



## A Quasi-Queeristan: An Analysis of Suniti Namjoshi's *The Mothers of Maya Diip* as a Lesbian Heterotopia

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**Abstract:** "There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses," postulates Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault indicates that power in its several manifestations creates varieties of discourses each serving to silence those on whom power exerts itself. Therefore, it can be deduced that there are numerous circles within a circle each having a centre and a margin of its own. In such structures of disaggregated margins, or margins of margins, there are surrogate centres of power that create a topology of subjects split into concentric circles; the closer the subjects are to the centres of power, the more included they are within its structure. Though centre and margin are expected to set up a binary, margin can also be made of binaries. Victims are victims all over the map, but victims can further victimise their kindred. Though stereotyped as 'other than woman' and sterile and marginalised by the collective forces of patriarchy and heterosexuality, lesbians never retreat from solemnising power games among themselves. Therefore, lesbian utopia is nothing but maya, an amusing illusion, a consolatory dream. In reality, it is nothing but a macabre heterotopia that mirrors existent patriarchal power politics and binary construction uncritically. Maintaining Queer Theory, Judith Halberstam's theory of "female masculinity," Foucault's postulation of power and heterotopia, this paper attempts to expose the superficially constructed status of lesbianist 'we' and contests the notion that all lesbians share identical experiences, ranks, interests, and practices through a reading of Suniti Namjoshi's unacclaimed and unexamined novel *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989). This paper seeks to unearth the paradigms used to construct the category of lesbian mother, who fits in it, who is waiting for her turn and who is totally ousted from this genus, who is privileged and who is underprivileged, exploited as well as their causes. In the process of answering these riddles, this paper will narrow down its focus on Namjoshi's politics of including beasts (who are endowed with human-like speaking ability) in her lesbian cosmos along with her politics of genre-blending in the above-mentioned novel.

**Keywords:** Lesbian, heterotopia, utopia, dystopia, class, power, centre, margin, overlapping circles, silence, exclusion.

Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these. In this sense, habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, without any deliberate pursuit of coherence...without any concentration. (Bourdieu 170)



Michel Foucault theorises power as an all-pervasive, supreme entity beyond agency or structure, while Pierre Bourdieu postulates power as an apparatus produced by the culture which legitimises itself through a recurrent series of interactions between agency and structure. Therefore, it can be deduced from this proposition that if the structure is supposed to be the universe surrounding us as it is, perhaps growth, mutation, and refinement will be ushered through making the most of our agency. Similar emerging structural changes, in succession, will shape our agency, and in a slow but steady manner, this cyclical framework will pave the way for an unaccustomed earth: a Queeristan, a novel, an all-inclusive, intersectional, redemptive haven for the Queers, of the Queers and by the Queers which will be an elysian meadow where non-normative is nothing but normal-alternative. Though envisioned facilely, this type of un-lived brave new world hurls a series of questions to the Queer community. First, will this utopian dreamland ever become materialised? Or, will it reduce itself to a nightmarish dystopia where existent normative power structures of inequity, injustice, and discriminatory practices aggravate day by day? Second, will this refuge be robust enough to validate itself as the ultimate queerscape sheltering the sexual refugees? Third, will there be simulations of heteropatriarchal power structures here? Fourth, will it emerge victorious in dismantling the anatomy of predilection? Above all, will it outstretch its cards on the table as a nauseating but homophilic heterotopia that cautiously cocoons all power equations among its several ghettos? Though stereotyped as 'other than woman,' unwomanly, mannish, sterile, and marginalised by the collective forces of patriarchy and heterosexuality, lesbians never retreat from solemnising power games among themselves. Therefore, lesbian utopia is nothing but *maya*, an amusing illusion, a consolatory dream. In reality, it is nothing but a macabre heterotopia that mirrors existent patriarchal power politics, games of hierarchy, and binary construction uncritically. Maintaining lesbian nation-building theory of Jill Johnston and Becki L. Ross, Edward Soja's theory of 'Thirdspace,' Foucault's postulations of power and heterotopia, and Baudrillard's theories regarding Postmodernism, this paper attempts to expose the superficially constructed status of lesbianist 'we' and contests the notion that all lesbians share identical experiences, ranks, interests, and practices through a reading of Suniti Namjoshi's unacclaimed and misinterpreted novel, *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989). Such theoretical intersectionality is utterly required in order to delve deeper and dissect the ways in which Namjoshi within the framework of class, gender, race and ethnicity, embraces the discussion of sexuality and sexual identity in Indian society. This paper seeks to unearth the paradigms used to construct the category of lesbian mother, who fits in it, who is waiting for her turn and who is totally ousted from this genus, who is privileged and who is underprivileged or exploited as well as their causes. In the process of answering these riddles, this paper will narrow down its focus on Namjoshi's politics of including beasts (who are endowed with human-like speaking ability) in her lesbian cosmos along with her politics of genre-blending in the above-mentioned novel.

"Minority or marginalised groups have privileged perspectives on the rethinking of national identities, helping to make them more inclusive and realistic" (Huddart 68). In sharp contradiction to Bhabha's Eurocentric theorization of nation in *Nation and Narration*, built on predominantly discursive, rigidly elitist, and exclusively majoritarian national narratives, Huddart pins his hopes on the formation of an imagined queer nation, which calls for a reconsideration of the authoritarian heteronormative national narratives as well as an out-thinking of the normative parameters of gender and sexuality. "The purpose of queer space is ultimately sex" (Betsky 89). The emergence of queer



spaces as prerequisites for the queers have sprung up from their adverse experiences in a straight culture. To the queers, heterosexual society's ever-widening normative spaces serve as a reminder of reterritorialization, subjectification and difference. In order to escape from the suffocating London suburbs Haroon tells Karim: "[w]e must find an entirely new way of being alive" (Kureishi 147). In accordance with Haroon and Karim, all queers cry out for a room of their own in order not to be choked by heteropatriarchy but to keep breathing. Very often compelled to camouflage their real sexual nature, queer people turn inward, juxtapose the norms of interior space and create a milieu of protection where they can celebrate their selfhood without fright and angst. Queer has the potentiality to design a thoroughly new architecture of desire, which is storied and labyrinthine; an architecture that trespasses man-woman cliched passion and moves past gender lines. No doubt, all theories related to queer nation and nationalism are reflections of this penchant for being alive queerly. The resultant heterodox and unorthodox queer nation, in order to validate itself as all-embracing in scope and multidisciplinary in outreach, attempts to remap the state-assigned geopolitical boundaries. "Nations around the world [may] still hold the [queer sub-]culture in disdain" but as soon as this new nation is formed, the queers "will be gladdened to see [themselves] in sizable numbers leav[ing] their [real country] borders permanently" (Graham 43). In his desperate search for an exclusively gay nation, Garrett Graham emphatically and earnestly pleads for the exigency of an independent and uninhibited homeland or set-apart nation solely for all male homosexuals and, by extension all gender non-conformists and Sapphists of the atlas in his *The Gay State: The Quest for an Independent Gay Nation-state and What it Means to Conservatives and the World's Religions* (2010), his conceptualization of a gay nation smacks of xenophobia and queer-slaughter rather than equality, democracy, and fraternity. He premeditatively brings into play the capital G for the label 'gay,' which other than serving the purpose of self-identification, serves to establish the Gays as a distinguished community of people on a par with the British, Americans, or other upright heteronormative ethnic majorities. If truth be told, through his hypothesis Graham remonstrates against the time-worn centre/margin binary between normal and abnormal, heterosexual and homosexual, normative and non-normative. No longer does he want to linger on "the Gay question" as "a national question" (38) because the gays throughout the globe feel most unhomey in their homelands. They are bluntly ostracised as outsiders by the centrifugal force of heterosexuality. As all endemic notions of nation and nationality are overtly or covertly predicated on the binary of centre/margin, Graham's borderland claims to have no boundaries and no centres. In addition to the articulation of a potent gay national consciousness, Graham also draws the roadmap leading to the professed queer constitution, national language as well as the national banner as the prerequisites for the formation and expansion of a gay nation. However, it should never be overlooked that such sort of an out-and-out gay/lesbian/queer nation "is posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated" (Chatterjee 74). Thus, the very superstructure of a gay/lesbian/queer nation is based on the fundamental stipulation of queerness as a marker of difference. Unlike religion, race, or ethnicity, which sets up the bedrock of other nationalities, queerness applies here as the quintessential principle of nationality. Queer nation, queer national, and queer nationality will be the single shibboleth in this dream design. "Lesbian activities were always there, but lesbian identity was missing. There was only "criminal or non-identity" (Johnston 45). Unlike the visible gays. Lesbians as corporeal creatures have always been invisibilized by society. Therefore, critters whose existence is in contention, simply there can be no question of a room of their



own. However, reality speaks for itself. Since the time immemorial lesbians have been there in every society voicing their grievances. If Graham puts forward his theorization of a gay nation in such words, a lesbian feminist like Jill Johnston goes one step further to challenge the heteronormative archetype of nation by advocating the utter need for a separate lesbian nation in her ground-breaking work *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (1973) through such words: “the best thing to do was to retreat and get your own shit together to build a nation from the grass roots out of your own community of women” (22). As an iconoclast, she deconstructs the factual and geographical ambits of nation-states which by all odds preserve, protect and promote heteropatriarchy and defamiliarizes the familiar definitions of nation and nationality by incorporating lesbian subjects and lesbian nationalism with it. This new definition celebrates the collective identity of women, appreciates the revisionist positioning of women in personal and public provinces simultaneously, and negates the age-old stigma associated with lesbianism by asserting it as a political identity. In a quite similar vein, Becki L. Ross in her book *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (1995) champions peaceful, bloodless, and non-militant lesbian nationalism over the racial or ethnic nationalisms that time and again bring about “brutal ‘ethnic cleansing’ within and across state borders” (15). Ross further documents those several mechanisms through which lesbian nationalism aims to turn the heteropatriarchal and socio-cultural state formations upside down. Apart from this, rejection of male-dominated customs and ways of living, and incorporation of changes in dressing style and looks that boldly unsubscribe from the heteropatriarchal gaze are subsumed consciously under this broad spectrum. In consonance with this theorem of a desired lesbian nation, it can be hoped that the acknowledgment of lesbian as a political identity is not far away. It is also evident from this discussion that theorists had theorised their penchant for a separate gay/lesbian/queer nation following their individual credos. Hence, whereas Graham presses for an autonomous territorial statehood disconnected from the normative cartograph for the gays, Johnston and Ross call for a particular space for the lesbians within the peripheries of their native lands, an appeal that wipes off the question of an isolated nation crammed with isolated nationals.

Although criticized as “frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent” (Soja 121), “sketchy, open-ended and ambiguous” (Johnson 85), Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is originally derived from the study of anatomy, where the term refers to “parts of body that are either out of place, missing, extra, or, like tumours, alien” (Hetherington 72). The credit for coining the term does not go to Foucault. However, Foucault’s employment of the term heterotopia as a spatial metaphor derives from the ancient Greek pronoun *heteros* (meaning ‘other’) and the noun *topos* (meaning ‘place’). Deployed as an analogy to utopia and dystopia, heterotopia literally signifies a place of a different order, an actual or real place perceived as being otherwise existing outside the normative socio-political space. According to Foucault, heterotopias ‘mirror,’ ‘reflect,’ ‘represent,’ ‘designate,’ ‘speak about’ all other sites but simultaneously ‘suspend,’ ‘neutralize,’ ‘invert,’ ‘contest,’ and ‘contradict’ those sites. The three most crucial segments in his works where Foucault explicitly and profusely calls the readers’ attention to heterotopia are, firstly, the introduction to *The Order of Things* (1966) where he discusses Borges’ Chinese Encyclopaedia, secondly, a radio broadcast as part of a series on the theme of utopia and literature (1966), and thirdly, a lecture given to a group of architects in 1967 which was published posthumously as “Of Other Spaces” (1984). In all these three cases the matter in question introduced and resolved is that of ordering. According to Foucault’s propositions,





places of 'Otherness' are spaces, whose existence sets up "unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate 'objects' which challenges the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered" (Hetherington 42). In a nutshell, heterotopias connote those spaces in which an alternative social ordering is performed, "one that stands in contrast to the taken-for-granted mundane idea of social order that exists within society" (Hetherington 39). The shocking impact heterotopia produces on the mind of the reader results from their unfamiliar and grim mode of ordering. What defines heterotopia as a place of unusual order is not a physical location but the confluence of discourses, institutions, and procedures deployed in a place. Heterotopias can hardly be spotted straight away within a system of representation but neither do they exist *sui generis*. Heterotopia can barely be found in the order of things but can obviously be located in the ordering of things. They can be simultaneously peripheral and central. They can also be correlated with both transgressive marginalities as well as carceral sites of social control. Heterotopias are sites of all things which are marginal, disordered, dislocated, forsaken, forbidden, rejected, or ambivalent; their worth stems not from a specific single centre, but from their interrelation to a set of remaining spaces, which encompasses the extant surroundings or terrains stretching at a huge distance from a marked site.

"There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses," propounds Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1: 27) implying that power in its many manifestations creates varieties of discourses each serving to silence those on whom power exerts itself. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault adds further that power operates at the most micro levels of social relations. Taking cue from this implication it can also be inferred that there are many circles even within a circle, each having a centre and a margin of its own. There are ghettos within ghettos, with multiple layers of power within each, so that the marginalised often becomes the marginalised to those who remain in a lower stratum of power. In such structures of disaggregated margins, or margins of margins, there are surrogate centres of power that create a topology of subjects split into concentric circles; the closer the subjects are to the centres of power, the more included they are within its structure. Corresponding to Rubin's "charmed circle", in this theorization of queer subjects as they are formed in relation to power, some are positioned at the hearts of the centres, some are scattered over the peripheries and some are altogether outsided. Though centre and margin are expected to set up a binary, margin can also be made of binaries. It is utterly shocking that as a marginalised subculture lesbians are ostracised by the mainstream hetero-norm society but even if they are given an opportunity to build a coterie of their own, they never retreat from simulating patriarchal power structures in their enclave.

Betrothed to an egalitarian feminist revisionist zeal, pruned and polished in the West, aided by non-normative parodic idiom, an eroticized grammar, and subversive fabulosity, Suniti Namjoshi, a diasporic lesbian author of Indian origin, serves as an iconoclast shattering all myths of patriarchy and heterosexuality. Though an unfamiliar name in the Indian queerphobic, straight academia, she has attained an unblemished reputation for her anthologies like *Because of India* (1989), *Cyclone in Pakistan* (1971), *The Jackass and the Lady* (1980), *The Authentic Lie* (1971), and fictional works like *Feminist Fables* (1993), *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* (1984), *The Conversation of Cow* (1985), etc. As an author, Namjoshi encapsulates a particular identity that Guzman (1997) terms 'sexile' – a queer global subject deliberately exiled from her native country, and acerbically liberated into free transnational mobility. Though she left India in 1968 for good, her works still pour out Indianness.



She consciously sets her novel in a fictitious Indian island called Maya: “[o]f all the princely states of India there was one in which a matriarchy bloomed unashamedly...off the west coast of India...oh. You mean Maya Diip, don’t you?” (*Maya Diip* 5-6). Therefore, it is crystal clear that whereas India is a real space, the island of Maya is an imaginary space, “an-Other” (Soja 57). Such balanced interweaving of the real (‘Firstspace’) and the imagined (‘Secondspace’) produces what Soja terms the ‘Thirdspace,’ a transcendental space that constantly expands to include “an-Other,” and thus enables contestation and re-negotiation of boundaries and cultural identities. Namjoshi conceptualises Maya as a space where “everything comes together...subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, the conscious and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja 57). In *Maya Diip*, the boundaries of real and imagined are blurred; it becomes a real space where action is enacted through the expectations of the imaginary. Namjoshi invents a grave new Queeristan through *Maya Diip*. Fictioners who “invent worlds, purpose to make them in some degree reflective of the familiar world from which they are estranging their readers, may...present readers with versions of their own world” (Bailey 109). Reading through this looking glass, readers can easily deduce that for all its fantastic spatial envisioning Namjoshi does not far depart from consensus reality, the utmost point Namjoshi furthers her artistry is towards the emancipation of the lesbians. Namjoshi’s sole concern here is to condemn those societal norms and institutions she considers predominantly erroneous. With the numb hope of discovering such an ‘eutopia,’ Namjoshi juxtaposes a prejudiced present and a miraculously altered distant past with a hopeless future only to prove that all are flawed for lesbian safe cohabitation. Her forlorn innovation or revolution or disjunction, introduced and enlarged with an analogous austerity which “determines the whole narrative logic” (Suvin 70), is an evident sign provided to the reader to concede that the narrative basically attempts to envisage an alternate world, and that the conflicting fictional spaces of the text have been turned upside down only to be reorganised according to a radically different, thoroughly post-colonial or cross-cultural, set of ethics and credence. This study proposes that through positing the novel in an unfamiliar post-colonial context, Namjoshi has trodden a postmodern avenue which is devoid of a fixed set of rules; it follows its self-made rules and flouts them whenever necessary. In this way, the novel chooses the burning social debates and transcreates them into fictional forms, questioning the ideological biases of oriental historiography as well as more recent efforts to rehabilitate India as a post-colonial Queeristan.

“Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality, there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they make it impossible to name this and that,” postulates Foucault in “Of Other Spaces” (xvii). Therefore, utopias or non-places are filled with power and possibility whereas heterotopias juxtapose contrasting or mutually opposing places. While typical utopias or dystopias necessitate an extant body of a well-grounded historical facts framing the distant past, recent present and near future, ambiguous heterotopias foreground the discursivity of these historical facts and deconstruct the methods through which they shape the modalities of social reality. Three common denominators of all conventional utopian and dystopian texts are that they have fictional settings, they never dare to defy the outdated, unified narrative structure and they hypothetically equate human with man –



stereotypes in utter need of revision. Consequently, feminist revisionist zeal engendered a considerable number of fictions envisioning gender non-discriminatory alternative worlds more significant to the particular culture they derive from. Heavily influenced by Adrienne Rich's theory of "lesbian continuum," Suniti Namjoshi chooses to go after Angela Carter's choice of heterotopia in *The Passions of New Eve* (1977) over utopia or dystopia. Among the six crucial principles of heterotopology listed by Foucault, the first principle is that heterotopias arise in all cultures (be it normative or non-normative) but in different forms. Being a lesbian author, Namjoshi adds a distinct lesbian hue to the genre of heterotopia which makes her novel come under the subgenre of heterotopia of deviation. She conceives the island of Maya as a habitus where lesbians are marooned because their sexual orientation confronts the so-called 'normal.' The most essential principle of Foucault's heterotopia is that it has to juxtapose within its womb several heterogeneous spatial elements which are in themselves incompatible – a feature that turns heterotopias into ambiguous, contradictory, and non-totalisable spaces. Namjoshi schematically juxtaposes as many as four contrasting patterns of quasi-human society in this heterotopian 'herland:' firstly, there is an out-and-out lesbian, separatist matriarchy called the empire of Maya, secondly, there is Ashagarh, an all-men utopia headed by a banished matriarch, thirdly, there is a federation of male androids, and lastly, there is an Arcadia namely Paradise full of male gallants who are constantly engaged in courting mothers. Whatever may be the permutation and combination of gender binary systems, ageless patriarchal oppressive structures reappear in a camouflaged or masked form in all these systems. Power and patriarchy are inseparable twins.

[Wo]men...have diseased identities...They fight sabere-toothed tigers when there are no sabre-toothed tigers to fight. They worship power and find the victory of battle heroic. They battle one another...This they perceive as the exercise of power; ...Power is an aphrodisiac. Power is pheromone... The smell of power makes their nostrils twitch. (*Building Babel* 114)

If Namjoshi's *Building Babel* betrays the inner power structures of a lesbian-dominated world in such derogatory terms, her *The Mothers of Maya Diip* stride further to suggest that gay/lesbian family structures are as oppressive as the hetero-patriarchal ones. Namjoshi's lesbian Gulliver Jyanvi gets an invitation from her lover Saraswati and sets forth her voyage to Maya Diip with her friend, The Blue Donkey. "The nation ... is singular and homogenous, or at least it becomes so in order to comply with the requirements of the state," argues Butler. Maya Diip has an epiphanic quality in the sense that with its hierarchical structures and ruthless labour system, it can easily prove Butler's argument as nothing but an oversimplification of the actual nation-state scenario. Maya Diip is portrayed as a misandrist lesbian island governed by an outwardly benevolent matriarch, in the manner of ancient Rajahs/Maharajas of India, called Ranisaheb, a 'she' (not 'he') who must be obeyed. *Maya Diip* introduces the matriarch as "a formidable figure" (*Maya Diip* 18), "an old woman" who "remain[s] unmoved" (*Maya Diip* 17) in every critical situation and "exude[s] her supreme authority" (*Maya Diip* 46) irrespective of the gravity of the situation: Ranisaheb is an absolute monarch" (*Maya Diip* 17). Her anonymity equates her with any unruly patriarch who wields power through aggression and



authority of wealth and status. Women have no value here as individuals; womanhood is equated here with motherhood. Reproduction here is state-controlled. Maternity is the highest single ideal of this cosmos: “[i]t’s the duty of every Mayan to sacrifice herself for the welfare of children” (*Maya Diip* 146). Mayans never come to understand that motherhood is never simply a core of human relationships but a political institution, the patriarchal keystone to dominate, control and oppress women in every sphere of life. This matriarchy operates through an oppressive hierarchical classification of mothers: Grade A mothers (daughters of the Matriarch), Grade B mothers (biological mothers), and Grade C mothers (labourers who accomplish the task of daughter rearing). However, this hierarchy is superficially flexible. While Grade A mothers have proprietary rights over daughters (comparable to authoritative husbands) Grade C mothers are nothing but caretakers of daughters (comparable to housewives engaged in household chores). Only through diligence and perseverance, Grade C mothers aspire to climb up the hierarchy. Jyanvi is stupefied by this covert and biased class hierarchy that privileges some mothers over the rest and starts to question the hypocritical system of mothering and childrearing. Mayans are totally unaware of the deep-rooted patriarchy in their apparently egalitarian matriarchy. Ranisaheb with the help of five guilds monopolises power in reality, though they make this syndicate appear thoroughly democratic. The system of choosing a successor is also manipulated by the Ranisaheb through an oracle: “[i]n theory all the Daughters of Maya look to the Matriarch [Ranisaheb] as an incarnation of the Supreme Mother; but in practice, the bloodline has been unbroken for seven hundred years” (*Maya Diip* 127). The delusion of an alternative and more democratic female line of succession, which outwardly seems to parody the patrilineal system of accession to the throne, smashing all hopes proves loyal to patriarchy. Therefore, like the gradation system of mothers, the system of succession has patriarchal corruption as its core definition. Even ferocity, warmongering, and vehemence, which Mayans believe to have been exterminated from their empire by the planned weeding out of males, linger on as a partially buried secret in the form of atomic weapons hidden cautiously on the island. Apart from such inconsiderate hierarchy, bloodthirsty rapaciousness, manipulation, and hypocrisy, Maya is infested with “unsisterly sisters, heresies, rivalries and jealousies of diverse sorts” (*Maya Diip* 20) which collectively prove it to be no less than a dystopia. Just as patriarchal exclusionist politics homologates women as secondary to men, Mayan mothers do not bestow male children with full human status but consider them “just as necessities” (*Maya Diip* 52). In this all-women utopia, men are always on the margins; they are here the victims of misandry, the alter-ego of misogyny; they are commodified as use and throw goods needed only for the sole purpose of procreation: “men are about as much use as the tom cat, the buck rabbit, the rooster who lays no eggs, the bull who gives no milk. Episodic characters...all of them” (Gyaltzen 11). After their semen is collected and rationed to women who qualify for motherhood, the boys are drowned in the sea and they turn into foam. Mayan mothers hate patriarchy but paradoxically they worship patriarchy’s projection of women as womb, and, most importantly, they are totally unaware of it. As absolute power is said to corrupt absolutely, Ranisaheb is banished from her kingdom along with Jyanvi, The Blue Donkey and Saraswati through a conspiracy hatched by her other two daughters namely Shyamila and Pramila.

After being expelled from Maya, the exiles reach Ashagad, i.e., the city of hope, founded by Asha, the eldest daughter of the Ranisaheb, who was banished from Maya as she raised her voice against the malpractice done to the boys. Ashagad forms a binary opposition to Maya, i.e., Ashagad





is a seeming inversion of Maya. Whereas Maya is an all-women empire, Ashagad is an all-male empire. Ashans have their own myth and legend. This is an all-men dominion led by an empress, Asha, whose ideals are shaped by that of Maya: glorification and celebration of motherhood is again the single most ideal here. Boys, abandoned by Mayans, are sheltered by Ashans. These boys compete with each other for gaining motherhood; they strive to achieve motherhood after passing several tests and trials and attaining adult status. As they cannot be biological mothers, they pray to the Tree of Life under which they find babies. When Valerie pinpoints the patriarchal system lurking deep inside Maya and Asha and the latter tries to imprison the former, Ashans are shocked at this revelation and they ponder over the prospect of having their own babies by enslaving the Mayan mothers. Therefore, Ashagad provides the exiles with nothing but irony.

The world of male androids is explored next. Some male androids descend to Ashagad to rescue Valerie. These western androids are not real men but robotic models built to a specific male stereotype who will be simulated by the real men. Therefore, here there is nothing real. The real is produced by the artificial. There is no longer any distinction between reality and its representation; there is only the simulacrum: "the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard 126). From the ancient world of Rajahs and Ranisahebs, the readers are shifted to a hyperreal world without notice. Another essential principle of heterotopia is 'heterochrony' or discontinuity in time. Heterotopias can return to the remote past, or, stretch out the present, or, leap into an unthinkable far away future. Namjoshi designedly situates her novel in an ancient past when matriarchy was in vogue and abruptly incorporates there the androids of the distant future in order to achieve a heterochronic effect. These male androids are primarily traders and they follow a military regime and by and large uphold the values of a patriarchal society. When all trade agreements fail, the androids accuse Asha of her autocratic behaviour and forcefully overthrow her on the false charge of "obstructing the causes of democracy and justice" (*Maya Diip* 103). Before leaving Ashagad, the androids appoint "a new government that'll be more cooperative and loyal" to the boys because patriarchy has taught them "that it is not okay to be ruled by women" (*Maya Diip* 103-4). These high-handed, sexist, mechanised androids take Ranisaheb, Asha, Jyanvi, The Blue Donkey, and Saraswati with them as hostages in their helicopter. However, their helicopter crashes down and they head for an emergency landing in Paradise.

In Paradise, the reader is confronted with an extravagant heterosexual milieu. Society here is neatly and strictly split into two genders: mothers (i.e., the women) and gallants (i.e., the men). The norm predominant here is: "two of a kind may not pair" (*Maya Diip* 232). Therefore, the reader is now in a "bad land of modernity" where queers have no space. According to its sexist parameters, women are regarded here as embodiments of beauty, passivity, love, and romance. The prime concern of men here is to win the favour of women and worship them. The adulation of the gallants reaches its greatest heights when, having a shortage of mothers, they begin to kill themselves and start reciting courtly poems before dying: "when the gallants commit suicide, they leave behind a couplet, sometimes a quatrain...it has become a custom, a tradition – the poetic thing to do – to die with a song on your lips" (*Maya Diip* 239). However, this extreme idealism, which is fundamental to Paradise, turns out to be the rescuing aid for the exiles. Ranisaheb and the queen of Paradise come to an agreement: Paradise has an acute crisis of mothers and Ranisaheb is in need of male warriors to



regain her lost kingdom. It is decided that the Gallants will help Ranisaheb to reclaim Maya and in return, the Gallants will be permitted to court the Mayan mothers. Therefore, the archetypal gender roles emerge in a renewed form: men as warriors and women as mothers. Namjoshi here substantiates that matriarchy is nothing but patriarchy. Therefore, matriarchy can never be a benign boon to the bane called patriarchy. Maintaining poetic justice, the good people win and the bad people are punished in the end. Breaking the bloodline Jyanvi is made the successor to the throne while Ranisaheb retires into the forest accompanied by The Blue Donkey. In this complex way, the novel proves that the myth of a unified, homogenous gay/lesbian/queer nation cloaks heterogeneity surreptitiously. Only the truth prevails: “we [the queers] are [never] a people, one people” (Graham 38).

“The magic of the faerie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are certain primordial desires. One of these desires is to survey the depths of time and space. Another is...to hold communion with other living being” (Tolkien 41). When the readers evaluate the political implications of Namjoshi's engagement with utopia, dystopia, and heterotopia as chosen genres and fantastic as a favoured mode (which are denounced by Marx as he encourages artworks to be the mirror-image of reality dipped sternly within the historical and cultural frameworks), they feel contented because Namjoshi uses the fantastic as a means of protest or desire for that which is long forgotten or truant. Namjoshi's strategic use of beasts (with human-like skills of talking, acting, and feeling) in the style of the beast fable enables her to incorporate fantastic elements in her literary oeuvre. Namjoshi's textual world is frequented with several fanciful, mythical, and metaphorical beasts – One-Eyed Monkeyji, Fire-Emitting Dragons, Birds of Prey, The Blue Donkey, and so on – who serve as allegories of human follies. As readers start to listen to these fantasy creatures, they “will be freed from the tyranny of the real” (Le Guin 132). With the inclusion of these fantastic beasts, Namjoshi willingly moves between disparate worlds, where each world is a self-contained system with a particular logic and pattern of assumptions. The topography of her fiction encompasses recognizable geography only to a restricted extent; for the rest, it transports the reader to an alternative world, what Tolkien refers to as a “secondary world” (Tolkien 60). These beasts are simultaneously knowable yet unknown, within easy reach yet unreachable. They are conceived as others, beyond humanity's perceptions.

“Gender is a genre. The third gender will produce a third (new) genre: not prose, not poetry; not fiction, not fact; not discourse, not effusion; but a mixture of all these” (Merchant 49). In all probability, Namjoshi took this idea too seriously to invent a radical style of writing. She conceives her novel both as a gender-bender and genre-blender. Her use of a pun on the title lays bare the inherent paradox – ‘Diip’ means a lamp and ‘Dwip’ means an island. Therefore, she devises Maya Diip as an illusory dreamland where women will be enlightened. In order to criticise the notion of a factual, separatist, lesbian continuum through an avant-garde effort, she haphazardly interlaces several genres – *Maya Diip* starts as a travelogue, a take-off on *Gulliver's Travels*, hopes to be a utopia, gradually unfolds to be a heterotopia sheltering several contradictory spatial elements, but eventually degenerates into a nightmarish dystopia, incorporates human-like beasts in the manner of beast fables, includes elements of science fiction, parodies heterosexual courtly love tradition, weaves poetry and myth, and finally, finishes off with a cliched “and they lived happily ever after” ending. Her aim may be to fabricate a story of lesbian emancipation, through deculturation of the established



culture, deconstruction of the hetero-patriarchal realistic modes of literary representation and denaturalization of societal institutions and institutionalised modes of behaviour, and teach the readers how to “live in multiple worlds...the strange prismatic worlds that art offers” (Winterson 264). Most probably, through such arbitrary genre- mingling Namjoshi strives to find ways to give her heterogeneous identities (half-Indian, half-Canadian, lesbian feminist writer of colour) a free play; identities which very often suffocate her as “contradictory, partial and strategic” (Haraway 154). However, to the utter shock of the readers, her over-confident efforts to achieve these high-sounding and ludicrous goals unconsciously reduce to “a great army of ‘trashy’ objects...a gallery of cheap junk” (Baudrillard 109-10), a postmodern kitsch. To conclude, by turning upside down the concept of the lesbian consortium, Namjoshi may embrace the idea of the “non-conceptual,” a movement that opens up the possibility of “a space without/outside the cultural order” (Jackson 43), but *The Mothers of Maya Diip* will forever serve as an example of kitsch, unselfconscious and devoid of any political or critical edge.

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