

GENDER STUDIES

UNIT I – POETRY

STILL I RISE – MAYA ANGELOU

Maya Angelou is an Afro-American poet. As a black woman, she has been marginalized by the white male members. Though Angelou has suffered much humiliation in the white, male dominated society, she is determined to scale over all these racial, gender and class discrimination.

This poem is addressed to the white male oppressors in society who would bind the speaker to her past and history that has been misrepresented. Maya is aware that her ancestors were wrongly pictured in history. But she is intent upon rising above the cruelty and suffering they experienced. The speaker is both defiant and confident throughout the poem. Initially she was perplexed by the white males who did not want her success. She feels that her joy seems to make them more miserable. She questions the whites why she has been misrepresented. At the same time, Maya taunts these oppressors, acknowledging the impact of her protest and personality and she is delighted in the fact that she bewilders them with her power and confidence. The poem, as a whole, is a declaration and assertion of her strength and determination.

The speaker boldly challenges the power of the whites who try to quell down her power and progress. She says that she is least bothered about their oppression. Nobody can take away her power and she is confident that she can rise above the artificial barriers – racism and sexism. Thus Maya will emerge as a powerful woman. By her sheer will power, she can break the negative cycle of the past.

As a Black poet, she voices the grievances of all black people. Maya refers to the trauma of her ancestors as slaves to white people and she addresses the collective experience of her Black community. She proclaims that as Blacks they are more powerful than their oppressors. Whatever the oppressor tries to hamper their independence, they cannot prevent their destination. They will progress, despite all their struggles.

The poet concludes her poem by affirming the strength of the Blacks. She determined to transcend history, hatred, racial discrimination and fulfill the dreams of her ancestors. If her oppressors view her with broken spirit, there is no progress in her life. Hence she wishes to keep her head upward. Through the poem is addressed to all racial oppressors, Maya gives the message to all women.

HELEN OF TROY DOES COUNTERTOP DANCING

MARGARET ATWOOD

Helen of Troy does countertop Dancing deals with the denial to agree to or obey the patriarchal ideology that women need to live a self-respected life and play humble roles in society. Atwood expresses the oppressed female psyche and her search to gain empowerment in everyday life.

In this poem, Atwood expresses feminist Resistance. On observing the context, contents and form of the poem, one can find out this resistance clearly. Atwood is a Canadian poet born in 1939. Helen of Troy does countertop Dancing is an extract from Atwood's poetry book entitled "Morning in the Burned House". These are two predominant themes in the book. The first one is exploration of the torture of woman. This theme is explained through the retelling of certain myths such as Helen of Troy.

The second theme is based on mortality and aging which was a reaction towards her Father's death. However the theme of the torture of woman and the use of mythological figures are key aspects of the poem. Atwood employs a narrative approach in this poem. This creates a personal connection with the reader especially feminists. In Greek myths, Helen of Troy was known as the bewitching beauty in the world.

There is no clean evidence to prove her parents. However, in Atwood's poem, Helen was the daughter of Greek and Zeno and Spartan Queen Lada. It has been said that Zeus disguised himself as a swan and raped Lada. Lada then produced an egg from which Helen came from, she says, "I come from the province of Gods", "My mother was raped by a holy swan". There are lines through which Atwood refers to the birth and parents of Helen.

Using Helen of Troy as 'the prostitute / stripper' in the poem creates great interest and entertainment due to the history of Helen. Helen is referred as having no morals and self-respect. This introduces feminist resistance in the sense of irony that the 'most beautiful woman in the world' is a prostitute. This illusion provides Atwood's attitude. The poem begins with the idea that women feel disgusted towards other woman who sell their bodies and degrade themselves by entertaining men.

Women and men in society regard such woman like Helen as a dishonor for women. However this job is known as the world's oldest profession for woman and who decides if this way of making money is really wrong. She defends herself, "..... I should be ashamed of myself / if they had the chance. Quite Dancing / Get some self respected job". Helen then rebuts by saying that why would she leave this job when all she'll be getting is 'minimum wage and various veins'. She further argues, "Selling gloves or something. Instead of what I do sell you have to have talent to peddle a thing so nebulous." She asserts her point by asking why she would waste her talents on selling objects when she can sell herself?. Others may say that she is exploited, but she has a choice and she will take the money by selling her body. Helen is strong willed and will not conform to society, but she would make her own decisions regardless of her reputation. Helen uses her work as a protest against oppression. She wants to have a control over her life.

Helen of Troy was worshipped as a person of beauty who is entertaining them for sexual arousal. Although they worship her, they still undermine her as a woman. They treat her as a object rather than a woman. At the same time, Helen will not allow men touch her without her wish. She says that she is a torch and anyone who touches her will be burnt. How this poem is a resistant text. Here the woman Helen questions the ideals that society has developed towards women.

SHE

LAKSHMI KANNA

Lakshmi Kanna's poem "She" is a feminist version of a woman's perspective. Here the poet talks about the inner feelings of a woman whose name is not given in the poem. 'She' has no distinct identity, but her grievances are common in every household in India. In a patriarchal milieu, woman is considered as a non entity and so no attempt is made to give her a separate identity. In Indian scenario, she has a look of a well being, but she experiences a deep hollowness in herself.

In the beginning of the poem, the poet shows a dignified woman who is elegantly and tastefully dressed. It is a modern woman who wears tight fitting clothes that smack of western culture. There is an aura of confidence as she glibly pronounces 'value judgments'. But under the polished appearance, there lurks a person who is tense and insecure. In spite of luxury of expensive clothes, liberal education are her upper middle class family background. She is still trapped in the patriarchal setup. Her inner voice remains unarticulated. Lack of self-satisfaction leads to frustration and depression. Her external appearance is tailored to mask her inner turmoil. Even the "value judgments" are borrowed from the patriarchal society. Hence while woman appears comfortable, the repressed real self is "tight and spring tense".

This poem explains the emotional and psychological sterility of woman at home. As a house wife, she keeps her house very clean, as her house radiates with 'clean health' and it is "breathing an air. She keeps her rooms in 'spick and span' and has decorated it in an attractive manner. It makes a woman 'house-proud'. However the woman is not genuinely proud, but is forced into being so: "she needs to be". She is not allowed to do any creative except keeping her house clean. Housekeeping is a stereotyped role, which a woman has to perform. In spite of all the material benefits, the woman experiences emotional stability at the core of her being. It is reflected in the following lines.... 'The floor swept clean as her empty heart'. While the house enjoys 'Clean health' and breathes 'an air of uncluttered ease', the woman in the house is psychologically and emotionally ill at ease with her role assigned by the patriarchy. She is denied opportunities of a fuller and more meaningful realization of the self.

The woman's inner chaos is contrasted with the orderliness of the garden in her home. In the concluding section, the woman's life is viewed against the backdrop of life outside the house. Through the open door, the woman gets a glimpse of the 'lengthening shadow' of her person. One gets the impression that life has quietly slipped her by and she is left with longing and loneliness. The mango tree is in full bloom with the sudden appearance of 'glossy leaves' that shine like copper on the branches. There is the "sweet-throated" sing of the birds. In the midst of so much joy all she can feel is the 'peeling stillness' and the pain of memories of a once pleasant past.

While nature registers a growth and renewal, the woman remains static, virtually living in a limbo. The only visible growth is the lengthening of her shadow. It implies that the real inner self has been arrested and the false social image she has acquired has assumed a large dimension. The woman looks at the eagle "soaring above in circles" with its "shrill notes tearing" the vast expanse of the blue sky. The eyes of the kite are 'frankly red and angry' as it cries out at some injustice or loss, but the woman suffers silently. The spectacle of freedom of animals and birds remind her of her own social confinement.

PHALLUS I CUT

KALKI SUBRAMANIAN

Kalki Subramanian's poem " Phallus I cut" deals with the mental, physical agony of a transgender. She articulates powerfully her experience as a transgender in order to be accepted by the Indian socy, as a woman. The poet is very candid rather than attempting to conceal the horrible facts. She opines that she has no need to practice 'Yoga' to become a lady.

The poet expresses her misery by stating that while not being physically born as a woman, she is born that way spiritually. Even then the society never acknowledges it as normal. She severed her male organ, that is Phallus, in an attempt to be accepted as a woman. After all these painful operation, she becomes a woman. During that surgery, she was covered in blood and escaped death narrowly.

Even after all these traumatic surgery, people question her femininity, arguing that she has no ovary, she is described as 'a desolate tree with decayed banks'. The poet exposes the harsh realities which transgender people have to encounter. This is viewed by society as the demise of their ancestry.

The poet reacts to others harsh criticism that as long as her roots will support her, she can survive. She cannot extend her family as she has no ovary. But Kalki asserts that she does not want an ovary to carry the garbage of fanatical religions casteism.

The poet criticises the existing society as it is filled with caste and religions prejudices. She hates such evil matters germinating in her ovary and groaning into a dictatorial tree. She feels happy that she is ovary- free, because many women used their ovaries as the social lavatory.

The poet is happy that she is lucky enough not to have been born a woman. Now, being a transgender, she does not have to recite the made-up gyno- grammar. She does not bother of anyone labels her a freak. The poet raises many valid questions to those individuals who have rejected them. She challenges her critics if they can adopt her way of life, renounce her religion and caste. Does becoming a daughter require them to stuck at their mother's breast?. She is appreciative of her unique identity since it allows her to be all of these things. She challenges them that once they have removed their Phallus of chauvinism, they will know who they are. Only after that they are permitted to claim that she is not a woman.

NATURE AND THE MEANING OF HAPPINESS

MARY SHELLEY

Like most Romantic writers, Shelley saw no separation between her literary art for the public and the private prose of her diaries and letters. During her difficult journey to Switzerland after her elopement with Percy Shelley, she started writing letters of exquisite literary splendour. While her early letters to her love P.B. Shelley exhibit a teenage girl's passionate love, her letters to friends and family from this self elected exile on the tone of a literary travelogue, made all the more dramatic by the unusual state of nature at time. The eruption of Indonesia's Mount

Tambora, the previous spring to this day the largest eruption in history – sent a cloud of volcanic ash around the globe, enveloping the northern hemisphere in a cool sheath of gloom. While the summer of 1816, he became the summer of love tons of young people travelling together.

In a letter addressed to her sister Fanny in 1816, which is included in “Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley”, Shelley describes the perilous but breathtaking journey from France to Lake Geneva in Switzerland, the largest and deepest of Swiss Lakes. What came out of it is the lyrical travelogue of both body and spirit – describing Nature’s costume changes in minute detail. Shelley chronicles her journey toward her destination across microclimates and terrains, not only toward her physical destination, but toward a new psychic summit of happiness, harmony and self-actualisation.

On arriving at Lake Geneva, she appreciates the Walter as “blue as the heavens which of reflects”. Shelley finds a wholly different manifestation of nature. A year after completing her manuscript of “Frankenstein”, Shelley published her travelogue under her new husband’s name, hoping that his popularity as a poet would lend it – more credibility than exposing the author as a woman. Three months later, she published “Frankenstein” anonymously.

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

CHARLOTTE PARKINS

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s classic short story, “The Yellow Wall paper” narrates the story of young woman’s gradual descent into psychosis. This short story is often as an early feminist work that predates a woman’s right to vote in the US. The author was involved in first wave feminism, and her other works describe the origin of the subjugation of women, particularly in marriage.

“The Yellow Wall paper” interrogates the roles of women, regarding their mental health and right to autonomy and self-identity. This story is about the mental deterioration of a woman while she is on a “rest cure” on a rented summer country estate with her family. Her obsession with the yellow wall paper in her bed room marks descent into psychosis from her depression through the story.

The narrator, a woman's husband John is a doctor and she has moved on to an estate to overcome her illness, which she explains as nervous depression, following the birth of their baby. John's sister Jennie also lives with them and works as their housekeeper. Though her husband is optimistic about her recovery, the narrator has an active imagination and likes to write. He discourages her interests. She often mentions her baby though there is a nurse who takes care of the baby and the narrator is too nervous to provide care.

The narrator and her husband move into a large room that has ugly yellow wall paper that the narrator criticizes. She asks her husband if they can change rooms and move downstairs, and he rejects her plea. The more she stays in the room, the more she is obsessed with the hideous wallpaper. One day, she feels even worse and is more exhausted. She struggles to do daily activities and her mental state has collapsed. John encourages her to take rest, but the narrator keeps on writing which she hides from him. Between July 4th and their departure, the narrator is seemingly driven mad by the yellow wallpaper. She sleeps during all days and stares at the wall paper at night, believing that it comes alive and the patterns change and move. Then she begins to hallucinate that there is a woman in the wall paper who alters the patterns and is watching her constantly.

A week before their departure, John stays overnight in town and the narrator wants to sleep in the room by herself, so she can stare at the wall paper without break. She locks out Jennie and believes that she can see the woman in the Wall paper. John returns and frantically attempts to be let in, and the narrator refuse him entry. John manages to enter the room, finds the narrator crawling on the floor. She claims that the woman in the wallpaper has exited and John faints, much to her surprise.

The author was a lecturer for social reform and her beliefs and philosophy play an important role in the creation of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. She wrote "The Yellow Paper" in 1890.

"Feminist, Female and Feminine "

Toril Moi

Toril Moi's essay 'Feminist, Female and Feminine' refers to the three categories of 19th century women's literary outputs identified in Elaine Showalter's "A Literature of their own". Moi redefines the terms and then employs them as the basis of critique of Showalter's own theoretical position, she argues that the term 'feminist' is a political term. Female is a biological term and 'feminine' is a cultural attribute to the concept of female. This essay investigates the belief that female experience is the basis of feminism. It implies that politics is a direct effect of biology. The word 'feminine' specifies a cultural idea rather than biological difference. It opposes feminine to masculine in an absolute binary opposition. It ultimately reaffirms an essentialist and patriarchal distinction.

Feminist is a political label indicating support for New women's movement. They wage a war against patriarchy and sexism. Toril Moi does not want to unify these differences, but she insists that recognizable feminist criticism must be relevant to the study of the social institution. According to Kate Millet, the essence of politics is power. Patriarchy and male dominance constitute the ideology of our culture. It provides the most fundamental concept of power.

It is true that many women have been victims for many centuries as particularly motivated critics, feminists will try to make the political text and implications of their implicit work explicit. If feminist criticism is characterized by its political commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it follows that the very fact of being female does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach. Not all books written by women on women are feminist ones. Rosalind Coward in her essay "Are Women's novels feminist novels?" deals with the confusion of 'feminist' with 'female' writing Coward argues that the Mills and Boon romantic novels are written about for women fundamental sexism of male writers. It is assumed that the very fact of describing experience typical of women in a feminist act since patriarchy has attempted to silence the voice and experience of women, is an important anti-patriarchal strategy. The women's experience as expressed by Mills and Boon and heterosexual love and motherhood exposed by Anita Bryant is very different. The mistaken belief in experience as the essence of feminist politics stems from the early stress on consciousness raising is the main political base of

the new women's movement Coward argues: " For the most part, consciousness-raising no longer forms the heart of feminism, small groups which do still have a central place in feminist politics are now often either campaigning groups or study groups".

“DANCE OF THE HAPPY SHADES”

ALICE MUNRO

“Dance of the Happy Shades” is a collection of 15 short stories. It describes the lives of many varied women. However they are linked by a common aspect that is strength. At the core of each heart and mind is a singular determination to endure to survive and to forevail.

Munro’s stories explore human experiences through sex, love, and family, social standing and aging. In “Boys and Girls”, the ado scent narrator considers herself to be a tomboy who enjoys working outdoors, normally reserved for males. However, due to the norms of the society, she is not accepted as equal by her male counterparts, as evidenced by her brother and father rejecting her by saying “She’s only a girl”.

Social position and physical awakening are discussed in ‘Sunday Afternoon’. Alva, a 17 years old boy is intimidated by her wealthy boss Mrs. Gannett. She expects Alva to know her place as an employee and not as an equal. After Mrs. Gannett’s cousin kisses Alva in the kitchen during a Sunday afternoon gathering, Alva gains validation of her blossoming womanhood and her social equality.

In “Dancing of the Happy Shades”, the story is narrated by a teenage girl whose piano teacher Miss. Marsalles, is hosting a piano recital performed by her students. It is simply tolerated by their parents. However, their teacher is truly proud of their music. She respects children and is a bit child like herself. After a handicapped child from the Greehill school performs dance on the stage, the parents are uncomfortably silent the dance is called ‘Dance of the Happy Shades’. The parents agree that the student is talented but that the talent is wasted due to her handicap. Miss. Marsalles disagrees, displaying her integrity by believing that her student is capable and gifted, inspite of the generalized opinions of society.

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

LORRAINE HANSBURY

Lorraine Hansbury's play 'A Raisin in the Sun' examines the impact of racial prejudice on the fulfillment of an African-American family's dreams. The play revolves around younger, a working class family that lives in Chicago's south side during the mid 20th century. Before the play starts, the head of the younger family dies. He is Big Walter. He leaves 10,000 pounds for the family to inherit as insurance payment. The family waits eagerly for the arrival of insurance cheque. The family's long deferred dream is going to be a reality. However, the members of the Younger family have conflicting ideas, dreams – regarding the best use of the money which causes tension.

Mama, the widow of late Big Walter expresses uncertainty regarding the best use for the money. Mama tells her daughter – in – law Ruth, that she and her late husband shared the dream of owning a house, but that poverty and racism prevented them from realizing the dream during Big Walter's life time. Mama's daughter Beneatha wants to attend medical school and become a doctor. It is a big challenge for an Afro-American woman at that time. Her older brother Walter Lee belittles his sister's dream. She suggests that she can be married off, instead of going for a higher education. But he wants the insurance payment as an investment in a liquor store and this proposal is rejected by Ruth and Mama. Ruth is worried about her troubled marriage and the family's cramped living situation. She shares Mama's proposal of buying a house. Although she is ready to support her husband's dream. She tells Mama, "He needs this chance". Walter as a white man's driver finds his job demeaning. So he wants to have a better future by opening a liquor store by using the insurance payment.

At last, the cheque arrives. Ruth is pregnant now and she wonders if she can afford to bring up another child. Knowing that Ruth is going for abortion, Mama requests Walter to keep the baby. Walter does not respond. As Mama watches her family "falling apart", she makes a strong decision to place a down payment on a house in the white neighborhood of Clybourne Park. Through this, she expects the family members to bring together. Ironically, this action

pushes Walter into deep despair as he finds his dream disappears. On the other hand, the new house brings joy and hope for Ruth, as Ruth envisages a better tomorrow for her unborn baby.

Several weeks later, Walter continues to grow more despondent and evades work three days in a row. Mama realizes that, "I been doing to you what the rest of the world been doing to you". She decides to transfer control of the family and household into Walter's hands, including the insurance payment. She makes a request to allot a portion of the amount for Beneatha's schooling. Walter is happy about her decision.

The family is happy to leave when Karl Lindner arrives and informs them of Clybourne Park's offer to buy their new house as a way to dissuade the family from moving to the neighborhoods. The family refuses the offer. At that time, Bobo, Walter's friend breaks the sad news that Willy Harris has disappeared with the liquor store investment. Walter has invested the entire amount on the liquor store. The loss leaves the family on the brink of financial loss.

An hour late, a Nigerian student Joseph Asagal visits Beneatha and finds her in desperation. Asagal asks her to marry him and come home to Africa with him. Since it is a sudden proposal, she says that she needs to consider it. Soon after, Walter informs the family that he will accept Lindner's offer which disappoints them greatly. However, as Walter and his son Travis, face Lindner, Walter reclaims his identity and refuses Lindner's offer. They are excited, but they are aware of the dangers that await them. Soon they walk out of the apartment and head toward their new home.

RUINED

LYNN NOTTAGE

Lynn Nottage's two act play discusses about a small group of women struggling to find hope in the war-torn Democratic of the Cengo.

The play is set in the Democratic Republic of Cengo. Mama Nadil is the owner of a bar in the war-torn country. Mama speaks to a salesman name Christian who visits the bar periodically. When she tries to serve him beer, he tells her that he has not had a drink for the past four years. Christian asks Mama to look into his truck. It becomes clear that the bar is also a brothel house. There are three women in the back. Mama says that she does not need three girls.

But Christian offers her a good price if she takes the whole group. Mama prefers Sophie, a beautiful girl.

Christian offers her two girls for the price of me, but Mama refuse as she does not want to feed two more mouths. Seeing his plan full apart, Christian discloses the fact that Salima was kidnapped from her small village, and the soldiers had used her as a concubine. Salima was married to a farmer, but she cannot go home either. He comments that Sophie is ruined. Christian narrates the back stories of these girls. Christian says that the “military men did ungodly things to the child, took her with.... a bayonet and then left her for dead”. After some Pickering, Christian reveals that he is trying to find a home for the girl as she is his niece. Hearing this, Mama takes pity on her and takes her in and teaches her to sing, clean and cook.

The civil war rages on, and various soldiers drift in and out of the bar. But Mama keeps her bar peaceful. One of the prostitutes namely Josephine, regularly entertains a Labanese merchant called Mr. Harari. Because of his profession, Mama Nadi produces a bag of diamonds and asks Harari to appraise them. He says that one of the gems is valuable.

Later Sophie and Salima plan to escape from the bar with the money stolen from Mama. At that time, a white preacher was kidnapped. Mama maintains a neutral position between government soldiers and rebel soldiers in her bar.

Mama is warned by Osembenga, a commander of the government forces about a rebel soldier Kitembe. A lot of people sell precious things like diamonds to Mama in the bar. Mama says that her insurance money keeps her alive with honour. When Sophie is questioned about her theft of money from Mama, she says that she needs the money for an operation on her damaged genitals.

The white preacher is caught red handed in aiding the rebel soldiers. Then he is cut into pieces beyond recognition. Christian is disgusted at these brutalities and begins to drink again. Around that time, two soldiers namely Fortune and Simon enter the bar and order food. Fortune asks if there is any woman namely Salima in the bar. He exposes himself as Salima’s husband. Though Mama convinces Fortune to leave, he stays outside. He is sure that Salima is there.

The play describes the brutality of war, the disintegration of family, and the kidnapping of innocent women during the war.

PARADISE

TONI MORRISON

The novel "Paradise" was written by Toni Morrison, an Afro-American novelist. This novel is structured into nine sections. The first section is named "Ruby" named after the town on which in the novel is set. The remaining sections are named after women implicated variously in the life of the town and the convent. The convent women are Mavis, Grace, Seneca, Divine and Consolata. The Ruby women are: Patricia and Lone. Morrison narrates the parallel histories of the town of Ruby and the convent seventeen miles south of it. She implies how the men of Ruby are determined to destroy the Convent women.

In the first section of the novel, nine men are going in for a kill in 1976. They are the popular men of Ruby, a black town in Oklahoma. It is a consciously isolated town, but it is a peaceful town with the population of 360. In this group, there are twin brothers Steward and Deacon. There is an explanation for the foundation of Ruby. There is the history of the failed town of Haven that preceded it. The reasons for Ruby's hierarchies and stringent exclusion of outsiders are given. They reach the point where the town leaders decide that they must eliminate the nearby convent. The convent is not a convent in true spirit, but a former embezzler's mansion, now inhabited by a group of women with troubled pasts.

Before Ruby, there was Haven. It was founded in Oklahoma in 1890. Haven was founded by a group of nine complete families. They are: the Blackhorses, Beauchamps, Catos, wo du Pres families, Fleetwoods, Floods, Morgans and Pooles. Apart from these people, there is a fragment of others. The founding fathers, led by Zechariah Morgan, are motivated by the exclusion from public domain and job opportunities. Thus they construct a new community. They are inferiorised due to their dark skin. When they arrive in the place where they decide to situate their new town, they built a large, sturdy oven of brick and iron. Previously, they had been living

in wagons and sod shelters. The over nourishes the blacks and serves as a symbol of everything they have achieved.

Though, Haven enjoyed the happy days in the beginning, it faded away during the World War II. Returning from service, the twins, Deacon and Morgan perceived that not there is not much change in the outside world since Haven was founded. There is still rampant colourism and racial discrimination. Preferring to renew their mission initiated by their forefathers of self sufficient nature. In 1949, they led a group of fifteen families out of Haven to found a new all black towns. The men take the Oven with them when they left Haven at the expense of other supplies. They rebuilt it when they arrived. Although, in the new town, it serves symbolically rather than practical purpose. Though it is called "New Haven" it is eventually named Ruby, after the young sister of the Morgan twins. She died when she is not treated medically because of her race. The name of the town belies the way in which it is founded out of the indignation of exclusion. The black men are unable to protect their black women in the outside world. The inhabitants feel relieved that there is no jail is cemetery in Ruby. Besides, except Ruby Smith and Delia Best, nobody has died on the sail.

Even though there are fifteen families in Ruby, there are hierarchies among them. The Morgan twins assumed much power because their father has founded the bank. Hence they amassed most money and properly. Ruby is reprieved from the race based discrimination of the world. But it has a strong patriarchal structure. The codes of the town have had adverse effects on its residents. Menus' alcoholism, seems to stem from the shame and despair he has felt ever since he abandoned the light-skinned woman, the wanted to marry. The men of Ruby refused to seek outside medical help in their sickness. Hence there is great anxiety about Ruby's future. The town has seen open signs of division. Steward and Morgan have not been able to have issues and Deek and Soane's sons die at war. Hence there is no Morgan heir to Ruby's leadership. K.D. Smith, an insolent young man who angers his uncles by spending time with a convent woman Gigi. Richard Misner, a young upstart is involved in civil rights struggle, modeling himself after Martin Luther King. He believes that Ruby needs to be more open to the changes afoot in the outside world. The old generation believes that he is engendering radicalism and rebellious behavior among the towns' youth.

The Oven has been taken over as a hangout spot for local youth. The old people think that the young generations do not understand Ruby's history. According to the version of the elders, the oven has an inscription like 'Beware', while the young reinterprets it as 'Be the Furrow of his Brow'. Finally, the town is scandalized when the convent women make a rowdy appearance at K.D and Arnette's wedding. Following their perception that the convent is corrupting the town with its amorality and purported witchcraft. Then they resolve to destroy the Convent.

The convent is an elaborate mansion built by an embezzler. Its architecture reflects its creator's hedonism and his Paran. It is windowless in one end, and is shaped like the cartridge of a gun. The mansion falls into the hands of some catholic nuns. The Convent serves principally Indian girls, where they are educated to forget their culture. Mary Magna, the mother Superior administrates the school. She is served by Consolata, a woman she kidnapped as an orphan child.

When the foundation that funds the school falls short of money, the nuns moved into other posts. However Mary Magna, Sister Roberta, and Consolata remain behind in order to maintain the convent and avoid incurring debt. The women begin a burgeoning business from things they produce on their property. In addition to their renowned extra hot peppers, they also sell barbecue sauce, pies and eggs. Eventually Sister Roberta moves into a nursing home and Consolata dedicates herself to the care of Mary Magna.

It is around this time that women begin to arrive at the Convent. They arrive by accident, in flight from wrecked lives. They suffered due to abusive husbands, dead babies, parental betrayal, abandonment by lovers and violent pasts. Slowly they begin to settle down in the town. They seem to find an escape from their troubled situations. Though there are clashes among the women, they reconcile. Even women of Ruby would come to the convent in times of need. Soane seeks the help of Connie who treats her medically. The women of the Convent care for Menus who recover from alcoholism.

The women of the Convent provide a haven for all those who come to its doorstep. However, the convent is perceived as a corrupting influence in Ruby. Instead of considering the roots of the conflicts in Ruby, the community leaders decide that the Convent must be destroyed. The men of Ruby are frightened and disgusted by the idea of women who do not need man. They have selfish motivations behind their moral crusade. The men in Ruby want to plot against the

women in Convent. Lone Dupres over hears the men and rushes to others to stop this damage. A gimp of nine men carrying gun, enter into the Convent and shoot the women on sight. Some of the women fight back while others escape. Now that they have a white woman and so they are afraid that white law would punish them severely. When Roger Best arrives to bury the dead bodies, they learn that many women survived the attack.

The ramifications of the attack are evident in town. Menus renew his alcoholism and Deek is unusually troubled. The nun remains divided. The people feel that they have broken the deal with God. The novel closes with a passage about the Convent women. Gigi, Pallas, Mavis and Seneca appear suddenly from their past. Each of them expresses regret and sadness. Gigi's father reconciles with her. Pallas' mother is unable to speak to flag her attention. Sally spots her mother in a dinner and apologise to each other Jean is revealed to be the mother of Seneca. Connie rests her head in the lap of an older woman from her past pie who sings to her as they face the ocean in a place called paradise.

This novel discusses the solidarity among female characters and their female bonding which is a source of their strength.

Women and literary History

DALE SPENDER

"Women and Literary History" written by Dale Spender analyses the role of women writers in various ages. She was born in 22nd September 1943. she is an Australian feminist ,scholar, teacher and writer. She has studied in 1974 in James Cook University.

She observes that there are no women writers in English Literature. The critic observes that Defoe, Richardson ,Henry Fielding are genius writers. Virginia Woolf searched the works of women workers in the library. Jane Austen's works are intelligent . The writer has doubts about literary history. Men writers consider the women writers as bad writers. He criticizes the male writers who condemn the whole women writers as bad writers. Men writers are acclaimed as great as their works are focused on women protagonists. She observes that Eliza Haywood is praised as the great writer.

The writer says that men writers steal the foot of women's creativity. For example, D.H. Lawrence is the one who is accused of stealing the women's writers. Men do not accept their truth as they feel that they might lose their fame and name. Often men claim that their creative works are the best and denounce the works of women writers. But this feminist critic Dale proves with evidence the creative potentials of women writers. She traces out the development of women literary outputs and brings out the merits and standard quality of women writers. She gives credit to the works of Victorian women writers and that period is remarkable for the development of women novelists. The writer finds out that there is no record of women writings in the literary as men dominated the literary world. Hence men's ideas are projected as the perfect writings. In the 18th century, people recognized the literary merits of the women writers. Previously women writer like George Eliot had to assume a male name so that their novels could be recognized by the male audience. Then Dale Spender points out logically the emergence of modern women workers and their power of expression. Gender discrimination was largely prevalent in the male dominated society. As a result, women's voices were suppressed by patriarchal society.

Gift from Goddess Lakshmi -by ManobiBandhopadhyay

“Gift from Goddess Lakshmi” is a biography of Manobi, an Indian transgender. It is narrated to journalist Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey. The author’s emotional appeal to the readers sets the tone for the book. Manobi was born on September 23, 1964 as Somnath Bandyopadhyay. His childhood was filled with premonitions of her long struggle to win his identity. His well-wishers imply the family’s increasing prosperity. He was called ‘Boy Lakshmi’. She was raped by her cousin in class V and assaulted by boys at school. Later on she moved on to Jadavpur University to study Bengali Literature. His worldview enlarged under the tutelage of Shankar Ghosh and Pabitra Sankar. In order to extricate herself from physical and mental agony, she engaged herself in creative activities like, theatre, dance and writing. This text reflects upon her personal relationships and her family’s denial of her trans identity. Her earnest longing for deeper link makes the reader marvel at her hopeful character.

During her period in Jadavpur University, she had a contact with another transgender called Jagadish (Juhi), a public performer. Despite their intimacy, there are differences between them. Juhi was afflicted with AIDS, due to his sexual lifestyle. For the first time, she started Abomanob, a magazine for transgender. This magazine focused upon various issues like sex, conventions and stigma. This created a space for transgendered people in the public sphere. So far his community clapped and begged at public signals. Manobi wanted a sex-change operation and that she did not want to be identified as homosexual. In 1979, she began hormone treatment. She became a principal of the Krishnagar Women’s College. In spite of the sneers, giggles, taunts or lack of empathy discouraged her from making her place in the world. Thus she proves herself as capable.

This poet is never tired of making the first move and offering warmth and respect to the people . She is very respectful and exhibits her talents. India's first transgender principal Manobi's tale proclaims that merit and hardwork are the only means to abolish the inequality of the sexes. Now Manobi is well accepted in the society as she has empowered herself through education. She believes that education alone can bring about a marked difference between the trajectory of her own and that of other transgenders.

THE NIGHT – Short Story by TemsulaAo

Innala is the protagonist of the short story "The Night". She is the mother of her four year old daughter and an unborn child. In the village Innala is exploited for the first time by her suitor. This shows the exploitation of women by patriarchal society. Innala's suitor by using words of tender love has illicit relationship with Innala and makes her pregnant out of wedlock. He forgets his promises of marriage to her and then he goes away to join in Naga Underground Army where he finds a wife for himself in the female recruits. Innala being a woman has to bear all the shame in society as her suitor refused to claim that he is the father of the child.

Innala for the second time becomes pregnant because of Repalembe. He seduces her while Innala is sick but she doesn't raise her voice because the touch of Repalembe seemed to ignite the hidden fires in both and inspite of her awareness that what is happening is not only wrong but also extremely dangerous for her, she gave into primeval urging.

A custom is going to be conducted in the village. In this custom Innala's fate would be decided. At first ,Innala is in turmoil whether Repalembe will accept his

responsibility. But to everyone's surprise Repalemba accepted the unborn child belongs to him and he is the father of the foetus of Innala . The night is filled with tribulations that are coming to break the family's existence but the night ended certainly to be peaceful one as the unborn child has heard the father say that "You are mine".

Inspite of the uncomfortable situation Innala is determined to take care of her two children independently, Innala's voice as a woman is suppressed by the society .The voice of the single mother is always unheard in this patriarchal society. Being a female and the mother of two children Innala undergoes so much trouble. She did not disown her responsibility of being a mother. She decided for herself that she will continue her education and then she will work hard to take care of her children. Innala is a strong mother figure.

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