Eliot's ending of *The Waste Land*, which as Eliot notes, is also "a formal ending to an Upanishad. 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is a feeble translation of the content of this word."

To conclude, Beckett might have thus effaced the early traces of a haphazard and thus comically ironic Indian religio-philosophical sub-text from *Murphy* so perfectly that by the time he got to *Waiting for Godot* there was only the drama left to twitter for itself. The metempsychotic 'birds of interpretation', having migrated through his early novels, are corporeally transformed into Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*.

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The Jewel in the Crown

Colonized or Self-Colonizer: A Generational Journey Through Independence in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

The British Raj was established in India by Queen Victoria in 1858, and Britain remained the dominant power structure until Indian Independence in 1947. Though many novels as well as works of critical scholarship attempt to capture elements of the British Empire's presence in India and its psychological effects on the citizens of India, less attention has been paid to the comparison of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. When examining these two texts closely, it becomes clear that Forster's novel exists as a narrative of a single moment of British Imperialism, whereas Roy's novel presents a multigenerational approach to describing effects of the British Empire. These different perspectives and historical contexts affect the characters' ability to transcend the continuous cycle of colonizer turned colonized. The juxtaposition of a colonial text composed by an English author with a postcolonial text written by an Indian author within the context of Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* provides an illuminating perspective on the evolution of the intertwined colonizer/colonized relationship and displays the potential to mitigate the lingering psychological effects of imperialism.

[**Key Words:** Albert Memmi, colonizer, colonized, postcolonialism, British Empire]

Introduction

Both *A Passage to India* and *The God of Small Things* were written about the British Empire's presence in India and share similar psychological themes throughout. However, the two novels develop representations of the colonizer and the colonized through strikingly different narrative backgrounds and forms. E.M. Forster's approach to a critique of imperialism comes from a colonial, British perspective, and addresses one brief period of time in the history of Anglo-India, whereas Roy's text approaches the subject from a postcolonial, multi-generational narrative form. This fundamental difference between the two authors creates many crucial points of variance in the expression of the colonizer/colonized relationship when placed in comparison postcolonially. This comparison exposes the psychological effects of colonialism which are illuminated by the reactions of the Indian characters in each novel—in particular, Dr. Aziz, and the Nawab Bahadur from Forster's text, and Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu, Rahel, and Estha from Roy's text—to their Western colonizers and their ability or lack thereof to blend British and Indian identity.

A. Memmi: The "mythical portrait of the colonized"

To better understand the terms of comparison, it is useful to first establish the concept of the colonizer and colonized. French-Tunisian author Albert Memmi, in *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* briefly addresses his own relationship with the colonization of Tunisia. His deeply personal experience with colonialism lends credibility to his text, but he then applies his experience to create a description of imperialism and its effects in general terms. Broadening the scope allows Memmi's text to be applied to all colonial legacies beyond Tunisia. Memi's text is useful when assessing the effects of British rule in India within Forster's and Roy's novels. Crucial to such an examination is Memmi's description of the "colonized" and their reaction to a long history of colonization.

In describing the colonized, Memmi argues that much of the colonized identity is generated by the colonizer. This is what he describes as the "mythical portrait of the colonized," to which he devotes an entire chapter (Memmi 80-89)[1] The identity that the colonizer imposes upon the colonized is the most crucial part of colonization because the threatof the colonizer and their imposed identity on the colonized results in "a certain adherence of the colonized to colonization" (88). Though this is an integral part of successful colonization, Memmi does not believe it to be the final step in the process. He states that

> It is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept this role. The bond between colonizer and colonized is thus destructive and creative. It destroys and re-creates the two partners of colonization into colonizer and colonized … Just as the colonizer is tempted to accept his part, the colonized is forced to accept being colonized (89).

Thus, Memmi suggests that the colonized must identify with the colonizer at some point. This stage is what he considers to be the final act of the colonized preceding revolt. The colonized's acceptance of colonization is reflected through several characters in *A Passage to India* and *The God of Small Things.*Memmi's philosophy, when applied to these characters, allows for a historical, critical approach to exploring the overarching legacy of colonialism, and whether the Indian characters from either text successfully reconcile both British and Indian facets of culture into their own personal identities, or if, in the process, the colonized characters inevitably identify with the colonizer as Memmi predicts.

B. Forster, Roy and Mirror Civilizations

Both Forster and Roy's Indian characters represent facets of Memmi's critical text. However, Memmi's description of the colonized's affinity for the colonizer, is more easily identifiable in Roy's text because the novel was written postcollonially and includes three generations of characters that bridge the gap of Indian independence. *A Passage to India* still resonates strongly with Memmi's text, but was published in 1924, twenty-three years before India's independence from the British Empire. This difference in historical context as well as the "moment in time" nature of Forster's book vs. the "generational" nature of Roy's, shows individuals within the nation of India in two different stages of colonial identity. *The God of Small Things* demonstrates a nation that consists of a blended conglomeration of colonizer and colonized. Roy accomplishes this by incorporating voices of a pre-independence generation, an independence generation, and a post-independence generation within her text. Contrastingly, Forster's novel captures the British Empire and the Indian people

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[1] Memmi's text also devotes separate chapters to detailed definitions of 'the colonizer who refuses' and the 'colonizer who accepts' in his text.

through the European gaze and sets up a starker dichotomy of colonizer and colonized.

A Passage to India, though focused on an acute moment in history, maintains a critique of the British Empire throughout. The most prominent character and protagonist of the novel, Dr. Aziz exists as a colonized subject. His close friendship with Cyril Fielding and his eagerness to please his supposed friends Mrs. Moore and Adela is what first forms his relationship as the colonized with the colonizer. Dr. Aziz ingratiates himself with Mrs. Moore and Adela in his constant attempts to fulfil their wish to see "the real India." Throughout the entire beginning of the novel, Aziz's goal is to "unlock his country for her" (Forster 73). Though he is still proud of his country, Aziz attempts close friendship with Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and Adela. Though Aziz becomes less of an Anglophile as the novel progresses, particularly after Adela's rape accusation, he can be seen desiring that which is English throughout the first half of the novel.

When associating with English guests in a building of British style, "Aziz thought of his bungalow with horror. It was a detestable shanty near a low bazaar ... I [Aziz] wish I lived here" says Aziz when examining the structure "with little rooms, now Europeanized ..." (73-4). Though he lives comfortably as an Indian man in India, he covets the British orderliness and is embarrassed by his own home. He displays Memmi's theory that "Now the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He [the colonized] scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions ..." (Memmi 103). Dr. Aziz is ashamed of his own home when he compares it to British orderly style despite the fact that Indian architecture is one of the only remaining signs of life for Indian identity.

Not only is Aziz's material passion for what is British highlighted in the novel, his intense desire for the friendship of Mrs. Moore is also alarming. He seeks the colonizer's approval and states that "She [Mrs. Moore] was perfect as always, his dear Mrs. Moore ... There was nothing he would not do for her. He would die to make her happy" (Forster 145). Dr. Aziz's veneration of British architectural style and his intense need to please Mrs. Moore demonstrates Memmi's idea of the colonized's movement toward identifying with the colonizer. Though Dr. Aziz does seem quite taken with the English, he still maintains doubts about their presence and their opinion of India. Aziz feels that "When his spirits were up he felt that the English are a comic institution, and he enjoyed being misunderstood by them. But it was an amusement of the emotions and nerves, which an accident or the passage of time might destroy; it was apart from the fundamental gaiety that he reached when he was with those whom he trusted" (56). This suggests that Aziz's affinity for the English is not result of real friendship and trust of them, but rather a nervous reaction to their imperial might. This tenuous relationship between Aziz and the Englishmen/women he encounters in the text foreshadows the marring of his identity and his distancing from the English after Adela's rape accusation.

The most prominent friendship that is destroyed in Forster's text is that between Aziz and Fielding. Despite Fielding's tolerant nature and desire to maintain his friendship with Dr. Aziz, the relationship is severed in the end of the book. Aziz expresses his belief that a friendship between the two of them would only be possible if the British Empire withdrew from India. Scholar, Ahmad Baker expands on the dissolution of Fielding and Aziz's friendship. Baker describes the idea that the land and environment of India reject friendships between Indians and the British. He uses the failed friendship between Aziz and Fielding to illuminate his point. Baker

focuses on the passage in which Fielding questions, "Why can't we be friends now … but the horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file …" (315-16). The colonizer/colonized relationship has become so deeply, psychologically rooted that "Forster acknowledges the need for India to be free before such a friendship can take place …" (Baker 72). Scholar Sara Suleri also examines this passage in a chapter of her book *The Rhetoric of English India.* In her work she cites Forster's statement that "When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has to go, my sense of the truth forbids anything so comfortable" (as cited in Suleri 132)[2] Ultimately, Aziz fulfills Memmi and Forster's prophecy and is unable to maintain his Anglophilia, falling out of friendship with Fielding, Adela, and Mrs. Moore who all return to England.

Another character within Forster's novel that shows Anglophilic tendencies is the Nawab Bahadur, He is a wealthy, Muslim, Indian who spoils his generosity on the English. When he hires a chauffeur to pick Ronny and Adela up on the roadside, he is described as,

> Trying to look and feel like a European, the chauffer interposed aggressively. He still wore a topi, despite the darkness, and his face, to which the Ruling Race had contributed little beyond bad teeth, peered out of it pathetically, and seemed to say, "What's it all about? Don't worry me so, you blacks and whites. Here I am, stuck in dam India same as you, and you

got to fit me in better than this (Forster 98).

Though parts of the Nawab Bahadur remain Indian, for instance, his Indian hat, he believes that he is "stuck" in India as well. This suggests that he would rather not be there and that perhaps he would prefer a place like Britain. Upon interacting more with Ronny and Adela, he becomes more uncertain of his own identity. He feels that

> "When English and Indians were both present, he grew self-conscious, because he did not know to whom he belonged. For a little he was vexed by opposite currents in his blood, then they blended, and he belonged to no one but himself" (98).

The text suggests that the Nawab Bahadur, in this moment, successfully creates his own identity by combining East and West. However, he becomes a key financial asset to Aziz's trial at the end of the novel and chooses to give up the title that the English gave him in response to their treatment of Dr. Aziz. This would suggest that his blending of cultures is not sustainable.

The many attempts to unite Indian and British culture within *A Passage to India* fail, suggesting that, particularly at that point in the history of the British Empire, it was impossible. However, if examined through a different perspective and during periods of India's relationship with Britain, it is interesting to see how the colonizer/colonized relationship develops. The comparison of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* to Forster's text helps put this development on display. *The God of Small Things* is written in a non-chronological fashion from different characters' perspectives, and in doing so, creates a unique generational lens through which the reader can experience British imperialism and its lingering psychological effects. Part of understanding the damage colonialism has on India in Roy's text hinges on the relationship between the colonizer and

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[2] Suleri also explains her own take of Forster's novel and the possibility of friendship between East and West during colonialism. She states that "If *A Passage to India* attempts to engender an illusion of cross-cultural conversation, then it is a dialogue that is highly conscious of the limits rather than the expansiveness of cultural sympathy" (Suleri 132).

the colonized and its progression through the pre-independence, independence, and finally post-independence generations.

The Ipe family resides in Kerala. This is an important choice of geographic setting because Kerala has a rich and complex history of colonization. The Ipe family identifies with Christianity, most likely as a result of Portugal's previous colonial and missionary efforts. Roy establishes that "Twenty percent of Kerala's population were Syrian Christians, who believed that they were descendants of the one hundred Brahmins whom St. Thomas the Apostle converted to Christianity when he traveled East after the Resurrection" (Roy 64). Despite their Christian practices, they still maintain some Hindu traditions as well. The family perpetuates the caste system despite the fact that as Christians, they should be casteless. Roy describes the psychological effect of this conglomeration of East and West as "having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all" (71).The synthesis of identity, in this case, leads to identity loss.

One character who perpetuates this synthesis is Pappachi, who is part of the pre-independence generation of the Ipe family. He exists very much in colonial India. He is a colonized individual who seems to accept British rule. Chacko, Pappachi's son, describes Pappachi as "an incurable British CCP, which was short for *chi-chi poach* and in Hindi meant shit-wiper. Chacko said that the correct word for people like Pappachi was *Anglophile*" (Roy 50). Pappachi affiliates himself with the English in as many ways as he can.He shows his Anglophilia by working for the government as an Imperial Entomologist. He answers to British rule, but when he discovers a new species of moth, his work is not recognized. The Englishmen in charge of taxonomic labeling claim that Pappachi's moth is a variation of a species that has already been discovered. However, they later give away the naming rights of the moth to another man who discovers it again. Though it

is unclear whether this second man is British or Indian, it is the Englishmen who control the naming rights and who take them away from Pappachi. The novel describes that "His [Pappachi's] life's greatest setback was not having had the moth that he had discovered named after him" (Roy .48). This is a prime example of Memmi's description of the "Situations of the Colonized." He explains that "As long as he [the colonized] tolerates colonization, the only possible alternatives for the colonized are assimilation or petrification" (Memmi 102). This psychological response further unravels Pappachi's identity and causes him to lash out more, physically and emotionally against his wife and family.

Along with Pappachi, Baby Kochamma lives most of her life within the era of the British Empire's occupation of India. Throughout the entire novel, Baby Kochamma cannot seem to reconcile both British and Indian identities,despite her self-righteous nature. She supports the caste system, as seen when she frames Velutha, the Paravan, for rape, but the caste system is Hindu and she claims to be Christian. Susan Friedman explains that "Roy's attack on the persistence of caste politics in Kerala begins with the irony of the Syrican Christian family's outraged response to the violation of the Hindu caste laws. As Christians, they should not share in the Hindu prohibition against touch" (Friedman 255). Yet, this pre-independence generation of the family all maintain connections to both.

Baby Kochamma's entire life is described as a battle between her Indian identity and the Western world viewthat was imposed upon her. She is more than simply the colonized who "accepts", in Memmi's terms. She is the colonized who embraces colonization. Baby Kochamma displays her Western tendencies frequently and unabashedly. She followed "American NBA league games, one-day cricket and all the Grand Slam tennis tournaments. On weekdays she watched *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Santa Barbara...*" (Roy 28). Baby

Kochamma's affinity to Christianity and American, as well as British television, illustrate Memmi's idea of the colonized adopting the culture of the colonizer. In his text, Memmi presents his own example of French colonization of Tunisia and how the Tunisian Jews "passionately endeavored to identify themselves with the French. To them the West was the paragon of all civilizations, all culture. The Jew turned his back happily on the East. He chose the French language, dressed in the Italian style and joyfully adopted every idiosyncracy of the Europeans" (Memmi. xiv). Chacko admits this same response in his family as well. He applies Memmi's theory to the Ipe family and describes them all as "Anglophiles" and this is "because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves" (Roy 51-52). Baby Kochamma actively displays all of these characteristics of the colonized that both Memmi and Chacko describe.

Baby Kochamma carefully maintains the cultural and economic benefits of being an unmixable blend of both a Brahman Hindu and a Syrian Christian—both top tiers of Eastern and Western hierarchies. Her incessant struggle to keep her family's social position is a result of "ancient, age-old fear. The fear of being dispossessed" (Roy 67). This is the same fear that Memmi describes in context to French colonization of Tunisia and the same fear that drives Dr. Aziz's desire to please the English. This fear of dispossession is what traps the colonized in a perpetual, deformed identity that eventually forces self-colonization and reiteration of their colonizer's ideals.

Baby Kochamma's inability to embrace the British and remain Indian also shows through her interaction with others in the novel. She resents anyone who resists the same cultural manipulation that she so readily embraced

and particularly. This struggle is especially apparent in how she feels about Ammu "because she saw her quarreling with a fate that Baby Kochamma herself felt she had graciously accepted" (44-5). The fate that Baby Kochamma refers to in this passage is that of a "Man-less woman", but her resentment is also more broad in nature. She dislikes Ammu because she displays signs of resisting hierarchy, and in turn, colonization. Her resentful attitude and the pleasure that she takes in the troubles of those around her is explained by Veena Shukla. Shukla states that "If we have a look at this rude behavior from a psychological perspective, we will find a binary opposition of exploiter/exploited working here" (Shukla 967). Baby Kochamma's constant affinity for the colonizer and the ruling class of the hierarchies that dominate her life is her fulfilling Memmi's psychological theory of the colonized turned self-colonizer.

The novel does not only show Baby Kochamma's and Pappachi's perspective. It puts on display the progression of identity struggle through three generations. Ammu demonstrates the effects of the generational evolution of ideals within the Ipe family as well. Ammu and Chacko grew up with their lives sandwiching Indian independence. Yet, they are not as deeply rooted in the psychological foundations of the colonized as Baby Kochamma and Pappachi are. Other characters, Baby Kochamma specifically, recognize this difference in ideology in Ammu throughout the novel. Ammu's mode of social resistance is described as her "Unsafe Edge" or the "air of unpredictability" (Roy 44). She is described as a woman attempting to fight for "an unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (44). Though Ammu's resistance comes initially in the form of being a *divorced* daughter from and *intercommunity love* marriage," it is clear that she is fighting against the social hierarchies that were firmly instituted by her former colonizers and

perpetuated by the previous generation of her family.

This resistance of the formerly colonized takes its form, via Ammu, as an attempt to redefine identity. Ammu rejects social laws with her marital choice and, most tragically, through her affair with Velutha, a Paravan. Her desire for redefinition is more subtly displayed in the airport when the family picks up Sophie Mol. When Estha misbehaves by not asking Sophie Mol "How do you do", Ammu "felt somehow humiliated by this public revolt in her area of jurisdiction. She had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo-British Behavior Competition" (139). Upon first examination, this passage appears to show Ammu's attempt to stomp out resistance in her children and train them to be Anglophiles. However, if examined in conjunction with Ammu's own resistance against the colonizer, it shows her attempt to redefine her family's Indian identity. Roy elaborates on this struggle in her book *Power Politics*. She describes that even "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the "cultural insult." As citizens we're still caught up in the business of 'disproving' the white world's definition of us" (Roy 13). If seen within the context of Roy's nonfiction, Ammu forces her children to speak English at the airport and wants them to behave politely because she is attempting to disprove what Memmi would call the colonizer's "mythical portrait of the colonized" as "inferior and wicked, lazy and backward" (Memmi 83). She is attempting to undo eighty-nine years of colonial damage.

This act, though incredibly important to understanding Ammu's desires, is merely a precursor to her final and monumental act of rebellious resistance—her affair with Velutha. This intimate act is a complete transgression of both the caste laws and colonizers' laws. Once again, Ammu makes the decision to act out against the establishment of hierarchy. However, this transgression is not only

important in and of itself; its placement at the end of the novel emphasizes the true magnitude of what hersand Velutha's abandonment of the 'Love Laws' implies. The scene is a beautiful depiction of their choice to eradicate the laws of touchability, if even just for a moment in history. The abandonment of "Love Laws" is initially addressed in conversation between Chacko and the twins much earlier in the novel. Chacko admits to Rahel when she asks if Ammu can love Sophie Mol more than her that "Anything's possible in Human Nature ... Love. Madness. Hope. Infinite joy" (Roy 112). These words are then repeated at the very end of the novel when Ammu and Velutha contemplate their decision: "Without admitting it to each other or themselves, they linked their fates, their futures (their Love, their Madness, their Hope, their Infinite Joy) to his [the small spider living in the History House]"[3] (320). Both Ammu and Chacko understand (though only Ammu has the courage to act) that the acts of defiance against Hindu, Portuguese, and colonialist hierarchies is the only progressive step towards breaking the overarching legacy of colonialism. This suggests that though it did not remedy the struggle against colonialism in Ammu's life and did bring about the death of Velutha, these acts against the hierarchy remaining in a postcolonial society are necessary for the redefinition of Indian identity.

The final generation within the novel to express the hope of transcending the identity of the "mythical portrait of the colonized" is that of Rahel and Estha. Throughout the novel, both twins seem to dance around the border of the identity of the colonized. They were born after independence, but it is clear

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[3] The 'small spider' is one of the 'Small Things' that Ammu and Velutha find within and around the History House: "They chose him [the spider] because they knew that they had to put their faith in fragility. Stick to Smallness. Each time they parted, they extracted only one small promise from each other: *Tomorrow? Tomorrow*" (Roy 321).

from Memmi's book and from Roy's text itself that the colonizers' legacy does not simply disappear with independence. Scholar Aida

Balvannanadhan explains that when Estha is asked to testify against Velutah, he "is nameless, and therefore cannot give his version of the events as he belongs to a hybrid space, begotten in an intercommunity, inter-religious love marriage and living with a divorced mother who has not yet made her choice between her husband's or her father's name" (Balvannanadhan 99). Both Estha and Rahel have uncertain identities and are unsureto whom they belong. This directly illustrates the tragic and multi-generational effects of colonization on the identity of the colonized. The namelessness that the twins encounter is similar to the confused identity that the Nawab Bahadur and Dr. Azizexperience in Forster's novel. Yet, the twins continue to defy being defined whether conscious or not. Rahel's and Estha's most dramatic act of defiance also comes at the end of the novel, just before Ammu's. They engage in an intimate relationship in the second-to-last chapter. This stands out from the text as an act against a universally accepted incest taboo. This transgression functions for the twins and the novel the same way that Ammu's affair with Velutha does. The abandonment of the love laws and societal taboos demonstrates movement toward freedom from the lingering psychological effects of colonialism.

C. Call to Action

Each novel provides its own suggestion for the mitigation of the psychological damage that the British Empire caused. The call to action proposed by *A Passage to India* is the departure of the British from India. Forster's novel helps illuminate the psychological

struggle of the colonized, but because it was written pre-independence, it leaves the remaining question of how to deal with the long-lingering effects of colonialism and its hierarchical structure unaddressed. *The God of Small Things* answers through its generational approach. The novel shows that, though the victims of colonialist rule cannot escape the psychological damage that the colonizers inflicted in the past, acts of defiance against all hierarchy can provide brief moments of extreme beauty and pleasure in the present as well as empowerment for an identity outside of the framework of colonialism in the future.

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Manifestations of Social Darwinism in Colonial Reflections: A Study of the Writings of Sahibs, Memsahibs and Others

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Abstract

The Orient has always conjured up images of an exotic land, mystic practices, of snake charmers and tight rope walkers. Contemporary fiction reinforced these images. However, the literature of the Raj is not confined to the writers of fiction alone. A vast body of literature which is largely unexplored yet exists. This comprises the writings of the Sahibs, the Memsahibs, the missionaries and other sundry visitors to India. The present paper explores these myriad images to ascertain the designs and patterns of writings on India. The paper also attempts to explore the motives if any behind the emerging frameworks of these diverse writings.

[**Key Words:** Social Darwinism, Orientalism, Occidental, Imperialism, Indologists, Colonialism]

The European Renaissance ushered in a spirit of enquiry and exploration. Geographical discoveries, scientific inventions, growth and appreciation of the arts were some of its essential features. Kings and nobles vied with each other to patronize the arts and learning for which one of the prerequisites was of course large quantities of money. Colonies represented power and pelf, while the search for and acquisition of colonies also satisfied the spirit of enquiry and exploration. And so Europe went about acquiring colonies across the globe, principally in Africa and Asia. The first dictum of Colonialism of course was that the colonies existed for the good of the mother country and the second, that the natives were an inferior people. However, the European Renaissance also swept in the spirit of humanism, which mandated dignity of man as man. Britain in particular prided itself on its spirit of justice and fair play. The dilemma therefore was how to reconcile the imperialistic motives with humanistic ideas. Kipling makes a sardonic interpretation of the dilemma by calling it ' the white man's burden'.

Of all the colonies of the far flung British Empire, India was deemed the jewel in the crown. England gloried in the material prosperity and strategic advantage that India brought to it. India always had porous borders, and myriad visitors kept pouring into India from times immemorial. Some of them chose to make their home here. Those who went back carried with them tales of splendor and glorious riches, of magical land and exotic

peoples. This in turn attracted the traders who came to India with gifts and entreaties, requesting permission to trade. The embassies of Captain William Hawkins and Thomas Roe are significant landmarks .It was the pioneering work of these gentlemen that subsequently led to the colonization of India.

The British arrival in India marked the beginning of a new kind of literature - depicting an exotic land, alien culture and inferior people. Edward Said says that the Orient was an invention of the West, whereby the West judged, studied or disciplined the East, depending upon the perspective of the viewer/ writer. For example, the image of India has been captured by 3 broad categories of writers: the writers of fiction, the reports and observations of the Sahibs (administrators), and finally, the writings of lay visitors such as the Memsahibs (wives of Sahibs), other members of the families of officials serving in India, the missionaries, etc.

The Man - Portrayal of the Indian Character

Some of the most celebrated books on India penned by the British are Foster's *A Passage to India'*, Kipling's *Kim*, Paul Scott's *Jewel in the Crown*, etc. Foster's protagonist, Aziz, is meant to represent the typical Indian – emotional, susceptible to kindness, generous, but mean, and having a way with truth. The character of Godbole is even more of an enigma. Foster does not even attempt to decipher him. It is as if Godbole is purposefully created to baffle and defy the Western understanding of Eastern character.

Another defining character in the British fiction on India is that of Kim, the protagonist in the eponymous work of Rudyard Kipling. Kipling's Kim grew up a street urchin, and is familiar with every nook and corner of the city of Lahore. This helps him in carrying out his nefarious tasks – passing on messages, espionage and the like – typically sly,

underhand things that an imperialist would expect a native to do. The Tibetan Lama in *Kim* is akin to Foster's Godbole – a mystic – unearthly and unrealistic. These images of Indians are recurring- either a morally less evolved, devious, unscrupulous, lying brute, or an inscrutable mystic, communing with his pagan gods and immersed in his Eastern spirituality.

Images of a similar nature are again echoed in the observations of the Administrators. These Administrators – the successive Governor Generals, Governors, District Magistrates and the like, people who ruled over the natives and came into a day to day contact with them, have a similar tale to tell. Tara Chand (Chand 235) opines that no Governor General from Cornwallis to Canning had a favourable opinion of the native. Bentinck said, "cursed from one end to the other by vice, the ignorance, the oppression, the despotism, the barbarous and cruel customs that have seen the growth of ages under every description of Asiatic misrule".[i] Similarly, Cornwallis did not think even one Indian fit to be a part of the steel frame of the British empire and therefore completely shut the doors of office to them. As for Macaulay, he despised the Indian character almost as much as he despised Eastern learning and literature. His opinion of the Hindu race was that it had been completely debased by 3000 years of despotism, combined as it was by priestcraft, slavery and superstitions.

Several of these administrators wrote memoirs, reports, letters, maintained journals and diaries. Herein, they recorded anecdotes and incidents that corroborate these views – for example, Sleeman (1915) writes in *Rambles and Recollections* of how he got robbed within moments of setting up camp in Gwalior, "when I cantered upto my tent door, a *sipahi* of my guard came up and reported that as the day began to dawn, a gang of thieves had stolen one of my best carpets, all the brass brackets of my tent poles and the brass bell with which the sentries on duty sounded the

hour, all Lieutenant Thomas' cooking utensils and many other things several of which they had found" (Sleeman web). F J Shore was of the opinion that the Englishman's estimate of Indians was that they were, "a low degraded people who possessed few good qualities and whose institutions, customs and government were bad" (Shore 4). *The Friend of India* (1858), an Anglo-Indian newspaper, is quoted in Tara Chand as saying, "(Indians) were a little better than wild beasts and the only way to rule them was to abandon the paternal methods of the company and rule them henceforward with a rod of iron" (Chand 479).

Just as was done with the officers, travel advice was shared with the wives and families before they embarked upon a journey to India. One can presume that most could not have had an unbiased view of this country. Fiction writers prepared them for a land of fantasy, of untold riches, opulent courts and majestic maharajahs while the letters home and diary and journal entries of serving officers told of a morally inferior race that needed to be educated in all aspects of culture and civilization. And so with the inherent white man's pride and a good measure of prejudice arrived in India a stream of visitors who in turn left vivid accounts of their sojourn in this country.

Principal raconteur among such casual visitors to India during the Raj was Fanny Parks, the wife of a District Magistrate, who has left behind a detailed account of contemporary India in her book *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (1850). By and large, a fair and just woman, Fanny Parks still finds the native as less evolved than the white people. She writes of the dishonesty, lies, stealth, indolence, lower intelligence of the natives - but all without rancor. She talks at length of how the ice got stolen on the way back from the bazaar, and how iron chests were melted to procure the silver within or how her servants slept the day away. She also talks of how during a storm, she had to address, motivate and inspire grown men to

not give up hope but fight to survive. Physically, the native was to her akin to what she had imagined a cannibal must be like:

> So vile and strange looking their long black shaggy hair matted over their heads and hanging down to their shoulders; their bodies are dark brown, entirely naked, with the exception of a cloth round the waist which passes between the limbs. They jump overboard and swim ashore with a rope between their teeth and their toeing – stick in one hand just like dogs, river dogs" (Parks I web). In an advice manual of 1864, one memsahib wrote: "where it is possible to cheat, [Indian servants] will generally do so. A friend of mine firmly believes a native speaker never speaks the truth except by accident... one of the most disagreeable feelings in India is that of constant suspicion indeed of the native character" (Chaudhury 554-555).

In fact, they frequently linked the native to animals. Nupur Chaudhury (1994) remarks that

> In the 1860s and1870s Memsahibs for the first time referred to the Indians as monkeys reflecting the influence of Social Darwinism into their discourse. Mrs Gutherie described her *ayah* as very small and very black and as she sat in her low chair or on the ground with her skinny arms round the fair child, she looked exactly like a monkey wrapped up in white muslin. Another Memsahib wrote that 'a great majority of Indian merchants have arms, legs and body bare and squat upon their shop boards or their doorsteps in attitudes strongly reminding one of the monkey tribes (Chaudhury 558).

The opinion of the missionaries did not differ much. They firmly believed that the natives were misguided, misinformed and misdirected due to their false religion and their unholy practices. A French Catholic missionary sums this up, "where (India) every prospect pleaseth and man alone is vile" (Chand 237).

Qualities like valour, loyalty and patience of the natives do find mention, but only incidentally. No panegyrics to the effect have been recorded. Col. Todd explored the history of the brave Rajputana in *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* and while he found the Rajputs incredibly brave, he also found them foolhardy.

The Milieu- Portrayal of the Land and Culture

The native character may have been found depraved, subservient, morally inferior and physically wanting, but there seems to be a dichotomy in the perception of land that was India. The conformists were outraged by every aspect of Indian culture, art, architecture, literature, religion. The explorers and writers were intrigued and fascinated by the exotic, tantalizing, bewildering East.

In fact, writers of fiction have almost a palpable design to create an exotic east. To quote Said, "the Orient was a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said 1), and hence emerges the India of snake charmers and tight rope walkers, of pagan worshippers and naked saints. The Raj literature abounds in tales of Maharajas and their opulent lifestyles, vivid descriptions of Indian festivals, stories of 'sati' and 'thugee', and the 'nautch' girls and the prostitutes. The most lingering image of India from Julius Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* is that of Sati. Meadows Taylor successfully romanticized the character of Amir Ali Thug - a man who robbed and killed for his living, simply by associating mystic practices and rituals with robbery/ thugee. *The Far Pavilions* by MM Kaye similarly recaptures the palace intrigues, the allure of the eastern women, the chivalry of the West among other things.

Some of the British officers and administrators were so fascinated by India that they initiated a separate branch of study - Indology. Foremost among the Indologists

was William Jones who admired the wonderful structure (of Sanskrit), "more perfect than the Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either" (Jones 28). Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal to further translate the unparalleled works of Sanskrit, such as Shakuntala, Manusamhita, Hitopdisha, etc,. and make them available to European readers. John Marshall undertook the supervision of excavations at Mohanjodaro and Harappa and brought to light the glories of the Indus valley civilization. He found unparalleled merit in both the layout and design of the cities as also in the workmanship and creativity of the artists and artisans of the civilization. Other Indologists of significance were Charles Wilkins, James Mill, James Princep, Alexander Cunningham etc. In fact, James Mill's *History of India* (1817) played a major role in reshaping the English policy and attitudes in India throughout the 19th Century. Eminent scholar and one of the greatest authorities on architecture, Percy Brown has this to say on the Taj:

> But all these architectural experiences, beautiful though some of the results undoubtedly were, recede into background when compared with that materialized vision of loveliness known as the Taj Mahal, a monument which marks the 'perfect moment' in the evolution of architecture during the Mughal Period" (Brown 107).

Similarly, the ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire, the exquisite craftsmanship of sundry artisans, metallurgists and sculptors draw praise and admiration from these students of Indian culture and civilization. However it is germane to mention here that the very same pieces of art and architecture were looked down upon with disdain by the larger body of the British in India. The conformists comprehensively condemned the Indian culture. Macaulay summed up the opinion of this school in Indian Learning in his oft quoted remark '... a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and

Arabia" (Macaulay web). Religion, especially Hinduism, was dismissed as base and primitive. One Rev A Hume wrote, "The Christian naturally supposed the popular Hinduism which he saw to be the whole of Hinduism, a system of many gods, of idols, of puerile and sometimes immoral mythologies, of mechanical and endless rites, of thorough-going caste, and often cruel caste" (Hume 1271). According to Mill, "Hindu religion was a mass of horrible penances, useless and harmful ceremonies, and Hindu learning, wholly devoid of rational thought" (Chand 237). And it must have been the conformists who thought the Taj Mahal valuable only for the marble it possessed and so decreed to auction it.

Conclusion

Clearly there is no single picture of India that emerges from the Raj literature- either in terms of man or the milieu. As far as the occidental reading of the character of the Native is concerned, he (the Indian) was found either vile and contemptible or inscrutable and enigmatic. Either way no concerted effort seems to have been made by the myriad visitors to genuinely understand the Native. The very superficial interactions led the ruling class to conclude that the Indian simply did not measure upto his own clearly established western virtues and hence were summarily dismissed. The Indian milieu came in for a more exhaustive treatment. The Indologists were completely bowled over while the conformists remained irreconcilably alienated. All things in India were comprehensively condemned by this school. It is thought provoking because these conformists were products of the Renaissance Europe where Renaissance primarily meant a revival of interest in the classical Greek & Roman art and culture. But when these very same people came across even those specimens of art and culture in India which were heavily influenced by Greco-Roman

style, they were not impressed (the westerners had arrived in India around the 6th century BC with Alexander and had made India their home. In consequence was born the Gandhar School of Art, a school that was, "evidently influenced by the art of the Roman Empire as some of its craftsmen may have been Westerners" (Basham 368).

On the face of it the low opinion of India and Indians could be because of the systemic existential differences not only in physicality, but also in values, ethics and morals. Hence the universal image that emerges from the writings of Officers and the lay visitors is that of the (i) vile Indian or the enigmatic Indian and (ii) an alien landscape – ugly and hostile. The Indologists it is true were fascinated by things Indian but then their subject of study was the India that once was and no longer existed. The tributes paid were largely to erstwhile practices and achievements and not to the then contemporary India. As for the writers of fiction, they too created a land of fantasy that once again emphasized the 'otherness of India'.

All these schools of thought looked at both the man and the milieu through the lens of their own schema leading to the emergence of contrarian imagery. However it would appear that all these images converged at one focal point – Imperialism. "This aspect of imperialism cancelled most of the benefits claimed by most of its apologists and admirers. This phase of imperialism presented ugly features- economic exploitation, impoverishment of the masses, dwarfing of the moral structure and the dignity of the subject people. Imperialist Britain treated India as a dependent satellite whose main function was to sweeten labour for the master, to subserve its economy and to enhance the glory and prestige of the empire (Chand 474). So the one commonality in the three kinds of images is that of the establishment of the essential differences between the east and the west. The east was perceived as not only alien but also inferior because unless the inferiority

was established how could the West conscientiously justify its prolonged presence in India. If not to carry out the 'White man's burden', what was the *raison'd être* for their extended stay? The native had to be perceived as inferior to enable the west to justifiably stay on and rule over the heathen country- to educate and civilize them. Any image contrary to this would have been completely untenable.

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An Early Nineteenth Century *Vade Mecum* for India

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Abstract

A Guide-Book for an Empire is bound to be of epic dimensions, more so if it is on India. In its length and largeness, in its depth and diversity, in its grand ambition and ambivalence, such works would inevitably reflect the geographical, political and cultural drama of a country that is so varied. There can be no clear distinctions, no acute significations even, as the tragic and the comic, the grand and the common dissolve, intermingle and produce a chaotic discursive montage of what India is. One such early work which presents India through the eyes of an Englishman is the *The East India Vade Mecum* of Captain Thomas Williamson written in 1810. Meant as a 'Complete Guide to Gentlemen intended for the Civil, Military, or Naval Service of the Hon. East India Company', this colonial archive is probably the first patient and meticulous noting down of minute aspects of life and people in India. Spread over two volumes of more than thousand pages, the author's professed aim in undertaking this stupendous labour was for 'public utility', 'with the view to promote the welfare, and to facilitate the progress, of those young gentlemen, who may from time to time, be appointed to situations under [the] several Presidencies...'(Letter to the Hon. Court of Directors of the East India Company in *Vade Mecum*).

[**Keywords:** Colonial Bengal, East India Company, India, Vade Mecum.]

About Captain Thomas Williamson we come to know from what he writes about himself in this book. The author attributes his considerable insight and knowledge to his long stay of 'twenty years' in Bengal. He first arrived in India in 1778 and was a Captain in the Bengal army. It is apparent that the Williamson family had spent some time in Calcutta. His father, whom he mentions also lived in India and is buried in Calcutta. By the time he was writing the *Vade Mecum*, he had already achieved some fame with his *Oriental Field Sports, or the Wild Sports of the East*, published in 1809, an extraordinary book that documents vivid descriptions and picture plates of animal hunting in India, especially tigers. As a first travel guide to India intended for Europeans, Williamson's *Vade Mecum* was intended to fill up the gaps in information required by the statesmen, military men, merchants, civilians and all those who proceed to this new country.[1] Keeping this in mind Williamson adopts an 'easy' and 'familiar' style rather than a 'didactic style'. The guide book is

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[1] A variety of works critically evaluate the Europeans', particularly the British, attitudes toward India. See *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* by Francis Hutchins, Princeton, 1967; *British Orientalism and the Bengali Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835* by David Kopf, Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969; *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* by Bernard S. Cohn, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997; and *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* by Betty Joseph, India, Orient Longman, 2006.

meant for those who would travel to India for a long stay and will need information of the place and people of this foreign country. His guide, he claims, has been written with the purpose to provide a 'just' conception of the 'characters of the natives' in India, and would remove all doubts, prejudices and national opinions, which if allowed to prevail "must occasion every object to be seen through a false medium"[2] (I:Preface,vii).

Williamson's assertion that his guidebook is not a false medium is apparently a rejection of such historical interpretations which are perceived very often through the narrow and distorted glasses of western preconceptions of India. From the seventeenth century onwards especially with trade links opening up, Western imagination and curiosity were fed with fantastic stories of India's fabulous wealth and its rich markets. European relationship with India for the next 300 years remained based on vague knowledge, assumptions and misconceptions. From the latter half of the eighteenth century as the British began to consolidate their physical territories in India there began a simultaneous process of constructing a vision of the Empire. Such a vision shaped by the contemporary Enlightenment ideal in Europe, was at once based on an imaginary construct and fashioning of the ways the British conceived of India and their role as rulers. As they undertook from the 1770's a more detailed study of India, there began an intense cataloguing and categorising of languages, races and tribes in India to secure a better understanding of the unchartered civilization they had to administer. Warren Hastings and his coterie of Oriental scholars like William Jones, Charles Wilkins and Nathaniel Halhed with their massive scholarly endeavours of translations and texts, reasoned that their effort to impart learning would be 'useful to

the state' and would 'lessen the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection' (Letter of Hastings to N. Smith, October 4, 1784, quoted in Kopf, p.18).Although there were obvious political and ideological differences between the Anglicist and the Orientalist point of view, yet both their perceptions were essentially those of the outsider. Charles Grant considered "the people of Hindostan, a race of men lamentably degenerate and base" (Grant: 71) and proposed in his *Observations* that "The communication of our light and knowledge to them, would prove the best remedy for their disorders" (Grant: 148-9).

Such viewpoints and scholarly enterprises reflected usually two extremes; on the one hand, there was an exuberant display of wonder and curiosity in those who saw India as a land of exotic differences. To comprehend such a mystifying entity, there was the obsessive desire to find parallels and common origins of languages, race, literature, etc. The attempt was to divest India of its strangeness and to fit it into a familiar framework that would be more comprehensible for the Western onlooker. The other extreme was to conceive India as a threat – as a land of dirt, disease and death – an exotic but a dangerous place. Throughout the eighteenth century as the British tried to contend with territorial supremacy, first in Bengal and later in the rest of the country, such contradictory tensions of differences and similarities continued to bother them. The sense of doubt, anxiety and uneasiness existed side by side as they tried to 'master' the land, the languages and the laws.[3] Captain Williamson's *Vade Mecum* shows this inevitable contrast between a seductive desirous India and a land which is at the same

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[2] *The East India Vade Mecum* of Captain Thomas Williamson in two volumes, 1810. London: Black, Parry, and Kingsbury. All further quotes from the texts are indicated in parenthesis.

[3] Thomas R. Metcalfe in *Ideologies of the Raj*, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p.167, asserts that India's attraction lay in the contrasting tensions it generated between mastery and submission, denial and desire, difference and sameness.

time threatening and fearsome.[4] His insistence that the young English recruits ought to 'know' this land reflects to a large extent Wellesley's ambition in setting up the Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800. Wellesley's anxiety "for the better instruction of junior Civil Servants of the Company" as they were "totally incompetent and ignorant of the languages, laws and usages and customs of India", was with a view to "the stability of our own interest, as to the happiness and welfare of our native subjects" (Wellesley's Minute in Council, dated 18th August, 1800 in Roebuck: xx).Williamson's inducement for writing the guidebook was quite similar, as he says:

> The consideration, that great numbers of young gentlemen proceed to India without the smallest idea of the customs peculiar to that country whither they are adventuring; and, that the want of some previous instruction has often proved of the greatest inconvenience...not only many a guinea, which could perhaps be ill spared, is thrown away, but many a lasting injury entailed..." (I:1)

The geographic contextualization of India in Williamsons guidebook is that of a vague nebulous expanse, mainly comprising the Eastern region of Bengal and parts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, an indefinite piece of land called 'upper provinces', and areas encompassing the rivers and swampy lands in the delta basin. The centre stage of action is understandably Calcutta, the hub of mercantile and military action and the seat of governing for the English East India Company in India where the Europeans coming to India were likely to land first. Volume I of the *Vade Mecum* provides precise information about precautions to be taken while sailing to India,

how to run a household, types of servants, and the domestic manners and customs of the 'natives' to be kept in consideration. It is, as the author states, intended for 'obviating misconception' and for 'the better management' of every candidate and 'to shield him from every imposition' (I:2) while these young men from England are instructed and groomed, improved and prepared to gain the respect of the 'natives'. Williamson's advice to them is to divest themselves of their English possessions and 'alienate their English opinion' and to view 'our Indian possessions, not as colonies, but as conquests, to which our laws and privileges are every way either unsuitable, or unwelcome' (I:7). He then proceeds to giving a list of clothing required both by the military and the civil upon their arrival in India which will conform to the image of a superior well dressed Englishman. 'Europe is the great source' (I:12) with respect to woollens and shoes, and they should bring four dozen fine cotton calico shirts to be used in hot climate (some with frills), undershirts, uppershirts, with precise instructions to the length and opening, pantaloons and silk stockings, socks, tie with ribbons, four dozen neck handkerchiefs, small cotton handkerchiefs, warm waistcoat, cotton drawers, great coat, dressing gown, an assortment of shoes, boots and hats. The new recruits therefore are to come with every possible baggage, cotton bed sheets, mattress made of horse hair, pillows filled with feathers, table clothes, towels, napkins, soap, liquor, tobacco, wash basin, chamber utensils, cutlery, razors, looking glass, knives, pencils, watch, telescope, tea, sugar, and for those who love hunting a good double barrelled gun and well bred dogs. The list is evocative of all that Robinson Crusoe needed on his island. The colonizer who travels from the 'centre' of civilization has to typically reinforcehimself with all the tropes of western materialism to make his stay comfortable and secure. Beset by scepticism of an unknown people and alien place, the practical Englishman must make himself 'at home' with his prudence, far

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[4] An early reviewer considered this work to be beneficial for youths who are introduced "into a new world, and to new temptations." *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, Vol. LXXII, *'The East India Vade Mecum'*. London: Becket and Porter, 1813, p. 159.

sightedness and enterprise. He remains the quintessential Englishman in "some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England" (Brooke: 115).

The *Vade Mecum* provides detailed instructions on how to run a house, lay a table, stock up on wines, fowl and meat, maintain a retinue of servants, and the incurring expenses on all these conveniences which are 'indispensable' 'to establish a gentleman at his residence' (I:172) will be roughly 700 rupees. Williamson's advice to these young boys proceeding to India is to pass the first year in the following manner:

> Rise at daybreak, and ride gently for one hour in the hot season, and two hours in the cold season; make a moderate breakfast, avoiding melted butter, salt meats, salt fish, sweetmeats, etc., good tea or coffee being assuredly the most wholesome; study the language for an hour; attend some office gratuitously, with the view to become acquainted with the accounts, price-currents, markets, provisions, commodities, etc.; about two o'clock retire to rest; about an hour before sun-set bathe, by means of three or four large pots of water poured over the head; put on clean linen, and dine moderately upon plain viands, taking care never to exceed four or five glasses of the best Madeira; proceed for two hours with studying the language, and, after taking a cup or two of tea, or of coffee, or a crust of bread and a glass of Madeira, go to bed, avoiding to sleep in a strong current of air. (I:176-77)

Williamson's daily to-do list shows, on the one hand, the Englishmen who must lead a life of careful 'moderation' and routine discipline in order to 'master' the unfamiliar climate, food and languages. Alternately, such lifestyles demonstrate an existence of leisure, luxury and indulgence of these 'nabobs' as these young men were soon to be known in England for the wealth they amassed during their stay in India. They must have, Williamson insists, a horde of servants very much in the fashion of the rich native gentlemen of Calcutta. A considerable portion of his *Vade Mecum* is devoted to a long list of the types of menials the Englishmen must provide themselves with, there being two distinct categories of servants – the '*noker*' and the '*chauker*'. The former are 'exempt from all menial duties' (I:185) and are considered superior in rank tothe second class of servants. Williamson points out the finer nuances of religion, caste and designation of these servants and how quickly they can be offended if due respect is not shown.

> The European should be careful not stride over any of his domestics who may occasionally lay down in the veranda of his house; such an act on the part of the unbeliever (applying the term to ourselves), being considered doubly laden with mischief. (I:185)

The guide book then provides extensive details of their work, responsibilities, attire, wages, positions and contributions to the society. The *Banians* are 'first in fortune, as well as rank'(I:188), the *darogahs* and the *sircars* are 'self appointed dignitary'(I:192), the *moonshy* has very little learning but is a 'very haughty class of servants' (I:193),the *cranny* has a pretentious pedantic style of correspondence (I:210-11), and generally, most of the servants are 'rogues', 'shrewd', and involved in 'forging transactions, extortions and fraudulent accounts' (I:200-8).

> I believe all, who have experienced their kind offices, will readily confess that no completer knaves are to be found in any part of the world. And this under the most sedulous appearance both to please, and to serve, those whom they are about to plunder. (I: 200-1).

These servants are seen as indispensable for the upkeep of a life of luxury and to maintain a status of respect in society. And at the same time there is a constant lingering anxiety of

being cheated, plundered, and defiled, especially the young children in the care of female attendants known as *ayahs* and *dhyes*.[5]

> ...children born of European parents...under the care of *ayahs*, become crafty, proud and unmannerly...Unless great attention be paid, *ayahs* will initiate their young charges in many practices, and especially in language, such as must require infinite assiduity to subdue; and after all, may not be completely suppressed. Besides, they are usually very slovenly and offensive in their persons. The *Dhye*is more generally an attendant upon native ladies: many of these are perfect in all the arts of intrigue... (I:341).

The *Vade Mecum* then seeks to rectify "the very confined knowledge which Europeans have of the domestic manners and customs of the inhabitants of the Company's territories...arising principally from the total want of familiar intercourse with the natives..." (I:347). The underlying subtext of fascination especially for the "private lives and customs of those native women that are secluded from the public eye" is amply evident by the long account of several orders of women in India, furnished to the author as he claims, by a learned friend (I:346).Williamson provides a lengthy and fair knowledge of types of Indian women – Hindu and Muslim women, single, married, widowed, wives, concubines, prostitutes, upper rank women, women of the lower class, nautch girls, slave girls, angry women and jealous wives. "Plurality" (polygamy) he says, "is common among natives of opulence, and is not unprecedented among Europeans", and one such elderly gentleman "solaced himself with no less than SIXTEEN, of all sorts and sizes!" (original emphasis, I:412). As regard to the expenses "a certain sum to be paid monthly...an allowance for beetle (sic),

tobacco, shoes, clothes, and *gynahs* (gold and silver ornament)...we may put down the whole at about forty rupees monthly" which is no great price "when compared with the sums laid out upon *some* British damsels"(I:414). Williamson presents remarkable minute observations of the elaborate dressing, toilette, and ornamentation of native women, which then can be a practical guidefor the newly arrived Englishmen to negotiate native customs to 'retain', and 'domesticate' native mistresses.

Williamson points out that in India the women who are euphemistically "under the protection" (I:451) of European gentlemen consider such relations to be as sacred as marital ties. Such connubial attachments with native women which are liable to be deemed in terms of 'Christian religion' as "libidinous or licentious" (I:453) are justified because of the sheer shortage of mates for these men.

> The number of European women to be found in Bengal, and its dependencies, cannot amount to two hundred and fifty, while the European male inhabitants of respectability, including military officers, may be taken at about four thousand. The case speaks for itself; for even if disposed to marry, the latter have not the means. (I:453)

The impediments that stand in the way of a 'consummation devoutly to be wished' are frequently monetary, but at the same time lack of friends and an incompatible climate can be oppressive enough to prevent the arrival of European women to India. (I:453-4) Williamson's advise to those importing worthy dames from Europe is to have the requisite 'well-lined purse' which has to take care of the expenses to be borne for clothing, accommodation, number of domestics, in keeping a carriage, in sending the children to Europe, and the mother herself being frequently compelled to return so as to restore her health. Because "matrimony is not so practicable in India as in Europe" (I:456),

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[5] Sara Suleriargues that homoeroticism and the imagery of rape defined the sexual appeal of India for the British in *The Rhetoric of English India.*Chicago, The University of Chicago, 1992, pp.16-17.

admirable doctrines like "fornication is a deadly sin" must be kept aside, and it is advisable for the European to keep a concubine rather than marry a native of India (I:457). Such a companion

> ...takes care of his linen, aids in cleaning his accoutrements, dresses his hair, and sometimes proves no bad hand at a beard! These doxies do, certainly, now and then, kick up a famous row in the barracks; but, on the whole, may be considered highly serviceable, especially during illness, at which time their attendance is invaluable. (I:458)

Worth noticing is the way Williamson parleys about what is morally right according to the Christian theology, and what would generally have been considered 'pagan' or 'heretic'. Rules, doctrines, scriptures are squeezed and modified, and conventions negotiated to often justify the ways that will work out in India. Moreover, such alliances and attachments were to be allowed in the private sphere but to be kept strictly separate from the more formal public existence of the officers. European men who had Indian mistresses and children did not enjoy the same social position and respect as those whose alliances were more 'pure'. The text manifests the anxiousness of potential complications arising out of such alliances, and legal and state responsibilities towards children born of such biracial relationships and mixed marriages.[6] The central representational modes of such writings showed the powerful attractions of a sensual seductive India which had to be held in check by an imposing policing. Williamson mentions the orphanages and the institutions where children born of such illicit alliances were removed, to the considerable "distress of mothers"(I:463). These institutions then were attempts to hide and efface some unwanted,

undesired aspects of life in colonies. Such writings make it evident that the enduring vision of India was of a temptress and seductress. India embodied the overwhelming of the rational by the sensual, but such aberrations of the senses were considered inevitable, transitory and unregulated.

Williamson's *Vade Mecum*also projects an invaluable glimpse of the reciprocal imitation and mutual fascination that the Europeans and the natives had for each other.Smoking, Williamson points out, is common among the ladies of Hindostan, but "still a certain idea, not very comfortable to feminine propriety creeps into our minds, when we see an European lady thus employed". Such a habit is seen as an "intrusion upon masculine characteristics" and the senses 'revolt when the European ladies adopt the costumes of the natives, and this in no ways "raised them in the estimation of those they imitated."(I:501). Then, there are natives who are

> Smitten with our general character, and partaking of our pastimes, lay aside their appropriate garments in favour of jackets, jockey-caps, boots, and leather inexpressible! Some indeed do more; they sit at table, and devour, with no small degree of eagerness, the viands prepared according to English fashion; washing them down with copious libations of Claret and Madeira, to the utter degradation of their persons, and reputation, in the eyes both of their new, and of their old, companions. (I:502)

Europeans' imitation of the natives is regarded as disgraceful, undignified and even scandalous. The natives copying the Europeans dressing, table manners and titles are considered to be vain, boastful and pretentious.[7] It is simultaneously the contrary

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[6] In 1792, Lord Cornwallis banned the biracial children from being sent to England. See Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India*. USA, Oxford University Press, reprint 1998, p.63.

[7] For a study of how the British experience of India had an impact on their body, clothing and food habits, see E.M. Collingham's *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, 1800-1947*. Cambridge, Polity Press and Blackwell, 2001.

feelings of attraction and repulsion, of desire and derision, and an overwhelming feeling of being threatened in those very aspects that mark their greatness as Englishmen.

Volume II of the *Vade Mecum* is a long repetitive account of almost every aspect of life in India. Every piece of information which is deemed essential, or otherwise is located, categorised and reported. Compared to the first volume, this volume is digressive, disorderly, and has considerable portions that are completely out of place. Williamson provides detailed information about types of houses, *cutcha* house, *pukka* house, old buildings, sorts of roofing, matting, carpets, window blinds, kinds of timber, trees, fruits and its uses, furniture, snakes and insect repellents, modes of entertainment, preservation of rain water, tanks and rivers, makes of boats, hiring of labour, elephants and their qualities compared with camels, trade and situation of Calcutta, etc. As a reviewer from a contemporary magazine pointed out,

> The author seems quite to have lost sight of his original intention, when giving us long descriptions of the various kinds timber, and methods of building. This, however, we shall not very severely censure. The information he supplies is not without its use, though superfluous in a Vade-mecum... Among the faults of this publication we should notice the avowed neglect of order, the unsuitableness of many of its details... (*The Eclectic Review*: 426)

But the keen observations, the attention to minute details and the humour with which Williamson writes these texts ensure that the *Vade Mecum* would have been an entertaining and informing companion for Europeans on their long voyage to India. The delineation of the Indian society in Volume II though many a times repetitive of what was reported in the first volume, is marked with the same vivid colouring of an outside observer. The

fascination and fear of an unknown place remain a constant thread through this volume too. The fear of predators like tigers and alligators lurking to catch the unsuspecting victim looms as large as the difficulty to survive in a hostile terrain of swampy lands, swelling rivers, unbearable heat and diseases.

> ... the immense expanse of slime, suddenly exposed to the sun, then on the equinoctial, throws forth the same destructive miasma, whereby epidemics, of the most dangerous description, are propagated (II:337).

The apprehension then spills over to the hold that the native *femme fatales* have on the European gentlemen. Though Williamson light-heartedly admonishes his countrymen to be wary of the "deceptions practiced by native women retained by European gentlemen" (II:425), yet the sense of horror is palpable when he recounts the cases of those women whose hair was chopped off, or worse,were beheaded by their husbands or relatives who suspected them of adultery(II:426). "In every part of India the profession of a prostitute is devoid of that stigma annexed to it in Europe" (II:423), but "adultery, under any circumstances whatever, is held up as a mortal sin, to be atoned for by death only" (II:425).

Williamson observes the rigidity of beliefs among the natives,their dislike for the Europeans, and their intense antipathy towards "adoption of the customs of a race held in abomination by even the lowest *casts*, (or sects), throughout the country"(II:87-88).Such Eurocentric views of European-Asian relations are often marked with scepticism, exaggeration and misconceptions in the text. At the same time what strikes one as remarkable are the instances of acute observations and comparisons which startlethe reader with its hint of ingenuous truth.What Williamson very astutely points out is that rather than use coercion, it would be easier to make the native population

conform to 'our system' if they could be convinced by reason.

> ...the shrewd native...imitates that which his faculties convince him is founded upon science...he sees the practice is good and he adopts it; whereas, if any regulation were to be framed to enforce his compliance with our system, in that, or in any other particular, we should assuredly witness his receding, if possible from every idea of improvement; or, if under the necessity of conforming, that his whole deportment would betray the reluctance, and antipathy, he felt on the occasion.May not this trait in the character of Asiatics in general, serve as a hint to those who talk of coercing them to the adoption of Christianity?...Certainly ! (II:88)

Charles Grant's proposal for introducing Christianity had been influential in the second half of the eighteenth century, but the Government had been wary of sponsoring Christian evangelism. The Pious Clause had been withdrawn in 1793, and from 1800 onwards the notion of despotism as an appropriate form of government for India was considerably modified with a more benevolent and 'understanding' stance. Post-Cornwallis the focus was on the emotions, to 'convince' the natives for a need of superior systems of governance. Voluntary compliance rather than coercion was the emphasis of the government wanting to rule by a more sympathetic understanding and intimate knowledge of the country and its people.

> Captain Williamson's *Vade Mecum* is a microcosmic representation of British comprehension of India of that time, of what the West saw the East as, of what was seen as distinctively 'Oriental'.[8] Such efforts to gather information, and methodically presenting them were based on a presumption that the description of India could be neatly packaged

and prescribed to foreign travellers. Such an India was by implication then a bounded, fixed, enduring reality, and 'knowing' it meant to contain and subordinate it. The connection between colonial knowledge and colonial power in such texts manifest what Partha Chatterjee says of "modern regimes of disciplinary power...that no longer has a centre...and are dissolved and dissipated by modern disciplinary practicesinto capillary forms of power." The production of such knowledge can be seen as'capillary forms of power' (Chatterjee: 8),a part of a larger enterprise that sought, what Wellesley stated so unequivocally,"the stability of our own interest, as to the happiness and welfare of our native subjects" (Roebuck: xx).Williamson's work is an excellent representation of alternate imaginings of nations, and the perceived notions of similarities and differences of native and colonial identities. Such imagined places set the non-European world as the Other, a mirror to "reflect Europe's gaze back upon itself" (Metcalfe: 5).The following review of Williamson's *Vade Mecum* reiterates prevalent perceptions and enthusiasm with which it was received when it was published:

> Those of our readers, who have any intention of visiting India, will do well to peruse these volumes with attention. They will perceive by them that the Asiaticks are not a whit behind the most ingenuous Europeans in the arts of deception. Let them learn never to trust to Asiatick descriptions of articles they mean to purchase, ... and should his [Captain Williamson] suggestions prove useful, his country as well as individuals will have cause highly to esteem his ingenuity...gentlemen designing to visit that country will find them no unprofitable preparative, as to matters of familiar occurrence, connected with personal conduct, in that branch of the British Empire. (*Select Reviews*: 36)

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[8] Said's *Orientalism* (London, 1978) has been seminal in shaping all discourses on the European views of the Orient and the dialectics of cultural hegemony.

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Charlotte Bronte's 'Imagined' Indianness: Homogenized Othering as a Mimetic Response in *Jane Eyre*

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Abstract

This paper problematises Charlotte Bronte's historically specific, religiously biased and homogenized underrepresentation of Indianness, considering Hinduism as an exchangeable term for Indianness, in *Jane Eyre* and claims this homogenized Othering to be a mimetic response. It concentrates on the Self/ Other dichotomy constructed through the characters of Jane Eyre and St John, both representing the British and Christian Self, and their individual approaches of Othering Indianness which resulted in a Self/Other polarisation in the Christian Self itself. Considering Rene Girard's theory of mimetic desire, the objective of the paper is to study Bronte's twofold way of homogenously Othering Indianness through Jane and St John, with an implication of doubly Othering the non-Hindu and non-Hindustani speaking Indians. It attempts to legitimize the novel as a quintessential discourse of British Selfhood besides being a mimetic response to the British social institutions which 'constructed' Jane as the marginalized "Other" in this autobiographical fiction.

[**Keywords**: Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, homogenized Othering, René Girard, Theory of mimetic desire]

At a conference titled "Europe and its Others" at Essex, while articulating the European strategy of representing itself as the sovereign Self and its colonies as Others or "programmed near-images of that very sovereign Self" (Spivak b. 247) , in her essay "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak proposed:

> On a somewhat precious register of literary theory it is possible to say that this was the construction of a fiction whose task was to produce a whole collection of "effects of the real," and that the "misreading" of this "fiction" produced the proper name "India" (para. 6).

By grounding its research on the mimetic aspect of the homogenised Othering of Indianness in *Jane Eyre*, this paper engages itself in problematicing Charlotte Bronte's 'constructed' representation of Indianness in the novel. It prefers the use of the word 'Indianness' to 'India' as Bronte's contemptuous Othering in the novel was meant for anything representing or containing the essence of the abstract notion of the colonized, 'coloured' object 'India' rather than for the landmass with well defined geographical referents called 'India'.

Entitled *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, during its first publication, the novel narrates the journey of an impoverished and orphan eponymous protagonist towards the attainment of her Feminine Selfhood, battling against the conventional patriarchal institutions of family, educational institution, class hierarchy, marriage and even religion. According to Margaret Howard Blom, the novel "(T)races an individual's desperate struggle against insuperable odds to establish and maintain a sense of her own identity and to satisfy the deepest needs of her nature" (Blom 87). The reception of the novel with wide global acclamation and the erudite interpretations of its various universally appealing themes consolidated its acceptance as a canonical text. However, Bronte's constructed narrativization of a historically specific socio-historical scenario of India through a religiously biased and homogenized Othering of Indianness, with a specific underrepresentation of Hinduism, proves to be a problematic. An attempt to discover India or Indianness through its representation in *Jane Eyre* is bound to lead a reader, alien to Indian history, to a factitious understanding of the nation and its socio-historical past from the viewpoint of the "master narrative that could be called 'the history of Europe'" (Chakrabarty 1). This paper, thus, accentuates on the homogenous Othering of the mainstream Hindu population of India and doubly Othering the marginalised Indians primarily by homogenizing its religious plurality, multiculturalism and multilingualism which together constitute Indianness. The itinerary of this research sequentially includes a textual analysis of the underrepresentation of Indianness through the characters of Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane and St John, Jane's Othering of Indianness as a response to the British patriarchal institutions which 'constructed' her as the marginalized "Other" in the novel and a psychoanalytic interpretation of her homogenous Othering of the Indianness as a mimetic act on the basis of René Girard's theory of mimetic desire.

As a quintessential discourse of Imperial subject construction, this novel has genuinely represented the British and Christian spirit and the sovereign Self through a meticulous Othering of Indianness, the paradigm of which was profoundly religious, besides being racial. As a testament to establish corroboration of this proposition one must critically focus on the denigrating words of Mr. Brocklehurst, "the black marble clergyman" (81), self-righteous and fastidious proprietor of Jane's Lowood institution. In a Biblical reference, in her Preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Bronte wrote, "Ahab did not like Micaiah, because he never prophesied good concerning him, but evil…" (xxxvii). This allusion justifies Jane's contempt for Mr. Brocklehurst whose prime concern was to uphold the doctrines advocated by the Evangelical Anglicans in general and by the Methodists in particular (DeVere web) and who was entrusted with the responsibility of guiding Jane on a virtuous path by her aunt Mrs Reed. Like Micaiah, prophesying evil concerning Ahab, Mr. Brocklehurst despised Jane and once decried her for her lack of essential Christian virtues, in the following words:

> (A) little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example; if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions, punish her body to save her soul: if, indeed, such salvation be possible, for (my tongue falters while I tell it) this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut — this girl is — a liar! (81).

From the perspective of this study, the above speech leads to at least two problems and one hypothesis. First, Bronte's intention behind

making Mr. Brocklehurst insolently refer to the shibboleths of Hinduism was a dissimulation, as Jane was not the signified but a signifier representing the polytheistic population whom the British needed to 'watch', 'scrutinise' and 'punish' for their heathen ways and guide them to 'salvation'. Second, the insinuation drawn from the possessive determiner 'its' again highlights Bronte's racial abandonment of the belittled population by reducing their identity to a homogenous, singular inanimate object. As the religious or communal group alluded to in the speech remains unspecified, the paper assumes that those polytheistic heathens stand the possibility of belonging either to the mainstream colonized elites group or marginalised communities or even to the ethnic groups of the British colonies. The rationale behind this assumption is that Bronte refers to some of the non-white or rather non- British races in the novel, the African slaves, Persians, Turks and Native Americans, besides Indians, and so it is difficult to specify the exact community she refers to in the speech. Susan Meyer calls this European notion of colonial culture and their tendency of alienating themselves from the colonized natives as "Eurocentric idea of colonized savages" (Meyer 45). Since Mr. Brocklehurst makes an allusion to the Hindu deities, from the standpoint of this research, the paper hypothetically claims that this speech has a disparaging allusion to the "colonized savages" and marginalised citizenry of the undivided nineteenth century India who definitely contributed to the omnium gatherum of Indian culture or Indianness although they were not considered as a part of the majoritarian population.

Bronte's perspective of viewing Indianness as indistinguishable from Hinduism, in the novel, results in an overt abnegation of the non-Hindu population of India. There are no references to any other religion or community of Indian origin in spite of India being the birthplace to several popular religious faiths like Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and the less popular faiths of the indigenous tribes. Her monolithic notion of Indianness was primarily governed by her knowledge of Hindu majoritarianism in India and the diabolical rituals, propagated by the custodians of Brahminical Classicism, rampantly exercised then. A glimpse of her conception about the grotesqueness of Indianness can be captured in her poem "The Missionary", first published in the anthology *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* (159), where she metaphorically describes India as a near image of hell:

> Still, with the spirit's vision clear,
> I saw Hell's empire, vast and grim,
> Spread on each Indian river's shore...

A juxtaposition of the gnarled image of this ancient Other, India, to the youthful British and Christian Self with 'spirit's vision clear' is a conspicuous implication of her propensity to peripheralize Indianness from the core British Self. The above picturesque imagery probably alludes to the evil customs like Sati or widow immolation and ailing moribund bodies abandoned on the shores of the Indian rivers, particularly The Ganges, which has a religious significance among the Hindus and has also received a specific reference in *Jane Eyre* through St John's exotic description of its shore (Bronte, 1991). The above mentioned imagery of the ritual of Sati has a close reference to Jane's notion of hell which she defined as "A pit full of fire" (35). The flames of the funeral pyres engulfing the widows alive emerge as a stereotyped symbol of the eternal infernal fire and recurs at regular intervals in the novel. A proof of her contempt for the religiously beleaguered Indianness and its diabolical heathen rituals reverberates in this autobiographical narrative as well when she makes Bertha Mason, her ugly, Creole antagonist, immolate herself and pave the path for the fulfilment of Jane's desire to matrimonially unite with Mr. Rochester who was previously legally wed to Bertha. In the above cited incident Bronte very skilfully exhibits her racial alienation from two

different colonies simultaneously, Jamaica and India. Therefore, the contemptuous Othering of the Other and an alienation from the colonial population, in various forms, function as an agency for centripetal mobilization of Jane towards attaining the core Selfhood and is constantly at work in the novel.

In order to contrapuntally comprehend this religiously biased Othering of Indianness and locate the vantage point from where Bronte surveys and represents Indianness one needs to contextualize Bronte in the socio-historical ambience in which she conceived this plot. India was then politically administered by the British East India Company whose governance was further regulated by the British parliament. The Company had to indulge in a political warfare in order to consolidate its foothold in this colony where Hinduism was followed by majority of the population. British tradesmen or the Company men were not eager to anglicise India, fearing to offend the educated class on whose support they depended, and arouse religious antagonism among the Hindu natives (Stockwell, 2008). As proselytism was not one of the missions in the initial days of the Company, it officially did not encourage Christian missionary activities in India. It was only with the renewal of the Company's charter, better known as the Charter Act of 1813 that the Christian missionaries from Britain were allowed to come and engage themselves in proliferation of evangelical activities in India. As a part of their political strategy the Company went to the extent of supporting the Hindus during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and expressing disfavour against Christianity to win over the native confidence. But a harmonious coexistence with the natives in the colonies would not have enabled the British to set up an empire and enjoy the sovereignty as colonizers by exploiting the colonized. Therefore Othering the native denizens was indispensable on their part. Moreover, the loopholes in Hinduism in the form of evil customs were the vulnerable

points through which the Company could split the power of the nation as a whole by trying to religiously interfere into the society, with the colonial elites on its side. In the words of Lata Mani, "(E)ven the most anti-imperialist amongst us has felt forced to acknowledge the "positive" consequences of colo-nial rule for certain aspects of women's lives, if not in terms of actual practice, at least at the level of ideas about "women's rights"" (Mani 120). Thus it was an effective strategy on the part of the British colonizers to establish an apparently amicable relationship with the Hindus and secure a political as well as a religious control over India. But the frontier of Self/Other between the colonizer and the colonized remained indissoluble.

Back in England people imagined India initially through the documentations chronicled by the East India Company with their colonial capital in Calcutta, in erstwhile undivided Bengal, and later through the pamphlets of the evangelists. Bronte's 'Calcutta centric' notion of Indian climatic conditions where Jane would be 'grilled alive' (235) and "protracted under an Indian sun" (219), metaphorically alluding to Sati that was rampant in Bengal, exhibits the superfluous influence of the documents of the Company in her writing. Both the types of documentations, political and religious, aimed at creating a stereotyped savage 'Other' by a "daemonic repetition" (Bhabha 18) of underrepresention of India, politically and religiously, which adversely affected the image of Indianness and legitimised British racial as well as religious supremacy over the Indians. For educated nineteenth century British women like the Brontes, these documents were the only 'reliable' source for knowing India. Consequently, Europe's perpetual Panoptican gaze on India through the lenses of fabricated representation resulted in an underrepesentation of Indianness in the expanding body of Imperialist discourse which further negatively influenced the

representation of Indianness in the nineteenth century British literature.

Besides homogenously Othering Hinduism, Jane's "Hindostanee" (210) tutorial under Evangelist St John suggests a hierarchical superiority and popularity of Hindustani over the other vernaculars which exhibits Bronte's Othering of the aspect of linguistic diversity of Indianness. Owing to a confluence of various linguistic families, the enormous diversity in Indian vernaculars, their dialects and sub dialects is too vast to cater to. Yet, her emphasis on Hindustani, so as to make it appear like a language that can function as a pan Indian medium of communication, would sound disputable even today, after 68 years of sovereignty and emancipation from British hegemony.

By using her fiction as a discourse of the Imperial Self, Bronte represents the British strategy to 'create' a "communal language" which was initiated by John Gilchrist who was a Scottish surgeon, indigo farmer and Indologist. In his insightful study of religious nationalism in India, Peter van der Veer, in his book *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India,* stated that Gilchrist had "discovered" Hindustani, a unified language of Hindi, Urdu and Persian, and popularised it as the language for British administration in the early nineteenth century India and specially preferred the language for communicating with the Indian soldiers of the Company (1994). Therefore, although Bronte's novel could touch the innermost chords of the British hearts with her biased representation of Indianness, it estranged itself from those Indian provinces who indulged in conflicting ideas of accepting Hindustani as the representative language of India. In this context of ignoring the vernaculars, Nandita Ghosh stated, "Class exclusions are reinforced by language exclusions; each feeds off the other" (para.12). In the present situation it is the exclusion of the marginalised population from the mainstream Indian population through accepting one language and relegating the rest. Thus, in both the cases Bronte summarily relegated the existence of religious diversity and multiculturalism and multilingualism in nineteenth century India, under British regime, and homogenised and represented them as "India" and "Hindostanee" respectively in her novel. Thus, in her attempt to portray her religious and racial Self 'recognizably different' from the colonized Other, she not only distanced the novel from the mainstream Indian Hindu population but moved doubly away from the Indian marginalized minorities.

Bronte's alienation of herself from Indianness has been displayed through more than one character and form, in this novel, in several occasions. She employed the characters Jane and St John to create the Self/Other dichotomy between British and Christian Self and the heathen Indianness. At the climactic point in the novel when St John Rivers proposed Jane to marry him and accompany him to India as a missionary's wife and be a "fitting fellow-labourer in his Indian toils" (234), Jane was torn between her desire to wait for Mr. Rochester by staying in her homeland and showing her gratitude by succumbing to St John's proposal for saving her life from poverty and starvation. She agreed to choose the second option, conditionally, that she would accompany him to India free and not as his wife. Her refusal resulted in a divergence in their journeying together on a religious mission and in life. Jane preferred to stay in her homeland and search for divine grace in the bliss of a family life with Mr. Rochester. Unlike Jane, St John renounced his love for Miss Rosamond Oliver to pursue the life of a missionary, the path predestined by God for him. This divergence resulted in a Self/Other polarization in the Christian Self itself through Jane's display of the Christian ideologies of Arminianism and St John's representation of Calivinism which further influenced their individual approaches of Othering Indianness. Bronte deliberately created this dichotomy within the Christian

Self in the interest of her plot. But in the interest of its parameters this paper seeks to circumvent the topic of Othering of the Christian Self and concentrate on the twofold way Jane and St John peripheralised Indianness.

Arminianism is a belief in conditional election based on God's foreknowledge and man's free will to cooperate with God in salvation ("Calvinism and Arminianism", n.d.). Jane's faith was "a different way to St John's, but effective in its own fashion" (241). Her reluctance in accompanying him to serve in India as his wife is evident in her words: "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death. And how will the interval between leaving England for India, and India for the grave, be filled?" (219). She alienates herself from her colonial counterparts in the words "I am not fit for it: I have no vocation..." (217). Jane's Othering of Indianness is a colonial alienation where the determinants of racial superiority and the freedom to choose between religion and personal desire are more dominant. More than serving the distressed population of the colonized nation, as a service to God, it is her individual way of prioritising her wants that become more coveted for her.

Jane's journey to India was like journeying to hell which was overtly expressed in her words, "(D)eath's gates open, shewed eternity beyond: it seemed, that for safety and bliss there, all there might be sacrificed in a second. The dim room was full of visions." (239). Quite interestingly, Jane had expressed her unwillingness to go to the pit of hell in her first meeting with Mr. Brocklehurst, the religious zealot. This might have been a metaphorical prognostication of her refusal to go to India on an evangelical mission. This refusal is not only an alienation from serving India or Indianness but also from the First World patriarchal social set up, conventional convictions of marriage and religion and a colonial alienation from the sufferings of the

Third World women or the "brown women"(Spivak 1988)

St John, on the contrary, was a zealous, fastidious representative of Calvinistic principles with a profound faith in salvation and predestination. ("Calvinism and Arminianism", n.d.). Bronte's creation of his character was influenced by the Biblical figure of Saint John the Divine, the writer of the final and Apocalyptic book of the Bible, Book of Revelations. His attitude towards Indianness suggests yet another kind of Othering. For him Indianness was a religious Otherness, a fallen country of heathens awaiting the Christian proselytes to lead them to salvation by eradicating the social evils and "save the brown women from brown men". (Spivak, 1988)

The paper looks at the characters of Jane and St John as representing two different persona of Bronte herself. The former representing the feminine desire of domestic security and familial bliss while the latter celebrating self-less service to Christianity and attaining divine benediction. In both the cases it is the human desire that is at the nexus on which the plot develops. Through both the characters it is Bronte's suggestive Othering of Indianness that is conveyed. In spite of having two different modes of Othering Indianness, their object of Othering is common, Hinduism, camouflaged with homogenized Indianness. This result in a misrepresentation of the historical past of India in totality as the other communities in India were not in a state of exigency, awaiting an intervention from foreign missionaries to reform their religious customs, as much as Hinduism was. Moreover, her representation of India's overt dependence on Christian missionaries for a reformed society completely eclipsed and ignored the movements like Bengal Renaissance, spear-headed by "The Father of Indian Renaissance", Ram Mohan Roy (1772- 1833). Thus, defending its hypothesis, the paper justifies itself in finding the representation of Indianness in the novel as fabricated and problematic.

At the personal level, narration of the struggle of her Feminine Self, in and against the world of the patriarchal Other, was never less challenging for Bronte as a writer. During its first publication in 1847, the authentic identity of the author of *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* was concealed under the androgynous pseudonym Currer Bell. This leads to at least two most 'obvious' conclusions. First, the story is a narration of her own centripetal journey towards achieving the desired core 'Selfhood' and second, her dealing with several historically specific social issues in the novel was a prohibited domain for women of her era for which she chose to introduce herself in a masked identity as Mr./ Miss Bell rather than Miss Bronte. As a dissuading response to her poems, which Charlotte Bronte had sent to him for his feedback, Robert Southey the Poet Laureate, had replied, "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it even as an accomplishment and a recreation." (Gaskell 123). This novel was thus, her platform for a fictitious representation of her response to the patriarchal predominance she had to struggle against.

Bronte's homogenized Othering of Indianness is a mimetic response to the Othering of her by the traditional institutions and can be psychoanalytically interpreted through Rene Girard's theorization of mimetic desire articulated in his book *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque,* 1961 (*Deceit, Desire and the Novel,* 1966). Girard differentiated between 'imitation' and 'mimesis' as the former to be a positive aspect of reproducing someone's behaviour, usually implying 'mimicry' and the latter as a negative aspect and a deeper instinctive response that humans have to each other. Based on this difference, Jane's reproduction of British patriarchal behaviour of racially and religiously Othering the colonized and gender wise Othering the white Female should be

tagged as 'mimesis' as it ends up in the negative result of creating discrimination among humans, an unbridgeable gulf between the colonizer and the colonized. This paper attempts to prove the interpersonal relationship between Jane and the patriarchal institutions through Girard's "desiring Subject-model- desired Object" framework. The itinerary of the narrative of Jane's journey towards her Selfhood shows how her Othering by the various conventional institutions implanted in her the zeal to achieve her Selfhood through pseudo-narcissism. This resulted not only in an alienation from the colonial population, in pursue of her personal desire, but also in a rebellion against the social institutions. As per Girard's theory, her emulation of the British patriarchal Self makes it her desired 'model' or 'mediator' and technically, her mimetic response is an 'external mediation' as she is spatially distanced from her model and there are no chances of rivalry between the subject and the desired object. But the uniqueness of portrayal of Jane's character lies in her clash with the representatives of the institutions on the personal level and thus reducing the spatial and social distance between the desiring Subject and the representatives of the model. Thus, it transforms the external mimesis into an 'internal' one due to their converging desires of being the core Self.

According to the Girardian concept, shared desires lead to rivalry and conflicts in the society and Jane's desire of sharing the same Selfhood that British patriarchy enjoyed was the prime reason behind the clashes between her and the social institutions. Her traumatic childhood at Gateshead Hall with her aunt, Mrs. Reed, and her cousins was a fight against her status as a familial Other which created the "family/counter- family dyad" (Spivak a. 246), as termed by Spivak in her essay "Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism", as she was 'dispensed from joining' (I. 1) the 'perfectly happy' (I.1) Reeds until she acquired more sociable and childlike

disposition. In all probability her confinements in the 'red-room', a strong metaphorical representation of the "patriarchal death chamber" termed by Gubar and Gilbert (as cited in Eddy 77), at Gateshead Hall was one of the reasons for her xenophobia and her aversion towards the colour or the 'coloured', metonymically referring to the non-Whiteness or non-white races, in this case Indianness.

At Lowood Institution, she was portrayed as the religious Other, hierarchically below the heathen Indians and labelled as 'not a member

was employed as a governess in Thornfield Hall. She represented the class of governesses which was 'homogenously Othered' by the elite ladies like the Ingrams. Juxtaposing Jane alongside the elite ladies marked a clear ineligibility for her to be the bride of Mr. Rochester, her employer and lover. The linear plot of the novel changed its course when she was welcomed as one among the Self in the house of the Rivers, who turned out to be her cousins and where she ceased to be the Other anymore.

In all the above instances Jane was Othered for being gender wise and class wise a Subaltern, in the patriarchal social set up. To specifically refer to Jane in the initial phase of her struggles, the identity which Spivak refers to as 'counter family', this paper would call her 'Jane the Other'. As a mimetic response to being Othered and in a desperate pursue of her desired object of 'Jane the Self' she homogenously Othered the colonized population who were racially, and according to Bronte's representation even religiously, inferior to her in order to attain ascendency in

novel is not only a documentation of Bronte's personal notion of India or Indianness, but also an emblematic of Europe's notion of this ancient land of mystique. *Jane Eyre* is a perfect amalgamation of the powerful discourse of the colonizer and a narrative of the powerlessness of the colonized. Othering, for Bronte, was not a

of the true flock' by Mr. Brocklehurst. "While tyrants such as Aunt Reed, Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St John Rivers want to turn Jane into a personal servant, Lowood Institution wants to turn her into a servant of the wage labour economy." (Leggart & Parkes 169). These incidents of being marginalized by society contributed considerably in aggravating Jane's contempt for the coloured races.

Reaching the next struggle in the itinerary of her journey she encountered the class hierarchy. During that time she the colonial hierarchy. By superimposing Girard's Subject-model-object framework on the novel we would therefore have 'Jane the Other' as the desiring Subject, the British patriarchal Self as the model and 'Jane the Self' as the desired object. "*Jane Eyre* was written in an ideological context in which white women were frequently compared to people of non-white races, especially blacks, in order to emphasize the inferiority of both to white men" (Meyer, 2007). Since the social status shared by the non-white races and the white women were both below the white men in the social hierarchy it was an absolute necessity for the white women to maintain their superiority in the colonial hierarchy by Othering the hierarchically low 'Others' which is reflected in the homogenous Othering of Indianness in *Jane Eyre*.

Bronte's homogenized Othering of Indianness resulted in a rejection of its kaleidoscopic demography which has remained the true identity of the 'lost Self', India, since ages. Representation of India in the

simple alienation. It was, at the same time an impediment while journeying to 'Self', an outburst of the suppressed wrath for being dominated, an act of vengeance against all dominant powers through rebellion and a resistance against being further Othered. The fulfilment of Bronte's desire of Othering Indianness can be best expressed in the words

of her surrogate, Jane, "Something of vengeance I had tasted...; as aromatic wine it seemed, on swallowing, a warm and racy: its after flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned." (Bronte 43)

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Fishers of Men

Indian Religions in the Roman Catholics' Gaze: 1920-1965

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Abstract

How contemporary European Roman Catholicism elaborated a representation of Indian religions as spiritual and mystical, or pre-modern, is the theme of this article. After a brief summary of the Catholic Church's recognition of the Indian religious Other in the context of the Second Vatican Council, and in particular the Church's watershed document *Nostra Aetate*, this article addresses the preparatory work of French Catholic theologians and missionaries in the decades before the council, particularly in relation to theological approaches to Indian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

[**Key Words:** Roman Catholicism, India, Vatican II, Nostra Aetate]

1. Introduction

In a personal recollection of his participation in a session of the Second Vatican Council (also "Vatican II"), arguably the most significant event in the modern era of the Catholic Church, Francis Cardinal Arinze argued that "Thanks to Vatican II, the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to meeting other believers" (Madges and Daley 2012, 207).[1] He did not elaborate further about the identity of those categorized as "other believers." In this article, the notion of "other believers" is understood as a Catholic representation according to Vatican II. The Catholic construction of the religious Other, including the Indian religious Other, at the Vatican II was significant for Catholicism's self-definition, at a time when the Church struggled to articulate a post-colonial missionary discourse and enter into dialogue with the modern world (*Nostra Aetate*, Part One and Five)[2]

2. *Nostra Aetate*

The "Declaration on the Relation of the Roman Catholic Church to Non-Christian Religions" *Nostra Aetate* (Latin: In our Time) was a major contribution of the Second Vatican Council. The original draft document was titled "Decree on the Jews." The decree was devoted to conveying details about the bond between Christians and Jews, while

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[1] In this paper, when not alternately noted, translations from French texts are by the author. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (or "Vatican II") was opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Francis Arinze, a former president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, was born in Nigeria in 1932. He was in Rome as a young priest when Pope John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council. Then he followed the three first sessions of the Council from afar. From September 11 to December 8, 1965, he attended the entire four session of the Council as the youngest bishop in the church and at the Council.

[2] In this regard, *Nostra Aetate* begins with the common destiny of all humanity and ends with an appeal to universal fraternity.

decrying all displays and acts of anti-Semitism—this only twenty years after the horrors of the Shoah. During preparation, the scope of the document was broadened to address the Catholic Church's relationships with the world's different faiths.[3] *Nostra Aetate* mentions only four world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism, arranged in an order indicating increasing closeness to Christianity. On Hinduism and Buddhism, the declaration states that:

> In Hinduism people explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which people can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or with divine help (*Nostra Aetate*, Part Two).[4]

Nostra Aetate is not apologetic about the truth of the Christian faith. While the declaration does not display a sense of superiority or emphasize the limitations of other religious traditions, going so far as to state that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions," it also does not indicate that non-Christian religions might be considered as ways of salvation *per se*.

While inclusive of only a limited number of statements on Indian religions, *Nostra Aetate* stands as a document of momentous historical significance: it is the first official recognition in the history of the Catholic Church of the existence and relevance of non-Christian religions as living traditions, on which the declaration shows a convinced option for a paradigm of inclusion.[5] In 1965, when *Nostra Aetate* was solemnly announced, the Church was probably ready for a substantial, official rethinking of its attitudes about other believers, thanks to the preparatory work of the previous decades in the different fields of historical theology, theology of religions and missiology, including a fundamental encyclical of pope Pius XI in terms of development of autonomous local churches.[6] A deeper look at *Nostra Aetate* may help identify the issues that the declaration maintains with regard to Indian religions.

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[3] Although the preparatory work began in mid-September 1960, an ample section on non-Christian religions was added to the text only in the draft E version, on November 18, 1964.

[4] *Nostra Aetate*, Part Two, in a revised translation in inclusive language. Source: Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions Decrees, Declarations. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996). For the original text of the declaration, see: *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancta Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vaticanis: Typis Polyglottis, 1970–77), vol. III, part VIII, 695.

[5] In presenting the text (draft D, not the final version of the declaration) of the document to the Council Fathers, Augustin Cardinal Bea, Pope John XXIII's appointed president of the newly created Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, on September 25, 1964, said, "Unless I am mistaken, this is the first time in the Church's history that a Council has in such a solemn manner enunciated principles with regard to [other religions]." The draft D only mentioned Muslims by name. See: *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancta Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, 650.

[6] An "inclusive" Christian view of non-Christian religions prioritizes the role of Christ in salvation over the role of the Church. However, the doctrine reminds that Jesus Christ is the "sole and universal mediator," which means first that "what is true and holy" in non-Christian religions is expression of the Holy Spirit, and, secondly that non-Christian religions cannot be considered as ways of salvation per se. Source: Congregation for the doctrine of the faith, Notification on the book Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism. January 24, 2001. The history of the theological shift in Catholicism from the previous view of non-Christian religions to inclusivism might require a paper on its own. Pius XI's major contribution to this shift was his vision of a missionary Church in a post-colonial world. His encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926) set the tone of missionary activity and missiological research for decades to come.

One of the major issues about which the council chose not to pronounce was the question of the extent that non-Christian religions might be considered as ways of salvation *per se*. The declaration mentions Buddhism and Hinduism in terms of

> ways of action and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though different from the ones she [the Catholic Church] sets forth, reflect nonetheless a ray of that Truth which enlightens all human beings (*Nostra Aetate*, Part Two).

Moreover, *Nostra Aetate* did not offer an explicit opinion on the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism or Buddhism in particular. The document left many with the impression that the assessment made of the Indian traditions necessarily is of quite a different order from the assessment made of the other traditions such as Islam and especially of Judaism. After all, the declaration mentioned Hinduism and Buddhism as collective denominations for the ancient religious traditions without attempting to capture their nuanced natures. As a matter of fact, the first time the Catholic Church officially recognized plurality of religions – including the Indian traditions -- was in the context of Jewish-Catholic reconciliation, attempts at which were more necessary than ever after Auschwitz, and critical to reaching consensus on a final version of the document.[7]

Finally, the brief text outlined a specific representation of Indian religions from the Catholic lens, a representation in which a selection of the mystical and the ascetical elements was predominant. The spiritual deposit of these traditions was displayed in the declaration in terms of divine mystery and supreme illumination, Hindu expression through myths and the Buddhists' ultimate liberation. Moreover, these religions are framed as an active search via philosophical inquiry, ascetical practices and trusting "flight towards God." In the broad vision of inclusion, the text came to characterize the Indian religious Other primarily -- but not exclusively -- as a monastic, spiritual tradition, as spiritual values that might be poised for possible assimilation into the one universal tradition of the Catholic Church.

The main contribution of *Nostra Aetate* was to set a tone of openness and respect toward pluralism, though clearly with a reliance on Catholic tradition. The fundamental point of *Nostra Aetate* was that the variety of world religions reflects the common search for answers to life's great questions, a cause that preoccupies all members of the human race. The general attitude of the declaration was one of enthusiasm and optimism – an "excessive optimism," as pointed out decades later by Pope Benedict XVI -- which demonstrated the mid-1960s *Zeitgeist* and revealed the surprise and stupor of a new self-understanding of Catholicism in a diverse world of religions (Benedict XVI, 2012).[8] Suddenly, Catholics found themselves in dialogue with the other religions of the world, including the Indian traditions, firmly committed to the path of mutual influence and enrichment. Although the declaration never stated that all religions are equally true, gone was the sense of superiority over all non-Christian religions, to the point that a vague but persistent recognition of equality among religions became prevalent in progressive Catholicism.

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[7] For an account of the activity that surrounded the development and approval of the text, see A. Melloni, "Nostra Aetate e la scoperta del sacramento dell'alterità" in N.J. Hoffmann et al. (eds.), *Chiesa ed Ebraismo Oggi: Percorsi Fatti Questioni Aperte* (Roma: Edizione Prontificia Università Gregoriana, 2005), 153–181. Also: "I remain convinced that this inclusive concept [of non-Christian religions] saved De Judaeis intact." Source: Thomas Stransky, C.S.P., "The Genesis of Nostra Aetate" in *America. The National Catholic Review*, Oct 24, 2005.

[8] The remark of Pope Benedict XVI says: "In the process of active reception, a weakness of this otherwise extraordinary text [i.e., the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*] has gradually emerged: it speaks of religion solely in a positive way and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance."

More importantly, the proclamation of *Nostra Aetate* designated the moment in which Catholicism came to terms with the theological status of the religious Other. For the first time, the religious Other received a name-- more accurately, a plurality of names – Hinduism, Buddhism and so on – rather than the one-size-fits-all label of "paganism."[9] Although initially thought to address the more problematic issues concerning the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism, the declaration became a document on all religions, the template of religious difference. *Nostra Aetate* acquired the status of *locus theologicus* in which the Church became conscious of the richness of religious otherness. This richness will be acknowledged and deepened in the postconciliar period. Indeed, the declaration designated India as ascetic, spiritual and mystical, a pattern of representation for Catholicism that will govern over the Indian religious Other in the decades to come.

3. Missiology

The representation in *Nostra Aetate* of the Indian religious Other as Spiritual India was partly the result of a shift in theology of mission and in the theology of religion in the Catholic Church. Although missions have been a fundamental component of Christianity since the very first generation in Jerusalem, it was only with Gustav Warneck, a German pastor turned academic and professor of mission at Halle (1897-1908), that missions became a scholarly area of research. His seminal work on mission studies (or "mission science" or "missiology") has been recognized as the first to in turn stimulate the creation of Roman Catholic missiology. In 1919, Benedict XV was the first pope to write a mission

encyclical and to recognize the necessity of proper preparation for work in foreign cultures, as well as the need to train local clergy. The Catholic Church began establishing chairs and colleges focused specifically on missiology.[10] Benedict XV's successor, Pius XI, promoted a Vatican Missionary Exhibition in Rome, which included a 30,000-book library. On the day of the 1925 inauguration, the pontiff assured that "Just as today in industry, commerce, and the more material occupations in life there is a search for scientific guidelines, so these must not be lacking in the missionary field."

The pope's invitation to Catholic missionaries and missiologists was clear: in pursuing their difficult task of evangelization, "holiness, hardship, and sacrifice" were not enough. The evangelization of people could draw fully from the scientific knowledge that human sciences were elaborating those days (Cronistoria dell'Anno Santo 1925 1928, 117-18). In sum, mission of the post-WWI period became a project of modernity, an "interaction between missiology and science, modernity and missionary practice," as argued by Carine Dujardin (Dujardine 2015, 12).

A second line of reasoning was also at work. The bridge between theology and science was encouraged along with the quest

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[9] For example, in the already quoted missionary encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Pope Pius XI pointed out that "converting the pagans is an obligation of clarity toward God and neighbor." *Rerum Ecclesiae*, encyclical of Pope Pius XI promulgated on February 8, 1926, Part 5.

[10] For example, a center of mission studies was created in the Collegio Urbano in Rome. See: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (Vaticanis: Typis Polyglottis, 1919), 448: "Itaque, dum alumni sacrorum, quos Dominus advocet, ad apostolicas expeditiones rite instituentur, omnino eos in omnibus disciplinis, tum sacris tum profanis, qua e Missionariis opus sint, erudiri oportebit. Id ipsum fieri, uti par est, in scholis Pontificii Collegii Urbaniani christiano nomini propagando, volumus: in quibus etiam proprium magisterium scientiae rerum qua e ad Missiones pertinent, tradendae posthac esse iubemus."A chair of missiology was established at the Dutch University of Nijmegen in 1936. Source: *Peter Nissen, "Scientia Missionum Ancilla.* Alphons Mulders and the Beginnings of Mission Studies at Nijmegen University," in *Carine Dujardin and Claude Prudhomme* (eds.), *Mission & Science: Missiology Revised / Missiologie Revisitee, 1850 - 1940* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 139-49, 141.

for a post-colonial Church organization and in continuity with a great Catholic cultural and religious *mission civilisatrice* to the rest of the world. In his 1926 missionary encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* Pius XI exhorted bishops to promote the formation of local clergy, who were less likely to be to be expelled from countries nearing their time of independence from colonial powers, while reaffirming the universalistic plan of Christian civilization that lies behind the missions themselves:

> In reviewing attentively the history of the Church, one cannot fail to notice how, from the first ages of Christianity, the especial care and solicitude of the Roman Pontiffs have been directed to the end that they, undeterred by difficulties and obstacles, might spread the light of the Gospel and the benefits of Christian culture and civilization to the peoples who "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Rerum Ecclesia, Part 1).

An important clarification rests on this point: the Catholic mission worked at two levels, as a project of evangelization *and* civilization of the peoples who "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death" at the closure of political colonialism. In a time of crisis of European colonial powers, the Roman pontiff was offering Catholicism as a universal model of civilization that was rooted in the medieval Christendom.

4. Theology of Religions

Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) was probably the most influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. De Lubac considered his work on the history of religions to be strictly connected to missiology, and from 1937 to 1955 he published extensively on both topics.[11]

While it is difficult to assess the direct role played by de Lubac at Vatican II, his influence is undisputable. He attended the council sessions as official *peritus* ("expert") after being a member of one of the preparatory commissions that elaborated documents for action at the council.[12] It was more through influence (rather than direct action) that he and other theologians accomplished the task of reducing the bewildering complexity of the Indian religious Other to the manageable level of Spiritual India.[13]

In 1930, as a junior professor of fundamental theology at the Université Catholique de Lyon, de Lubac was asked by

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[11] See: Henri de Lubac, *Le Foundement Théologique des Missions* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1946), Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du Bouddhisme I* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1951), Henri de Lubac, *Rencontre du Bouddhisme et de*

l'Occident (Paris: Aubier, 1952), Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du Bouddhisme II: Amida* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1955).

[12] Also Georges Jouassard, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic Faculties in Lyons, was included in the Preparatory Theological Commission, which was composed of a total of sixty people.

[13] The existing historiographical literature on the preconciliar work that led to the declaration *Nostra Aetate* is not exhaustive enough to identify the handwriter(s) of the text on Hinduism and Buddhism (initially introduced in the draft E on November 18, 1964). Accordingly, the connection between the group of Lyon and the text of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* can be only inferred. Fortunately, traces of this connection are everywhere in evidence. For example, the close relationship between Yves Congar (a French theologian involved in the text of *Nostra Aetate*) and Henri de Lubac (the leading theologian in Lyon) during the Vatican II is reportedly well documented. All said, more historiographical work still need to be done to understand the impact of the influences inside and outside the Secretariat for Christian Union on the different drafts of the declaration, and eventually identify the actual writer(s) who was/were responsible of the text on Hinduism and Buddhism. For the existing historiographical literature, see: J. M. Oesterreicher, *The New Encounter Between Christians and Jews* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986); E.J. Fisher (ed.), *Visions of the Other: Jewish and Christian Theologians Assess the Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), G. Miccoli, "La Libertà Religiosa e le Relazioni con gli Ebrei" in G. Alberigo et al. (eds.), *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995–2001). For the relationship between Congar and de Lubac at Vatican II, see for example: Henri de Lubac, *Carnets du Concile*, Edited and annotated by Loïc Figoureux. 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2007).

his dean to teach history of religions. This request was the beginning of a long academic journey that resulted in publication of three books on Buddhism twenty years later. Since he was not an orientalist by training, de Lubac's research relied exclusively on translations and secondary sources. As he recalled in his memories, de Lubac diligently investigated Buddhism and comparative mysticism, "without preparation, without books, without knowledge of any language, European or Asiatic." He also began to study Henri Bergson and his theory of "two sources" (Christianity and the cults), Alfred Loisy (an excommunicated priest who was later appointed chair of history of religions in the Collège of France) and his highly scientific and experiential approach to history and religion, and the positivistic religion of Auguste Comte (de Lubac 1993, 31-2). The influence of this secular work is particularly evident in one of de Lubac's books on Buddhism, *Rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident* (1952), a history of the West-East encounter from the Western point of view.

De Lubac's ultimate conclusion about Buddhism was a negative one. In his view, Buddhism expresses an atheism that "leaves no room at all for the living God" (de Lubac 1952, 278-79). The same conclusion is carried out in all three books on Buddhism under several points of view: the greatest spiritual tradition in the history of humankind, Buddhism is ultimately deficient "of the unique Fact in which we adore the vestige and the very Presence of God" (de Lubac 1951, 8). Buddhism is a natural religion and "remains far from the Christian supernatural," that is, the former is a human project while the latter is a response to an initiative of God (de Lubac 1955, 11). And yet, a door was left open. De Lubac begins the concluding paragraph of the final chapter of *Amida* pointing out that even in an objectively inadequate way of salvation, the omnipresent grace of Christ can be effective. "We have no right to think smugly that God has left himself without witnesses

everywhere outside Christianity" (de Lubac 1955, 290). In other words, de Lubac did not exclude the possibility that there existed elements of truth in Buddhism. Here the statement of *Notre Aetate* on "a ray of that Truth which enlightens all human beings" is recognizable.

De Lubac's books on Buddhism are a colossal systematization of the existing Western literature on the subject. De Lubac relies significantly on such a body of literature to formulate his conclusion, while he offers no opportunity to Buddhism to stand on its own account. In these books, Buddhism is situated in a Christian framework and its truth subordinate to Christian faith. De Lubac places his inclusive approach – although not explicitly presented this way – in the context of the Western approaches to Buddhism, as a middle space between the more orthodox Catholic tradition, which denies that there is even the most minute element of truth in Buddhism, and the syncretistic synthesis of Western-Eastern romanticism (de Lubac 1952, Conclusion).

During his early days in Lyon, de Lubac was acquainted with Jules Monchanin (1895-1957), a priest destined for a career of ascetic missionary work in India. De Lubac met Monchanin in 1930 and was surprised to see Monchanin reading Sanskrit at sight (de Lubac 1992, 32). The two priests forged a life-long relationship of intellectual respect and friendship. Monchanin's first encounter with to Indian religions was at age 14 through a book by Émile Senart, a French indologist. The book, *Essai sur la Légende du Bouddha*, was a book in which Buddha is portrayed not as a real character but as a myth (Senart 1875). In 1939, Monchanin left France to relocate permanently to India and pursue a project of contemplative mission. The project found concrete realization in 1950, when together with a Breton Catholic monk, Henri le Saux, Monchanin established a Christian ashram in Tamil Nadu, where Christian monks would practice contemplation in Indian traditional

forms. Monchanin believed that the essence of Hinduism could be severed from its manifestation. His dream was to Christianize India not from the outside in, penetrating the invisible spiritual core of the Indian soul starting from its visible religious expressions, but from the inside out. Monchanin envisioned to Christianize India from within, that is, to convert the inner essence of Hinduism in the light of Christian faith, while allowing the visible form of the Church to express herself in a truly Indian way. Since the essence of Indian culture was mysticism, the challenge for Christianity in India was to reframe the Hindu mystical tradition.

Monchanin's approach to Hinduism was primarily philosophical in character, focusing on the relationship of the One and the Many, which he identified as the question of God and the world, and the related question of the two orders of truth. He concluded that Platonic and Neoplatonic Greece as well as medieval Christianity were equipped to reconcile the two orders of truth, while Hinduism has no solution to propose. According to Monchanin, Hinduism offers two options: the doctrine of transformation, the One itself becomes Many; and the doctrine of illusion, only the One exists. In the latter, the Many appears, but it is an illusion; the One exists, but does not appear. Sankara's thesis of the sole One without a second recognizes in distinction the two orders of truth: the phenomenal order is apparent, and the reconciliation happens with the pure identity of creation and God, *Atman* and *Brahman*.[14]

Monchanin argued that the problem of the One leads to the "muddled thinking"

of monism (Monchanin 1989, 541-42). If only the One is real, the result is monism. "How is the problem of the One and the Many to be put in this monistic perspective?" he rhetorically asked in a lecture of comparative mysticism in Pondicherry. His intellectual project was to integrate the Hindu philosophical tradition and Christian faith; however, after spending ten years in India, Monchanin was depressed with the lack of interest from Hindus in Christianity and with the sluggishness with which his vision of a Christianized India could be realized. He acknowledged that Hinduism was self-contained and sufficient, and that Indians seem to understand "Christianity, a religion of time," to belong to the phenomenal order and, as such, to be imperfect wisdom (Monchanin 1965, 100).

The difficulties Monchanin consistently encountered when debating with cultivated Indians helped him to rediscover his intellectual roots: "I react in a contrary direction: never have I felt – intellectually – more Christian and I must say more Greek," a term that Monchanin used as shorthand for the logical, structural and formal approach which Christian thinking had inherited from Greek philosophy (Monchanin 1989, 541-42). His Hellenic formation became an obstacle for him in his project of Christianization. Although he was conscious that Christianizing Hinduism is not, as Raimon Pannikar argues, Hellenizing it, Monchanin did not see any other option (Panikkar 2001, 183). He believed that only the Christian notion of the Trinity could bridge the two orders of truth: there is both God and creation. He stated that his task was to only accept those elements of Hinduism which were compatible with Christianity and to reject the rest, including the idea of Māyā (or the apparent), an entity that is clearly neither as being nor as nonbeing and which he deemed "an intellectual monster" (Monchanin 1989, 542 and Monchanin 1965, 94-95).

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[14] Monchanin addressed this topic in several occasions. See: "Yoga et Hésychasme," "Apophatisme et Apavada," and "La Quète de l'Absolu," three lectures given in 1955 and 1956 in Pondicherry and Madras, and then printed in Jules Monchanin, *Mystique de l'Inde, Mystère Chrétien. Ecrits et Inédits* (Paris: Fayard, 1974), 108-136. See also the previously unpublished Vagneux Yann, L'un en Grèce et aux Indes. Un inédit de Jules Monchanin, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 3/2012 (TOME 96), 541-556.

In a letter dated January 1955 to his fellow monk le Saux, Monchanin summarized the state of the art of the project of Christianization on India:

> It is creation which must be rethought or rather resituated in the light of the revealed Christian mystery. In this mystery, Hinduism ... must die in order to be resurrected as Christian. Any theory which does not take sufficient account of this necessity involves a lack of fidelity, both towards Christianity – we cannot mutilated it by separating it from its essence – and towards Hinduism – from which we cannot hide its fundamental error and its essential divergence in connection with Christianity. Hinduism must reject its equation of *atman-brahman*, if it is to enter into Christ (Monchanin 1965, 136).

This quotation merits three remarks: first of all, the gulf that separates Christian faith from Hindu tradition is the result of a "fundamental error" on the part of Hinduism. Secondly, the necessity is to rethink Hinduism in terms of Christianity, and not the other way around. Finally, never forget that Hinduism is a natural religion and Christianity an authentic Revelation.

In 1955, Monchanin published his only book, *De l'Esthétique à la Mystique*, a study of comparative mysticism, in which he demonstrated the correspondences between the Hindu notion of inner divinity and the Christian concept of Holy Spirit. In the same book he paid homage to his intellectual roots. He remembered that he belonged ultimately to the Occident, "the only civilization ... that has revealed to other civilizations their history and their essence. No other has done this for any other" (Monchanin 1955, 67).

6. Concluding remarks

Although de Lubac and Monchanin were only two among the intellectuals before and during the Vatican II who maintained that non-Christian religions need not be rejected but integrated in the Church, they are worthy of a respectful investigation due to their profound impact on the Catholic pronouncements on Indian religions. Indeed, they share responsibility with the generation that has produced a major reformulation of Christian thought in the key area of world religions, articulating a representation of the Indian religious Other as highly spiritual, conceptually disappointing and theologically wrong. This representation of Indian religions was not contradictory, but rather sustained a larger vision of the Catholic Church. Catholicism was adopting -- in the period before the Vatican II -- the modern tools of scientific knowledge in missiology and missionary practice while elaborating a universal project of Western civilization based on a faith-reason medieval synthesis. In this context, *Nostra Aetate* was first and foremost an exercise of self-redefinition about how Catholic Christianity understands the relationship with other world religions in the light of the post-colonial reality and the acceptance of modernity. This historical background may explain why, in the very moment when the council was struggling with the decision to define Catholicism in relation with non-Christian religions, the same council went to paint the Indian religious Other as pre-modern.

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"I am black, but my soul is white": the Christian Neophyte and his Alienation in 19th Century Anti-conversion Anglo-Indian novels

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Abstract

This article studies how the Christian convert is represented in three nineteenth century Anglo-Indian novels. On the basis of their attitude towards conversion, Anglo-Indian novels can be classified as pro-conversion or anti-conversion. In pro-conversion novels, conversion to Christianity is presented as a smooth transition. Anti-conversion novels, in contrast, portray conversion as a harrowing experience that shatters the mental stability of the convert. Alienation and isolation inevitably follow conversion. The three texts discussed here show how the authors highlight the alienation of the Christian neophyte to discourage proselytization. The alienation of the convert is thus strategically articulated in these texts.

[**Keywords:** Christianity, Conversion, alienation, Hinduism, Caste, *The Missionary*, Sydney Owenson, *Seeta*, Philip Meadows Taylor, *The Old Missionary*, William Wilson Hunter.]

The issue of conversion became very important in nineteenth century Anglo-Indian[1] literature. This was not an isolated occurrence, unrelated to mainstream English literature. As Gauri Viswanathan shows, conversion became a popular subject of discussion in nineteenth century Britain. The nineteenth century witnessed progressive secularization and liberalization of British society and state. This was not a smooth passage. There was a heated debate on whether to incorporate the religious

minorities like the Jews, the Catholics and the Nonconformists into the wider concept of nation. The orthodox groups like the Evangelicals insisted on the conversion of the minorities to Anglican faith before they could be incorporated. At the same time, they also called for the Christianization of the colonies. On the other side, there were those who wished to preserve religious differences. Their goal was to Anglicize the minority groups without tampering with their religious identities – to convert a Jew to a non-Jewish Jew, in the words of Viswanathan. In such an atmosphere of conflicting ideas, novels on conversion acquired added importance. Viswanathan states, "It is no accident that novels about the conversion of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity had wide popular appeal in nineteenth century England, not merely as wishful testimony to the efficacy of

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[1] The word 'Anglo-Indian' is used here in its nineteenth century sense to mean Englishmen and Englishwomen living in India. Anglo-Indian literature refers to British writings on India. Such works reflected colonial power relations, projecting the British as masters and the Indians as subjects.

missionary ideology but more compellingly as exotic displacements of the pressing and often explosive issue of whether to admit Jews, Catholics, and Nonconformists into the English nation state" (Viswanathan 27).

The Novel, as Viswanathan's study suggests, became a battleground where the pro-conversion and anti-conversion ideologies confronted each other. Indeed, on the basis of their attitudes towards conversion, novels can be classified as pro-conversion or anti-conversion. In the pro-conversion Anglo-Indian novels, conversion generally becomes, to quote Viswanathan again, "a straightforward, overdetermined spiritual movement to Christianity" (Viswanathan 28). That is, in such novels conversion to Christianity is portrayed as smooth and unproblematic. In contrast, anti-conversion novels problematize conversion. Such novels focus on the alienation of the neophyte to tacitly discourage conversion to Christianity.

This article aims to examine how three anti-conversion Anglo-Indian novels strategically describe the alienation of the Christian neophytes. In such novels a neophyte always appears as a tragic figure. Rejected by the Hindu society, he does not find place among his new co-religionists. His attempts to mingle with the Europeans always meet with rebuff. The anti-conversionist authors do not portray conversion as a joyous rebirth. Rather they portray it as a painful experience involving isolation and separation.

It is necessary to understand at the very outset why some colonial authors were so much against conversion. The stated aims of colonialism were the three 'Gs' – God, Gold and Glory – or the three "Cs" – Christianity, Civilization, and Commerce. However, the conversion of the natives always induced an anxiety in the colonizers. In so far as the neophyte proclaimed the triumph of Christianity, he or she was seen as the "reformed, recognizable Other", to use a phrase by Bhabha (Bhabha 122). However,

much like Bhabha's 'mimic man', the neophyte also acted as a menacing presence. This is because, united to the colonizers by a common religion (Christianity), he/she claimed like Blake's "little Black Boy" – "And I am black, but O! my soul is white" (Blake 45). This claim challenged the colonial signifying practice by partly obliterating the barrier between the self and the other. The only way colonial authors could render the neophytes innocuous was by presenting them as failed converts. Their attitude towards the neophyte was therefore ambivalent; it oscillated between compassion and contempt. This in turn influenced the way they portrayed the neophyte and his alienation.

A few words on the concept of alienation is necessary here. The word 'alienation' has become so much saturated with meanings that it is difficult to arrive at a concrete definition. At best, one can provide only a working definition of the term. For the purpose of this study, we will accept the very basic definition of alienation. As Irving Louis Horowitz points out, "At its source the word 'alienation' implies an intense separation first from objects in a world, second from other people, third from ideas about the world held by other people. It might be said that the synonym of alienation is separation, while the precise antonym of the word alienation is integration" (Horowitz 231). Alienation, as Horowitz shows, can have both positive and negative effects – that is, can be "constructive as well as destructive" (Horowitz 233). However, as long as it is imposed from without, it generally has a destructive effect on individuals. It produces only negative feelings–the feelings of "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement" as recognized by Seeman (Seeman 783).

The ostensible object of colonial authors in portraying the alienation of the Christian neophyte was to condemn the Hindu caste system. In this the pro-conversionist and the anti-conversionist authors were in agreement.

It is interesting that the nineteenth century Anglo-Indian writers portrayed mainly Hindu converts in their novels. Despite the fact that the Muslims formed a substantial portion of the Indian population, the novelists rarely portrayed their conversion to Christianity. Now, as polytheists, the Hindus were felt to be more in need of 'truth' than the Muslims. After all, the Muslims also worshipped the one true god, while the Hindus were just 'idolaters'. Islam was certainly an 'errant faith'; but it was a monotheistic one, sometimes more rigidly monotheistic than Christianity. As T. R. Metcalf argues, "Islam in the end was a religion which commanded respect, even a covert envy, among the British in India" (Metcalf 144). But more importantly, the British were afraid of the Muslims. Unlike the pliant Hindus, the Muslims were 'zealous' and 'fanatical' in their eyes. The British feared that they had already earned the animosity of the Muslims by ousting them from a position of power. They were not ready to try their patience further. Hence, the British writers put more emphasis on the conversion of the Hindus than the Muslims.

In order to understand why the neophyte necessarily becomes alienated from the Hindu society after conversion, one must have some idea about the Hindu social system. From time immemorial, Hindu society has been organized on the basis of *Varna* or colour. The *Rig-Veda*, the oldest religious text of the Hindus, mentions four *varnas* or social groups – the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya* (or *Rajanya*), the *Vaisya*, and the *Sudras*. It is important to note that these distinctions were not rigidly imposed on the people in the early Vedic age. Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta points out:

> [...] in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* there is little trace of the rigid restrictions typical of caste in its mature form. There was hardly any taboo on intermarriage, change of occupation or commensality. We have instances of marriages of *Brahmanas* with *Rajanya* women, and of the union of *Arya* and *Sudra* ... There was no ban on the taking of food cooked by the *Sudras*, and there is no evidence that impurity was communicated by the touch or contact of the inferior castes (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, and Datta 31-32).

According to a section of modern historians, caste system, as we have it today, was a later development born out of the contact of the Aryans[2] with the Proto-Australoid and the Austro-Asiatic tribes. The magic rituals of these tribes, which prohibited contact with strangers, were simply adopted by the Aryans. Whatever the case might be, it is certain that with the passage of time caste system became increasingly rigid. The upper castes, especially the *Brahmanas*, arrogated to themselves a position of superiority. The lower castes and the indigenous tribes were branded as untouchables. Contact with these people, it was believed, demanded ritual purification. Close intimacy with them resulted in excommunication and expulsion from one's own caste. Loss of caste entailed boycott and social ostracism. Naturally people were afraid of violating caste norms.

Like all major religions, Hinduism is not appreciative of anyone who renounces his faith. Apostasy is automatically punished by loss of caste privileges. This is of course natural, since the convert himself renounces caste by leaving the fold. In past, segregation and social ostracism followed conversion. Under the rigid caste rules, even the closest relatives of the convert could not maintain contact with him. Anyone associating with the convert was sure to bring down the same punishments upon him. The harsh laws practically turned the convert into a pariah. Till the mid nineteenth century, a convert from Hinduism could not inherit the property of his ancestors. It was the British who finally removed this restriction by promulgating the

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[2] The colonial historians believed that Hinduism was brought into India by the Aryan invaders who migrated from Central Asia. This is, however, a contentious issue.

Caste Disabilities Removal Act in 1850. The British authors thus well knew what the expulsion from caste meant. They believed that it is this fear of expulsion from caste which prevented a Hindu from converting to more 'enlightened' religions. As Captain Meadows Taylor observes in *Seeta*:

> Seeta is only a type of thousands and thousands of her own countrymen and women, who feel the truth, and who, until some unforeseen crisis in their lives arises, dare not make the final plunge which not only severs them from all they love, honour, and respect in life, but makes them social outcasts – utterly despised and rejected by their people, even to the refusal of a cup of cold water (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. III, 207).

This view is shared by most of the authors we study.

While both pro-conversion and anti-conversion authors criticized Hindu society for driving out the Christian convert, they differed in their accounts of the treatment the neophyte received from the European society in India. The pro-conversion writers generally chose to remain silent about this, thereby avoiding the thorny question about the neophyte's integration. The anti-conversion authors however show that the neophyte is rarely accepted with open arms. Some writers like Philip Meadows Taylor even criticize the Anglo-Indian society for rejecting the neophyte. But most authors tacitly blame the neophytes themselves for their alienation. They allege that, though converted, the neophytes retained traces of their former belief. This made it impossible for them to merge successfully with the mainstream.

It is necessary to understand at the very outset why some colonial authors were so much against conversion. The stated aims of colonialism were the three 'Gs' – God, Gold and Christian community. In short, they tend to argue that the alienation of the neophytes is their own making. In this way, these authors absolve the European Christians from the charge of not embracing their Indian brethren. At the same time they could also establish the futility of the missionary enterprises. This sort of argument can be found in novels like *The Missionary* and *Seeta*, to which we now turn.

Sydney Owenson's (Lady Morgan) *The Missionary: An Indian Tale* (1811) was probably the first Anglo-Indian novel that had conversion as its main theme. The novel turns on the conversion of the Hindu priestess or "Brahmachira" Luxima. The novel may be briefly summarized. The protagonist of the novel, Hilarion Count d' Acugna, is the descendant of an influential Portuguese family. He becomes a Franciscan monk and travels to India to spread the message of Christ. He achieves little success at first. The natives, though gentle and tolerant, resist him with the argument, "God has appointed to each tribe its own faith, and to each sect its own religion: let each obey the appointment of God, and live in peace with his neighbour" (Owenson 53). Hilarion, however, is too orthodox to appreciate such pluralistic arguments. During a religious debate with the Brahmanas, Hilarion meets the beautiful Hindu priestess Luxima, and is immediately drawn to her. He plans to convert her to Christianity, thereby setting her as an example for others to follow. With this intention, he travels to "Cashmire" (Kashmir). There he meets and preaches to Luxima. Gradually, the Christian missionary and the Hindu priestess fall in love. When their intimacy is discovered, Luxima is excommunicated by her own grandfather who is a *guru* or teacher of the *Vedanti* sect. With nowhere left to go Luxima follows Hilarion who baptizes her and takes her to Goa. His intention is to place her in a convent there. In the road, Hilarion is arrested by Jesuit priests who bear a grudge against the Franciscan Hilarion. Luxima is sent to a convent while Hilarion is charged with sexually exploiting the neophyte. He is condemned to death by the Inquisition. Luxima escapes from the convent with the

help of a Brahmana. She reappears before Hilarion could be executed and thrust herself between him and the executioners. In the process, she receives a mortal wound. Seeing this, the oppressed Hindus rise up in rebellion. Taking advantage of the confusion that ensues, Hilarion flies with Luxima who dies soon after. Hilarion returns to Kashmir and spends the rest of his days meditating on Luxima.

The theme of conversion in the novel has drawn a fair share of critical attention. However many scholars, including Nigel Leask, tend to misread the novel when they claim that Luxima did not convert to Christianity (Leask 116). Owenson graphically shows Luxima receiving baptism:

> The Missionary led her forward, in silence, to the edge of the spring, and blessing the living waters as they flowed, he raised his consecrated hands, and shed the dew of salvation upon the head of the proselyte, pronouncing, in a voice of inspiration, the *solemn sacrament of baptism*. All around harmonized with the holy act, Nature stood sole sponsor, the incense which filled the air arose from the bosom of the Earth; and the light which illuminated the ceremony was light from heaven (Owenson: 179).

This description proves beyond doubt that Luxima was converted to Christianity, even if informally.

According to modern scholars, the novel opposes Christian missionary enterprises. Nigel Leask mentions, "In Morgan's novel, Hinduism as embodied in the doctrine and example of Luxima is preferred to the intolerant asceticism of the Catholic missionary Hilarion" (Leask 102). He further states, "The polemical thrust of Morgan's novel is to show that evangelical policies of cultural assimilation cannot succeed; rather than 'making a Christian' Hilarion only succeeds in 'destroying a Hindu' …" (Leask128). Nancy L Paxton has provided an even more unconventional reading of the novel. She believes that Luxima's worship of "Camdeo" (Kamdev) or the Hindu god of sexual love is psychologically more liberating than the rigid Christianity of Hilarion. In her eyes, Hilarion is nothing other than a "self-deluding, rigid and intolerant Catholic zealot" (Paxton 91). These scholars thus claim that Owenson herself was against conversion. The study of this novel does make it obvious that the author criticized the aggressive zeal of the Jesuit priests. She sees them as "cruel and inexorable bigots" who pervert the teachings of Christ – "substituting malevolence for mercy, and the horrors of a fanatical superstition for the blessed peace and loving kindness of true religion" (Owenson 258). They are no better than, and perhaps even inferior to, the fanatical Brahmanas who persecute an individual for his apostasy. But it is not enough to claim that Owenson condemned conversion. Rather than blandly stating her opinions, Owenson shows us both the positive and negative sides of conversion. She points out that conversion is as much capable of alleviating alienation as in enforcing it.

In *The Missionary* Owenson vividly portrays the mental conflict in Luxima after she converts to Christianity. What most scholars fail to note is the fact that it is the Hindus, and not Hilarion, who finally drive Luxima to Christianity. She changes her religion only after she is excommunicated and is left with no other options. Luxima clearly states that she has no future under Hinduism, "For me, my days are numbered – sad and few, they will wear away in some trackless desert, […] lost to my cast (sic), my country, and my fame […]" (Owenson 175). Owenson here clearly criticizes the rigid Hindu caste norms. Once excommunicated, it is only Christianity that offers her relief. It promises to unite her once again with common humanity. If Luxima fails to takes this chance, the fault lies with her and not with her new faith.

As a matter of fact, despite her obvious sympathy for Luxima, Owenson shows that her alienation is self-imposed to a large extent. She is unable to embrace Christianity wholeheartedly. This increases her feeling of isolation. She tells Hilarion, "it was *thou* I followed, and not thy doctrines" (Owenson 233) Even after she is excommunicated, her former caste prejudices do not abandon her. Herself an outcast, she rejects the hospitality of another outcast. Owenson shows that this is a flaw in her character. Given that the novel preaches liberal humanism, Luxima's orthodoxy appears as obnoxious as Hilarion's.

Luxima's conversion to Christianity is thus only superficial. Owenson suggests that inwardly she retains her belief in Hinduism. While travelling through the wastelands during her journey to Goa, Luxima cannot prevent herself from bowing down before the alters of the local gods. Though Hilarion rebukes her severely for "the perpetual vacillation of her undecided faith", Luxima repeats the 'mistakes' again and again (Owenson: 201). She declares that old ties are difficult to severe, and the author agrees with her. Ultimately at the moment of crisis, Luxima completely reverts back to Hinduism. She thrusts herself between Hilarion and the executioners, crying out, "Brahma receive and eternally unite our spirits!" (Owenson 260).Gauri Viswanathan points out that here Luxima symbolically attempts a *sati* or self-immolation at the pyre of her lover. This symbolic act of *sati* shows her renunciation of Christianity and return to Hinduism. She dies declaring "now I *die* as Brahmin women *die*, a *Hindu* in my feelings and my faith – dying for him I loved, and believing as my fathers have believed" (Owenson 273). Luxima thereby becomes a renegade convert who highlights the inefficacy of missionary enterprises.

Our reading suggests that Owenson did oppose conversion, but on entirely different grounds. She never felt that Hinduism was superior to Christianity. Though calling it a 'poetic faith', she also describes it as an 'error'

- "bright, wild and illusory; captivating to the senses, fatal to reason, and powerful and tyrannic to both" (Owenson 111). In contrast, Christianity is described as simple and sublime. What really made Owneson criticize Luxima's conversion was the feeling that it was premature. She felt that Christianity demanded a certain maturity on the part of the neophyte. Without the light of reason guiding him, the neophyte was sure to go astray. Even Hilarion understands that Luxima's prejudices "could only be perfectly eradicated by the slow operation of expanding reason, by the strengthening efforts of moral perception..." (Owenson 181). Unfortunately circumstances forced the religion upon Luxima. It is not surprising that she becomes a renegade proselyte in the end.

Like Owenson's *The Missionary*, Philip Meadows Taylor's *Seeta* (1873) highlights the alienation of the convert. Seeta certainly does not convert to Christianity. Though married to the Englishman Cyril Brandon, she remains a Hindu throughout the novel. Nevertheless, the novel does contain a discourse on conversion. As David Finkelstein observes "In *Seeta* ... there is much emphasis on Seeta's potential for conversion to Christianity" (Finkelstein 183). *Seeta*is a 'Mutiny novel' – that is a novel which has the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as its main theme. The protagonist Seeta is widowed when her husband Huree. Das is killed by the dacoit leader Azrael Pande. Azrael is later caught by the British police and brought to trial. When Seeta appears before the British magistrate to give her testimony, Cyril Brandon, the officer, becomes impressed by her courage. This gradually develops into love and finally to marriage. The couple live happily till the arrival of the English girl Grace Mostyn. Cyril finds himself falling in love with Grace. This becomes a severe trial for him, but he manages to maintain his fidelity to Seeta. Things were beginning to look good for Seeta, when the Mutiny suddenly breaks out. Azrael, who had escaped from prison, returns as a leader of the mutineers. Determined to violate

Seeta, he attacks the couple again and again. During a raid on the British settlement, Azrael accidentally wounds Seeta when the latter receives the blow meant for her husband. The British officers kill Azrael. Seeta succumbs to her injuries soon after. Cyril returns to England to marry Grace and inherit his ancestral property. The novel ends with Cyril and Grace paying their respect to Seeta.

Unlike *The Missionary*, conversion is not a major theme in *Seeta*. This is to be expected, for *Seeta* is a Mutiny novel. It was believed in Britain that the Sepoys (soldiers) had rebelled out of fear. They felt that the British were trying to demolish their religions.[3] There is some grain of truth in this. The foremost historian of the Mutiny, John William Kaye, describes how in the years preceding the Mutiny, Christian missionaries struck with a ruthless force at "the great Baal of Hindooism". (Kaye: 181 – 185) Taylor himself believed that the Mutiny was nothing but an attempt of declining Hinduism to reassert itself. In a letter to his father dated 21 June 1857, he observes:

> Civilisation is pressing hard on Hindooism, perhaps also on Mohammedanism: I do not say Christianity, for that as yet is far off; but that amount of civilisation which has proved progression of knowledge to be incompatible with Hindooism, and to be sapping its very existence. This may have led to conspiracy among Brahmins, and by them the Rajpoots or Kshattriya classes have been aroused to action (Taylor, *The Story of My Life*, 340).

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[3] The immediate cause of the Mutiny was the introduction of the new greased cartridges for the Enfield rifles. The Sepoys were required to bite the cartridges before loading them. It was rumoured that the cartridges were greased with the fats of cows and pigs, taboo to both the Hindus and the Muslims. The Sepoys felt that the British were deliberately hurting their religious sentiments.

Such observation shows that the fear of the Sepoys was not completely groundless. However, after the Mutiny, the British began to disavow their involvement in proselytization. When Taylor was writing his novel in the 1870s, the people of England were not ready to acknowledge that the British ever tried to impose their religion on the natives. This accounts for the cautious way with which Taylor approached the topic.

Though Taylor does not depict actual conversion, he leaves enough hints to suggest that had Seeta lived she would have changed her religion. For instance, at one place she compares the *Bible* to the *Bhagavad Gita*, finding the former to be "so tender, so simple, that a child could understand it" while the latter to be difficult and obscure (Taylor, *Seeta* vol .II, 294). Again, after attending a Christian service, she finds Hindu prayers to be "cold and comfortless" (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. III, 144). Observing her mental transformations Mrs Pratt the missionary's wife remarks, "there is good seed sown and it must germinate and grow" (Taylor, *Seeta* vol.II, 291). Seeta, therefore, faces the same dilemmas that a neophyte faces in the course of his existence.

What makes Seeta's alienation more acute is the fact that she is rejected by both communities. While the Hindus shun her because of religious prejudice, the European Christians do not accept her out of racial prejudice. Immediately after her marriage with Cyril, Seeta is excommunicated by the "Gooroo" (Guru) of her caste. Her guardians - grandfather Narendra and his sister Aunt Ella – are also forced to undergo purification ceremonies. Though they continue to love Seeta, they thenceforth start avoiding her. Particularly Aunt Ella, who becomes a "Bhugut" or devotee, rejects her company altogether. Even her childhood friends refuse to mingle with her anymore. Thus ostracized, Seeta begins doubting herself. She cannot help feeling "that her husband's caresses were poison; that she was polluted by them ..." (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. II, 90). Seeta here suffers

from feelings of isolation and estrangement. Like other writers of that time, Taylor criticizes the Hindu society for its rigid caste norms.

To Taylor's credit, he did not spare the prejudices of his own countrymen either. Theoretically Christianity preaches universal brotherhood; as Cyril states, "Our churches are open to all; and where prayers are publicly read, the place is God's temple, for the time" (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. III, 139). But in practice, the European Christians maintained their distance from the native Christians. Taylor does not hide this fact. When Seeta visits the local church, the Europeans are scandalized; Taylor states:

> […] we may well believe that the presence of Seeta attracted no little attention: and there was a good deal of indignant sniffing on the part of some ladies present, at the unwarrantable intrusion, as they expressed it, of a 'black woman', a heathen, into a place of Christian worship (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. III, 141).

Though some English ladies like Mrs Pratt and Grace Mostyn welcome her, the majority stays aloof. These ladies further try to separate Cyril and Seeta, believing it their duty "to save that fine young fellow from the scheming natives" (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. II, 164). Even Cyril's family members in England oppose their marriage; his brother writes:

> She could *never* take her place as your wife here, and the idea of recognizing such a person as Seeta, as a member of our old family, is as you must see yourself on reflection, perfectly absurd and impossible (Taylor, *Seeta* vol. II, 219).

Taylor does not show what would have happened had Seeta converted to Christianity and went to England as Brandon's wife. Instead, he chooses the easy way out by having her killed. The reviewer of the novel for the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review* complains, "This … strikes us as akin to the action of the player who upsets the chess-board because he

can see no way of winning …" (Gregg 224). The reviewer does not understand that Taylor had little options. He was well aware that the prejudice of the British society was too deep rooted to accommodate Seeta into the fold.

Despite his misgivings about the behaviour of his countrymen, Meadows Taylor is more positive about conversion than Owenson. Conversion does not promise any material benefit to Luxima. All it proposes is a dreary life in a convent. In contrast, conversion is more alluring to Seeta as it promises to make her union with Cyril more complete. Taylor mentions:

> Yet towards becoming a Christian, the advantages in a worldly point of view, appeared far more decided than in continuing as she was … As a Christian, he would marry her by Christian rites. No one could then deny her right to social rank and position … If she bore children to her husband, they would no longer have a stigma of illegitimacy according to English law (Taylor, *Seeta* Vol. III, 208).

However, even these considerations do not decide the question irrevocably for Seeta. Taylor very realistically shows that it is difficult to accept a new faith which requires the renunciation of old ties.

There is one curious similarity between Luxima and Seeta which requires some consideration. Luxima dies with the name of Brahma in her lips, showing her relapse to Hinduism. Interestingly, at her deathbed Seeta recites Sanskrit prayers mingled with lines of Christian hymns (Taylor, *Seeta* Vol. III, 104). This shows that like Luxima her acceptance of Christianity is not wholehearted. Further her mixing of Christian and Hindu prayers resembles an imperfect mimicry. Such an act, with its potential for subverting the dominant discourse, always filled the colonizers with anxiety. It is likely that Taylor's ambivalence towards conversion becomes manifested here.

Both *The Missionary* and *Seeta* depict the conversion of the feminine other. While these

novels are not very sure about the final efficacy of conversion, they nevertheless present conversion as something desirable. In both works, conversion becomes a metonymy of the romantic possession of the feminine other. In contrast, anti-conversion novels which depict the conversion of the masculine other appear more bluntly hostile to conversion. Vying for equality in the religious sphere, the native males are depicted in such works as the threatening other. The colonial novels often villainize the male converts. Example of this can be found in William Wilson Hunter's tale *The Old Missionary* (1897).

The plot of *The Old Missionary* is rather simple. The novel describes the idealistic efforts of the old missionary Father Douglas to compose a dictionary of the hill-languages. Fate, however, works against him. He becomes blind and dies leaving his work unfinished. There is no complication in the novel. The only crisis one comes across is a religious debate between the old missionary and his disciple the Brahmana convert. This Brahmana preacher tries to outdo his preceptor in religious zeal. As a result they become engaged in a confrontation which causes suffering to both.

The Brahmana convert, who becomes a rival of the old missionary, is the main antagonist in the novel. He is shown to be well-meaning, but rigid and uncompromising in his outlook. Though a disciple of the missionary, he tries to outdo his master in piety. What leads them to confrontation is the debate over the recitation of the Athanasian creed. Father Douglas omits this out of mercy, reasoning, "the church in which I have preached Christ's message of mercy shall never be profaned by man's dogma of damnation" (Hunter 105. The Brahmana convert, however, sees this as a heresy. Hunter suggests that the dogma of this neophyte is characteristically Oriental -". The truth seems to be that the younger of the catechists had for some time desired a warmer ritual and a more tropical form of faith than the calm theology of their aged pastor" (Hunter 104). According to the author, therefore, the conversion of this Brahmana has been imperfect. Eager to be accepted into the fold, he understands the letter but not the spirit of Christianity. Hunter shows that this breeds a feeling of isolation in him. Interestingly, at the moment of spiritual crisis, he turns to another Brahmana Pandit for solace, instead of seeking the advice of his new co-religionists. Hunter seems to suggest that Christianity as practiced in the West is unsuitable for Indian minds. His anti-conversion sentiments thus become manifested in the novel.

The study of these three anti-conversion novels reveals a similar strategy of representation. In all three, as well as in other nineteenth century anti-conversion Anglo-Indian literature, the neophyte is not accepted into the fold with open arms. Rather, he or she is treated as a transgressor whose conversion is only skin-deep. Belonging neither to the ingroup nor to the outgroup, the neophyte's is an unenviable fate. The Anglo-Indian authors, as we have seen, often focus on his sense of isolation and alienation. This is not done out of sympathy. Instead, the writer tries to show the English readers the futility of conversion. The neophyte's alienation is thus strategically articulated in certain colonial texts to counter missionary enterprises in India.

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The Quest

Sacred Topoi of Mythical India in the Literary Work of Mihai Eminescu, the Romanian National Poet

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore some of the main important Indian *topoi* that were active in the creative imaginary of Mihai Eminescu, the Romanian National Poet (1850-1889). Not very many researchers from abroad know that Mihai Eminescu developed his own philosophical approach and, by far, Indian culture caught his attention through the richness of symbols, through the complexity of fundamental theories on world cosmogony and extinction, sacred topoi and through its fruitful mythology. Not at all by chance, one of the strongest voices who studied the literary work of Mihai Eminescu from this new perspective is the Indian author Amita Bhose, who lived for several years in Romania and who decided to learn Romanian language especially for being able to read Mihai Eminescu's poetry in the original language and to translate it for Indian people.

[**Keywords: C**reative Imaginary, Indian topoi, Romanian National Poet, Indian Researcher, Multiculturalism]

Indian culture, with its exotic mythology and consecrated archetypal structures was one of the privileged Eastern landmarks in the creative imaginary of the Romanian national poet, Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889). During his Philosophy studies in Vienna and Berlin, Mihai Eminescu, who is considered to be the "last great Romantic" of the world, thoroughly studied the ancient Oriental philosophies. By far, Indian culture caught his attention through the richness of symbols, through the complexity of fundamental theories on World cosmogony and extinction, the gods' migration between Earth and Heavens, the codes of human feelings and not least, the geographies of Paradise that were perfect for the Romantic Age escape temptations. Other sacred topoi are, for instance, Nirvana, a sky of stars seen in a mirror, the coral palace, the temple, but the most mysterious space of all is *the repose* or the *"ahistorical void"*, a place of refuge and protection, with re-balancing virtues in which the potential state, the untriggered *energeia*, the One and unrepeatable have not yet received a norm or a shape but are still potentialities.

Amita Bhose, a great lover of Romanian literature translated into Bengali a volume of Eminescu's poems and analysed the influence of mythological India on Eminescu's work by means of a direct and academic connection to the authentic values of Hindu culture. Born in 1933, in Calcutta, Amita Bhose followed her husband (Dipak Kumar Ray, Ph.D. in Oil

Geology) to Romania, in 1959. She loved Romanian people and culture so much that she decided to learn Romanian language perfectly. She started translating M. Eminescu's poems into Bengali and she published, in 1969, in Calcutta, *Eminescu: Kavita (Eminescu: Poems)*. Amita Bhose came back to Romania several times, and in 1971 she started a PhD programme in Philology, in Bucharest, with a thesis about **The Indian Influence on Eminescu's Philosophy**. After finishing her PhD training, she became a collaborator of the Oriental Languages Department of the University of Bucharest - Romania, where she taught an optional course in Bengali language and literature. In 1978 she published her most important book about *Eminescu and India*, a complex study about the close connection between M. Eminescu's literary work and the Indian philosophy and mythology.

At a careful look at Eminescu's research, literary historians (and Amita Bhose herself) have signalled a few aspects of Indian thought and mythology that Eminescu became aware of and studied thoroughly. Thus, it is well known that during his studies in Berlin, the poet attended the Sanskrit language course held by professor Ebel, and because of his interest in Sanskrit he later translated parts of Franz Bopp's *Critical Grammar of Sanskrit Language* and copied much of Bopp's *Comparative Glossary of Sanskrit Language*. Eminescu did more than copy the text. He also analysed and made connections between terms, which is a proof that he knew the deep semantics of the Sanskrit word *aksara* (which he explains by "quod non perit, immortale", "syllaba sanctissima") and of the sacred syllable *OUM* (meaning "seed", "essence"). He was very knowledgeable about Buddhism, as it may be inferred from his manuscripts, in which he mentions having read E. Burnouf's *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme Indien*. He also read *Bhāgavad-Gita* and analysed concepts of Brahmanism, which he later used in his poems; he studied the theses of

Nāgārjuna's nihilist thought, the psycho-cosmogram with the ten circles of *Mandala*, he developed concepts like Nirvana, *samsâra* (cycle of birth and death, wheel of destiny), the world's gold seed or matrix (*Hiranjagarbha*), he knew all ancient Indian gods and used them in his own work, he read several of Kalidasa's works. Speaking about assuming Traditional Indian doctrines, Romanian ideologist Constantin Barbu notes that "the emptiness doctrine in Māhāyana Buddhism was darker and more tempestuous than Vedic hymns; for the most radical Māhāyana nihilist thinker, Nāgārjuna, also known to Eminescu, there is no: 1. cessation (*nirodha*); 2. origination (*utpāda*); 3. annihilation (*uccheda*); 4. eternity (*śāśvata*); 5. unity (*ekārtha*); 6. multiple meanings (*nānārtha*); 7. appearance (*āgama*); 8. disappearance (*nirgama*)" (Barbu 24).

Our intent is to analyse the Romantic perspective of **mysterium tremendum** shifted towards Oriental philosophical and imagological potentialities, which Mihai Eminescu appears to have used as an ontological support for the explanation of logos. We begin our analysis by accepting the idea that, for the Romantic man's archetype, assuming the sacred is a characteristic of what Phillipe Van Tieghem calls "the inner Romanticism", but also of the mystical experience of the creative self, mentioned with a fascinating relevance by Mircea Eliade, himself a great lover of Indian culture: "...the poet discovers the world as if he had been present at the birth of the world, as if he had lived the first day of creation. From one perspective we can say that any great poet recreates the world, as he strives to see as if Time and History did not exist" (Eliade.a: 72).

For Mihai Eminescu, loneliness and retreat to isolation in view of initiation are principles of dignity. M. Eminescu built a semantic and a deeply metaphorical bridge between what Hindu culture calls *Karma* ("fate") and "the blind will to live" (a concept borrowed from German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer),

thus giving birth to several extremely powerful lyrical motifs. As the human being was created equal to gods and subjected to his body's desires, he finds ways to rebel and come back to himself, to cross boundaries, to escape and protect himself against the petty exterior. Throughout Eminescu's work, we encounter a series of professions of non commitment and return to the inner depths of the self, while craving for the grand sites of knowledge and escaping to sacred places: silence and non-sight (stopping words in thought and refusal to look at the superficial outside world), solitude, melancholy, return to the past through remembrance, reaching privileged places and states (childhood and old age, climbing the magical mountain or the temple, return to origin).

We shall try to follow the manner in which several of these concepts are reflected in Eminescu's poetic imaginary, bringing to life the sacred topoi of Indian mythology during full European Romantic culture.

No-Place and No-Time, the Unborn, the Single Point

In 1877 M. Eminescu published an article after he had attended a lecture given by Romanian philosopher A. D. Xenopol on Indian Philosophy, being very much impressed by it. It is obvious that Eminescu already knew the major aspects of the *Hymn of Creation* in *Rig-Veda*, *Manu's Code* and the fundamentals of Buddhism: "The speaker', Eminescu writes, 'was of the opinion that pantheism was born out of the country's enriching nature and that the sun giving life to the thousands of organic forms was seen as the father of all living beings and that all living beings were different forms of the sun. On this occasion, he quotes a hymn from Rig Veda, dedicated to the sun, and another hymn dedicated to fire, as the most appropriate representative of the supreme god. The separation of people according to immovable castes had also sprung from the same manner of seeing the

world, along with the belief in metempsychosis and the apathy of the Indian people. He goes on to present details of Hindu cosmogony and mythology and to talk about the great religious reform undertaken by Buddha. He remarks that Buddhism spread to other countries more than it did in India for the same reason that Christianity, born in Judea, spread more outside this country. This new religion was pessimistic, just like Christianity, and it opposed the optimistic Jewish belief. Without omitting details of Buddha's life, Eminescu focuses on the moral contents of his doctrines. Finally, he shows that, at this point, Buddhist morality is superior to biblical morality, and concluded that "the Brahman religious belief is closest to the results of modern science" (Eminescu a: 340).

Summing up, the Romanian poet was sufficiently knowledgeable about the traditional works, concepts and structures of Indian culture to engage in an exercise of cultural anthropology from an interdisciplinary perspective and to use them as filters of his own poetic visions.

Indian critic Amita Bhose is pointing to the poet's Indian sources in her study in *Mihai Eminescu*'s *Cosmology*: "The source of Eminescu's cosmology has long been traced to Indian texts, more precisely to the *Hymn of Creation* in *Rig-Veda (Rig.* X. 129). There are documentary evidences to show that the poet knew this hymn. In his poem, *In Search of Sheherazada* (1874), Eminescu sends his hero out to India in search of wisdom. It is worth noting that Eminescu, who knew all the cosmogonic myths known in Europe in his days, selected the Vedic myth, which is the most scientific of all, according to eminent cosmophysicists of our times, Carl Sagan and Fritjof Capra for example" (Bhose. c: 76-86).[i]

Some of Eminescu's most important poems are drawing on Vedic cosmogony, such as *Scrisoarea I (the First Epistle), Rugăciunea unui dac (A Dacian's Prayer)* and *Luceafărul*

(Lucifer). Here is for instance Eminescu's view on creation in *Rugăciunea unui dac (A Dacian's Prayer)*: "When death did not exist, nor yet eternity, / Before the seed of life had first set living free, / When yesterday was nothing, and time had not begun, / And one included all things, and all was less than one, / When sun and moon and sky, the stars, the spinning earth / Were still part of the things that had not come to birth / And You quite lonely stood... I ask myself with awe, / Who is this mighty God we bow ourselves before"[*], or that from **Satires I**: "Into the time things began, when being and not being still / Did not exist to plague man's mind, and there was neither life nor will, / When there was nothing that was hid, yet all things darkly hidden were, / When self-contained was uncontained and all was slumber everywhere. / Was there a heavenly abyss? Or yet unfathomable sea? / There was no mind to contemplate an uncreated mystery. / Then was the darkness all so black as seas that roll deep in the earth, / As black as blinded mortal eye, and no man yet had come to birth, / The shadow of the still unmade did not its silver threads unfold, / And over an unending peace unbroken empty silence rolled!..." Certainly, our impression is that of similarity up to the point of being identical to the *Hymn of Creation* in *Rig-Veda*.

When analysing these Indian philosophical views that were used by Eminescu without any change, Amita Bhose notices in the same article that "Manu says that the self-created (i.e. unborn) One, spurred by the desire of creating, put His seed *(virya)* in water. The seed evolved into an egg, as bright as a thousand suns; Brahma, the ancestor of the whole world, was born out of it. He stayed a year in the egg, and then by meditation (mental power) split the egg in

two, out of which He made the sky, the earth, the atmosphere and the eternal abode of the waters. From his own self He created mind, ego (self-consciousness), conscience, the subtle elements and time. He created the gods and gave them life. He created the rituals, the word as well as the impulse and the act of procreation *(kama* and *rati)*. In order to create the living beings, He divided His body into two halves, out of which were born the masculine and the feminine principles, *purusa* and *viraj* (I.8-32). The golden embryo appears in hymn X. 121 of *Rigveda* and hymn IV. 2 of *Atharvaveda. Hymn X* of the former says that after *viraj* was born from *purusa*, he was re-born from her (Bhose.b. web). The process of creation described in *A Dacian's Prayer* is simpler than that in *The First Epistle*. We would only point out the conception of the creation of light from water, an idea present in Indian mythology. In *The First Epistle* (distichs 4 and 5), Eminescu imagines the process of creation in a way that comes very close to the one described in the *Rigveda Hymn of Creation*, the most explicit cosmogonic hymn in Vedic literature: "At the beginning *kama*, the seed of mind, appeared in One. There were receptors of seed. There was greatness or power. Happiness was below, will above" (Bhose: Ibid.).

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy provides a possible decryption of the creation symbols from the perspective of the *Upanishads*, also known to M. Eminescu: "God is an essence without duality *(adwaida)* or, as some maintain, without duality but not without relations *(vishishtâdwaita)*. He is only to be apprehended as Essence *(asti)*, but this Essence subsists in a two-fold nature *(dwaitibhâva)*, as being and as becoming. Thus, what is called the Entirety (kritsnam, pûrnam bhûman) is both explicit and inexplicit *(niruktānirukta)*, sonant and silent *(shabdâshabda)*, characterized and uncharacterized *(saguna, nirguna)*, temporal and eternal *(kâlâkâla)*, partite and impartite

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[*] All quotations of Mihai Eminescu's poems are Corneliu M. Popescu's translations unless stated otherwise:
www.estcomp.ro/eminescu/popescu.html

(*sakalâkalu*), in a likeness and not in any likeness (*mûrtâmurta*), shewn and unshewn (*vyaktâvyakta*), mortal and immortal (*martyâmartya*) … and so forth. Whoever knows him [God] in his proximate aspect (*apara*), immanent, knows him also in his ultimate aspect (*para*), transcendent" (Coomaraswami 275).

Nirvana, Retreat and Quietude

In Eminescu's work, we can identify symbols of identity between man and God as well as symbols of the search for the profound self up to the moment when Karma is fulfilled and the fundamental ontological Quietude is found, all of which hold different poetic functions. Tantric Nirvana is for Eminescu a place of compensation, not of extinction, a place of withdrawal from the world's anguishes. Here we would like to mention that Mircea Eliade, the most knowledgeable Romanian author about Indian culture and philosophy, wrote that "The experience of Light signifies by excellence the meeting with the ultimate reality: that is why man discovers inner Light when he becomes aware of his Self (*ātman*), or when he perceives the essence of life and of cosmic elements or when he dies. In all these circumstances, the veil of illusion and ignorance is torn apart. Suddenly, man is blinded by Pure Light and falls into being. From a certain point of view, we can say that he transcends the profane world, the conditioned world and that the spirit reaches an absolute level, the level of Being and of the sacred. Brahman, like Buddha, is at the same time the sign of the sacred and of Being, of absolute reality. Indian thought identifies being with sacred and mystical knowledge, and it is through them that the mind wakes up to an awareness of reality. That is why you can find Light either through meditation on being – as it happens in the Upanishads and in Buddhism -, or through the attempt to reveal the sacred, as in some yoga teachings and in mystical schools. (…) According to Indian

Philosophical thought, freedom and knowledge are related: he who knows, who has come to know the profane structures of being, is freed from his earthly life and no longer conditioned by cosmic laws; from now on, he enjoys divine spontaneity, no longer moving like human automata according to the laws of cause and effect, but 'dances' like gods or like flames." (Eliade b: 36-37). Much in advance of Mircea Eliade, M. Eminescu had already noticed these similarities and created some of his poems and prosej on the idea of reaching inner Nirvana as he had understood it from his studies in Indian culture. Amita Bhose, in her study ***A fundamental motif in Eminescu's poetry***, notices that "`Seated at the "cool balance of thought", Eminescu attains control of passions. Now he is equally indifferent to the pleasant and the unpleasant. Buddha's disciple has come near Nirvana. The spirit of *The Gloss* is also in conformity with that of the *Bhagavad-gita*, which maintains that one who is not moved by either happiness or sorrow, gain or loss, who remains the same in victory and defeat, and who is free from fear, anger and bitterness can verily be called wise" (*Bhagavad-gita*, II, 38, 56). *The Gloss* is immediately succeeded by *Ode in Sapphic Metre* (1883), permeated with an acute longing for death. To Eminescu's mind, death no longer signifies exit from sufferings. Buddha's teachings guide him not to look for salvation through death. He calls on "sad indifference" to help him pass over the humdrums of daily life. The poet believes that at last he has learnt to die" (Bhose b: 131-140). Here is an excerpt from Eminescu's poem *Ode in Sapphic Metre* which endorses Bhose's assertion: "I little thought that I would learn to die; / Forever young, enveloped in my cloak, / My dreaming eyes I lifted to the star / Of solitude. // When of a sudden you stood in my way, / On, anguish you, of nameless suffering sweet… / And to the dregs I dank the draught of death / Unpardoning. (…) By my own dreams consumed, I endless wail; / At my own pile I am consumed in flame, / Shall I then luminous one day return / As does the

Phoenix? / Tormenting eyes but vanish from my way, / Come to my breast again sad unconcern; / That I may die in peace at last, myself / Give back to me" (*ODE <in antique metre>*). This is, in Eminescu's vision, the moment when the three Vedic energies - *cit* (the absolute truth), *jiva* (individual soul) and *māyā* (material illusion) – allow for a transgression of time, space and causality, enabling enlightenment. Otherwise it would be impossible for the self to accept the sacred *Tat twam asi*, that Eminescu knew about and which gave the one of his poems.

Within this context, we can mention Amita Bhose's analysis of the poem *Rugăciunea unui dac (A Dacian's Prayer)* which "begins with a Vedic hymn dedicated to the God of creation, then moves to the steps of suffering towards death, towards the return of *atman* to *Brahman*. By mentioning the cosmogonic concept from *Rig-Veda*, the Upanishads philosophy of the link between individual soul and universal soul ('your breath will mine efface'), and the Buddhist doctrine and exit from samsara, the circle of birth ('into endless nothing I go, and leave no trace') (*A Dacian's Prayer*) the poem shows Eminescu's knowledge of Indian philosophies and represents a noble attempt to synthesize them" (Bhose b: 91). In addition, M. Eminescu also cultivates the *samsara* archetype, an obvious symbol in *Luceafărul (Lucifer)*, the most important poem of his entire literary work: "Hyperion, o child divine,/ Don't thus your state disclaim, / Nor ask for miracle, nor sign / That has nor sense nor name. // You wish to be a man of son, / To be a star you scorn; / But men quick perish every one, / And men each day are born. // Yet stars burn on with even glow, / And it is fate's intending / That they nor time, nor place shall know, / Unfettered and unending. // Out of eternal yesterday / Into tomorrow's grave, / Even the sun will pass way / That other sun's shall lave; // The sun that every morn does rise / At last its spirit gives, / For each thing lives because it dies, / And dies because it lives" (*Lucifer*).

Certainly, there are influences from *Atharva-Veda* regarding identity unaltered by the laws of time and causality.

Eminescu is also inspired in his meditations by one of *Bhagavad-Gita's* parables on the relativity of the material world, as if directly from Shankara's wisdom "For someone to metaphorically imagine the world, they should take a piece of clay – eternally the same -, which is therefore timeless – and shape it into different things, one at a time, this or that. The clay remains the same" (Eminescu b: Ms. 2285, f. 126). Not few are also the gods of ancient India mentioned by Eminescu either as self-standing mythological structures or as symbolic entities. Eminescu's favourite seems to be Kama, to whom he dedicated an entire poem: "In pain for love/ and wanting to heal my soul, / I called Kama in my sleep - / Kamadeva, the Indian god" *Kamadeva* (1887).

In conclusion, we can say that the entire work of Mihai Eminescu, the Romanian national poet has absorbed concepts, myths, archetypes and symbols of deep resonance in traditional Indian culture. His fiction too is shot through with topoi borrowed from the theory of avatars, the cycles of life and death, places-refuge of the Nirvana type, karmic structures, symbols of female and male as a sacred duality, the Manichaeist structure of the world, the complex processes of cosmogony or of world extinction. This and Eminescu's entire poetical work was thoroughly analysed by the Indian researcher Amita Bhose, who is the most pertinent analyst of these aspects of the creative imaginary in his case. The intention of this study has been to highlight, once again, the borderless movement of world's cultural values and the migration of sacred topoi between apparently completely different cultures.

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India as Object of Mircea Eliade's Gaze

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Abstract

Exotism is one of the blue prints of European literature in the 20th century, says Jean-Marc Moura in *La littérature des lointains. Histoire de l'exotisme européen au XXe siècle.* (Moura 1). He defines this desire of the other as "the totality of Europe's debt to other cultures" (Halen: web). Thereby he acknowledges the permanent change of Europe's literary map though the integration of other cultures. Exotism equals a favourable or desirous perception of alteriy. This paper sets exotism in polarity to access to India as to an imagined community, pointing to orientalist Mircea Eliade, historian of religions, as an example in point.

[**Key Words :** Mircea Eliade, colonial India, Memoirs, Erotic Mystic]

Introduction

Pierre Halen distinguishes three types of alterity in which the West is grounded: Roman, Greek, and Bzyantine. To them Jean-Marc Moura adds a fourth, which was generated by colonial imperialism, taking the form of « ekphrastic exotism », whereby he understands the "description of an alien art work, real or imaginary, in a piece of fiction" (Halen: web).

The founding of European colonies in India, by Portugal, England, the Netherlands spawned a rich harvest of exotic literature, especially in English and French, which included : Edward Morgan Forster (*A Passage to India*), Rudyard Kipling (*Kim*), Paul Scott (*The Jewel in the Crown, The Day of the Scorpion , The Towers of Silence, A Division of the Spoils*, Pierre Lotti (*L'Inde sans les anglais*), André Chevrillon (*Dans l'Inde, Sanctuaires et Paysages d'Asie*), Romain Rolland (*Gandhi*), André Malraux (*Antimémoires)*, Marguerite Duras (*Le Vice-consul, India Song*), Catherine Clément (*La Reine des cipayes*), Alexandra David-Néel (*L'Inde où j'ai vécu*). Famous are also American Louis Bromfield (*Night in Bombay, The Rains Came*), Italian Pier Paolo Pasolini (*L'odore dell'India*), Alberto Moravia (*Un'idea dell'India*), and German Hermann Hesse (*Carnets indiens, Siddharta*). Fascination with India took Romanian Mircea Eliade on a three-year journey to initiation in Orientalistics. It ascended from exterior initiation (the discovery of the unknown Oriental space), through affective intiation (revelation of love as the royal way to the absolute), to anagogic initiation (philosophy, theology, yoga).

Mircea Eliade and India

Mircea Eliade's presence in India is not related to the traveller's or the explorer's curiosity but by a desire to be initiated into Orientalism, not through bookish studies but through unmediated contact.

He was only fourteen when he took up the study of Sanskrit, Persian and Hebrew. In 1928 he received a scholarship from a Maharajah to study Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy with Professor Surendranath Dasgupta. He was also initiated into Hindu theology and Yoga practices. His Indian adventure came to an end three years later, in 1931, when he returned to Romania for military service.

Upon his return, Eliade published two books about his adventure in the East : *India* and *The Maharajah's Library*. He reports on his unusual experiences, inroads into the jungle or into the Indian metropoles, liminal experiences (moments of excitement, of anxiety, of disenchantment or shocking discoveries for the European coming from Eastern Europe, from a different culture, encounters with outstanding Indian personalities : his benefactor, Manindra Chandra Nandy, the Kazimbazar Maharajah, known in Bengali for his magnanimity, Ghandi, the leader of the movement for non-violent liberation from the British rule, poet Rabindranath Tagore, who spoke to him about the gap between the East and the West.

India is Eliade's notebooks of the 1928-1931 period, where he jotted down his impressions, experiences and reflections. In the preface to the book, published in 1934, the author specifies that this is no travelogue or book of memoirs but off-hand jottings about the visited places, giving back a fragmented image of the Oriental space he had discoverd : "This book is made of fragments on India ; some of them were written on the spot, others were recollections, and a third group were taken out of an intimate notebook. This is not a unitary book on India [...] I chose to replace adventure with reportage, and reportage with narrative. (Eliade a. 5). Here and there description makes room for reflection or for narratives of adventures in various Oriental places.

Ceylon was Eliade's gate of entry into India. The encounter with the jungle world is overwhelming. He is taking in the exotic landscape through hightened visual and olfactive perceptions, being overwhelmed by the abundant vegetation, dizzy with its piercing flavours. He experiences at first hand a nightmare which, to a western man, is unimaginable.

His body, the first receptacle of sensations, is almost crushed by their force which carries him from agony to exhilaration. The epithets convey this organic resonance, the ceaseless threshing of the senses: "a breaze pervaded by the fragrance of the sapful tree trunks", "an atmosphere saturated with strong and ravishing perfumes" (Eliade a. 13).

The jungle is working its power over the European soul with such force as to impose itself on the young man even when he has given it up as a form of posession: "The terrifying rush of saps makes you a prisoner, dragging you into the midst of their cruel slaughter, stirring and mocking you in your traveller modesty."(Eliade a. 17).

The jungle is the very image of creation, the endless show of the war between life and death and of their mix, the topos of a vitalist experience of sorts, and a permanent challenge to the senses: "This act of nature permanently spewing life, senselessly, for the mere joy of creation, for the joy of breathing in the sun and crying out its victory, makes one dizzy, makes one dumb" (Ibid.).

Eliade perceives the exotic miracle through sensations, the first step in the oriental space cognition being of a sensuous nature. His body is showered by sensations before his consciousness begins to reflect on the jungle experience: "You return to the world of men with the sense of having witnessed a miracle, something monstrous or something sacred, exceptional and irrational, which you can neither judge nor imitate" (Eliade a. 18).

By contrast with the jungle, as living show which sufffuses the traveller with the joy of being in the world, the ocean's beach,

immense, desolate and impoverished, gives him a sense of waste and loneliness, similar to the one experienced in the vast low lands crossed by the Ganges.

The European unaccustomed with India's sultry weather, whose rains are hot and unexpected storms nightmarish, is plagued with sunstrokes. In the boiling sun of the low lands, his body loses its strength, his consciousness is over and again undone and recomposed, with temporary lapses into hallucinations.

Eliade enters a world that shocks a European through its unseemly mix of races, languages and religions, where civilizing efforts are frustrated by the resilience of aboriginal traditions still inviolate in the twentieth century. By that time, however, the liberation movement from the British rule instated in 1857 had started. In 1920 Mohandas K. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) had changed the Congress Party into a mass movement waging war against the British colonial rule. In the city of Amritsar, Eliade watches the effects of the civil war led by Gandhi: "I was in Northern India, the province that was most grievously affected, where no foreigner could move about without permission, where every stranger could be a revolutionary agent, and each Indian, a bomb maker (Eliade a. 71). He hears about the sacrifice of the 500 youngester answering Gandhi's call to non/violent resistance against the British rulers.

In 1930 he bears witness to the brutal repression of the students' and citizenry gathered together in the park of the Calcutta University:

> Cordons of female Bengali students were broken by horsemen hitting left and right, whomever and wherever they could. Broken heads and ribs could be seen everywhere. There is however something that can only be seen in British India : children trampeled under horses, children bleeding from hooves and cudgels" (Eliade a. 272). He goes on to say that

"nobody can intervene into someone else's destiny without committing a lawless act with consequences that would prove fatal eventually" (Eliade a. 276). He has in mind the belief in destiny, governed by the law of karma.

Eliade cannot get close to Gandhi excepta at his trial which he describes in *The Maharajah's Library*.

Eliade's view of the Indian space differs from the exotic cliches of other travellers crossing the continent and taking an outsider's view of India. The three years of unmediated experience forced Mircea Eliade to adapt himself to the daily life there, including cooking and transportation, but also in-depth studies in philosophy and theology. From the initial, external, perception of an alien struck by the novelty of a completely different culture, he progresses towards an inner vision as the fruit of erotic and spiritual experience. His Indian progress is one of initiation, of discovery and acquisition of knowledge at different levels : sensuous, affective, spiritual.

His infatuation with India does not exclude the objective grasp of the obvious gap among social classes as an effect of colonization, yet he does not allow himself to become a prisoner of cliches. Fascinated by Hindu spirituality, he seeks the company of poets and visits the Himalaya monasteries to watch religious customs and rites, even if his imperfect knowledge of Hindi forces him to communicate in a mixture of Urdu, Bengali and Sanskrit. (Dumitrache: web). He discovers the core of Hindu philosophy (in the *Upanishads*): outside the absolute reality of Brahman-atman, everything is merely appearance (*maya*). He reports on his journey through the jungle, his experience as hermit in a monastery, the Indian funeral rite (bodies are burnt on a pyre and entrusted to the Ganges), on the dark side of India with its horifying retinue of lepers, beggars, crippled, in sharp contrast to India's bright side ; a

crocodile hunt is interspersed between journeys to Hindu temples and princely palaces, which occasion a display of what Jean-Marc Moura calls "ekphrastic exotism".

Being is just seeming he suggests in his story, *Nights at Serampore,* a belief he had acquired from his guru, Swami Shivananda, a former Indian physician, whom he met at the monastery of Rishikesh, where he found shelter after being driven out of Dasgupta's home for having an affair with his daughter.

In Hindu philoosophy, what western thinkers take for reality is only a veil of appearances. The idea is illustrated in the story by an adventure in which are involved the narrator and his companion and explained away by Swami Shivananda, the physician who had "studied all philosophies in a quest for the peace of his soul" (Eliade d. :87) undertaken in the retreat of his cottage on the banks of the Ganges at Rishikesh. The narrrator tells him his strange experience, with no rational explanation, of having got out of his time into another temporal interval, with which he interferes and modifies, while witnessing an event occurring 150 years back.

Swami Shivananda explains the difference between western and eastern philosophy, giving him a persuasive proof of the possibility to reenter a past moment and relive the experienced formerly triggered by Professor Suren Bose during a secret Tantric ritual : "Everything that goes on in our cosmos is illusionary. In a world of appearances, in which no thing and no event is consistent, in which nothing possesses a reality of its own, anybody can control certain forces which you choose to call occult, and do what do whatever he wishes. It is obvious that he too creates nothing real, but only a play of appearancces" (Eliade d. 91).

The idea of annihilating time through yoga exercises is also present in *The Maharajah's Library,* but in a different sense : life can be prolonged after death according to one's own will, as yoga exercises can wake up in man the "kundalini", i.e., "the cosmic potency planted in man which can bring about experiences unknown to ordinary psychic life" (Eliade d. 51).

In *India*, Eliade surveys the sundry races sharing the same territory, the religious differences between the Hindus and the Mahomedans, their conflicts, the effects of Hindu mentality (indifference to death, the squandering of one's wealth, passivity), the multicultural society, the characteristics of the Hindu soul (sincerity, thirst for love, respect for tradition, religious fervour), ans several aspects of the Hindu religion : belief in the migration of the souls, imprisoned by Karma in the chain of reincarnations until the soul disengages itself from its social conditioning, breaking loose and recovering its cosmic dimension. The liberation can be achieved either in one's lifetime through techniques of spiritual elevation or through biological death.

Experimenting with mystic Hindu

In Hindu philosophy, woman embodies nature (Eliade h. 8), her nakedness revealing divine beauty, which means that she should be eyed admiringly but dispassionately, as a mystery of cosmic creation rather than as the object of a lay man's gaze [...] In India, every woman is a Devi, a goddess [...] India sees in woman neither a virgin nor a mistress, but only the goddess, the self-sacrificing mother" (Eliade a. 257).

The body participates in a cosmic ritual, and erotic experience is mystic.

The union of man and woman according to Hindu mentality is not a profane act but the union of two deities, a ceremonial ritual following a divine model : "The sexual union is a ritual that changes the human couple into a divine one" (Eliade h. 9-10)

Young Eliade experiences in Calcutta this kind of love for Maitreyi, the very image of female Indian exoticism, but also of mystic Hindu spirituality.

His erotic experience is narrated in the novel *Maitreyi*. The heroine is a sixteen-year-old Bengali, who initiates him into Hindu erotic mystic. She combines innocence and maturity, intelligence and naivety, prudery and audacity, play and provocation. Her virginal body bespeaks sensuality, exerting an irresistible charm. It is a deity's body progressively revealed in an ambiguous play of sensuousness and innocence which her male partner cannot quite comprehend :"I know she is excessively sensual, even if as pure as a saint" (Eliade b. 61). On seeing her next to him, as a guest, he experiences the mystic of her body : "one could say she lived in virtue of a miracle, not biologically" (Eliade b. 12).

The growing intimacy of the couple, through a blend of sensuality, friendship, attraction, and love, in the home of the engineer who intends to adopt him and settle with his family in Europe, goes through Tantric rituals, as the sexual act presupposes initiation into the moment of extasy, otherwise it remains a purely carnal union. Initiation includes spiritual exercises. With the Indians, everyday life is suffused with mythology, gestures and conduct being dictated by the Vedas. Every Indian goes through an initiation within his own caste, he observes religious rites and the tradition he learns since childhood. Maitreyi makes no exception, it is only that her sentimental choice does not confirm to the very strict principles of her caste. Those who do not observe them are punished, being driven away from home for fear they might draw the divine curse on the whole family.

Maitreyi aspires to an all-consuming love, in which the individual being is absorbed into the Divine. It is the archetype of *Shakti* (the female principle, the energia), while Allan, a Shiva figure, the masculine, passive, principle, is woken up, initiated by *Shakti*. Extremely sensuous, Maitreyi experiences a sense of totality, of cosmic absorption through a merely visual contact or a touch. The male body is not carnal temptation to her, but an instrument of access to a higher world. The mental make-up making the difference between Europe and India is also manifest at this level of the erotic relationship. Maitreyi tells more than once to the European Allan, with whom she falls in love, that he does not understand love, while Allan keeps repeating to himself that he is not in love, but merely attracted by her charm, by the virgin's irresistible sensuality. For all that, before the physical possession of her body, Allan will experience, despite himself and astonished at himself, the Indian erotic mystic in the scene of the look which releases a state of inexpressible magic and total communion, as some kind of absolute possession. It is through the gaze, not through the body that he reaches mystic extasy: "We were staring at each other bewitched, flooded by the same unnaturally sweet current, incapable to resist, to shed off so much charm [...], experiencing a calm and at the same time violent sense of contentment, to which the soul will give in – the beatitude of the sense which surpasses sensuality, as if we had shared in a heavenly bliss, in a state of grace." (Eliade b.75). For Maitreyi, the union of two people is the fusion of two principles, male and female, the erotic act being the fulfilment of the existential meaning ordained by the Divinity (Eliade b. 110).

Indian mentality does not however allow of the mesalliance with a stranger. This is the source of the dramatic fate of forbidden love among people belonging to different castes. Mircea Eliade fell so deeply in love with Maitreyi, his mentor's son, that he decided to convert to Hinduism in order to marry the sixteen-year-old Bengali. Their love and marraige were deemed impossible by Indian mentalities that prohibited marriage to an impure stranger, despite the sacrifice the westerner was ready to commit accepting a new religion and a new culture.

The lovers are separated and punished. Driven out of the house, Mircea Eliade will live a hermit's life in a monastery close to the

Himalaya mountains, where monks practised Yoga techniques. It was there that he began his initiation into Yoga which would be the subject of several of his books: *Techniques du Yoga* (1948), *Le Yoga. Immortalité et liberté* (1954), *Patañjali et le Yoga* (1962).

Eliade and Hindu spirituality

In the Ashram Swarga monastery , where he spent several months, Eliade was taken to a higher level of initiation by his guru, Swami Shivananda. He discovered the yoga practices and lives of the monks living there in meditation and prayer: "Prayer is not always devotional, religious, in the Christian sense of the word, but rather a spiritual exercise in inner purification and metaphysical athletics." (Eliade a. 195).

The purpose of the Yoga practice is the liberation of the individual from temporality and the accession to absolute freedom, as, in Hindu philosophy, being is only a veil of appearances, illusion (*maya*). Nothing exists except for the Creator's absolute reality. Monks in monasteries and acsetics in caves break loose from life's turmoil through spiritual exercise in view of "acceeding to" the only reality, Brahman-atman, the soul which is identical in man and in the universe (Eliade a. 186) - an upanishadic motif. He discovers his self in order to pass the cosmic one: "Brahman is the only God, immanent in the whole of creation, and yet transcendent" (Eliade a. 95)

Mircea Eliade enters into the core of Hindu philosophy through study. In *Yoga. Immortality and Freedom*, he identifies and defines the fundamental notions at the basis of Hindu spirituality: *Karman, maya, nirvana* and *yoga. Karman* is the "law of universal causality" which conditions human existence. *Maya* is the "cosmic illusion", while *nirvana* is the "absolute reality", existing beyond illusion and human experience. The "pure Being (the Absolute), called the Self (atman) or Brahman,

is the "undetermined, transcendent, immortal, indestructible, or Nirvana".

Yoga consists of the "means of reaching being, the techniques which are appropriate to go through in order to reach final liberation (*moskṣa, mukti*)" (Eliade g. 15).

The hindu sage discovers universal suffering, in which Hindu philosophy is rooted. Human existence generates suffering, but this belongs to an individual's personal drama, not to the spirit (the soul, the Self), named *paruṣa, atman,which is* "eternal and cannot be mixed up with psycho-mental life". The purpose of Hindu philosophy is liberation: "To rid oneself from suffering, this is the purpose of all Hindu philosophies and mystics. Liberation is achieved directly through knowledge [...] or through techniques [...], but no science is any worth, if it does not aim at man's redemption" (Eliade g. 15).

Hindu thought aspires to ultimate truth by virtue of its soteriologic function: "The utmost purpose of a Hindu sage [...] is liberation, the conquest of absolute freedom" (Ibid.). The liberation from social-historical determinism is realised through diffferent methods: gnosis or yoga exercises, which presuppose ascesis and meditation. It is through knowledge that man will "wake up" from ignorance, realising that his spirit's dependence on matter is only illusion. Hence he will try to shed the illusions of the phenomenal world through yoga practices, which impose self-control on the body and help the spirit concentrate on its transcending of the human condition and access to a higher, absolute reality.

"Knowledge is merely an <awakening> that reveals the essence of the Self, of the spirit" (Eliade g. 35), and which cannot be acquired through intellectual toil but through revelation. During the "awakening" or the "illumination", the object and the subject become one (the "Self" is self-<contemplating>)" (Ibid.). This is not thought, Eliade explains, which is a mental activity as

an attribute of nature (*prakrti*), i.e. of matter as primordial matter.

Man believes that the spirit (soul) is matter's *ancilla* (servant), and that it can break loose from it, but that is only an illusion of psychomental life, for the spirit is eternal and free.

"Liberation" means the *anagnorisis* (recognition) of this eternal freedom and of the fact that life is a succession of painful moments which do not involve the spirit, because the spirit is only a detached observer. The one that breaks loose is annihilating his personality understood as a "synthesis of psycho/mental experiences" (Ibid.). Hence suffering is external to the spirit, it belongs the personality side. The one "set free" disengages himself from psychomental life and attains absolute freedom through the return of the individual self to the primordial oneness of the universal Self. He escapes karma, the consequences of his deeds.

Conclusions

In his search of oriental wisdom, Mircea Eliade comes to an understanding of the Hindu soul, generous, sincere, joyous, thirsting for freedom in the spirit of his religion, in which all Indians are brought up, coming to think that their destiny is decided by the law of karma, that nobody has the right ofr the power to intervene into the three decisive events of an Indian's life: birth, marrraige and death. Hence the passive acceptance of life, the devotion to one's family and traditions, the serene acceptance of death as a way to the liberation of the soul from matter, which is the purpose of a Hindu life's.

Young Eliade, bearing witness to everyday life in India for three years, acceedes acced gradually to the essence of Hindu philosophy, discovering the fundamental difference between Occcident and Orient. The western man aspires to individual freedom, to the attainment of materialist targets, to the exercise of power, the family being a fragile institution in Europe. He is traditionally an atheist or a Catholic, but not a devotee. By contrast, the Hindu acts out of conviction and religious devotion, and out of respect for tradition which governs his existence. To him, family is a sacred institution, woman is the creative mother-goddess, respected by all for her devotion to the family, which is an existential purpose accepted throughout in India.

The perspectives on oriental existence are contributed by multiple voices in *India*. On the one hand, there is the narrator observing and discovering from the outside; on the other, there are the insider perspectives of indigenous male and female Hindus. A third vantage point is the erotic and spiritual initiation in *Maitreyi.*

An Indian woman's mentality and status are defined in relation to the European ones by a female voice: "We're not interested in freedom. That's an illusion which sooner or later you will discard. Our lives are governed by Fate, by Karma, and any attempted escape will only *tighten* its hook *around your neck*. To us, happiness is not a whim, it is not something fleeting and irresponsible, passionate and sentimental infatuation. [...]. To an Indian woman, happiness never lies in individual initiative, but in the institution which teaches the time-honoured ideal of family, of the rearing of children. Bliss and final liberation only become possible if we give up on our passionate whims, our shallow and ephemerial ideals, and aspire to the mothers'perfection. [...] In all religious rituals we commune with our imagined greatgrandmothers (Eliade a. 258-259).

To the Indians, everything is mystic - religion, pshilosophy, eros, even politics – says a representative of the non-violent liberation movement: "Our struggle is not an abstraction, a matter of principles, nor confined to claims. Our struggle is a crusade for the liberation of the mother ("India is

Mother to Us") That is why it is not politics but mysitics: we accede to freedom, as Mahatma says, through purification, by renouncing selfhood, through non/violent agony, Our politics is ascetic apprenticeship." (Eliade a. 277).

Indian philosophy has a soteriologic purpose, the Indian sage seeks the supreme truth, the absolute reality. It is through knowledge in the sense of "awakening" or "illumination" that the Hindu will get off the hook of suffering caused by psycho-mental activity, finally realizing that the spirit is actually free and immortal, that it does not go down to either psyche or thinking, which are steeped in the primordial substance of life, in matter.

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Unsettling Landscapes: Landscape and the Entelechies of the Alienating Gaze in Kipling's *The City of Dreadful Night*

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Abstract

This paper examines and analyzes Kipling's representation of colonial Calcutta in his travel sketch, *The City of Dreadful Night*. It explores the role of the European gaze at length seeking to uncover the ways in which it became complicit in delineating not only the colonial space but also the (hitherto more secure) notion of Englishness. In order to do so, this paper exploits Freud's play on the concepts of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, shining a light on how the colonial space, in Kipling's imperial narrative, functioned as a covert force in the formulation of identities.

[**Keywords:** Kipling, Landscape, Colonial space, Gaze, Alienation, Desire]

Vision seems to adapt itself to its object like the images that one has of a town when one contemplates it from the height of a tower; hearing is analogous to a view taken from outside and on the same level as the town; touch, finally, relates to (the understanding of) whoever comes in contact with a town from close up by wandering through its streets. (Leibniz 1668)[1]

In Kipling's rendering of the colonial city of Calcutta in *The City of the Dreadful Night*[2], the entelechies of the urban colonial space can be grasped through a careful consideration of the senses—primarily, the visual, the aural, the haptic and the olfactory—and the interplay among them. In the specific context of his travel sketches on colonial Calcutta, this sentience is both the locus of his desire as well

as its occasion. But before one can delve any deeper into the vectors of such longing, it is imperative to remind oneself that Kipling's narrative on Calcutta distils the essence of European alienation and the primordial desire for home. Calcutta, for Kipling, both *is* and *is not* home and it is this very contradiction that enables one to see desire as an embodiment of two opposed ideas: first, as an entity that one must resist or escape from in order to preserve one's integrity and second, as an entity symbolizing the human longing (at the moment of desiring, that is) for an ideal state, object or outcome.

Interestingly, the traveller/narrator of *The City* presents desire as both promise (albeit, elusive) of fulfillment as well as absence or lack—an idea that replicates the essential dichotomy between longing (for the 'object' that one lacks at the moment of desiring) and evasion (of the seductive yet, admittedly sinister world of taboos etc.). However, the desiring Subject is not essentially aware of this

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[1] G. W. Leibniz (October 1668). Letter to Jacob Thomasins, quoted by Vidler. (2001). 81.

[2] All the references to the text (hereafter referred to as *The City*) are taken from the Alex Grosset 1899 edition of the book.

basic dissonance characterizing the nature of his desire(s) but is, nonetheless, structured through the object(s) of his longing(s). It is on account of this very inevitability that it is useful to apprehend the traveller/narrator of *The City* (and concomitantly, the narrative he produces) as the function of his desire(s) for the Orient as well as for all that it (the Orient) lacks. While the European's desire for the Orient (the promise of adventure, discovery, power etc.) can be easily explained, his longing for what the Orient lacks warrants a more conscientious speculation. In this particular instance, what the Orient lacks and the traveller/narrator desires can be summed up (not too imprecisely, so to speak) as "some portion of [my] heritage" (Kipling 7). It is no doubt an abstract idea but, also one that reasonably embodies the European's anxiety, his longing for the *heimlich* in the midst of an alien world and the ultimate unattainability of his desire(s). For although "Calcutta holds out false hopes of some return" (Kipling 6), the materiality of the claustrophobia it invokes automatically cancels the immaterial reprieve afforded by an illusionistic idea of 'homecoming'. The desire for the *heimlich* London within the *unheimlich* domain of colonial Calcutta culminates into the febrile crescendo of the (ironically self-fashioned) "backwoodsman" and "barbarian": ""Why, *this* is London! *This* is the docks. *This* is Imperial. *This* is worth coming across India to see!" Then a distinctly wicked idea takes possession of the mind: "What a divine—what a heavenly place to loot!"" (Kipling 8; emphases added). While Calcutta in its being the specular reflection of Dickensian London excites the desiring Subject (the traveller/narrator of *The City*) into asserting the malleability of forms and models (London, in this instance, is the model not only of Calcutta but also of all metropoleis), it is also the locus of the European's desire to appropriate the *Other* for himself ("What a heavenly place to loot!" (Kipling 8)). However, this should not be confused with anti-desire or the desire to annihilate or destroy; on the contrary, it traces

the trajectory of colonial desire to a longing that manifests itself as (latent) power of the Occident over the Orient.

As indicated earlier, Kipling's representation of colonial Calcutta derives, to a great extent, from his sensory experience of colonial space. Like the royal palace in Italo Calvino's "A King Listens" (*Under the Jaguar Sun* 2009 [1983]) which is "all whorls, lobes: [it is] a great ear" (Calvino 38), the colonial metropolis of Calcutta for Kipling is a sprawling sensory map—a vast network of sensory signals concretizing emotion, affect and memory. He repeatedly makes reference to the great "Calcutta stink" which he variously describes as the "essence of corruption" (9) and "the clammy odour of blue slime" (9)—notably fusing the haptic, olfactory and the visual. That the experience of the colonial space (and the subsequent representation of the same in writing) is informed by sensory perception in *The City* need hardly be over-emphasized, given its conspicuousness. Rather, it is the deployment of sensory perception to convey a sense of anxious alienation from the notion of home or the *heimlich in* and *through* language that is likely to strike one as particularly intriguing. The speaking Subject of Kipling's narrative—a stand-in for the European colonial—is alienated in ways more than one, for he not only typifies the Self in exile condemned to dwell "in the outer darkness of the Mofussil" (Kipling 5) but also problematizes the gaze of the European surveying the colony in a more or less unambiguous acknowledgement of the blurring boundary between the familiar and the foreign. At the heart of Kipling's representation of colonial India lies this central paradox: India is both familiar as well as foreign; both home as well as abroad; both *heimlich* as well as its terrifying *Other*. It might be noted that the relation between the (German) words *heimlich* meaning familiar, homely, tame etc. and *unheimlich* (the prefix un- indicating inversion) meaning unfamiliar, strange, uncanny etc. is not free from

ambiguity; they *do* and *do not*—well, at the same time—seem to suggest the same conventional relationship as that shared by two unequivocally antithetical terms. As Freud writes, "*Heimlich* thus becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich.* The uncanny *(das Unheimliche,* 'the unhomely') is in some way a species of the familiar *(das Heimliche,* 'the homely')" (Freud 134). He further goes on to state:

> *Unheimlich* is clearly the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimich*, *vertraut*, and it seems obvious that something should be frightening precisely because it is unknown and unfamiliar. But of course the converse is not true: not everything new and unfamiliar is frightening....Something must be added to the novel and the unfamiliar if it is to become uncanny (Freud 124-25).

In his study of the uncanny, Freud seems to align with Ernst Jentsch—who equated the uncanny with intellectual uncertainty—in supposing that the environment and one's orientation (or the absence of it) to it determined the likelihood of his experiencing the uncanny or the *unheimlich*. It is precisely this idea that informs the current analysis of Kipling's representation of the colonial metropolis of Calcutta. The relation with or orientation to one's environment is further complicated with the consideration that we cannot (and perhaps *ought* not to) produce a fixed category to make amends for the (intellectual) uncertainty that Jentsch alludes to. What is familiar to the one at *home* is always unfamiliar to the one outside—the *stranger*. This proposition, understandably, introduces greater complexities—especially if the position of the subject with respect to his environment is uncertain or fraught with ambiguity. Freud's analysis of the two German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* yields two distinct sets of results. The first set (predictably) defines the word *heimlich* as belonging to the home, familiar, domestic,

hospitable etc. and the word *unheimlich* as its direct negative, meaning strange, unfamiliar, eerie etc. However, the second semantic set defines the word *heimlich* as secretive (from the German word das *Geheimnis* meaning secret), privy, clandestine and that which is concealed or hidden from sight. On the other hand, the word *unheimlich*, according to the second set can be taken to mean—albeit, less formulaically—familiar, revealed etc. Thus, Freud's thesis that the *unheimlich* (or the uncanny) is actually and counter-intuitively something familiar and repressed that recurs, follows directly from the less conventional implication of the word (as derived from the second set).

Kipling begins his sketch of colonial Calcutta with the following intriguing observation: "We have left India behind us at Howrah Station, and now we enter foreign parts. *No, not wholly foreign. Say rather too familiar*" (Kipling 5; emphases added). Similarly, colonial Calcutta, in Kipling's narrative, morphs alternately into an entity that is now desirable and now odious. The alienation of the European which (in this particular instance) stems from the incompatibility between his knowledge of his own identity and his substratal incomprehension of his immediate environment struggles to resolve itself in his desire for home. Concomitantly, Calcutta is projected as London or, to put it more sensibly, metropolitan London is projected onto colonial Calcutta. The effect that such a superimposition produces can only be beguiling as the "whited sepulchre" blends into "a great wilderness of packed houses— just such mysterious, conspiring tenements as Dickens would have loved" (Kipling 59). The allusion to Dickens—very much the one whose construction of nineteenth century-London in his fictional works was characterized by a measured combination of solidity and the disillusionments of modernity—is hardly accidental, especially if one considers the fact that Dickens' portrayal

of London can alternatively be read as an elaborate treatise on alienation stimulated by the metropolis. In his book, *Dickens and the Unreal City* (2008), Karl Ashley Smith writes: "At his most insightful, Dickens makes the character's experience of urban disorientation and alienation, which his prose style so skilfully replicates, part of a process that enforces revelation of real identities and relationships" (Smith 220). Similarly, Kipling's portrayal of colonial Calcutta unleashes the metaphor of space in order to both reveal and emphasize the (European) Self in exile from the securities of home and the wholesomeness of the Anglo culture. Calcutta, in Kipling's prose, is variously depicted as dangerous, diseased, corrupted, ghastly, evil and a wilderness lacking order—a space which is, in every imaginable way, the exact opposite of Imperial London and all the virtues it typified. While, for Kipling, the colonial metropolis of Calcutta evokes memories of Dickensian London, the familiarity of 'home' induced by the 'white' town teeming with fellow countrymen in frockcoats and top hats quickly blends into a sense of unease stimulated by urban squalor. Galvanized by dirt and filth, Kipling's neurosis in the context of colonial Calcutta typifies (albeit, counter-intuitively) the return of the repressed confirming the blurring lines between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*.

The relationship between the European narrator and his surrounding environment is further complicated by the following analogy which he uses to describe his experience of dwelling in the colonial city: "it is remarkably like sleeping with a corpse" (Kipling 13). The semantic violence unleashed by the word "corpse" is particularly noteworthy in this context since it not only conjures memories of violence associated with Europe's Imperial Project in the East but also signals the fallibility inherent in the European's (absurd) desire for domesticating his intractable *Other*. The desire for an ideal English State or, in other words, the replication of imperial

London in colonial Calcutta is therefore doomed from its very inception. Kipling's linguistic fashioning of the indigenous people as "natives" (as opposed to the more neutral 'indigenous' or 'autochthonous') as pointed out by Low (153) reasserts the socio-political divide between the English in India and its indigenous, subjugated population. The segregation is immediately apparent in the layout of the colonial city with its distinct white town and native quarters—in the orderly decorousness of (white) Chowringhee and the "foul wattle-and-dab huts" and "rabbit-warrens" of the native settlement. Interestingly, Kipling's representation of the highly precarious native quarters with their flammable tenements, evoke the "Subura" of ancient Rome which may, with some credence, be considered as the precursor of the modern slum housing the impoverished and the disreputable. Consequently, it is not too difficult to comprehend how the unsettling landscape of the colonial city might have been instrumental in alienating the European traveller/narrator and in bringing to light his anxiety pertaining to his own Englishness.

In the current context, the traditional understanding of landscape as an aesthetic appreciation of the environment is complicated, given the character of the gaze that formulates it. For instance, the recurrent images of disease, pestilence, filth, pollution and abjectness that punctuate Kipling's imperial narrative, imbue the landscape of colonial Calcutta with a dreariness which is not only characteristic of the actual locale as experienced by the traveller/narrator, but is also reflective of the specific position—that of the panoptic (European) solar eye—he writes from. The use of landscape in *The City* often generates an acutely dystopic effect further complicating the traditional understanding of the concept. The imbrication of objectified environments and the gaze of the observer echoes Lawrence Buell's conceptualization of landscape as an embodiment of the holistic

comprehension of the gaze. In *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Im*agination[3] (2005), Buell writes:

> Landscape typically refers to rural rather than urban contexts and typically implies certain amplitude of vista and degree of arrangement, whether the referent is an artifact or an actual locale. But what is called landscape may be messy or chaotic rather than orderly, foreshortened as well as panoramic, urban as well as exurban. In all cases, *landscape implies the totality of what a gaze can comprehend from its vantage point*. (Buell 142-43; emphasis added)

Thus, according to Buell, the conceptualization of environment as landscape not only entails variability but also the gaze (of the observer) delineating it. In fact, this is also how Kipling seems to narrativize space and its embodiments in his imperial narrative—by faithfully recording the varied environments (or landscapes) through which he traverses on the one hand, and endowing them (by means of his gaze) with meaning, on the other. Buell's formulation of landscape as "the totality of what a gaze can comprehend from its vantage point" is particularly useful in the analysis of the relationship between the European traveller/narrator and the colonial space he traverses *in* and *through*. Buell's gaze is a function of its latency—the comprehension of the gaze from its vantage point being, at least partially, informed by the workings of an inner world which is reasonably complicit in producing the 'reality' as the observer sees/experiences it. Admittedly, the European does carry an 'inner world' within himself and, as Kipling evinces in the course of *The City*, it is this inner world which has to constantly negotiate with the external environment (the indigenous or native landscape, that is)

reformulating and reconstructing it in the process.

However, the European gaze—as evident from *The City*—is not just directed at the urban landscape but also at the (native) bodies occupying it. The body, as it might be said, is the principal site of convergence of social and political anxieties that are often expressed through disturbing images of the corporeal form. Consider the following observation: "Natives sleep and lie about all over the place, and whole quarters are just so many rabbit-warrens" (Kipling 55). Not only does such a description of the metropolitan landscape evoke a sense of claustrophobia with the overwhelming presence of bodies littered all over, but also—more disturbingly—blur the distinction between man and beast (men living in "rabbit-warrens" are rhetorically dehumanized). To observe the colonial body—so seeable, that it seems to naturally warrant a universal invisibility—is, at least superficially, meaningless because the cultural codes that it represents remain, to a great extent, incommunicable to its observer. Through the colonizer's lingering and insistent gaze, the colonial body is transformed into a field of meaninglessness and anonymity; it is reduced to an object that functions within the Orientalist narrative as a mere prop to support and uphold the colonizer's intellectual fecundity.

The relationship of the colonial body with the foreign or the *Other* is, strictly speaking, dialogic which is evident not in the hubristic 'I' of the Western eye—the purveyor of epistemologies—but in the latter's incapacity to proactively effect a closure, to be indifferent to *Otherness* and to remain uninvolved on the whole.[4] And, so flows the awkward desire to flee:

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[3] See Buell (2005), especially pp 142-43 for an insightful analysis of this.

[4] See Holquist, Michael. Dialogism. London, USA and Canada: Routledge, 1990. 17. Holquist writes: "In dialogism, the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness. This otherness is not merely a dialectical alienation on its way to a sublation that will

Let us escape from the lines of open doors, the flaring lamps within, the glimpses of the tawdry toilet-tables adorned with little plaster dogs, glass balls from Christmas-trees, and—for religion must not be despised though women be fallen—pictures of the saints and statuettes of the Virgin. (Kipling 55)

This particular instance refers to a certain Mrs. D___, a Eurasian woman, "the widow of a soldier of the Queen." Her presence in a colony of prostitutes is particularly disquieting as she—unlike the debased (but native) figures of Dainty Iniquity and Fat Vice—is after all a Eurasian "fallen" from grace, a figure that threatens to dissolve the neat demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized.[5] The inopportune consequence of such brazen dissolution of racial difference is subsequently summarized by the narrator in the following words:

[T]he secret of the insolence of Calcutta is made plain. Small wonder the natives fail to respect the Sahib, seeing what they see and knowing what they know. In the good old days, the honorable the directors deported him or her who misbehaved grossly, and the white man preserved his *izzat*, He may have been a ruffian, but he was a ruffian on a large scale. He did not sink in the presence of the people. The natives are quite right to take the wall of the Sahib who has been at great pains to prove that he is of the same flesh and blood. (Kipling 74-75)

In Kipling's *The City*, the urban landscape of colonial Calcutta is represented not merely as the source of anxiety (for the colonizer) but also as the site of negotiation between the speaking (and the desiring) Subject and the *Other*. Kipling's representation of colonial Calcutta and the colonial space in general has much to do with the complex and beguiling trajectories of the European gaze. This paper implicates the European gaze in the revision and reformulation of both colonial subjectivity as well as the colonizer's notion about his own Englishness. In doing so, it proposes that the mythification of the colony followed from a corresponding desire (in the European colonizer) for naturalizing the 'alien' or the 'foreign' into the organized grammar of colonial/English discourse.

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endow it with a unifying identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary: in dialogism consciousness is otherness.

[5] This is yet another instance of the *heimlich* dissolving into the *unheimlich*.

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Eliade in the Looking Glass

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Abstract

Our paper focuses on the intertwining of modern travel writing with a series of major questions pointing to Western culture. In the realor imaginary texts of Mircea Eliade, Thomas Mann and J.-M.G. Le Clézio,European identity is at stake. Regardless of their different starting points, the authors end up questioning the status of the equation civilized versus wild, as a basic principle of Western culture. A special emphasis is placed by the three writers on the stereotypes of the encounter Self / Other, fostered by modern European culture mainly through mythical patterns.

[**Key words:** travel writing; European identity; marginal; exotic]

1. Myths of European Identity

It is common knowledge that standard European identity has always been flaked by the image of the other, both as a barbaric figure opposed to the Western man and as an obstacle to a free cross-cultural communication. One of the basic principles of Western culture and a major landmark of European identity has been the equation civilized versus wild. In the process by which Western identity was constituted, the opposition civilized versus barbarian as well as the Figure of *the Barbarian* played an important part. The myth of the barbarian is tightly bound up with the main mythical components of Western identity (Bartra, 1994:146).

Traveling creates images of the other, analyzes otherness, and makes it easier to accept and to cope with (Moura, 1998). In the real and imaginary travelelogues of Mircea Eliade, Thomas Mann and J.M.G. Le Clézio that I am pointing to in the following pages, one can see the intertwining of modern travel writings with major questions concerning Western culture.

Turning the tables on those who suggest that the primitive peoples, discovered and colonized by European explorers, gave birth to the myth, we have to accept that, in fact, the already existing myth of the wild man shaped the reactions of the Europeans to real people. In this way, the wild man underpins the notion of civilization on which much of Western identity has been based (Bartra 147-48).

The very idea of a contrast between a wild natural state and a civilized cultural configuration is part of an ensemble of myths sustaining the identity of the civilized West and emphasizing the *otherness*, the *difference*. Yet, one needs to merely cast an eye on the myth of the wild man to realize that we are dealing with an imaginary form existing only on a mythological level (Duer 1986).

In his book, *India, the Library ofthe Maharajah,*Mircea Eliade usually sets the epithet "barbarian" between inverted commas when he is referring to India or to Indians. It is his way of showing that he is using it as a quotation from the standard European discourse. (The discourse of the white man

who brought "civilization" to India). By using it, the author of the journal is challenging the idea, turning its meaning upside down: "In double ventilated train cars, Americans are praising the blessings and the reforms of continental civilization in a barbarian country" (Eliade a. 54). And further on: "Benares is stretching in all its weary barbarian beauty" (Eliade a. 64).

At a certain point the author maintains that "barbarian is rather the outlook of modern Europeans on the botanical garden: a concept that can only have its roots in a stupid epoch like the nineteenthcentury" (Eliade a. 104).

The current equation is reversed. The barbarian is the civilization-bringing Englishman who seeks to build up a monotonous town like Darjeeling, in order to feel at home: "Englishmen who are forced to spend a longer time in wilderness would make any effort to change their habitat into a small corner of England. It is they who refer to local people as *poor savages* " (Eliade a. 106).

Civilization, its motives, and its models unify but also flatten differences and nuances. "It is not Europe - splendid and immortal reality - that I dislike, he concludes. It is the stupid tendency of the European of molding all the rest of the world after himself" (Eliade a. 84).

In Thomas Mann's travel journal *Travelling with Quixote* journal the relationship between civilized and barbarian is explicitly phrased and emphatically reiterated. The epithet "civilized" is frequently used. Mann is, for instance, talking about "being disgusted of the mechanism of civilization" deeply hidden within his own personality. He also expresses his desire to give up civilization for primitivism, and uncertainty, for the irrational and for adventure:

> Does this pleasure betray my own disgust with the mechanism of civilization, a desire to abandon it, to deny it, to reject it, as being destructive for my soul and for

my life, a desire to search for a new life style, closer to the primitive and to improvisation? Is there in me a voice that is crying for the irrational, for this cult of danger, of risks and of abuses, this cult against which I have been guarded by my critical rational consciousness, a cult which I have fought against - out of my sympathy for the European, for rationality and for order, or maybe because of an in-built need for balance - as if I didn't' t have in myself enough to battle against?"(Mann 293).

The escape of the self-exiled writer from Europe provides an opportunity to take a stimulating distance and to review a highly debatable equation. Civilization and the barbaric - generally speaking - are for Mann the torn halves of a cultural hybrid. The German writer is able to discover a barbarian side of modern European culture - the barbarity of Nazism, for instance, as well as Nietzsche' s criticism of canonical European values.

Nietzsche himself - who is seen by Mann in close connection with the idea of the barbarian side of European identity - includes in his *Birth of Tragedy*, a dialogue about the recipe of happiness between the Fridjean king Midas and the barbarian Silenus. Although Silenus himself is meant to be the very embodiment of the non-European, he can also be seen as a symbol of the hidden, repressed dimension of Europeanism.

As to J.M.G. Le Clézio, as we follow his line of argument, barbarian should be the equivalent to natural or even to savage. Oma, Naja Naja or the author himself are proud to be perceived as savage. ("Moi aussi je Suis un peu sauvage.": "I myself I am a little bit of a savage", Le Clézio admits during an interview.) To be more specific, in *Le Chercheur d' or,* the savages are always the others, the non-civilized Alterity, to put it in the European system of reference. If compared for instance to a character like Robinson, the

"savages" do not even try to ape the so-called civilized way of life. On the contrary, they prefer to emulate the other living creatures of the Earth. Their bodies actually belong to the Universe. Therefore they feel themselves outside the humanity and protected against it (Onimus1994: 130).

2. The Marginal Revisited

In spite of current hierarchies and axiologies, the three authors identify themselves as rather marginal. From this standpoint, Mann, Eliade and Le Clézio may be rated as eccentrics, magicians, mad, etc.

At this point we need to be aware of the clear-cut distinction between marginal and wild. The marginal is not necessarily a genuine savage. He rather ended up a savage, and stepped out of the so-called normality. In his own system of values, Le Clézio does not display the defining attributes of the savage. We could rather say that he rejects all the common standards of civilization. A savage is supported and legitimated by a specific culture, while a marginal is a lost and a displaced human being(Onimus,1994:130-33).

Some of the protagonists and of the fictitious narrators of Le Clézio's travel writings explicitly assume the values of marginality.When he decides to openly undertake the task of the narrative-author, a first person auctorial stance, the writer himself does the same. Adam Polo, the main character of Le Clézio's first book, is the perfect illustration of the outsider. The great majority of the others are tramps, fugitives, ill-adjusted, outlaws, and savages leaving their lives in the middle of a city.

The most relevant example is young man Hogan, in *Le Livre des fuites.Young man* is the only clue that we are provided with, the only way of identifying the character: a human being reduced to his essence, to the common traits of the species, and subsequently an outsider in the world of civilized Europeans.

The narrative voice follows him everywhere in his journey around the world. The character starts off as the inhabitant of an anonymous Mediterranean town and ends up as the perpetual wanderer in the remotest corners of the world.

Having a strong consciousness of his German identity, Thomas Mann seems to embody the very heart of Europeanism. The center and the periphery of Western identity co-exist inside his run-away identity, which incorporates wilderness. Therefore we may conclude that Mann's personal experience epitomizes the very status of European and Western identity.

As a Romanian born "*Huron*" throughout his entire lifetime, Eliade endeavored to legitimize his own Europeanism. *How can one be a Romanian?* is the key-question that structured both his existence and his work. In Eliade's case, the criticism of Europeanism comes from the speaker of several reputedly exotic languages, the historian of religions, the author of some books about shamanism and of a Ph.D. dissertation about yoga.

Following in the footsteps of his friend Young and of the members of the Eranos circle, Eliade is in search for the hidden roots of universal cultures and civilizations. For him, the Indian civilization is more of an antidote to barbarity rather than the other way around.

3.Travel as Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic dimension of traveling is conspicuously emphasized by Mircea Eliade. For him, deciphering meanings is the only proper way to understand the other. According to him, Alterity expresses itself on the level of meanings rather than on the level of facts. Facts affect us not through what they are but through their meaning. For this reason traveling is for Eliade a semiotic adventure: "A primeval forest, never-ending, incomprehensible - this is the eucalyptus

forest that the traveler is crossing on the way to Amritsar" (Eliade a.72).

In Eliade's journal meanings grasped from experience are transposed visually, translated into iconic symbols: cinematographic and photographic metaphors called visions or simply icons. At a certain point, the writer is talking about the European and the non-European eye. The author contends that tourist adverts rarely feature the most significant characteristics of India, because, and I quote: "The essential can never be captured by statistics and it's usually avoided by photographers."Roughly speaking the hermeneutic vocation of his travel journals is striking. "How many Indias are there in fact?" he wonders; as many as we can find for the same so-called cultural topography" (Eliade a. 46).

In the traveling journals of all the three authors there are frequent occasions when writing mirrors writing.

It is common knowledge that certain forms of writing have self-reflecting features and this is the case the case of a re-read or a re-written journal. Eliade, for instance re-read his travel journal and commented upon it, rewriting it as a different journal plus a series of travel articles, firstly printed in Romanian magazines and then collected in one volume (under the title *The Library ofthe Maharajah.)*

Le Clézio is adding to his travel book *Le Chercheur d' Or* a journal which throughs light upon the genesis of his book*Voyage à Rodrigues.*

Traveling with Quixote, Thomas Mann rereads it and underlines the moments when Cervantes imaginarily stages the reflection upon such binaries as European/non-European, civilized/ barbarian. Mann insists on Cervantes' option to ascribe the manuscript about Quixote to a non-European fictional author: Cid Hamite Ben Engeli. In this way, Cervantes pretends to read Quixote's adventures from the viewpoint of a Stranger. The translation of the text from Arabic to Spanish becomes the metaphorical equivalent of the dialogue between the autocratic identity and the non-European alterity. As far as the adventures of Quixote are being screened from opposite standpoints, the fictitious character is assigned a complex arch-cultural (and meta-European) identity.

A significant episode in Mann's travel diary accounts for the fate of the More Ricote, the ex-grocer of Sancho Panza's village.

Exiled from Spain for being a foreigner, he has to return to his native country named Berberia (Barbaria?). Perceived as a barbarian form the European standpoint, the exiled grocer suffers from a very symptomatic nostalgia. He misses Spain badly, perceiving it as his home and as the cradle of his genuine identity. Once more, cultural identity is cross-checked by both Cervantes and Mann. Eventually, the opposition self/ other, the same/ different is questioned and invalidated.

Among the puzzling identities on display in the traveling book re-read by the German author, the character of Cardenio - *the wild man from Sierra Morena* deserves a special attention. To put it shortly, on his way Quixote comes across a disappointed lover who has decided to exile himself in the wilderness of Sierra Morena and mourns his vanished love copying the savage lifestyle. Cervantes fakes seeingCardenio both as an outsider and as a savage. As a matter of fact, these are the two main attributes of barbarity, in respect to which European identity has been defined during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. At a certain point in the novel, Quixote himself decides to ape Cardenio. In this way, Cervantes provides himself with a fine opportunity to undertake an ironical critique of so-called barbarity. Cardenio is by no means "a genuine savage". He simply plays the part assigned to the wild man in the European cultural space.

In order to cope with barbarity, the German writer needed a mitigating image:

Quixote - a *Figura* of his own deep, hidden, alterity. As far as Quixote decides to imitate the wild man from Sierra Morrena, mirroring eventually enhances the hermeneutic potential of Mann's reading.

4. Codes of the Dialogue Self/Other

A special emphasis is being laid by all the three writers on the stereotypes of the Self / Other encounter. Fostered by modern European culture, the repertoire of stereotypes had functioned mainly through linguistic networks and following specific mythical patterns.

On the whole, Eliade, Le Clézio and Mann have operated in convergent ways. They have generally worked on the same lines, unveiling the mythical substance of the Barbarian seen as an Alterity in relation to the European identity. This mythic wildness has profoundly shaped rational and scientific discourses such as Western-formed historiography and ethnography and also fantastic and travel literature, has engendered the stereotype of the good savage in the fiction of the Enlightenment etc.

The Stranger discovered by Eliade in India is radically different from this stereotypical image originated in the European imaginary and circulating mostly through cultural networks: "Maybe Amritsar is going to be one more disappointment, like so many other places and cities of India, places and cities that I have heard too much about, that I have imagined to much about" (Eliade a.73).

The writer is constantly aware of the multiple cultural filters that are screening his personal contacts with the Difference, even with the difference in Nature: the Indian night for instance. He is quite aware that any direct contact with it is impossible and ... incomprehensible: "...it is not the night of Italy or of Romania. To draw nearer it, you must first get rid of Novalis' nights, the nights of the French romantics, or those of the Latin poets'.

And even then, the oriental legend charm of the *1001Arabian Nights* will still separate you from it. Arabia stretches out between you and the Indian night" (Eliade a.75).

The modern history of the wild man - discovered by colonizers, exalted by the Enlightenment, studied by ethnologists - should be understood as an unfolding of an ancient myth (Bartra, 1994:204). The barbarian was a fixed and tangible phenomenon offering Europeans an extraordinary opportunity to gaze into the mirror of otherness.

Progressively the symbolic image of the barbarian has been transformed into a rational and scientific concept, capable of capturing the otherness of the allegedly non-civilized societies: a mental universe ruled by mythos and opposed to logos.

Eliade concludes that the mythology of barbarity and the myth of the barbarian, in their various forms, have acted as a network of codes, repeatedly interpreting the Western culture. According to him, the sacred could be successfully approached through the stereotypes and the models of cultural mythology. The myth contains various codes with which to interpret Western culture. Due to its metaphoric richness and multiple significances, the myth of the wild man becomes a medium by which the origins of the idea of Western civilization / identity-alterity/ may be interpreted.

During his Indian travels, Eliade currently uses certain mediators to facilitate communication and understanding between himself and the Other: "A crocodile resembles a dragon from my Nibelungian childhood" (Eliade a. 34). Later the author notices that the choices, the likes and dislikes of the travelers are inspired by books rather than reality: more precisely by geographical books and by sentimental novels.

Travel literature is a journey that has the great privilege to grant textual substance and reality to the efforts of transgressing, of going

beyond the monolithic space of identity and of its canonical representations.

What is almost crucial in this respect is the double function adopted by travel literature: the function of discourse (*textual*) and the function of conceptualization (*meta-textual*). In this respect, travel literature resembles fantastic literature that has flourished especially where the centripetal rhetoric of the monolithic Western Europeanism has collapsed.

In the case of Thomas Mann, the meta-textual conceptualizing role is the most poignant while the discursive representation is mediated: entrusted to Cervantes and to his wandering fictitious character.

The discursive function is, however, prevailing on Le Clézio's case. Midway between the two, Mircea Eliade's works illustrate a more balanced recipe.

Traveling is generally the representation of a world of order or of disorder: an excursion into the chaos or the counter-order of extra-culture. As far as space and time are being reinterpreted, the result of this re-organization is the birth of chronotop typical for travel. Le Clézio, for instance, declares bluntly: "It is in time, not in space that I am traveling." (Le Clézio d. 35). Traveling with Quixote and through him with chivalry novels allow Mann to descend to successive temporal levels. Spatial distances between the familiar, the European, the civilized, on the one hand, and the unfamiliar, the barbaric etc. on the other, become the perfectequivalents of a journey in time. The outcome of this is a transfer in time - in the European historical past of a reality usually perceived as mainly spatial: cultural difference.

In Eliade's case, the ontological passages in space and the travel in eternity, in time, belong to the same chronotope. He dismisses the categories of time and space engendering a peculiar travel chronotope. In Eliade's travel narrative, the discursive level is more substantial than in Thomas Mann's case,

where emphatically displayed conceptualization is the dominating element.

The covert semantic affinity between the other as the repressed or forgotten, and the other as the foreign or strange becomes overt in the transformation of the forgotten into a mysterious marvelous or monstrous object. The barbaric side of the European past, suffocated by the conventions of normality and rationality, the Alterity banished by each of us in the hidden sides of our identity, surfaces and takes a tangible shape. In this way a representable space is born, alongside with an exotic, geographical, ethnical, non-European foreign Alterity. The image of the Other is a cover (a masque) for all that is repressed, forgotten or made absent, that which was or could have been a part of our cultural experience.

If we switch to a meta-textual level, Eliade is working towards annihilating the opposition between the central and the peripheral and between the past and the present. His travel diary subverts the validity of fundamental categories like appropriateness, extravagance, adventure, hallucination, sorcery, and para-science. Marguerite Yourcenar astutely detects Mann's efforts to redefine all throughout his works, two allegedly contrasting categories, the humanist and the mythological, building a bridge between them, underlining the links between them. A quotation from the writer's travelogue confirms and completes her hypothesis: "It is *the multilateral not the unique* that designs the future" (Mann 280).

In their travel writings the three authors undertake a convergent critic of the travel writing itself as a literary genre. Mann does it by resorting to the reading of Cervantes, adding a pair of *hermeneutical glasses* to be able to accurately narrate and to understand his experience.

Le Clézio implicitly questions the picaresque recipe as his travel writings are recreating the mythical itinerary of famous

wanderers as well undertaking a criticism of the stereotypes of rambling.

There are sections of Eliade's text openly criticizing the genre itself, because it traditionally records facts rather than interpretations. Author of a hermeneutic journal, Eliade is undertaking a criticism of the very idea of tourism as an itinerary in a land of events and of objects rather than of meanings:

> "Travel journals can sometimes make admirable books. But those few facts, maybe even those tens of facts that every traveler comes into direct contact with doesn't really mean much. They rarely have any positive significance. They are never, at least almost never, decisive. How do hundred or one thousand facts enhance the understanding of an extremely diverse country such as India? " (Eliade a.15).

Or, in a different context: "I don t really believe in travel literature. You can write in so many ways about the Orient. It really comes down to how much you a ready to uncover and to the quantity of facts that you are determined conceal" (Eliade a. 18).

All travel writings have a subversive dimension in that they pursue the aim of creating alternative worlds as well as making up for a frustration resulting from cultural constraints. In the three authors' texts, the relationship homo- versus hetero-cultural is never shaped as a clear-cut polar model, but *acted out* as a constant transgression of the boundaries between present and absent, true and false. It is this very image of ambivalence that makes the travel writing a conceptual force, disturbingly interfering with the models produced by a culture in order to come to terms with its "Other".

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The Cartooned Picaro of the Digital Age

How Do the French have Fun in India: A Study of Representations in Tintin and Asterix

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Abstract

From the times of Ctesias and Megasthenes down through to today, there have been many representations of this exotica in other literatures. Mostly these are serious recounting of travelers aimed at raising the commercial and political interest of their fellow countrymen. In contrast, the writings of Herge or Gosciny and Uderzo are aimed at entertainment. While not discounting the rise of sensibilities of the west with the intervention of postcolonialism, the paper will argue that the othering of India continues in modes of production that are more exclusively western than others. In situations where the west is the producer as well as the consumer of cultural products, these seem to crawl back to stereotypes and projections that demand interference. The paper will try to show how the picaresque interference of the comic heroes serves to turn the nation, that is India, into a mere destination which has little or no sovereignty. In a world of post colonialism, the continued ideological challenges that comics, with their popularity with children poses, cannot be taken for granted. The paper will try to read the comics with the hope of problematising the ideas of comics and fun in relation to depictions of India.

 Keywords: Postcolonial, Stereotype, Tintin, Asterix

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences (Said 20). This 'invention' has played a crucial role in the project of European imperialism. It was not simply 'the other' against which the West found its own definition. It, in fact, provided them the fodder around which an entire discourse was built, through which certain images of the Orient are repeatedly sold as a system of knowledge with impressive resilience. With the advent of postcolonial studies, there has been a renewed interest in rereading these images as continuing the project of colonialism through cultural hegemony. A majority of these images were distributed and maintained through texts, a reason why Greenblatt has suggested them to be the 'invisible bullets' (Ashcroft, et al. 93) in the arsenal of empire. Today, the way we read *Robinson Crusoe* or perceive the character of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, has changed completely. Texts and textuality are no longer seen as an innocent medium through which the Europeans exercised their 'civilising mission', but rather as weapons which have played a major role in both conquest and colonization. These texts - be it fiction, histories, anthropologies – have all captured the non-European subject as the 'other' of the European man, prominent in his alterity or lack from the latter. Not only did these images provide material to the

Europeans, but also polluted the mind of the colonized through formal education or other cultural relations, making them believe in these projections as authoritative pictures of themselves. Evidently, the celebrated norm in all of these images was that of the white European man who had to be followed and emulated, while the image of the 'other' became a signifier of what the colonizer's own past had been like – to quote Marlow from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" (Conrad 6).

Bhabha takes this argument one step further when he looks at these images as stereotypes which reiterate the position of the colonized as a fixed reality "at once the 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha 41) that needs no proof. The stereotype becomes the primary mode of identification, penetrating human consciousness as a reality, through which one claims knowledge over the other race and culture. Having been consumed unquestioningly over time, stereotypes that have been fed repeatedly create an illusion of reality. One fails to realize that it is merely a false representation of a given reality that has become a fixity without giving space to its evolving differences. The stereotype assumes the role of a fetish, which according to Bhabha has an ambivalent relation with the source that generated it. It is at once an object of desire in its alterity, as it is an object of terror. The image of the subject becomes more important than the problematisation of the way the subject was formed. The colonial power continues to exert its power through the knowledge of the stereotype that it has created instead of questioning the "function of the stereotype as phobia and fetish that, according to Fanon, threatens the closure of the racial/epidermal schema for the colonial subject and opens the royal road to colonial fantasy" (Bhabha 43). Reading against this grain, one can specifically take up the case of comic books which generally exploit

stereotypes within their storylines. For the sake of this paper, I will be looking at two of the most popular comic characters of all time, Tintin and Asterix and their adventures in India.

Assouline, who has traced the timeline of *Herge: The Man who Created Tintin*, mentions an episode from the writer's life:

> George and his parents rarely spoke; they communicated with drawings. Herge remembered it was by this means that he understood what he had common with, and how he was different from, his father. One day both were drawing airplanes; his father gave his the lightness of dragonflies, while George's versions carried the whole weight of the aeronautics industry. From that Georges deduced the fact that his father was an idealist and that he was a realist... (Assouline 6)

The George here is Georges Remi, who wrote under the nom de plume of Herge, and the creator of *The Adventures of Tintin*, one of the most influential comic-strip art of the 20th century that changed the face of European comic scene forever. With the usage of high quality illustration where special attention was given to minute details and the introduction of speech bubbles inspired from American novels, Herge (the word which comes from reversing Georges' name and pronouncing them in French) received almost instantaneous popularity. However, how much of a realist was he, is a question one has much to debate about.

He began as an illustrator of a conservative newspaper in Brussels, "The Twentieth Century" (Le Vingtième Siècle), run by Abbé Norbert Wallez, a staunch Roman Catholic. The paper described itself as a "Catholic Newspaper for Doctrine and Information" and was run under Wallez's strict rein. The aim of the paper was to disseminate a far-right, fascist viewpoint among the people. Aiming to propagate his socio-political views among the young readers, Wallez started a

new Thursday youth supplement, titled "The Little Twentieth" ("Le Petit Vingtième") and appointed Herge as its new editor. Tintin, a reporter, made his first appearance through this supplement on 10th January 1929, finding immediate fame. It is believed that Herge, who wanted to be a reporter himself, got to live his adventures through Tintin - remaining an "armchair traveller" (Farr "Introduction") for a long period of his life. It is needless to point out the influence of Wallez on his earlier works, to which period we can accord two of his most controversial works, *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* and *Tintin in the Congo.* Commenting on this time, Harry Thompson writes,

> Looking back now, the adventures that inspired such excitement, such as *Tintin in America*, *Tintin in the Congo* and *Tintin in the Land of Soviets* itself, seemsslipshod. They are plot-free, happy-go-lucky adventures, a stream of unrelated cliffhangers composed at a time of jollity and youthful exuberance, by inky-fingered juniors in a newspaper office. Little thought went into them – it was too exciting for that. Today they are lauded for their primitive artistry, but at the time their readers were not too deeply concerned with the significance of Herge's emerging clarity of line. The boy reporter was bringing the world to life in their living rooms (Thompson 2).

Who cared if the first stories were cheap right-wing propaganda, instigated and directed at small children by a Catholic newspaper editor who kept a framed photograph of Mussolini on his desk? Herge certainly didn't. When he started Tintin he was still a naïve young man who knew little of the world, intelligent, but socially immature like so many of his contemporaries. The early Tintin reflects essentially childish concerns, in particular, the influence of the boy scouts and the Red Indian games they played, is strongly present. Today the idea of boy scouts in copious shorts and enormous hats being encouraged by adults to pretend to be Red Indians right up to their twentieth birthdays is somewhat laughable, but the inter-war Belgium was an innocent place. Scout only escape from the boredom of life at home, and life at home had a habit of dragging on right to the end of one's teens.

While Thompson has been too forgiving towards Herge for such stereotypical depictions of the non-European races in his earlier albums, not everyone had brushed it off just as lightly. As Tintin was slowly being made to go on cosmopolitan adventures, beginning with the Orient, Abbe Gosset, a teacher of Chinese students in Louvain, learnt of Herge's intentions and wrote to him out of a deep concern that he might end up misrepresenting the Far-East and its people. He introduced him to Chang Chongren who further introduced Herge to the complexities of "oriental art and culture" (Mountford np).

Herge writes,

He made me discover and love Chinese poetry, Chinese writing "the wind and the bone", the wind of inspiration and the bone of graphic solidity. For me this was a revelation... (Mountford np)

Thus began a long friendship, whereby Herge promised himself not to give in to floating ideas but rather research it out for himself. Tintin's adventures to the "Orient" which was later divided into the two parts of *The Cigars of the Pharoah* and *The Blue Lotus* are considered to be much more mature, especially the latter which has a more nuanced and sympathetic representation of the Chinese and is seen as a turning point in Herge's oeuvre. In some sense, this was his real brush with reality. Herge himself grew to be profoundly embarrassed about his earlier work. He confessed that it was a result of an upbringing in a society where such stereotypes were prevalent. In his defense it was his naivety and ignorance that were seen as the reason behind such depictions rather than underlying racism spread through the project of colonial stereotypes.

While such confessions of naivety do not leave much scope for criticism, it is equally unnerving to realize how such images get ingrained in the minds of unsuspecting victims, who believe in them in all their ignorance as nothing but historical truths. Bhabha has rightly pointed out that the knowing of the 'other' is done solely based on racist stereotypical discourse which inscribes a form of discriminatory and authoritarian rule over the colonized by recognizing:

> ...the difference of race, culture, history as elaborated by stereotypical knowledges, racial theories, administrative colonial experience, and on that basis institutionalize a range of political and cultural ideologies that are prejudicial, discriminatory, vestigial, archaic, 'mythical', and crucially, are recognized as being so (Bhabha 52).

It is because of these reasons that the politics of representation have always assumed such prime importance in the discourse of postcolonialism. Such European texts, where the non-European subject is presented in his alterity or lack i.e. as the other, becomes a projection of European fear of the unknown rather than an objective truth. With the centrality of the colonizer in the postcolonial discourse, where the actual historical time of the colony gets re-appropriated as pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, there is a denial of the colony's actual past irrespective of its colonizer. And, this is what we see happening in Herge's projections of the Indians too, in Tintin's first adventure to India in *The Cigars of Pharoah*.

While much has been written about Herge's depictions of the blacks, the Jews and the Russians; his representation of the Indians haven't been extensively discussed. In an overt simplification, we find "Egypt is full of pharaoh's tomb, Arabia and Mecca are barren sandy desert regions and India is full of dense jungles and scattered with mystic fakirs and maharajas in palatial residences". Serialised weekly from December 1932 to February 1934, the story tells us about the adventures of Tintin, the Belgian reporter, and his dog Snowy, who while travelling in Egypt discover a pharaoh's tomb filled with dead Egyptologists and boxes of cigars. Pursuing the mystery of these cigars, they travel across Arabia and India (albeit a little improbable), and reveal the secrets of an international drug smuggling enterprise. They reach the imaginary kingdom of Gaipajama, a strange motley-ised name, in Bombay. India is depicted as the plentiful exotic other, which nonetheless is in need of western aid. From the first scene onwards, where India has been depicted, there is a marked transition in the scenery, from yellowed deserts to lush green jungles. The motley-ised naming is carried on to the motley-ised architecture that fuses elements of predominantly Hindu or Sikh society with Islamic minarets and domes. Tintin is almost immediately presented with an opportunity for ethical intervention when he finds an elephant burning with fever. Tintin, the modern scientific traveler from the West is shown to have his quinine ready with him, and he graciously administers it to his grateful patient - the white man's elephantine burden. In return for this intervention the colonial subject accepts the intervention as godly and accepts the white man to be his superior. The parallels with Robinson Crusoe are striking: "for my man, to conclude the last ceremony of obedience, laid down his head again on the ground, close to my foot, and set my other foot upon his head, as he had done before, making all the signs of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, and let me understand he would serve me as long as his life endured." The elephant's health is instantly restored, and it considers the white traveler to be some sort of a magician and carries him to his herd to recruit him as an "elephant doctor".

The elephant episode continues with Tintin making a trumpet, telling Snowy that he has figured out the elephant speech and

that he is making the trumpet able to communicate with them. His mission is accomplished as the elephant starts to understand him, and is immediately put into his service by Tintin by bringing him water or carrying him around. "Hooray," shouts Tintin in joy, "I have learnt to talk elephant". The ease of language acquisition that Tintin demonstrates is akin to that of the colonialist who could afford to get away with speaking motley versions of Indian languages, or by fashioning locals into translators. At any rate, picking up oriental knowledge and getting the natives to do their will, seems to be the easiest thing on earth for the white western traveler.

When Tintin comes across a bungalow with another white occupant, Mr. Zoty, we realize that the setting is that of British India. However, later, when we discover this man to be a mediator in the much organized drug dealing business, there is a light reference to the whites as having come to India to plunder its resources. Many Tintinologists like Thompson believed that the inclusion of British colonialists as antagonists made "partial amends" for the colonialist attitude displayed by Tintin in *Tintin in the Congo*. Fellow Tintinologist Michael Farr further praised the scenes set in the Indian colonial bungalow, commenting that it was "claustrophobic and sinisterly dramatic" (Far 48).

The very next Indian object that we are introduced to is the kukri, a very North-Indian symbol, which has been gifted by a fakir, who is said to possess magical powers. The kukri has long been associated with the violence and danger of the east. Then there are instances of ghost sightings - again adding to the supernatural and mystic spirit of India. The servants in Bombay look typically North-Indian with turbans and beards and are joined by fakir-s – again very North-Indian, who have hypnotizing powers along with powers to charm ropes like those of snakes. The most stereotypical picture imaginable of India proceeds to unfold through the pages, with

Tintin being the voice of reason and sanity, imposing justice and upholding what is right. The fakirs also throw arrows poisoned with the Rajaijah juice, the potion for madness. Madness seems to run in the subcontinent as we are shown a ward full of mad people - mostly white, with white doctors but Indian servants. The destination that is India is shown to turn even the rational western mad but the source of cure for this madness too lies with the west. The Indian is the cause of the madness, while the treatment for it lies with the West. In another stereotype of lethargic listlessness associated with the Orient, potbellied Indian men are shown having their afternoon siesta under the trees, whose bellies act as spring cushions for Tintin helping him escape the madhouse.

In another striking scene, we have a conversation between Snowy and a cow, all regal and sacred. It charges at Snowy for his impudence and is in turn bitten by him. This arouses the wrath of the common people who all capture Snowy to sacrifice him on the altar of Siva. This is a recurring motif in Herge, which we find again in *Tintin in Tibet*, where a bull is lying in the middle of the street obstructing all activity, while the men watch on without disturbing it and waiting for it to move on its own. When Captain Haddock asks them to move the bull, people warn him that it is sacred and that the white traveler should not mess with it. The Captain, however, is impatient and tries to step over it. He is duly punished as the bull charges with him on its back, running madly on the streets of old Delhi. Going back to *The Cigars of Pharoah*, the Siva statue, where Snowy is being sacrificed is actually a Nataraj, the dance god. The men are superstitious and are easily persuaded that God is speaking to them when Thomson and Thompson order them from behind the statue as God to let go off Snowy. Finally, we are introduced to the Maharaja of Gaipajama, again turbaned and on an elephant back, out hunting royal Bengal tigers. The white traveler is then received as a royal guest

towards the end of the album after he busts the opium racket, dressed in Indian clothes of kurta and turban. One must also note the absence of women in the domain of the white-man's adventures, making the colonial enterprise as an exclusively male-centric space. This probably was inspired from popular imagination of viewing the project of imperialism as being exclusively male. It was an all boys world of adventure where the white man had taken upon him the task of taming the wild exotic colony - imagined as the feminine. Be it the real life accounts of colonial adventurers or travelers, or that of the fictional world of Haggard or Conrad, the valour and cultural ethos of the boy adventurer was held up as a glowing justification for the process of colonisation. Women either occupied the peripheral spaces or they were completely out of the adventure. The main relationships men built were with other men, intensifying the imagination of the process of colonisation in its masculinity and male-bonding. The white boy traveler became an emissary of light upholding the call of imperial duty, functioning as an inspirational figure for future colonialists.

Before his next venture, Herge had already come across Chang and there had been a change of perception towards comic book writing. The result is apparent in *Tintin in Tibet* considered to be one of his masterpieces, in the absence of an antagonist and in the high level of accuracy that he has maintained. However, before moving onto that, one should also have a look at *Tintin in India: The Mystery of the Blue Diamond*. It is a Belgian theatre piece in three acts written by Hergé and Jacques Van Melkebeke, featuring Tintin and covering much of the second half of *Cigars of the Pharaoh* as Tintin attempts to rescue a stolen blue diamond. Unfortunately, the script of the play was permanently lost, but the story has all the elements of the former, with the white traveler turning a rescuer at the naïve king's distress. The name of the palace that Tintin goes to is Padakhore, another parody of

an Indian name, literaly, "One who farts" as we saw in the previous case of Gaipajama too. There are instances of hypnotism, Indian ballet and an elaborate Indian performance which is interrupted with the loss of the Blue Diamond.

Though *Tintin in Tibet*, serialized from 1958, strikes more realistic in its representations, with Tintin and Haddock as sightseers at the Qutub Minar and the Red Fort, we see some of the same stereotypes here too. The Indian men are inevitably all turbaned, although in Delhi it seems more probable. At Kathmandu, people start speaking Hindi, which is a little unrealistic, while the Sherpas are shown to speak broken English. There are monks who levitate and predict future, and Yeti-s that exist, although kind and caring ones. According to myths and legends, Yeti-s are supposedly fond of liquor, which is shown here when the Yeti steals Haddock's bottle of whiskey. Although it does away with much of the misrepresentations of the earlier story, it retains the story of the white traveler who is compelled to come and rescue his Asian friend Chang (from *The Blue Lotus*) amidst exotic adventures.

But there seems to be some recurring motifs that are to be found in such representations of India as an exotic locale with sacred cows, fakirs and snake-charmers. One could take the example of *Asterix and the Magic Carpet* where we have a turbaned fakir on a flying carpet. A collaboration between script-writer Rene Goscinny and artist Albert Uderzo,*Asterix* first appeared in the magazine *Pilote* on 29th October 1959. Set in 50 BC, Asterix the Gaul lives in a little village on the north coast of Armorica who refuse to give in to Julius Caeser. In the above mentioned adventure of Asterix, the Orient comes looking for help to the West and finds help in a bard in the Gaulish village. The kingdom that he comes from is described to be beside the river Ganges, with "hot and dry" weather with few months of monsoon. However, with no rains that year, it has

become imperative to find someone who could prevent a famine in the kingdom and also save the princess from being sacrificed to the Gods, because of a prophecy made by the evil Vizier. The trope of the west being called upon by the east in order to save itself from itself comes up again. The party comprising the fakir, Asterix, Obelisk and the bard Cacofonix, reach India, after many adventures, only to find that the bard has lost his voice. As treatment, he is ordered to take an overnight bath in elephant milk. The cures of the east are exotic and rare. The Indian kingdom is again shown to have palaces built in the style of Islamic architecture, something that had come to India much later with the Mughal rule. Here again the narrative deviates from the real historical time of the country. Later one encounters other animals such as tigers, monkeys and a rhinoceros. Finally the bard restores his voice, sings his songs and brings rain and saves the life of the princess. Amidst the obvious exoticisation lies the detective mystery enforced through the names of the Indian characters. The Indian Fakir is named "Whatzizname" rendering him nameless and impotent. He must literally "Getafix" by approaching the west for the solution to the "Whodunnit", saving the Raja from his eternal fix of wondering "Whatzit" is really going on. The western must intrude, investigate and intervene in order to save the east from the predicament it is facing because of itself.

Cartooning, which is an outgrowth of caricaturing, has always fed on stereotypes. Especially in cases when the west is representing the east, the exaggeration seems to be taken to a new height, equally disturbing when it is targeted at children. The very first marker is pointing out the otherness and alien-ness of this eastern culture to that of the west. It is an exotic land rich with green forests and dense with animals, especially elephants and tigers. There are turbaned maharajas with turbaned servants who go for royal processions or hunting expeditions on elephant backs, but are highly incompetent

when it comes to ruling the kingdom. It is there that he requires western intervention, the white traveler, who can remove these obstacles and restore normalcy.

India has always been seen as an exotic destination. We have had other such real travelers, who have left behind similar representations of the country, some of them actually having visited these places. Be it accounts of one legged tribes of brown Indians (Ctesias' *Indika*, Ctesia was an ancient Greek doctor, court physician to the Persian king Artaxerxes II. His accounts stirred the imagination of Alexander) or India as a land of unimaginable power, riches and magic (Megasthenes' *Indica*, who had actually come as the ambassabor to the court of king Bimbisara), India was always an exotic locale that attracted tourists, not just to travel or plunder but also to bring about a change. This patronizing attitude is apparent in such representations of the nation, albeit in mere fun and naivety. It, however, becomes more problematic when the text is of such prominence, translated in more than 70 languages – disseminating a wrong picture throughout, based on tales heard and assumptions. In a postcolonial world, the continued ideological challenges that comics, with their popularity with children poses, cannot be taken for granted. Despite rising sensibilities we realize that some stereotypes do stay back. As Bhabha states, "it is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjections, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, overdetermination, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositionalities of racist discourse" (Bhabha 51). Therefore, one needs to raise awareness and question the picaresque interference of such comic heroes who serve to turn the nation that is India into a mere destination which has little or no sovereignty. In a way, it seems like a continuous reassertion of the white man's burden that is evident even today,

where the Indians must turn to the outside white for aid and assistance. It is only through such problematisations of the complex contact between the two that one can truly resist such representations "without losing sight of the persisting and historic inequalities within these relations and structures" (Ashcroft et al. 94).

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Books Received and Reviewed

Review Article

Mapping South Asia through Contemporary Theatre:
Essays on the Theatres of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka
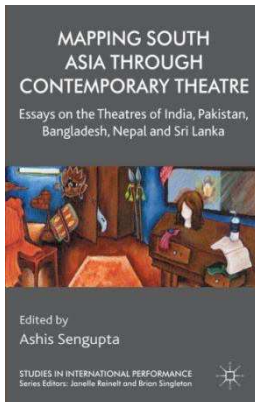
Edited by Ashis Sengupta
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
Pp. I-xviii, 250.

Reviewed by
Himadri Lahiri
University of Burdwan, West Bengal.

Theatre as a performing art is potentially an effective medium for bringing together sections of people across cultures and nations, particularly if it has the proper message to convey. It is more applicable to a geo-political area like South Asia with a history of shared moments and experiences. South Asian countries, which are politically volatile, have experienced turbulent periods of intra-national identity politics and violent inter-national hostilities. The 'shadow lines' that exist between warring communities and nations are the result of intensely felt, and violently executed, politics of 'difference' although the fact remains that many of them share the same origin and similar history. Artificially created national, political and religious prejudices which stem from hegemonic forces operating within nations block efforts of people-to-people cultural contact. It is in this context that the publication of *Mapping South Asia through Contemporary Theatre: Essays on the Theatres of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka* edited by Ashis Sengupta may be considered to be a welcome gesture towards

understanding the region from cultural points of view. The book provides a well-researched picture of the contemporary South Asian theatre in the five countries of the region mentioned in its subtitle. It is, as Aparna Dharwadker points out in her Foreword to the book, "is the first study to confront the problem of fragmentary approaches, and to think ambitiously and systematically 'beyond the nation'" (x). South Asia, recognised as "a key geopolitical area," provides the contributors of the book this "beyond the nation" space for an intensive study of its theatre movements. The approach in this volume is, as Dharwadker points out, "an inclusively 'regional' [i.e. South Asian] rather than exclusively 'national' approach" (ix).

It is, however, difficult to view the 'regional' – South Asian – nations as exclusively defined cultural zones. Many of them share linguistic and cultural affinities that invite cross-border 'infiltration.' Indeed cultural aspects and products like theatre traditions and conventions, like Hollywood films and songs, defy material borders and circulate among people of 'other' nations. This

again paves the way for a people-to-people understanding. Cultural groups like theatre activists often go beyond restrictive state-sponsored 'national' cultural schemes and launch their own plans of participating in broader transnational cultural projects. This reviewer has suggested elsewhere that a strong pan-Asian (of course including in its ambit South Asia) cultural understanding can be created "through cultural activities like building up theatre movements and publishing and circulating anthologies of writings from across different Asian countries."[1] Madeeha Gauhar points out in an article, South Asian Theatre Committee (SATCO) festivals in Lahore (1992), Dhaka (1993) and Kathmandu created ripples among theatre activists and audiences in several countries of the region and generated an urge for mutual cooperation in this regard. These festivals, Gauhar continues, enabled the audience "to see theatre from Nepal, Sri Lanka, India and Bagladesh, and also provided theatre activists to have interaction with the visiting actors/directors. SATCO decided to organise festivals in the region and facilitate contacts between theatre groups" (253). Dialogues between theatre artists, producers and organisers across nations led to multi-national theatre productions like those of *The Sixth River*, a project of Pakistani theatre group Ajoka, and *Dukhini*, a collaborative project of Ajoka and the Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA). Theatre as a creative art can thus offer scope for effective collaborative projects on a transnational scale.

The volume under review was conceived from such a broad perspective. It forms part of "Studies in International Performance" Series.

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[1] This was stated in an article entitled "Sharing a Future: Looking from Cultural Perspectives at Possibilities of Pan-Asianness." It will be published in *Writing Out Identity: Individual Claims, Group Perceptions, and Socio-Cultural Constructions of the Self in Asian Literature* edited by Ulrike Middendorf and published by Ostasien Verlag (Deutsche Ostasienstudien 9).

The books in the series, Series Editors Janelle Reinelt and Brian Singleton observe, attempt "to expand their disciplinary horizons to include the comparative study of performances across national, cultural, social, and political borders" and to explore the "complexities of transnational cultural productions" (xiii).The 'cultural productions' in the context of the book under review are 'contemporary' theatre performances in the five South Asian countries mentioned earlier. It is rather comprehensive in the sense that it covers not only the English language theatres but mostly those in the local languages, not only mainstream genres but also sub-genres specific to the areas; moreover, it goes to explore the dialogues between the linguistic mediums of the productions, and between genres and sub-genres. In the long critical and insightful introduction ("Introduction: Setting the Stage") which is a pillar of strength for the book, Ashis Sengupta, the editor, provides historical and cultural perspectives from which the theatre performances of the region may be viewed. The introduction which contains surveys of performances across South Asian nations also provides incisive, critical commentaries on the trends of the theatre movements in the countries. This will lay a strong foundation of South Asian theatre criticism for the future scholars. For convenience Sengupta has divided his introduction into several sections. In the first section he redefines the term 'South Asia' reiterating the fact that the imperialistic overtone hidden in the term has been replaced by a strong postcolonial consciousness. He further extends the scope of the term by including diasporic elements beyond its geopolitical boundaries. In the next section he shifts on to 'contemporary South Asian theatre,' defining its meaning and scope. He is basically concerned with the meaning of the word 'contemporary' which he discusses discursively and then conceives the term as "a site of 'conjoined yet incommensurate' elements, both past and present, in 'multiple configurations and variations,' a site of what

could be described as different and competing temporalities, multiple and alternative modernities, one transecting another" (5-6).He argues that in respect of countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka the word 'contemporary' may be taken as 'post-independence' and 'postcolonial,' while in respect of "Nepal, which was never a 'colony' as such, [it] should mean the stretch of time since the dissolution of the Rana oligarchy (1951)" (6).In all these contexts, there are 'postcolonial engagements' in the sense that there are engagements with power sources and power structures, the most important of these being the State itself. The 'contemporary' in the book projects "the complex, diverse theatre landscape of South Asian countries since independence" (7), countries that have a history of common linkages and of violent separations. Mapping such a complex history of a complex region, we understand, is really a challenging job which Sengupta and his colleagues have done successfully. By delineating the different political histories of the different countries in the next section, Sengupta accounts for the different theatre landscapes of the countries and shows that "even when a particular sub/genre of theatre (for example, Boal's theatre of the Oppressed) is popular throughout the region, it has its countless variants depending on the ground reality and performance tradition of the country in question" (10). In the next section, he goes into the question of both history and drama as acts of representation and observes that "[t]heater in its different forms ...supplements conventional history" (13). In engaged theatre which is mostly oppositional, he contends, the relationship between the theatre and the 'real' is more direct. The effect of such a theatre on the mind of the audience is more lasting. "And therein lies such social theatre's efficacy" (16). The next section is a detailed commentary on the theatres and contexts of the five countries – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka – which prepares a context for the reading of the articles on the individual

countries by individual contributors and this is followed by his brief comments on the essays in the volume, He rounds off with his revisiting of the objectives of the book itself.

The first article of the book – Shayoni Mitra's "Dispatches from the Margins: Theatre in India since the 1990s" – takes the 1990s as the main domain of its discussion. The decade, she observes, was marked by the opening up of economic markets in 1991, de-monopolisation drives, private economic investments, and consequent restructuring of the cultural capital. It witnessed a total shift of the Indian theatre norms – from the centralising and homogenising tendencies of the earlier phase to a more accommodating, even radical, ones. The plays performed since the 1990s interrogated the discourse of the singular 'national' theatre and foregrounded the visibility of many theatres representing many Indias. The 'contemporaneity' projected in this article is evidently not in conformity with the editorial understanding of the term 'contemporary' as being 'post-independence.' Mitra is rather 'radical' and more 'contemporary' in her conception of the term since she focusses on the theatres from 1990s onwards. But, then, in order to show the radical difference of the latest phase, she discusses the earlier post-independence history of theatre practices and policy making. This is avowedly for the purpose of contrast rather than for a comprehensive survey. Nevertheless, the effort provides a fuller picture of the contours of the development of 'post(-)colonial' Indian theatre. Her projection of two important moments of Indian theatre – 1956 and 2008– is intended to show the difference of perspectives. Two different seminars were held in the two different years mentioned above. While the first Drama seminar held in 1956 reflected the stand of 'Nehruvian soft nationalism' and reinforced the concept of a singular 'national' theatre to the exclusion of the marginal ones, the latter, interestingly titled "Not the Drama Seminar," (three different years of the seminar 2006,

2007 and 2008 are provided by Mitra on pages 69 and 72, a glaring oversight for a book of such high standard) organised by India Theatre Forum challenged the ideology of the former. She observes,

> The oppositional 'Not' in the 2007 (sic) seminar then is the key to unlocking the aspirational identities of twenty-first century Indian theatre. It is *not* in Delhi, the nation's capital, it is *not* attempting a singular historiography for Indian theatre, it is *not* concerned with a Sanskritized classical past, it is *not* positing Hindi (and by extension a version of militant Hinduism) as key, it is *not* limited to the very elite of the field. From within this emphatic series of negations, emerges a tentative attempt at heterogeneous, and perhaps utopic futurity. (72; emphases original)

The marginalised theatre, now being encouraged, became more and more visible. Mitra mentions three main areas where the rise of the 'marginalised' can be noticed: women's theatre, Indian English theatre and the Dalit theatre.

Women's theatre obviously was absorbed into the grand spectacle of the national theatre where their identity was rather subservient. They became much more assertive since 1990s. Mitra quotes Tutun Mukherjee who observes that "women are found to be largely absent from the documented history of modern Indian theatre as a cultural process and drama as a literary genre" (qtd. in Mitra 80) and then comments, "In summary what has come to connote modern Indian theatre since independence is either a playwright-driven cache of urban middle-class plays or a director-propelled experimentation in formalised aesthetics. Women theatre workers have pointedly been excluded from this process of cultural nationalism" (80). Nevertheless, India has seen the emergence of a host of talented women theatre workers who are "the

antithesis of the big bill production – it is the intimate, non-linear, non-naturalistic performances of women like Anuradha Kapoor, Anamika Haksar, Maya Rao, and Zuleikha Chaudhari" (80-1). Mitra notes two important aspects of women's theatre: 'mediation of female subjectivity' which makes their avant-garde works 'politically' significant and the use of technology which, she says, is not just 'an invisible facilitator' but 'a participant in the action' (83).The second category of marginalised theatre mentioned by Mitra, interestingly, is Indian English theatre which does not have a big enough constituency to receive the productions. Even then they are occasionally produced in metropolitan centres and in academic campuses. Students and teachers of Indian universities are the main producers and consumers of campus productions. Most of the Indian English playwrights write and produce their plays in more than one languages. Mitra discusses Mahesh Dattani in some detail as he projects themes that concern the deviants and the marginalised.

In the third category Mitra discusses the Dalit performances and indicates their 'radical imaginary' which is being projected in the post-1980s scenario. The performances expose the 'mechanisms of othering bodies' (93). Mitra notes down the techniques of subverting the hegemonic caste-influenced systemic mechanisms:

> So firstly, the caste and outcast body is of central concern to dalit performance. Secondly, following from this, realism is often sidelined for genre bending idioms that embrace allegory, musicality, dance, poetry, narrative, and gesture in equal measure. And thirdly a range of folk, rural, urban, and popular forms become available for mobilization since dalit performance does not feel the need to provide a teleological and evolutionary account of contemporary everyday life. (93)

Since accessibility of the performance space like a big auditorium is always a problem for cash-trapped marginalised theatre groups, Dalit theatre, like many other theatre groups, moved out to streets as the site of their performance. In such alternative spaces were born theatre performances, both realistic and non-realistic. Mitra rounds up her article by mentioning that Indian theatre has witnessed shifting margins, appropriations of the marginal into the centre and reconfiguration of new alliances 'in unlikely places, through unexpected collaborations from unpredictable inspirations: its history a testament to the temporary" (98). She thereby hints at the great possibilities of the Indian theatres lying ahead.

The second article "Theatre Chronicles: Framing Theatre Narratives in Pakistan's Socio-political Context" is written by Asma Mundrawala who traces the country's theatre from its 'complex beginnings' (103). From its very beginning Pakistan has been facing the dilemma of not only charting its own political destiny but also of how to reconfigure its own national identity simply because it derives its origin from the 'mother' nation called India. The basic problem lay in how much it owed to its 'Indian' past which was intrinsically associated with a secular (and often with a dominant 'Hindu') cultural history. As Mundrawala observes, Muslim middle class, after the partition, was very conservative and "denied any shared heritage with India and considered all elements of Hindu culture as borrowed and therefore not Pakistani" (105). Despite a deliberate attempt to deny its cultural past, the early Pakistani theatre clearly showed its debt to the age-old Indian traditions, including the popular, folk and oppositional-ideological (e.g. Marxist) theatre conventions. To make matters worse, the rise Islamic fundamentalism, military-politician-feudal nexus, a strong anti-India feeling posed threats to the development of a secular, democratic theatre. Moreover, Islamist ideology of Pakistan "harbors a hostile attitude toward the performing arts because of their

capacity to question beliefs and their 'foregrounding' of the body" (105). It was in an environment of intolerance of the 'others' – the religious, ethnic, linguistic groups, and women – that the new Pakistan theatre was born. The promulgation of Martial Law (1977) and the enactment of many prohibitory laws made protest movements a very difficult proposition. Even then two theatre groups that staged political performances relentlessly are Sheema Kermani's Tehrik-e-Niswan (1979) and Madeeha Gauhar's Ajoka (1984). They supported various resistance movements including women's movements and workers movements. There were other theatre groups like Ali Ahmed's NATAK and Aslam Azhar's DASTAK (1982) who too participated in the anti-establish movements by staging theatres. Most of their plays were political in nature and directed against, among others, Zia-ul-Haque's repressive measures. Tehrik-e-Niswan and Ajokain particular "embraced traditions from their predecessors, ranging from indigeneous forms and early theatre encompassing social issues and themes of national unity to Western realism and ultimately the Brechtian tradition as appropriated by leftist theatre in South Asia" (116). Ajoka's play *Jaloos*, Mundrawala points out, bears distinct influence of the Indian playwright Badal Sircar's *Michhil* written in Bengali. She quotes from a news source to label it as "theatre of defiance" watching of which gives a "sense of participation in that defiance" (117).

With the onset of neoliberalism Pakistani theatre's support for political causes declined. Market economy played an important role even in the theatre productions. There emerged donor-driven, NGO-inspired theatre as a tool for development. There were training programmes for creating, and honing the skill of, theatre artists. Interestingly, 'a new brand of English language musicals' emerged with government support - these often promoted crass entertainment values. But even in the midst of this lure of the market, Ajoka and

Tehrik-e-Niswan consistently followed their ideological engagements:

> Battling the commodification of theatre and many other hurdles impeding their growth, both groups continue to address resounding issues – such as persecution of minorities (*Hum Rokaen Gae*/We Will Stop It, Tehrik-e-Niswan 2012), the rising wave of fundamentalism (*Hotel Mohenjodaro*, Ajoka 2008), and evils of war (*Jung Ab Nahin Hogi*/ There Will be No War, an adaptation of Lysistrata, Tehrik-e-Niswan, 2002/2010) – amongst many other concerns of social and political relevance." (131)

In the third article "Designs of Living in the Contemporary Theatre of Bangladesh" Syed Jamil Ahmed clearly specifies the meaning of the word 'contemporary' as applicable to the young nation. It mentions 'the tumultuous years immediately preceding the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 at one end' and the 'first decade of the current century, at the other" (135).But in its immediately preceding national existence it shared its history with Pakistan. Ahmed's account thus intersects with that of Asma Mundrawala in respect of their earlier common but unequal co-existence. Ahmed identifies the performance of Munier Chowdhury's *Kabar* (The Grave) on 21February 1953 (when it was part of Pakistan) as "the defining moment of the narration of the nation (Bangladesh now) in its theatrical context" (136). Mundrawala also mentions this one-act play in connection with (West) Pakistan's selective amnesia of (East) Pakistan's theatre in general and its linkage to the Communist Party inspired theatre in particular. Chowdhury was imprisoned because of his Communist link and his association with the Language Movement. He "wrote the play at the request of a fellow prisoner and Communist Party member, Ranesh Dasgupta, who wanted the play to be performed by the imprisoned members of the Party to commemorate the sacrifices made by

students during the Language Movement in 1952" (Mundrawala 108). The entire proceeding was kept secret. The play was staged surreptitiously "by the light of lanterns, lamps, matchsticks" (Ahmed 136). So, as Mundrawala has already asserted, *Kabar*, contrary to the common belief, testifies that political theatre did exist in Pakistan (in its eastern wing) even before the 1970s.Later, Syed Shamsul Haq's verse drama *Payer Awaj Pawa Jay* (At the Sound of Marching Feet, 1976), Selim al-Deen's plays, part of the Gram Theatre Movement in 1981, *Bisad Sindhu* (Dhaka Padatik 1991 and 1992) and many other oppositional theatres embodied the new cultural nationalist spirit of the nation, retrieved 'local histories and local performance traditions,' and challenged Islamic radicalism. Different performances also projected struggles against military-Islamic alliance. Rabindranath Tagore had been in many such endeavours a source of inspiration, particularly during the Civil War and post-independence cultural environment.

The narration of the nation in its hegemonic, majoritarian sense, in its 'arborescent' schema of cultural productions, observes Ahmed, suffered punctures when ethnic groups, long forgotten, came forward with their own performances. A 'flight' from the mainstream trends was found in Desh Natak's production of *Birsa Kabya* in 1990 which dealt with the rebellion of the Munda ethnic group (1899-1900), or in productions of performances like *Rarang* (Distant Drum, produced by Aranyak, 2004) or in *Mahedra Banabas* (The Exile of Mahendra performed by The Joom Esthetic Council from Rangmati). All these productions which probed "how ethnic diversity can be accommodated within the monolithic narration of the nation" (145) suggest the rhizomic effect that *Birsa Kabya* produced on other ethnic groups. Production of performances by the subaltern groups may also be classified from this point of view. The theatres produced from the point of view of the 'woman question' also received adequate

attention from the author of the article who has discussed performances like *Irsa* (Jealousy), *Kokilara* (the Kokilas, 1989) and *Binodini*.

But Ahmed feels that the theatre needs to be redirected to "postnational 'routes' to a pluralist process of becoming" (167) – he suggests that theatre should more effectively engage with the 'politics of difference' rather than with the 'narration of nation.' In the gender axis, it should move towards the tabooed areas like transsexuality and homosexuality.

In the next article "Towards an Engaged Stage: Nepali Theatre in Uncertain Times" Carol C. Davies charts out the complex history of Nepali theatre which too is intricately associated with the history of the nation. In this sense, the article, like its companion essays, projects the relationship between the nation and its cultural products, the latter changing its accents with the change in the conditions of the nation. Davis defines the 'contemporaneity' in the context of Nepal in terms of the abolition of the Rana oligarchy and the beginning of the democracy in the country. It is with this beginning that Nepal opens up to the world, particularly the West. It is the beginning of what she terms as 'Nepali modernism' (177). It is during this phase that theatre moved out of the palace ground into the popular arena like the theatre halls, or even the open streets. Religious-ritual-epic themes were also replaced by political and social ones relevant to the changing nation and its people. It was Balakrishna Sama (1902-81) who combined East-West traditions in his plays and gave a new turn to the Nepali theatre. Nepali theatre, however, entered a new stage of experimentation when the nation encountered threats to democracy, and the common people experienced state surveillance during the pro-democracy movement and later during the Maoist insurgency. AsheshMalla's *sadaknaatak* (street theatre) gave anew turn to the Nepali theatre. It presented overtly political themes through its

performances. Malla's group members staged their plays with lightning speed and evaporated from the scene of performances before the arrival of the police. *Hami Basanta Khoji Rahechaun* (We are Searching for the Spring, 1982) is perhaps Malla's most well-known play. Malla reached out to other playwrights and performers to exchange ideas and to experiment with his own plays as well as to intensify his pro-democracy activities. Sunil Pokharel and his Arohan Theatre too contributed to the development of engaged theatre. Pokharel also developed *Kachahari* theatre similar to Augusto Boal's Forum theatre and this offered scope for spontaneous and extempore development of theme and style during the performance itself. Both Malla and Pokharel turned to theatre with social messages after the restoration of democracy. The latter concentrated on issues like health, poverty, community development, education, forest conservation – sometimes with funds from the NGOs or other organisations. During the Maoist phase these theatre workers staged plays pointing out the suicidal nature of state-Maoist encounters which killed thousands of innocent people. Malla himself grew pessimistic which is borne out by his plays like *Gadaicha Pheri Yudhako Ghoshana* (Who is declaring War? 2001) and *Mritu Utsav* (Death Festival, 2003).

Abhi Subedi wrote his play *Dreams of Peach Blossoms* (2000) in English. It was considered a very important play by directors like Pokharel. The Nepali version of the play *Aaruka Fulka Sapna* was directed by Pokharel himself. Subedi wrote more plays in Nepali and his *Agniko Katha* which dwelt on the conflict between the state and the Maoists won much acclaim. There were a good number of Nepali renderings of world classics like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (*Putaliko Ghar* 2003) which were being produced simultaneously. One important developments of the Nepali theatre was the foundation of a number of theatre centres and training facilities. Pokharel was instrumental in

establishing a school of theatre called Gurukul in 2002. He also built up a second one in Biratnagar in 2009. Ashesh Malla too established his own Sarwanam Dramatic Art Centre in 2012.

Theatre in its most interactive forms continued to influence the people. The process still continues. "Nepal today," as Davis sums up, "wrestles with aesthetics, topics, and form, and sorts out its place in a constantly shifting society" (206).

The last article of the volume – Kanchuka Dharmasiri's "From Narratives of National Origin to Bloodied Streets: Contemporary Sinhala and Tamil Theatre in Sri Lanka" – captures the developments of Sri Lanka theatre during the postcolonial period, mainly from the 1960s to the present. Much of it was concerned with the history of turbulent political course of the country, particularly the inter-ethnic violence in which the state is widely believed to have played a partisan role. Sri Lankan theatre has been performed mainly in either Sinhala or Tamil. Dharmasiri considers modern theatre of the country as the "product of the postcolonial cultural renaissance, economic changes, and politics of space, class, and language" (209). She notes the politics of language in the efforts to equate Sri Lanka theatre with the national theatre. Gamini Haththotuwegama who pioneered the street theatre critiqued such oversimplified and hegemonic concept. Performance artists of the time also questioned the fetishes of economic liberalisation, commercialisation and commodity circulation of the following decades the effects of which were highly felt by the ordinary people. Vivurtha Veedi Natya Kandayama (The Wayside and Open Theatre) which was founded in 1974 gave an intellectual turn to theatre and in their performances they criticised the trends of commercialisation which resulted in the changes in the traditional value system. Their plays like *Open Economy* (1978) and *Wesek Dekma* (Wesek Vision, 1979) may be mentioned in this context. Its production of *You Saw ... I Saw*

(1989) embodies the violence of the 1980s. Theatres of the time also reflected an acute social consciousness.

During the Civil War, Dharmasiri notes, Tamil theatre disappeared from Colombo, the main site of theatre activities, but it was practised intensely in other parts of the country. Open theatre in community spaces prospered. K. Shanmugalingam's Tamil play *Man Sumantha Meniyer* (With Sweat and Dust on Their Shoulders) was, however, first performed in 1985 at the Kailaspathy Hall, Jaffna. It captured the picture of innocent people trapped in the Civil War zones. Speaking of the role of gender in Sri Lankan theatre, Dharmasiri points out that though there is some visibility of women artists in Sri Lanka theatre, there is a real dearth of talented directors and actresses. The "extent of women's presence in Sri Lanka's theatre, however," she feels, "is slowly increasing" (226). She also notices the presence of collaborative efforts "to foster dialogue across different communities which in itself is a very positive sign in the strife-torn island nation. She offers an interesting example:

> Founded by Parakrama Niriella and H. A. Perera in 2003, Janakaraliya holds a unique position in Sri Lankan theatre because of its production of plays in both Sinhala and Tamil with an aim to take theatre to wide-ranging audiences. The group's members are from both linguistic communities and some actors are of mixed ethnic origins, reminding their audiences of the problematic nature of every facile binary. Translation – from Sinhala into Tamil and vice versa – is a distinctive feature of Janakaraliya's activities... (226-7)

She therefore displays a positive role of the theatre in the reconciliation of different ethnic groups in the context of the volatile environment of the nation. Hybridity, too, metaphorically suggests a very postcolonial phenomenon of a third space of enunciation in the nation that may be promoted.

The spatio-temporal cartography of theatre of the region during the 'contemporary' period that the book under review projects yields certain important inputs. All the countries covered by the book went through political upheavals that affected popular aspirations. Theatre stepped in to voice the aspirations and helped bringing about transformations in the system. The theatres here are therefore largely 'political' in their ideology. Street theatres were the best avenue pursued by several groups to reach the people and voice their indignation. Secondly, in most of the countries there were strong alliance between the army, politicians, and feudal lords. In Pakistan and Bangladesh in particular Islamic fundamentalists also joined the combination. Since Islam is against 'representation' and theatre is a form of representation, religious ideologues were often against theatre. Syed Jamil Ahmed in his book *In Praise of Niranjan: Islam, Theatre and Bangladesh* (2001) links this dogmatic view with "centuries old interpretations accruing from the traditions of *Qiyas* and *Ijma*. "The scholastic theologians, through 'consensus of the scholars' and through 'analogy,' sought sanctions for prohibition of representation and theatre in the *Qur'an...*" (26). He, however, argues that the passages in the *Qur'an* "contain nothing against representation in general and theatre in particular." Similarly, the Prophet, Ahmed says, "had no clearly defined position regarding this matter" (26). Even then conservative and fundamentalist elements overzealously stood against theatres. It goes to the credit of the theatre artists that they defied not only the traditionalists and fundamentalists, but against the powerful combinations of all hues. In the process they had to sacrifice a lot but the nations gained in the process.

Ashis Sengupta has done a wonderful job by planning the volume and translating his objectives into reality – in the form of*Mapping South Asia through Contemporary Theatre: Essays on the Theatres of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka*. All the articles are well-researched. The contributors, it appears, are quite familiar with their fields of research and the professional touch is never missing. The volume bridges a gap in the South Asian theatre scholarship. It has not certainly adopted an India-centred approach that is usually followed in critical studies in the field. It has juxtaposed theatre activities of the five countries side by side but interestingly this juxtaposition locates the areas of both intersections and deviations, thereby opening up the avenues of conscious collaborative theatre, and scholarly, activities. This reviewer hopes that more inclusive, and interactive, studies on pan-Asian/South Asian theatre aesthetics and practices will be taken up in future.

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A Compelling Saga, Poignant yet not Maudlin
A Review of *One Year for Mourning*
A Novel by Ketaki Datta
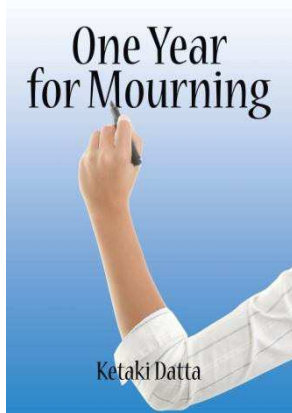
Reviewed by
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The mother-daughter relationship is certainly one of the most intriguing of human relationships. Carl Gustav Jung has written extensively on the mother archetype, and also on the mother-complex in the daughter. According to Jung, the ways in which this mother-complex can operate in a daughter can be classified into four major categories namely, i) hypertrophy of the maternal element, ii) overdevelopment of Eros, iii) identity with the mother, and iv) resistance to the mother. But, as life always overleaps the theoretician's best endeavour and the scientist's sharpest acumen, the categories mentioned above are neither exhaustive nor definitive. To a woman, her mother is very often more than an individual; very often she stands for her home, her lost childhood, a part of her life all of which become part of a memory that she can no longer live.

Ketaki Datta's second novel *One Year for Mourning* is a testament of the mother-daughter relationship that eludes standard categorizations of relationship, and plumbs the depths of a human bonding that reaches down to the roots of existence. The novel weaves memories of a bereaved daughter who is passing through a phase of ritualistic mourning which is prescribed in Hindu scriptures. The novelist deploys the flashback technique and harks back to her early childhood and adolescence, and also her early youth. The novel limns her memories that come flooding back to her. Her quiet yet colourful life in the hick town called Hridaypur, the family picnics by the side of the river Tarangini, kitty parties at her home, frequent visitors to their residence, her relationship with her father who was a professionally committed physician in a government hospital, and also with her sibling Tubu---everything gets vibrantly portrayed in expertly crafted lyrical prose. The details are painstakingly registered, and moments of emotional exuberance or turmoil have been enlivened without being sentimentalized or over-sensitized. These speak volumes for the author's restraint when the issue is speaking about oneself. In an intra-diegetic narration replete with autobiographical elements (the novel is one such), the authorial self of the narrator always has to try a fall with her real-life self. In this battle of one-upmanship, the authorial self has to edge past its contestant if the novel has to succeed. Datta, the narrator, has here caressed the Datta, the daughter, but has never allowed the latter to get the better

of her. Kudos to Datta for this feat in tight-rope walking!

Reception Aesthetics would have us believe that a text is 'produced' more by the reader than by the author. Roland Barthes in *The Semiotic Challenge* has so ardently pre-empted the 'textual analysis' over 'structural analysis', emphasizing 'the avenues of meaning' sought out by the reader. In Datta's novel, an imaginative reader may well find his 'avenues' meandering through the hick town, mingling with the people whom Datta reminisces on, and get a feel of a lost time laden with an aroma of bitter-sweet memories that intoxicate and engross. One feels suddenly stalked by a time in which people like the narrator's mother and narrator herself show great devotion to music and sitar, in which parched-souled, disconsolate women like Rani aunty and Srijita aunty get helplessly locked in dull, loveless marriage ties, and self-defeatingly seek soccour in extramarital affairs, and in which a dedicated doctor like the narrator's father is hounded out of his residence and is forced to sell his much-adored X-ray machine. The words with which Datta depicts these characters and narrates the incidents of their plights and trials serve to relocate the reader in a different temporal order altogether. It is not the hassling, hustling time of the hypercompetitive and ruthlessly professional world of the new millennium, but one in which passion mattered in relationships as well as in professions.

The virtuosity of Datta's prose and narrative voice lies in its unassuming and unabashed simplicity, giving a 'speaking from the heart' feeling which is never easy to emulate. The way she verbalizes her own angst and mortification at her unreciprocated love for Debaditya argues an intimate style of writing which is poignant yet not maudlin. When Debaditya declines the narrator's telephonic invitation to the nearest coffee-joint, she so describes her hurt sentiments: "I hung up, keeping the receiver on the cradle and felt the ground my feet shake. I came down the stairs calmly, with dejected steps, never to tiptoe up to his place again" (p-126). We feel the tremor within the narrator's heart, but the surface narrative registers only ripples of that. This is masterly. And then, the passages which describe the narrator's unbelievably strenuous service to her terminally ailing mother are heart-wrenching in the truest sense.

But, on some occasions the narration seems to flag somewhat, especially when the narrator rather unselfconsciously tends to be judgmental. While talking about Rani aunty's physical intimacy with the Keshab Babu, her sitar teacher, Datta uses terms like 'lascivious'. These jar, because Datta's tone towards Rani aunty has all along been sympathetic, and also because the plain calumniation of a character in such raucously cruel terms does not quite argue artistic finesse. But these foibles apart, the novel is greatly moving.

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