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EDITORIAL

“Broke people (what’s up with that?)”- *Borders M.I.A*

The multitude of differences and forced segregation which borders have given rise to have left the world filled with ‘broke people’. The decline of the colonial powers in the mid 20th century led to the emergence of Postcoloniality as a major field of study. This year, the Department of English, Stella Maris College conducted the Intercollegiate Students’ Seminar on “Postcoloniality, Indentured Labour and Migration” to honour and celebrate the life of the Caribbean poet and playwright Derek Walcott.

This issue of the *Literary Journal* identifies and expands this theme through its collection of articles. From writings of the Empire’s exploitation of the Caribbean islands to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, we hope to offer you a glimpse into the diverse avenues of literature through which postcolonial agency manifests itself.

Torn between distant lands
And straddling their traditions,
You lead a life of uncertainty;
Hesitant, treading the turbulent path,
You lose your way.
Where am I? Who am I?
You look back and see something,
Something worth holding on to. But why?
It seems tainted. Rebellion? Resentment?
Yet you feel the desire, the need
To walk a path of your own,
Pristine and untouched. Still, your doubt lingers.
Who am I? Where do I belong?

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CONTENTS

CRITICAL ESSAYS

Of Love, Land and Labour – Indentured Labour and Postcoloniality in Kim Young-Ha’s <i>Black Flower</i> and Pema Bhum’s <i>Wink</i>	Aameena M. and Uma Madhu	4
“Saving Muslim Women”: Orientalist Representation of Muslim American Women in Amani Al-Khatahtbeh’s <i>Muslim Girl: A Coming of Age</i>	Maria Sebastian	6
Derek Walcott’s <i>Pantomime: A Carnavalesque Interpretation</i>	T.C. Nivedita and Carol Maria Sunny	9
Women’s Voices from the Caribbean: A Closer Look at Velma Pollard’s Poetry	Vineetha A. V.	11
The Figure of Crusoe in Derek Walcott’s Poetry	Aswathy Mohandas	13
A Postcolonial Analysis of <i>The Adventures of Tintin</i>	Riya Nagendra	15
Multiplicity of ‘Africanness’ in Adichie’s <i>Jumping Monkey Hill</i>	Elizabeth Cherian	18
CREATIVE WRITING		
From The Light House	Krishna J. Nair	20
Bombay Meri Jaan	Liz Maria Joys	21
The Holy Night?	Surya Suresh Kumar	22
The Listener	Sarah Mathew	23
Author	Mary Monika	24
Middle of the Night	Mary Monika	24
Miscellaneous	Pooja Krishna H. A.	25
Song of Seasons	Pooja Krishna H. A.	26
That Stranger in the Mirror	Rathna Mahesh	27
I Scream	Remy Tresa Abraham	27

Of Love, Land and Labour – Indentured Labour and Postcoloniality in Kim Young-Ha’s *Black Flower* and Pema Bhum’s *Wink*

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On April 4th 1905, 1033 Korean emigrants boarded the *Ilford* to Mexico where they imagined a better life for themselves. As they set sail, the country behind them was fighting for its sovereignty from both the Western and Eastern Imperialistic powers. In the grand scheme of things, the lives, struggles and the bitterly disappointing fates of these passengers (tricked into indentured labour), did not matter, and their stories were confined to stray bits of documentation and fragments of memory. Kim Young-Ha’s novel *Black Flower* attempts to chronicle these stories.

Half a century later, in 1950, the Republic of China incorporated Tibet into their country effectively stripping it and its people of their sovereignty. Most of what happens to the millions in Tibet and the Tibetan refugees whose nationalistic fervour still thrives despite the annexation and illegitimation of their country, is unknown. Pema Bhum’s short story *Wink* is a mocking, humorous take on the cultural subjugation that the Tibetans face to this day.

By comparing the repercussions of these events belonging to different lands and timelines, we attempt to establish that colonialism and indentured labour is not the sole purview of Western powers, and that it is not confined to uncomfortable sections of history; that indeed for many people, it is still a living reality.

The passengers aboard the *Ilford*, which served as an apolitical space, found themselves in a blatant hierarchical void as they were no longer separated by class privileges. The ruined aristocrats initially suffered the most whereas the petty thieves, peasants and soldiers were used to the suffering, deprivation and harsh environments, having lived through them far before the Japanese colonisation.

While as a novel, *Black Flower* works with a diverse set of characters and their individual histories, *Wink* as a short story is intensely contained, revolving around a family living in occupied Tibet. The struggles of the couple, Tenpa and Lhamo, are intensely personal and reflect the overwhelming fear and hesitation of the Tibetan people.

The system of indentured labour dehumanises the labourer to a point where they pledge their very selves to an entity that holds absolute power over them. The Korean indentured workers were assessed and purchased like cattle by the hacendados. They were also subjected to brutal whippings which were an unfamiliar punishment to the Koreans. “If the Mexicans had spit in their faces, they might have brandished their machetes on the spot. But none of them knew how to cope with this; whips used on horses and cows were being used on people” (Kim 95). This highlights the humiliation and disgrace they faced at the henequen fields.

The economic aspect of China’s stake of ownership which acts as a catalyst to the ideological subjugation of Tibet is their capture of the means of employment and production in Tibet. When the coloniser dictates his terms of labour, the colonised are forced to submit. Every decision Tenpa takes is in accordance with whether he would be permitted to work again.

The practice of capturing “bad elements” and entrapping them in brutal labour camps for “mental reform” is an example of the epistemological violence faced by the Tibetans who were forced to give up their religious beliefs and culture in favour of China’s atheistic, Communist ideologies. Tenpa and Lhamo name their son Darmar – after the Red Flag of China. Being Tibetan Buddhists who still revere the Lamas and look to religion for guidance, this was an act of

inevitable surrender and sacrifice of their national consciousness, but only outwardly so. This forceful assimilation, the coloniser's belief that they are entitled to the allegiance of the colonised, even while placing them firmly below any citizen of the coloniser country, has been a prominent feature of imperialism throughout the centuries.

The Koreans of Mexico had to adopt the religion and culture of their oppressors in order to improve their quality of life. The hacendados imposed Catholicism on the Koreans through force and indirectly through socio-economic benefits for the converts. Gwon Yongjun, who acts as interpreter for the Mexicans is an example of the colonised subject who adapts and assimilates completely to the oppressive culture.

In contrast, Yi Jongdo, the patriarch of the once-aristocratic family, holds on to the nostalgia for his homeland, and by extension its culture. In fact, nostalgia, combined with the sense of collective displacement, created a new image of the Korea they had left behind. From the moment they stepped on Mexican soil, they began a process of forgetting their sufferings back home because home, despite its faults, is still home – “This endless plain with no Arirang Hill of their folk songs, was a truly strange sight.....these were people who referred to the space between heaven and earth as “mountains and rivers” (Kim 81-89) and the stark absence of both intensified their dislocation in the new land.

This is a starkly different aspiration from the Mayans who worked alongside the Koreans – they had no place to miss as they were displaced in their own land, much like the Tibetans.

While *Black Flower* discusses the geographical dislocation of the Korean indentured labourer, *Wink* discusses the cultural dislocation that Tibetans face in their own homeland. Tenpa's family is caught in a painful liminality – they are neither fully Tibetan, nor fully Chinese and do not possess the liberty to exist in that liminality because of the constant pressure from the Chinese government. By virtue of the essential position of who they are, they do not possess the ability to escape this liminality either.

Postcolonial resistance, however, is found in this very liminality. Their attempts at affecting a Chinese national consciousness remained, till the very end just that – an affectation, dressed and constructed for the purposes of survival. The story, by enabling the colonised subject to have the last laugh, showcases the very futility of subjugating the mind of a people so intricately tied to their own identity.

China projects its occupation of Tibet as a mission of liberalisation of the common Tibetan person who longs for freedom from the oppressive religious regime, and aspires to attain Chinese citizenship. If the 2500 Tibetans captured, imprisoned and massacred in the Lhasa demonstrations of 1988 and the countless others confined as political prisoners in labour camps are absolutely no indication of the general sentiment of the “common Tibetan person”, Pema Bhum's story further serves to dismantle these notions.

“Since when does an individual choose his nation? I'm sorry, but our nation chooses us” (Kim 241). This exchange in *Black Flower* questions the idea of an inviolable nationality. Like the Tibetans, the Koreans also had no say in whose citizens they were, legally. One day, their Korean passports were invalidated, just like their Korean identity. In the latter part of the story, Ijeong, one of the Korean labourers, took to establishing his own nation of New Korea within the Mexican wilderness. “Even if we cannot die as citizens of the country we created, at least we can avoid dying as Japanese or Chinese. We need a country in order to have no nationality” (Kim 286). Their rejection of the colonial identity is what led them to assert their own, and the creation of this small, short lived independent country is one of the most powerful acts of resistance in the novel.

Ultimately, the hope that both works provide is one of continuity. Ijeong's son was a product of a new Korean-Mexican identity, eventually becoming a symbol of progress and growth even in a space of liminality, a continuity that follows to the fourth, fifth generations of these labourers now thriving in Mexico. In *Wink*, Darnar, who becomes the subject through whom the Tibetan identity pokes fun at and emerges victorious at the end of the story, symbolises the continued resistance of the Tibetans.

With the Tibetans and the Korean-Mexicans, along with this perpetual continuity, the spirit of resistance will forever be relentless.

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“Saving Muslim Women”: Orientalist Representation of Muslim American Women in Amani Al-Khatahtbeh’s *Muslim Girl: A Coming of Age*

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Muslim Girl: A Coming of Age is the candid account of a Muslim woman in the wake of 9/11, the War on Terror and the Trump era of racism. The terrorist attack of 9/11 has been a turning point in world politics and international relations. The attacks put the Muslim Americans in the spotlight. Muslims have been stereotyped as being terrorists and are often projected as savage, religious fundamentalists. Al-Khatahtbeh in the novel claims that, “The truth is that 9/11 never ended for us” (9). Islamophobia is a form of racism. Muslim women face double oppression, being the women from the orient. The fanciful representation of Muslim women by many European travel writers has created an impression about the Arab Muslim world as one of sexual indulgence. Such a depiction of Muslim women reiterates “European superiority over Oriental backwardness” as Said outlines in *Orientalism*.

Hasan Mahamadul in his work *Orientalising of Gender* points out, “Orientalist representations of women have all along been intended to convey a particular impression of them as passive, incapable of raising their voice and always waiting for westerners to advance their causes”(30). Al-Khatahtbeh points out in her novel, “I felt bad about myself, given the societal pressure for Muslim girls to view themselves as inferior” (21). She saw in the Muslim girls “a lack of courage, integrity and strength” because “that’s how society trained [them] and inevitably caged [them]” (21).

Media orientalises the representation of Eastern women. “The media victimises the 1.6 billion of us with each news cycle” (106). The Western media projects a distorted image of the East by taking the various occurrences that happen there out of context and makes it an excuse for their colonial venture. As Al-Khatahtbeh points out, the Western media wants the Muslim girls to be “submissive”. According to the author, there is pressure on Muslim women to “bend,

conform, assimilate and submit” (20). Such stereotypes ascribe sexual exoticism and powerlessness to Muslim women which contributes to the way in which Western media perceives them. The Western media contrasts the image of the subjugated Eastern women against the liberated Western women. Thus, Western culture is projected in a positive light while a scandalous image of Eastern and indigenous culture is propagated. Al- Khatahtbeh says, “The media is hype about Muslim women right now, but only the ones that fit a certain kind of image” (93).

In order to find a place for herself in Western modern society, the Muslim woman has to adhere to Western codes. Thus they are reduced to ‘mimic women’. The feeling of superiority of the colonial masters over the colonised lead the members of the colonised nation to look at themselves as inferior human beings. This suppresses one’s own cultural identity and reduces the person to an ambivalent and confused state. Homi Bhabha defines mimicry as, “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other... the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence” (86). Khatahtbeh is initially reluctant to wear her hijab to school and resents not being able to wear shorts as it is considered immodest as per Islamic rules. This reflects her fear of being considered an ‘outsider’ or ‘foreign’ and her desire to mimic Western culture. When Al-Khatahtbeh finally understood the viciousness of Islamophobia, she decides to embrace Islam with pride as an identity marker.

I would wear the headscarf with pride as my outward rebellion against the Islamophobia that had seized me and suffocated me for most of my life. With that decision, I inherited the entire history to which the hijab has been tied and carried it on my head like an issue for public debate. (41)

Orientalist representations of Muslim women have reduced the entire Muslim community to the veil. The contemporary world looks at the hijab as an icon of cultural backwardness. Contemporary Western society believes that its lifting will liberate and modernise Muslim women. The dominant voice of Muslim women suggests that they wear it not out of compulsion but out of religious belief and to distinguish themselves in a multicultural society. Abu-Lughod points out that this ideology of “saving Muslim woman” is an excuse to separate them from their indigenous culture and if possible assimilate them to Western ethos. This has a marked colonial motive. The assumption that the Muslim women suffer silently under the hijab homogenises them and ignores the strong voice of many educated and progressive women who wear it due to moral and ideological principles.

According to the Al- Khatahtbeh, American-Muslim women have to negotiate between their identities, and at the same time, are expected to conform to the norms of gender and sexuality, at a time of visibility and surveillance. The society’s gaze forces Muslim women to conform to stereotypical religious ‘Muslim woman’ identities. As Foucault opines in *The Eye of Power*, “An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself” (155). In the public space, Muslim women are often forced to be in a state of constant awareness of society’s gaze. This is done so as not to attract the ire of the observer thus leading to an interiorisation of control. Hence, they become ‘docile bodies’ within society which acts as a panopticon power structure, thereby becoming principles of their own subjection. Al Khatahtbeh opines

If one Muslim commits terrorism, then all Muslims are terrorists, every action that a visibly identifiable Muslim woman takes in public is immediately attributed to our

religion as a whole. We exist in the public sphere in a perpetual state of constant awareness and consciousness of the outward eye. Our actions are constantly manipulated, negotiated and limited to serve that purpose – another manifestation of the oppression we suffer in the Western society (47).

Al-Khatahtbeh examines the impacts of Western imperialism and the ways that the Western colonising mission has portrayed Muslim women as primitive and in need of rescue and salvation. ‘War on Terror’ propaganda perpetrated by the Bush administration focuses on the cultural differences of the Muslims which in turn solidifies the difference between inferior Orient and superior Occident. Laura Bush in her November 2001 radio address claimed that “the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women”. Muslim American women are intrinsically linked to the war on terror which is often depicted as a war without borders. The ‘War on Terror’ myth is still used by the U.S government to justify the dehumanisation of the Muslim Americans within the country.

The current era of Trump administration has ushered in a heightened state and popular suspicion of Muslim Americans. Trump converted Islamophobia into a campaign strategy that helped deliver him the presidency. He adopted the Orientalist ideology that America was at war with Islam, which is illustrated most vividly in his statement; ‘Islam hates us’. “I could not imagine a generation of little girls living through a Trump era...and enduring the unsettlement not just from navigating their own identities but their surroundings as well” (3).

Several Muslim women donning the headscarf reported that the fear of the oncoming administration spurred their desire to remove the conspicuous marker of Muslim identity (cnn.com). Hence, the sense of superiority of the West is a form of arrogance that has to be challenged. *The Muslim Women: A Coming of Age* questions the sense of superiority of the West and its ideology of ‘saving Muslim women’ to propagate violence and unrest among the Muslim Americans. However Al-Khatahtbeh claims that, “We [Muslim women] are rising up – we are the ones reclaiming our voices, the ones talking back, and the ones reminding the world that no, we haven’t forgotten. We grew to become our own saviours” (134). Thus, the novel is a necessary counterpoint to the current rhetoric on the Middle East.

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Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*: A Carnavalesque Interpretation

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Caribbean literature is a confluence of African, European and Indian cultures, languages and traditions. It emerged as a product of imperialism, indentureship and oppression and documents the internal conflicts of the writers as well as other postcolonial subjects. Derek Walcott was one of the prominent figures voicing the ethnic multiplicity and hybrid identity of the West Indian communities through poems and plays that explore the themes of identity, colonialism, postcolonialism and racism.

Drama and theatre, in the postcolonial context, function as a weapon of resistance – an anti-imperial tool. The Empire ‘writes back’ to the imperial centre through the reworking of European ‘classics’. Helen Tiffin terms this project ‘canonical counter-discourse’, a popular movement among postcolonial writers whereby they dismantle specific canonical texts and develop a ‘counter’ text within the same framework, but by divesting the colonisers of their assumed authority. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, ‘A classic “megatext” of Eurocentrism’, has been a focal point in this project of rewriting English classics. Derek Walcott, in the play *Pantomime*, subverts the dominant discourse through his characters Harry Trewe and Jackson Philip, the lone inhabitants of a Guest House in Tobago who contemplate staging a reverse pantomime of the *Robinson Crusoe* story. This attempt at a reversal in authority relations through humour and chaos is defined as ‘carnavalesque’, by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin.

This classic story of a white man stranded on an uninhabited island in the 17th century, overcoming his despair and hopelessness by mastering himself and “civilizing” a native slave, is reversed by Walcott in *Pantomime*, handing power to a black Crusoe while a white man assumes the role of Friday. Through Jackson Phillip and Harry Trewe, this play explores the complexities of the relationship between slave and master, black and white, the colonised and the coloniser. Jackson hopes for a reorganisation of the hierarchical ranks. “But one day things bound to go in reverse” he says, “With Crusoe the slave and Friday the boss”(Walcott *Pantomime* 140). Superficially, this reversal of the Crusoe-Friday myth is used as a subject of comedy in *Pantomime*, but there is an underlying vitriolic attack on the colonial ‘powers’.

The carnival, whilst serving as entertainment, also acts as a valve to release the suppressed voices of the common man. Jackson, typecast into the role of a servant, was deprived of his agency. His role as Crusoe provided him the chance for a bitter attack on the imperialists. His rebellion petrifies Harry Trewe who verbalises the coloniser’s fear of being overpowered, “This is too humiliating.” he says, “Now, let's just forget it and please don’t continue or you're fired” (Walcott *Pantomime* 142).

The Trinidadian Carnival served as a model for the development of Caribbean drama. According to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, the carnival evolved into a satirical representation of authoritarian knowledge (80). Humour and parody, for Bakhtin, is a “carnavalesque signifier” with the aim of “degradation”. Degradation in any form also has the goal of “regeneration”. Harry and Jackson’s attempt at staging a pantomime results in an interaction typical of carnivalesque humour. Carnival laughter is directed at those who laugh; laughing *at* them while laughing *with* them is an essential feature of this form. The utterly chaotic situation in which Walcott places his characters presents a perfect platform for satirising the colonisers.

Walcott uses language of the coloniser both as a symbol of resistance and also as the primary mode of eliciting humour. Jackson's blatant refusal to pronounce certain words as they *ought* to be and the incorporation of the indigenous Creole into English often leads to hilarious consequences. Jackson also takes to renaming things and inventing a new language which, as the black coloniser, he attempts to teach Harry. He insists on calling himself 'Thursday' instead of being christened 'Friday' by his master. Walcott intersperses violent remarks and abusive expressions to bring the language closer to the 'speech of the common-man' which is a clearly carnivalesque form of representation.

A carnivalesque text also aims at a hypothetical creation of a utopian world. Harry and Jackson working together to put up a show to avoid the hotel's deteriorating state is an image that shows the harmony that can exist between the two groups. Walcott is at harmony with his Afro-Saxon identity and desires peaceful coexistence without any disparity between races. Harry stepping down and offering Crusoe's role to Jackson is the first step in the realisation of Walcott's dream. Bakhtin says "During the carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life" emerges "permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other" (10).

Familiar and free interaction between characters and eccentric behaviour are other characteristics of the carnivalesque form. Jackson initially finds it difficult to accept the new role of the coloniser offered to him by Harry but as the play progresses, he gets accustomed to the idea of being the master, while Harry struggles to give up his dominant position. Jackson's initial reluctance can be interpreted as the colonised subjects' internalisation of the inherited "unchangeable" roles. According to Frantz Fanon the gaze of the colonised is one of envy and "he dreams of possession...of sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife..." (5).

Bakhtin claimed that carnivalesque literature broke apart oppressive and mouldy forms of thought and cleared the path for the never-ending project of emancipation. Jackson's improvisation of the role of Crusoe is symbolic of his imagination taking flight because of his transition from that of a bonded man to a free human. This is not just a release from physical bondage but also implies creative freedom.

Colonial mimicry and the "helpless obedience" of the slaves is a recurring image in the play. Homi.K.Bhabha views mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same, but not quite*" (126). Harry accuses Jackson of mimicking the masters and equates the colonised with the coloniser's shadow. Jackson, in the pretence of acting in the pantomime says, "...in that sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow", he says (Walcott *Pantomime* 138).

The motif of the parrot is another metaphor for colonial mimicry. As in *Robinson Crusoe*, here Harry and Jackson are accompanied by a talking hotel parrot. Jackson feels mocked by the "pre-colonial" parrot as the only word it utters is "Heinegger". For Jackson, the "prejudiced" parrot embodies the colonial principles and ideas while for Harry the parrot is merely repeating its German master's name because for him "the war is over." This shows the disparate perspectives of the coloniser and the colonised. The parrot mocks the absurdity of Harry and Jackson's existence as a master and slave in a postcolonial society, long after such hierarchies are supposed to have been erased.

Bhabha also explains the subversive use of mimicry. The coloniser civilises the natives to create a 'domesticated other' to assist the colonial project. The natives might sometimes misappropriate their role, mocking the very discourse the coloniser is trying to propagate.

Jackson's attempt at playing Crusoe is criticised by Harry as imperfect and he is infuriated at the mocking gaze of the colonised, Jackson. This mockery evokes laughter which in itself is a renouncement of the master-slave roles.

Walcott juxtaposes pantomime, a distinctly 'British' form of popular entertainment with the Calypso tradition of Trinidad and Tobago. This dichotomy between a pantomime actor from the English music hall and an ex-Calyptonian, further reinforces the carnivalesque nature of the play since a native tool of political resistance is integrated into a purely 'colonist' art form.

During colonisation, there is a descent of the native land from paradise into a Third World country. Walcott, in his essay "The Figure of Crusoe" equates Crusoe to Adam, the first inhabitant of second paradise ("The Figure of Crusoe" 35). He is the archetype of the coloniser who wreaks havoc in a peaceful land, stripping it of its resources and identity and leaving it barren, begging for alms. In *Pantomime*, the dilapidated condition of Harry's hotel is symbolic of the postcolonial state of the Caribbean islands. Jackson's persistent resentment towards the coloniser's exploitive nature is evident. He says, "You come to a place, you find that place as God make it; like Robinson Crusoe, you civilize the natives; they try to do something...you say "you go back to your position as slave...I will keep mine as master"" (Walcott *Pantomime* 128).

Through the carnivalesque rendition of the English literary classic Robinson Crusoe in the play *Pantomime*, Walcott transgresses boundaries, mimics the pretensions of ruling classes and reinterprets social positions. Who should play Crusoe? Who should play Friday? Who is in charge now?

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Women's Voices from the Caribbean: A Closer Look at Velma Pollard's Poetry

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II B. A. English

With Caribbean literature being incorporated in the syllabi of almost all educational institutions across the world in the form of poems, essays, memoirs, novels, etc, it can be concluded that the postcolonial literature of the countries belonging to the Caribbean Islands are

given so much importance that it is internationally preferred for an educated person to have encountered them at some point in their lives. But mostly, people's knowledge of this category of English literature is limited to male Caribbean writers. This paper aims to bring out the relevance of the works of women Caribbean writers by analysing two poems of the Jamaican poet Velma Pollard.

The Caribbean Islands, though collectively called the West Indies, have a history and culture that are distinct to each of these islands. Being under the colonial rule from the fifteenth century, the islands began expressing their yearning for separate cultural and political identities from each other and from Europe, and written literary traditions from individual perspectives developed and became popular in the 19th century. While the works of male Caribbean writers like Derek Walcott and Marlon James are recognised worldwide as milestones in West Indian Literature and have become the subjects for analysis and critical reading, those of the lesser known women writers of the Caribbean Islands are yet to be popular enough. Velma Pollard is one such writer whose poems and short stories express intense emotions, a range of themes, multiple meanings and expressions, all contained within the limited number of words that constitute her works.

By touching two of her poems namely, "Crown Point" and "Fly", tangentially, an idea about the significance of the works of Caribbean women writers can be obtained. "Crown Point" is the title poem of her first collection of poems. She begins the poem with a vivid description of the countryside and the feeling it evokes in her – the very thought of the sea and the stars brings her peace. She invokes nature again when she talks about the encounter between the sweet smell of the pennyroyal outside her window and the intense aroma of the khus-khus in her cupboard. Her devout grandmother and active great grandfather, with whom she feels at home, are as important to her as the beautiful landscape that instils in her a sense of home. The significance of religion is brought out by the constant chants of the verses from the Bible by her grandmother and the presence of the Bible itself, worn with age. It conjures images of 'back home' when God was the protector, giver and the ultimate destination for solace, faith, our bread and sustenance. In the last stanza of the poem where she says "Perhaps the clutter of my life / obscures her voice / Perhaps the clutter of my mind / frustrates her" Pollard is contrasting the haste and the bustle of the present with the gentle and slower lifestyle of the previous generations. The themes of the poem are nostalgia, nature, family, migration, diaspora, chaos of the present world and recollection of the serene past. Pollard also talks about identity when she wonders whether her identity as a woman of the present, advanced generation would go along with her grandmother's identity as an old school Caribbean woman. The main feature of the poem, like in most of Pollard's poems, is the use of Creole. For instance, the line "...A see mi great grandfather/ jumping hopscotch and playing marble..." is in Creole, a local variation of English.

"Fly", an example of Pollard's poignant writing, is about her being trapped in the complexities of contemporary life and her sad longing for Mother Nature whom she had abandoned when she became preoccupied with her busy life. The fly in the poem refers to the people of the postcolonial contemporary world who are involved in the complex, baffling, noisy world of the present and at the same time, ache for the soothing, calm country life where worries were minimal and peace of mind, maximal. In this poem too, the vernacular form of English is used. The poem begins with the Creole "ef a ketch im/ a mash im" which actually means 'If I catch him, I mash him'. Here, 'him' refers to the spider and 'I' to the fly. The latter lures the former into its web by offering a snug residence to the fly. For the fly, being snug meant being under valleys of clouds, on the lush green grass. Thus the fly finds itself trapped in the web,

which stands for how human beings get trapped in the modern era, represented by the spider, where life is all about being fast and busy. Before and after being trapped in the web, we see that the fly yearns to live with nature. The initial freedom it had was superficial because the colonised hardly had a chance to enjoy the rivers, clouds and valleys under the colonial rule. The act of getting trapped in the web shows how people, post colonial rule, are still not free, being chained to the advanced world that takes them away from the peaceful lives that they had led amongst nature. The spider is referred to as Anansi who is a character in the African and Caribbean folklore. Anansi is a spider that has a knack for surviving the odds through trickery. The fly finds thousands of other flies trapped like itself. Nature is accessible only by reminiscing about the past. This is a metaphor for how the complexities of contemporary life consume us, giving us no scope for escape.

Both the poems depict how, after the colonial influence, the people of the Caribbean islands pine for nature and the countryside with clear skies, blue seas, and green grass as soon as they got the bitter taste of modernity. Velma Pollard is the spokeswoman for the doubly marginalised Caribbean women writers. Through her poems, she embarks on a reflective journey that traverses a wide array of emotions. "She is Caribbean. And she is also the world. Truly, her canvas is global and she proves at ease, with fluid sensibilities capped by an indomitable anchorage", commented the local newspaper of Jamaica, *The Gleaner*.

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The Figure of Crusoe in Derek Walcott's Poetry

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Derek Walcott is a prominent voice in Caribbean literature. In his writings, he reworks the figure of Crusoe and completely subverts existing notions about the character. In his address at the University of the West Indies in 1965, he warned that "it is not the Crusoe you recognize", the romantic desert islander of fiction or tourist brochures. Walcott compares Crusoe to the mythical figure Proteus who changes shape according to what we need him to be. In his poems such as "The Castaway", "Crusoe's Journal" and "Crusoe's Island", Walcott explores various dimensions of this character and thus Crusoe becomes an emblem of the various problems organic to West Indian life. Walcott uses the figure of Crusoe to explore themes such as exile,

isolation, postcolonialism and artistic recreation. Walcott remarked, “My Crusoe, then, is Adam, Christopher Columbus, God, a missionary, a beachcomber, and his interpreter, Daniel Defoe.”

In “The Castaway”, Walcott explores the figure of Crusoe as an artist. In this poem the West Indian artist is shown as a shipwrecked individual. The state of the West Indian artist is like that of Crusoe because he too is stranded in an intermediate space between two worlds, to neither of which he completely belongs. In his isolation from the outside world, he longs for recognition and acceptance. His condition is like that of a “green bottle’s gospel choked with sand, labelled, a wrecked ship.” His ideas and thoughts are pent up inside him. The image of “the ripe brain rotting” shows that he is wasting away in his isolation and at one point he also talks of abandoning art and “dead metaphors”, the very things which actually give him hope.

The artist is in a state of despair, in a state of “frenzy”. He contemplates ideas such as silence and death. However this also has a positive connotation. For example, the castaway, cracking a mollusc, makes thunder split, breaking the silence which has up to now silenced him. Similarly, the allusion to the Biblical Genesis lends itself to a two-fold interpretation. The castaway ponders about how “we end in earth, from earth began” but then he talks about creating meaning on his own – “in our own entrails, genesis.”

This aspect of how exile becomes the point of artistic recreation is further explored by Walcott in his poem “Crusoe’s Journal.” Crusoe collects driftwood and creates light and heat, a figure for the West Indian artist creating new literatures out of the cultural detritus of a fragmented history.

So from this house
that faces nothing but the sea, his journals
assume a household use,
We learn to shape from them, where nothing was
the language of a race...

The figure of Crusoe in this poem is both individualistic and communal. Like Crusoe, the Caribbean artist brings together objects, symbols and cultural fragments from disparate worlds to create a new vision. Thus, Crusoe becomes emblematic of the West Indian writer’s “creative schizophrenia”, “of the electric fusion of the old and the new”. Through the figure of Crusoe, Walcott is actually making a call for the poetic and cultural transfusion and transformation required in the postcolonial context of the Caribbean. According to Walcott, “Crusoe’s survival is not purely physical, not a question of the desolation of his environment, but a triumph of will ... We contemplate our spirit by the detritus of the past.” Thus, in many ways, Crusoe echoes the identity crisis, alienation and lack of belonging experienced by Walcott himself and how he seeks to come out of this condition through the shaping of a new vision.

This striking parallel between Crusoe and Walcott is more pronounced in the poem “Crusoe’s Island”. Both of them reflect how they are at their “life’s noon” and how their life is being wasted away. Crusoe, who is stranded on an island, longs for human interactions and an end to his isolation. The poet is also stranded on an island, in the metaphorical sense of the term. He is in a state of artistic breakdown and despair. In this poem, Crusoe wants the sun to “scour the brain as harsh as coral”. This reflects the desire for a certain sense of forgetfulness. However, there is a significant transition in the state of mind of Crusoe as the poem proceeds. The same tolling of “the bell”, which signals an end to the poet’s creative spirit in the beginning of the poem, marks a new beginning, as the poem draws to a close. It becomes a “transfiguring tongue”.

In “Crusoe’s Island”, there is also an interesting juxtaposition of the colonial and postcolonial worlds. Walcott portrays Crusoe as the coloniser who seeks to educate and “refine” the “savages”. The initial part of the poem talks about the “congenital heresy” of the coloniser, looking down upon anything that is not European as “the other” and seeking to propagate Christianity at the cost of native religious beliefs. However towards the end of the poem, there is a shift in focus from Crusoe the coloniser to the Caribbean people, “Friday’s progeny”, who walk in their “air of glory” alongside the breaking waves. The image of the “black little girls” also signals the overthrowing of patriarchy along with colonialism. Overthrowing colonisation is not just the regaining of the physical space but also the mental space that was long dominated by the thoughts and mind-set of the coloniser. The fact that Crusoe envies these “black little girls” and compares them to “angels” underlines the importance of the removal of the last vestiges of colonial thought.

Walcott not only revisits the figure of Crusoe and reinvents him; he develops this character in varying degrees and explores him from various angles. Walcott’s Crusoe thus conveys the voice of the Caribbean in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Interestingly, his Crusoe is both the coloniser and the emancipated West Indian. He is the artist but stands for both artistic breakdown and artistic recreation. He is Walcott himself but at the same time he is also his original creator, Defoe. Walcott’s Crusoe is the West Indian individual but he stands for the entire community as well. The old character Crusoe is infused with new life when Walcott appropriates him to stand for new ideas and most importantly, for the fusion of the old and the new.

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A Postcolonial Analysis of *The Adventures of Tintin*

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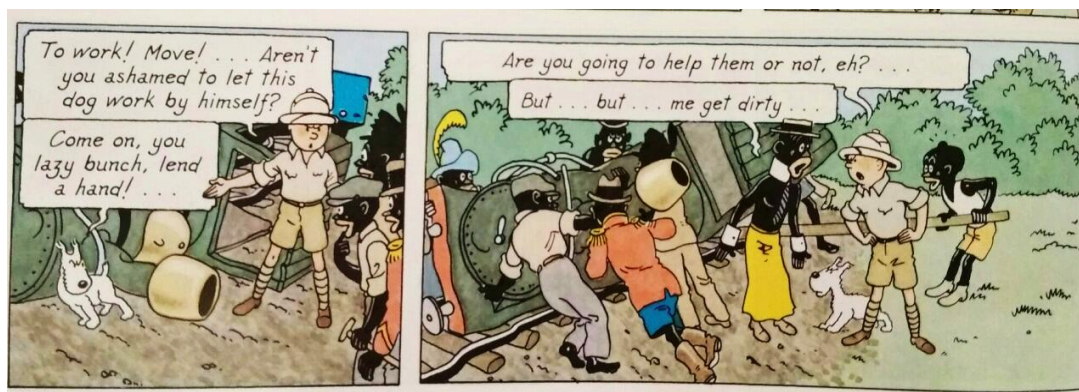
“I didn’t consider it real work, just a game.” – Hergé

In 1929, this was Hergé’s attitude when he took on the responsibility of editor of *Le Petit Vingtième* (the children’s supplement of the newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*), and sole artist of the adventures of the young boy reporter, Tintin, and his dog Snowy. The first installation of the series was set in Soviet Russia and is by no means well-researched. Compared to Hergé’s later work—so brilliant because of the fanatic desire for perfection he developed—it is definitely a disappointment. *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* was greatly influenced by the editor of *Le*

Vingtème Siècle, the Abbé Wallez, who very kindly presented Hergé with a book by Joseph Douillet, a Catholic diplomat in Russia, called *Moscow Unveiled*. The book summed up the staunch right-wing sentiment of the Belgians on the communist government in Russia, and these sentiments were voiced through Tintin's first adventure.

Hergé continued this trend of voicing the popular in his next adventure (in the Congo) as well—mostly because all he knew of the Belgian Congo was what he heard from his countrymen—the propaganda of the coloniser. The Abbé insisted that this second adventure should take place in the Congo, to teach the young readership of *Le Petit Vingtème*, the benefits of colonialism. The patronising attitude that the Belgians had towards the inhabitants of the colonies is evident in multiple panels of *Tintin in the Congo*, despite the many revisions to make it more acceptable to the modern reader; the Congolese are shown as needing the help of their Belgian overlords, who are, of course, portrayed as superior to them in every way – especially in terms of character (Snowy calls the Africans a “lazy bunch”) and intellect (they speak with very simplified grammar). It is interesting to note that despite all this, the main villains of this adventure are White—this could be perhaps because Hergé was keen that the next installation should be set in America, and needed a storyline that would act as a means to that end—but it does not seem that he sought to vilify any particular race.

Another thing that stands out in comparison to the other instalments is the casual slaughter of wildlife that takes place with the intent of adding humour to the story (he kills fifteen antelope one after another, thinking that he has missed the shot). In later volumes, we see that Tintin is a staunch advocate of nonviolence, which makes *Tintin in the Congo* an interesting read. It reflects the frivolity of the colonisers with regard to the natural resources of their colonies – it was the Congo, after all, that was exploited by the Belgian King Leopold II for its rubber trees.



Over the next few adventures, Hergé sheds the Abbé's influence, and broadens his horizons. In *Tintin in America*, Hergé shows some sympathy towards the plight of the American-Indians, but mostly by mocking the settlers—the White Americans—and their aggressive method of doing ‘business’. Hergé was not a fan of the Americans or the British – although this is not often evident in the English versions of the book where multiple revisions have been made in order to appeal to the British audience. In fact, while Hergé became more independent in terms of the content of the new Tintin stories (barring when Belgium was occupied by Nazi Germany), the changes he made to the old ones largely depended on their reception from readers across the world. The Americans did not appreciate any portrayal of the Black race (a deckhand on the *Karaboudjan* had to be redrawn to suit these needs) and a substantial chunk of *Land of*

Black Gold had to be altered and redrawn, because it showed the British administration of Palestine in an unfavourable light – whereas, funnily enough, the portrayal of Arabs and Islamic traditions in the same book is inaccurate. Similarly, in the first two-volume adventure (*Cigars of the Pharaoh* and *The Blue Lotus*), there is another such inconsistency—Hergé was in a position to depict the situation in China with stunning accuracy due to his friendship with a Chinese student Chang Chon-Ren—the letters and signs are written in Chinese and are relevant to the situation in China; and Tintin laughs at the stereotypical ideas that Europeans have of the Chinese (certainly different from his portrayal of the Chinese as pigtail-wearing torturers in *The Land of the Soviets*). On the other hand, India is depicted as a mystical land of fakirs, and Maharajahs riding on decorated elephants – a typical example of orientalism.

Hergé’s depiction of Arabs is also flawed in some instances – he sometimes used squiggles in lieu of actual Arabic text (as in *Crab with the Golden Claws*). This doesn’t happen in the later volumes, but in some panels in *The Red Sea Sharks*, even though the proper script is used, the language itself (though comprehensible) is not very good. The same can be said for the Hindi text in *Tintin in Tibet*.



Hergé’s work certainly doesn’t appear to be deliberately racist, but his portrayal of other cultures can’t be taken too seriously for it is tainted by his European worldview. *Tintin in the Congo* is definitely far behind the times, but it tells the modern reader a lot about the colonial period, especially the mindset and attitude of the colonisers – more so than it does the character of the author. Hergé wanted to improve the comics as far as he could, especially in his later years—in fact, he wanted to stop the sale of the first two books—but when it came down to it, only the commercial aspects were considered and only the most powerful voices were heard.

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Multiplicity of 'Africanness' in Adichie's *Jumping Monkey Hill*

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The profundity of colonial discourses can be understood from the literature of the colonial masters. Postcolonial writers challenge this Orientalist ideological paradigm at the centre which creates a unitary notion of African identity. This paper explores the multiple stories and identities of African people and territory through a study based on "Jumping Monkey Hill" from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*. It will also question the notion of African authenticity and attempt to challenge African clichés.

The concept of the 'Orient' is not equivalent to the geographical East. According to Edward Said, "this European invention" presents as a "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes and remarkable experiences" (1). This 'exoticising' and 'othering' of Africa and the African create the single story of Africa that silences the natives and deprives them of history and language.

The first story under consideration, "Jumping Monkey Hill" is noted for its conspicuous absence of names for the characters. Apart from the protagonist, the only two named characters are the white organisers of the "African Writers' Workshop". By depriving the African writers from different regions of the continent of their names, the author satirises the colonial tendency to homogenise African identities and deny the continent its diversity and complexity of culture.

Although empire may have been a shared experience for most of Africa, the experience of empire was far from uniform...Thus for the student approaching African literature, it is necessary to remain attentive to difference when attempting generalizations about the continent. (Murphy 61)

Orientalism explains Edward's patronising attitude. It functions as a "corporate institution" to deal with orient "making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said 3). In a TED talk, Adichie says,

If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner.

(“The Danger of a Single Story”)

Western literature and media have portrayed Africa in a way that any variation from the popular image of the dark and impoverished nation is fraught with suspicion. The stories told by the Senegalese, Zimbabwean and Ujunwa are regarded as “not authentically African.” When a Senegalese writer narrates a story related to homosexuality, Edward asks, “How African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?” (Adichie “Jumping Monkey Hill”). His comment that the story is not reflective of Africa does not change even though the Senegalese woman present in the gathering asserts her identity as a lesbian, proving the existence of homosexual Africans. He dismisses it as “passé” or obsolete although senseless Christian intervention was common in the country because it contradicts the colonial belief that considered Christianity as integral to the establishment of a ‘civilised’ society.

The protagonist’s story is “implausible”, according to the white man because stereotypical African women are overtly sexualised beings who will forsake anything to win a position of prestige. This story challenges the stereotypical inferiority of African woman by depicting her as strong and independent. A woman who refuses to take up a job as a paid “personal contact” (Adichie “Jumping Monkey Hill”). This agency subverts the Eurocentric idea of Africa and thus makes the story ‘unrealistic’ for the Occident. Despite the writer’s denial of any autobiographical resemblances, the readers clearly trace parallels between Chioma, the fictional character in the story Ujunwa creates and Ujunwa herself. Ujunwa walking out of the meet is a reaffirmation of the authenticity of her story: her act establishes that it is a ‘real story of the real people’.

It is the Tanzanian man’s story about the “killings in Congo” from the perspective of a militiaman, “a man full of prurient violence”, that Edward considers “urgent and relevant” (Adichie “Jumping Monkey Hill”). This image of the violent man conforms to the colonial discourse of labelling the African continent as a “heart of darkness” and its people as “savages”.

The food served in the African writers’ meet is not African, contradicting the spirit of the whole event. The novelist mocks this Orientalist attitude of the European who dictates the authenticity of African stories and culture. Edward’s self-proclamation as a person who is “keen on the real Africa and not the imposing of Western ideas on African venues,” is ironic. Replacement of rice with meat and cream on the table projects the superiority of the Western cuisine.

Silence is a sign of oppression. Years of oppression have taken away the voice of the people, and at the same time, the oppressed have internalised this oppression as the norm. Everyone notes Edward’s shameless act of staring at Ujunwa’s breasts, but no one dares to question him. Through the character of Ujunwa, Adichie expresses her rage against this attitude of passivity. “This kind of attitude is why they could kill you and herd you into townships and require passes from you before you could walk on your own land!” (Adichie “Jumping Monkey Hill”). In spite of achieving independence, many nations live in what Slemon calls a “postcolonial condition” (102), a condition in which the Third World countries are still dependent on the First World nations economically.

“Jumping Monkey Hill” not only critiques the white man’s colonial perspective, but how the Africans have internalised these notions. Stereotypes like “Kenyan are too submissive! Nigerians are too aggressive! Tanzanians have no fashion sense!” are blatantly expressed by the writers who should be trying to break those popular faulty images. The transformation of silence into laughter suggests Adichie’s strong resistance to change according to the white man’s wishes, and her refusal to accept the white man’s victory by homogenising African identities. By

bringing many writers writing different stories, Adichie aims at what Chinua Achebe calls a “balance of stories” (Adichie “The Danger of a Single Story”).

The stories and histories from the perspective of colonised people challenge the ‘single story’ or stereotypical unitary African identity and establish the multiplicity of African identity and stories.

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From The Light House

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“Days of my youth wasted on a selfish fool
Who ran for the hills from the hand you were dealt
I flew far away, as far as I could go
Your time is running out
And I'm a long way from home.”

-The Lumineers, *Long Way From Home*.

The beauty of walls is that you decide how to make them, and even if they break, you know how to mend them. You either make them strong by interlocking, or you stack them up and let them fall on a fine day. Every structure has a wall, and it is a bare necessity.

You see the world through the eyes of the beholder. Standing on the circular platform three hundred and fifty two feet above, admiring the panoramic view. You face the sea lashing against the shore. The lights from the structure falling on the sea, breaking all the possible reflections and guiding those who are lost, to their home. Under the searchlights you stood lost, making your hollow bricks.

Brick one: You hung your legs over the ledge letting nothing block you, feeling the breeze caress you like your mum did when you were young.

Brick two: Your phone flashed with your pa’s laughing face, waiting to hear your voice. The green and the red options glared at you, and you chose the one with the longer wavelength.

Brick three: You slowly untied your shoes and let them fly and crash into the sea. The waves caught them and set them free.

Brick four: The headlines announced your ship sailing, and you hid under the searchlights, living like a ghost.

Brick five: The doors flew open, with arms at the end. You folded yours, and shut the door on their smiling faces. Through the door left the last bit of hope.

Brick six: You raised yourself down the ledge, holding onto the rusty pillars as wobbly as your life. You hung there, fearlessly. And that was the worst form of fear.

Brick seven: The doors opened again and they saw your stunt. Curiously, they gave their hands to you. You waved goodbye and continued to smile. They left, all except one, who smiled with you.

Brick eight: You told your story, you let him listen. You raised yourself up and spoke. The doors remained closed and no one knocked again.

Together, you built more bricks; hollow, flawless bricks with your names engraved on it. Through the hidden spaces, you continued to watch the world; and they all thought you both disappeared.

One fine day, the stacked bricks fell apart.

And that was okay.

The doors flew open with no one on the other side.

And that was okay.

You both fell down the spiral stairs

And that was okay.

The headlines screamed your names.

And that was okay too.

In the end, everything was okay. You could breathe again through the paths where the autumn leaves flew along with the wind. For the first time in a million years, it didn't hurt anymore. For the first time in a million years, you weren't far away from home.

Bombay Meri Jaan

Liz Maria Joys

I M. A. English

As I face the glimmering sea reflecting a thousand shimmering lights shining bright with all their energy, and the Queen's Necklace in full view, memories rush through my mind. Oh the buzzing energy and the bubbling joy! Can there ever be a better place? Mumbai and home have definitely become synonyms. Three years have gone by swiftly without a warning that this too shall pass.

I see my college at a distance, proudly displaying its magnificence. Those corridors hold within, a million emotions and memories which will forever be cherished and treasured. Wilson faces the ever welcoming Chowpatty Beach whose grains contain the tears and laughter of a million, and the sunsets are a mesmerising view to behold! As I reach Malabar Hills, the view from my balcony is breathtaking, with the sea dancing along the wind and the city lit as the sky on a starry night, shining with all its brilliance. It is indeed true that Bombay never sleeps! And it is soothing to know that the world is still alive as I toss across the bed.

The golden streaks of sunlight beaming onto my face called out to me for a day filled with fresh adventures and memories.

As I climb down those familiar hidden flight of stairs from Hanging Gardens and pass by all those outlets that I used to celebrate, an ever familiar fragrance pierces through my brain, calls out and urges me to stay. Time stands still and all the hustle pauses as I gaze down the lane – a canopy of green and yellow blocking the sun and sky, that which has a thousand impressions of my shoes embedded in them. And there at a distance I see my hostel. The agony of not being a part of that place anymore sends a shiver down my spine. Oh the pain! Without any strength to look up to my room and balcony, I slowly walk past the lane as thunder starts to roll. Within seconds it's drizzling. With a sip of Bombay's Cutting Chai and the flashback its taste brought, my eyes start to sweat even though it's raining cats and dogs now.

As the train howls past familiar streets and stations, myriad emotions pass through my mind. I step off the train and proceed to the ever glowing Marine Drive and walk towards Nariman Point, fully drenched in the monsoon showers. This is the single most beautiful walk I'll forever love and cherish. Even a single day of Bombay is a priced possession. Yes, Mumbai is definitely the City of Dreams and will forever remain my Home away from home.

The Holy Night?

Surya Suresh Kumar
I M. A. English

There was again that Christmas night
Once and for all the Holy Night
But the night set before me
Were the screeches and helpless cries
Of those women;
The bait of man's madness.
And the Holy Night commenced
I saw people proceed to the altar
But somewhere,
In the darkness of the night,
In the corners of silent streets
And in the quietness of the forests
I hear them plead
Help me! Help me!
That Holy Night, when the Saviour is born
Never Forget,
There are shes who weep for a Saviour.

The Listener

Sarah Mathew
III B. A. English

The table has been cleared.
Stomachs full, now the heart remains.
Please, be seated around the table.
Pairs of aging eyes upon me.
An uncomfortable smile unleashes
Smirks of satisfaction.
Authority established.
Pay attention because...
You have to.
The oldest voice drones on.
Three generations,
Seated at the same table,
All looking at the same face,
Listening to the same voice,
Narrating the same story.
Half-hearted hands support drooping spirits.
A round of laughter
Jerks me back to reality.
It's not really laughter.
Just pained grins
Punctuated with sound.
And the story continues.
You can never choose your family.
Concentration wavers.
No one can keep up.
But oh! We know
Exactly when to do what.
It's intuition.
Years of training disciplines the mind
To know what is expected.
A quick grin to cover up my inattentiveness.
Yes, I've been trained well too.
Now, a bout of silence.
An anecdote no one understood?
Have we reached the end?

Scrunched up faces say otherwise.
'We need to keep this going!'
Screams each mind.
One voice saves the rest.
A younger version of events
Narrated to anyone who'd listen.
Now, the talk isn't monopolized.
They talk over each other.
Divide and conquer!
To each her own group!
Survival of the loudest!
I am the listener.
For, I don't have stories to tell yet.
So, I sit among strangers
And pass judgement.
The only thing I can do.
Perhaps I'm wrong in doing so.
Perhaps I should learn a lesson or two.
Give the benefit of doubt.
But...that's never been fun.
So, thank you for the
Wonderful Time!
We hoped for more
But it's past midnight.
You can bore me the next time we meet.
Inevitably.
You'll stock up on stories
And I, my patience.
For my cheeks are hurting
From hours of fake smiles.
My ribs are cracked
From stifled yawns.
So, until our next meeting,
Loads of love,
The youngest generation.

Author

Mary Monika
I M. A. English

I wander alone
Through the desert sands
I pick out phonemes from the grains
I cull out morphemes and signs
The signifier and the signified in your eyes
Not in my hands.

I make up words
I give them meaning
But out my heart they are taken
By the reader who gives them different reasons
Different layers to my words.

I string my words together now
I make poems I make prose
Part of literature I grow
But there he comes again
My reader
Breaks my efforts
Discards my pain
He built a fort
He built a castle too
Out of my work
All out of my work.

Genius not in origins
But in combinations lost.
The author is gone
The author is gone.

Middle of the Night

Mary Monika
I M. A. English

He used to miss him a lot before.
Sitting by the window with his mother
Waiting and waiting for him.
Everybody lost hope of his return.
Warrior they said.
Brave death they uttered.
Be proud they yelled.
But not the little boy. Not him. He never lost faith in his father.

And one day. In tattered clothes. Dirty face. Dried blood all over.
He returned.
His father came back home.
Proud little one the boy became.
Constantly asking for stories.
His interest shone in his starry eyes.
He boasted to the other kids.
Proclaimed that he too will go to war with his father next time.
He loved it.
His strong strong father.
The fights and battles and the victory
Gave birth to so much desire within that little body.
He continued to ask.
His father continued to repeat that story of blood and gore
That the boy loved a little too much.
That the boy romanticised beyond measure.
And then one day he saw it.
Late at night, a sleepless night, went for a carton of milk he.
Stumbled upon his father.
The broad back how slumped.
He on his knees by the fire.
Trembling.
Whispering.
Sobbing.
Muttering.
'I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm so so sorry'
Over and over.
Clutching a bunch of dog tags in his hands.
For dear life.
From then on.
The boy never asked the father about war.
Instead, on such invisible nights
A carton of milk waited for
The worn out teary eyed man.
In the middle of the night.
Love was poured along with bottled tears.

Miscellaneous

Pooja Krishna H. A.
III B. A. English

"Don't enter the temple!"
"Don't touch the flame!"
Was the Goddess restricted, too?

Who decides what's 'right' and what's 'wrong'?
Have they been right all along?
Who decides what's 'wrong' and what's 'right'?
After all, life isn't black and white.

Reality was a slap to the face.
Society was the palm.
She had never felt a sweeter pain.

'Blue becomes you!' his father praised outside the changing room. He hid his pink nails.

'Who are you?' Society asked in revulsion.
'Me. I am myself.' she answered proudly.

A Song of Seasons

Pooja Krishna H. A.
III B. A. English

It's a cold, cold day
And the words of the Lady,
Frostily calculated, haunts my mother
As she washes the dishes.
Insulting, Demeaning,
The former never gives the latter
A chance to breathe.

And she wasn't allowed to scream out loud.

It's a windy, windy day
And the touch of the Master,
Frighteningly breezy, repels me
As I sweep the floor.
Creepy, Slimy,
The former never gives me
A chance to say 'No'.

And I wasn't allowed to cry.

It's a hot, hot day
And the glare of the Lord,
Swelteringly cruel, follows my father
As he toils in the fields.
Disdainful, Superior,
The former never gives the latter
A chance to prove himself.

And he wasn't allowed to raise his eyes.

It's a dreary, dreary day,
And the commands of the Family,
Unfortunately superior, cage us
As we just exist.
Sharp, Hurtful,
The former never gives us
A chance to live our lives.

And we weren't allowed to scream out loud,
We weren't allowed to cry,
We weren't allowed to raise our eyes,
We weren't even allowed to die...

That Stranger in the Mirror

Rathna Mahesh
II B. A. English

In the shadow lit room
I sat on the floor,
Legs tucked beneath me
The silence a deafening roar.

I looked into her eyes-
The girl who sat before me;
I knew her, I did
But how could that be?

I stared at this wisp of a girl
I took in her jaunty chin
That proud nose, those arched brows
Was she kith? Was she kin?

I touched her hollow cheeks
My fingers came away salty and damp.
I traced her lips, she jerked away
Startled, I reached for the lamp.

But I paused, I didn't know why,
Somehow, I knew what I'd see
And I wasn't ready to think about
Those tears on her cheek.

Suddenly it all came rushing back to me.
I remembered this girl now, I did-
I remembered when people were around
She was the one I hid.

So instead, I sat back down
And reached for a lock of hair
I brushed it back and she winced
As if a hand had never touched her fair.

I started to hum then,
A lost, familiar tune
And we sat together that way
Till the sun chased the moon.

And when the dappled rays
Kissed the back of my neck
I took in the girl sitting before me
Christ, but what a train wreck.

Those listless eyes
A mouth made for sin
Her story lay etched
On her face, her body, her skin.

She parted her lips
She sucked in a breath,
Then clamped them close
And her eyes brimmed with tears that bled.

Now I realised how I knew her
I had seen that face for sure
The stranger in the mirror
Had never looked so familiar before.

I Scream

Remy Tresa Abraham
II B. A. English

I scream,
And I scream,
And scream.

But he doesn't bother turning around.
I am just another insignificant girl he sees every day.

I cry and bawl at his feet.
I beg for a second chance.
But he doesn't bother turning around.
Yet, I beg for a second chance.

A second chance at what you ask?

A second chance at kissing her good morning.
A second chance at kissing her goodbye before I leave for school.
A second chance at returning home to the smell of her evening snacks.
A second chance at complimenting her wondrous cooking.
A second chance at falling asleep on her lap after a disastrous day.

A second chance at hugging her whenever I need to,
At kissing her on the cheek simply because I want to,
At telling her I love her whenever I feel like it.

I beg for a second chance,
To love her like she deserved,
To treat her like the Queen she was,
To have a chance at a proper goodbye.

And as Death walked away with her in his clutches,
I scream,
And I scream,
And scream.

But he doesn't bother turning around,
Because I am just another insignificant girl he sees every day.

