Dominant, Dormant and Emergent Tendencies in the Twentieth Century Working-Class Novel

by

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Abstract

My doctoral dissertation entitled *Dominant, Dormant, and Emergent Tendencies in the Twentieth Century Working-Class Novel* studies twentieth century working-class novels as a transnational and trans-historic category. I analyze and explore the Marxian revolutionary subject from a subaltern point of view and show that the global political economy constantly reshapes and reconstitutes the working-class. My research traces how the genre has evolved throughout the twentieth century; the dissertation demonstrates how questions of gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, ecojustice and post-colonialism are associated with class politics and its representation in the genre of the twentieth century working-class novel.

In order to outline the dominant, dormant and emergent trends within the genre of the working-class novel, I have divided the study into three clusters. First, I study representative Anglophone proletarian novels from the decade of the 1930s to identify the established tenets of the genre. The second cluster focuses on South Asian novels of the 1930s that integrated class politics with colonial crisis. I demonstrate that while the US novels of the Great Depression, the Soviet Socialist novels and the industrial novels of Great Britain are studied as dominant texts of proletarian culture, texts with peripheral status within World Literature, produced by subcontinental writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand and Manik Bandopadhyay extend the boundaries of revolutionary literature by introducing the subaltern's crisis. The third cluster consists of texts by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Mohammed Choukri and Mahasweta Devi. I study these novels as emerging texts of revolutionary resistance and show how class struggle remains a continual theme in the latter half of twentieth century World Literature.

The dissertation deploys a comparative methodology for studying working-class novels from Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Revisiting the perception of the 'literary', this research demonstrates that the working-class novel is essentially an international entity. Integrating Marxist theories on literature and representation, with questions of body/disability, Post-colonial criticism and Ecocriticism, I advocate for interdisciplinary and comparative approaches towards the study of working-class novels as an indispensable part of twentieth century World Literature.

This research proposes that working-class literature cannot be comprehended thoroughly if we restrict its limits within national literary studies and specific historical periods. Instead, I urge for an alternative methodology that addresses the subject as a transnational category that is constantly evolving. Literary representations of class-conscious political struggles indicate that twentieth century class identity and ideology is embedded within discourses of modernity and modern identity.

Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter One 17

The Working-class Novel as a Category in World Literature 17

What is working-class literature? 17

Working-class literature as an international continuous practice in world literature 20

Journalism and the Working-class Novel 28

How does the genre of the working-class novel resist reification and evoke class consciousness? 39

Conclusion: Why did the working-class novel emerge as a genre of international class struggles? 46

Chapter Two 52

Dominant Trends in the Genre of the Proletarian Novel: Transnational Narratives of "Western-White-Heterosexual Able-bodied" Working-class Members 52

Proletarian Novels in the English Context and *Love on the Dole* as a Typical Proletarian Novel 55

Waste Heritage and its Atypical Tenets 76

The Grapes of Wrath: A Popular Proletarian novel of the 1930s 85

Conclusions 103

Chapter Three 105

South Asian Working-class Novels of the Late Colonial Period: Dormant Tendencies within the Genre 105

Background to the introduction of the working-class novel in the subcontinent 110

Premchand and *Godaan* 118

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* 132

Working-class identity in *Padma Nadir Majhi* 146

Conclusion 159

What does the inclusion of 1930s subcontinental novels add to the study of Working-class Literature? 159

Chapter Four 162

Emergent Trends in the Genre of Working-class Novel 162

Section A. Writing about and for working-class in the 'third world' in the postcolonial era 164

Adivasi working-class communities in Mahasweta Devi's novels 164

Petals of Blood as an example of African Working-class Novel 185

Section B 206
Working-class narratives by working-class members in late twentieth century 206
Conclusion 214
Concluding Remarks 217
Works Cited 224

Introduction

> No, the bourgeois intellectuals tell us, there can be no such thing as proletarian literature. We answer briefly: There is. Then they say, it is mediocre; where is your Shakespeare? And we answer: Wait ten years more. He is on his way. We gave you a Lenin; we will give you a proletarian Shakespeare, too; if that is so important.
>
> To us the culture of the world's millions is more important; the soil must be prepared; we know our tree is sound; we are sure of the fruit; we promise you a hundred Shakespeares.
>
> — Mike Gold, 1930

This dissertation aims to establish the historicity of the genre of the working-class novel by presenting a comparative study of texts from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, colonial and post-independence India, 'post-colonial' Kenya and Morocco. Novels from 'western' and 'non-western' origins will be juxtaposed to show that the working-class novel is a transnational and trans-historic literary genre. While the dominant trends of the genre are set by 1930s 'western' literary works, texts from 'non-western' geo-linguistic provenances provide dormant and emergent tenets to the genre. The genre's international spirit can be traced back to the *Vsemirnaia literatura* (World Literature) Publishing House, which was established in 1918 under the leadership of Maxim Gorky. This publishing house attempted to synthesize Goethe's idea of world literature and the Marxian idea of universal literature to form a notion of (Soviet) Proletarian World Literature. This short-lived project aimed to produce Russian translations of the masterpieces of world literature along with original imaginative pieces from Russian authors. The 1930s literary culture of the Soviet Union (which gave birth to

Soviet Socialist Realism) as well as (other literary) spheres under its influence is indebted to the World Literature Publishing House for its international outlook and methodology.[1]

The conception of a working-class literature, which will be informed of the classics through translation and produce original works for class education, provides a dialectic outlook to both world literature and proletarian culture. Working-class world literature brings together the popular and the classical; it is neither limited to an author of a particular class origin nor is it confined within the dictates of the factory. International working-class literature is vast in quantity and varied in quality. It establishes conversation amongst working-class cultures from different geo-political origins via translation. Lenin seems to echo the same sentiment towards the establishment of a proletarian literature, calling for literary works that bring "dialectical materialism" within the purview of literature. Lenin's perception of world proletarian literature is comprised of texts that are intelligible to the millions and brings forward the message of class consciousness for the middle class and peasantry.[2]

Most existing scholarship on working-class literature, especially the genre of the working-class novel, has focused on the 1930s western literary culture. There has never been another phase in world literary history when such a high volume of literary texts was produced for, about and in many cases by men and women from working-class backgrounds. Nevertheless, I will argue throughout this dissertation that the working-class novel, as a literary tradition, existed throughout the twentieth century, so we cannot confine its study within a specific decade.

The heuristics used for my study categorize working-class novels from world literature (in English) into three groups according to their 'location' within a map of international literary

[1] See Maria Khomitsky for more on the World Literature Publishing House.
[2] *Lenin on Art and Literature.*

trends. The first group is comprised of 1930s working-class novels from the 'west' that enjoy a considerable monopoly of the existing scholarship on the subject. I will examine these 'dominant' trends established by the aforesaid group and show how these texts complement the questions raised by Soviet theorists from the preceding decades. The second group is comprised of non-western novels from the 1930s that enjoy a 'dormant' position in World Literature throughout the history of the discipline. I will investigate how these 'marginal' texts engage with the questions of 'totality', 'truth' and the 'working-class worldview', which were key concerns amongst the Soviet theorists. The third group includes working-class novels from outside of the often studied decade of the 1930s. I aim to show that these 'emergent' tendencies are in diachronic dialogue with the critical debates of the inter-war period. These emergent tendencies are shaped and influenced by both dormant and dominant works of the '30s. I ground my research within a tradition of literary resistance which eradicated the barrier between politics and literature. My research will trace the historicity of the international working-class novel, and relate the dominant, the dormant and the emergent tenets of this genre within Anglophone World Literature (including English translations of works produced in various languages).

Review of existing scholarship and identification of the problem

Academic scholarship on Anglophone working-class literature follows two parallel routes whose foci are geographically separated by the Atlantic Ocean. Proletarian Literature of the US and British Socialist literature have so far (mostly) been studied within their national domains. Scholarship on the nineteenth and the twentieth century British working-class was spearheaded by Gustav Klaus, who recovered the long tradition of British working-class literature. These texts are normally identified under the umbrella term Socialist Literature. On the other hand, after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, scholarship and research on radical and Socialist

tendencies in American literature gained renewed interest. As a result we find new critical surveys of 1930s literature being published since the early 1990s. While Walter Rideout and Daniel Aaron were the first critics to present organized studies on 1930s US Proletarian Literature from a bird's eye view during the Cold War period, Cary Nelson and James Murphy contested 1930s' leftist literature from a revisionist point of view. Rideout and Aaron establish the genre of proletarian novel as a cultural expression of the white-heterosexual-American-male's struggle and life-cycle within the working-class context. Rideout holds the proletarian novel as 'the' most important genre of American proletarian culture and argues that the Communist Party defined the proletarian culture of America from 1900 onwards. Aaron identifies Michael Gold, Joseph Freeman, Granville Hicks and Max Eastman as the architects of Proletarian Literature in the US. Such tendencies of silencing the heterogeneity of practices within the genre, which incorporated voices of women and 'the negro question', have been contested in subsequent studies.

Major shifts in looking into the genre of the proletarian novel and the literary leftism of the 30s were initiated by works of Paula Rabinowitz and Barbara Foley, both of whom analyzed the decade from a feminist point-of-view. Foley presents a Marxist analysis of the genre of the proletarian novel by including works by women novelists like Tillie Olsen as well as novelists of color like William Attaway; Foley's major work, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941* reshaped western readings of the 'proletarian' subject and the genre of the proletarian novel. Another field-defining work, *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America* by Paula Rabinowitz, addresses the 'woman question' and shows the integral role of women in shaping proletarian culture in the 30s. One of the most comprehensive criticisms of 1930s proletarian literature is found in Alan Wald's *Exiles*

from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left, which also revisits the 'negro question' and the 'woman question'. Wald and Foley approach the proletarian culture of the '30s as a category of the present and aim "to rescue proletarian literature from undeserved neglect" (Foley 443-44).

In spite of this steady growth in academic interest and scholarship on the proletarian novel, most of such academic pursuits limit the study of working-class literature, culture and other arts within their national/regional domains. I identify this 'nationalist' enclosure to be an anti-Marxist one and show that working-class culture is transnational by definition; literature of the working-class, especially the working-class novel, has always aimed at a global literary approach from both readers and critics. The working-class is conceived as an international category in Marxist theory. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx wrote: "The working-men have no country". Marx envisioned a complete dissolution of the bourgeois concept of nationalism which was already threatened by 'free-trade' and 'globalization'. Following this international definition of working-class identity and culture, I will present a comparative study of twentieth-century working-class novels that show how the genre has evolved according to global class politics and incorporated questions of gender, race and environment as part of class struggle.

The Marxist literary school establishes working-class literature as an international genre. Earliest references to working-class literature (in an organized form) can be found in the *Communist Manifesto* where Marx and Engels state that working-class life, struggle and culture should be reflected in literature. Owing to its international nature, capitalist-modernist society fosters World Literature rather than local or national literature:

> In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in

> material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. (*Communist Manifesto*)

Throughout the twentieth century working-class literature developed within local and national politico-linguistic circles while maintaining their internationalism. However, scholars like Mikhail Agursky have shown that the spirit of nationalism haunted Socialist literary movements since the beginning. But as Katrina Clarke points out, a straightforward relationship between the national and international characteristics of the Working-Class Revolution cannot be established as the situation is multilayered and complex.

In the *German Ideology* Marx proposes a new idea of literature for the Communist society, one where mental and physical labors are not separated by hierarchy, and therefore artistic endeavors are not secluded from the working class. Bourgeois hegemony over literary content and readership alienates the working classes from literary-artistic production and consumption. Marxist theory opposes the tendency of focusing on the 'individual' as the center of the literary community and proposes to imagine the class collective as content, author and audience in working-class literature. The *German Ideology* identifies "exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass" as "a consequence of division of labour" (Ch 3, "Rebellion") and advocates for resistance to this process through dialectical-material praxis. Later in "Party Organization and Party Literature" Lenin builds on this Marxian idea of literature and proposes a model of proletarian literature focused on class collectivity. In Lenin's vision literature is inherently a political organization within a working-class context:

> Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, 'a cog and screw' of one single Social-Democratic mechanism set in motion by the entire

> politically conscious vanguard of the entire working class. Literature must become a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work.

In the same work Lenin also asks for eradicating the traditional difference between reader and writer — an approach which was later developed by Walter Benjamin.

Corpus of this Study

This dissertation aims to read selected working-class novels from both global north and south, from a comparative perspective. Within the global economic culture of the twenty-first century the working classes are set to compete against each other on an international scale; as a result nationalist identities are promoted. This competition overshadows the international aspect of class identity. The working-class of Bangladesh or China becomes a competitor of the American proletariat, and thus the solidarity of the international working-class is challenged and broken. Similarly, studies focusing on proletarian literature or working-class culture within national frames fail to grasp the transnational nature of this class culture. As a result, dialogue amongst various working-class literary trends is missing, an absence which hinders the process of conceptualizing the international nature of working-class culture. Besides these nationalist constraints in studies of working-class literature, most existing scholarship on the subject has been limited to studies within the decade of the 1930s. Though steady growth in working-class literary practices was experienced during this timeframe, working-class novels have existed prior to the 1930s in World Literature and they continue to speak and advocate for cultures that sit on the margins of globalized capitalist systems. For my research, the working-class novel is studied as a continuous literary practice. This dissertation will demonstrate that a transnational approach, which also addresses how the genre has developed along the axis of time, re-establishes the working-class subject and working-class novel within the framework of Marxist theory. In

addition, this comparative study also shows that Marxist revolutionary consciousness is accompanied by ecofeminist, anticolonial, multicultural and environmentally conscious struggles in the international realm.

In order to study working-class literature as an international category my research approaches the 'Proletarian Moment' as a living and relevant subject of contemporary global culture. It is difficult for the post-industrial global north to perceive working-class culture as a lived reality as factories and its ragged workers are an increasingly abstract concept within advanced capitalist societies. With relocation of 'production' to developing or under-developed countries, a geopolitical dissociation from 'labor' has taken place within mainstream societies of the global north. Nevertheless, the contexts and challenges of working-class life are very much a current and recurring problem. By coffining working-class literature of the 30s' as a 'historical event' academic scholarship adds to this alienation and banishment of the working-class subjects from contemporary critical social discourses. Janet Zandy explores this absence of working-class literature from academic perspective in *Liberating Memory: Our Work and Our Working-Class Consciousness* and observes that "We do not yet have institutionalized 'working-class studies'. Perhaps it awaits the pressure of a larger, political, workers' movement" (xiii). However, a deeper analysis of the situation confirms that the problem is not centered on the mere absence of a category or genre from the canon, but on the absence of an understanding of working-class literature in its totality. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Peter Hitchcock correctly point out, Zandy's approach will result in the addition of another minor literature to the canon and leave the working class more "abstract as a concept".

Going back to the original Marxist standpoint on proletarian culture and identity, I will study the genre of the working-class novel as a category of World Literature. By presenting a

comparative study of *Love on the Dole*, *Waste Heritage*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* — three Anglophone, western proletarian novels that emerged from three different national origins—as examples of diverse literary projections of working-class questions of the 1930s, I show that the genre is transnational in essence. Confinement of working-class texts within national literary traditions hinders their universal appeal and distorts our perception of class culture and the working-class movement. Though these three western texts show that class conscious literature does not conform to ideological norms of nationalism, they depict the western proletariat as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied character and fail to accommodate questions of colonialism, racism and disability within the discourse of working-class culture. In contrast to the aforesaid western novels I study *Coolie*, *Godaan*, and *Padma Nadir Majhi* — three South Asian novels of the 1930s, which originated from three different sociolinguistic backgrounds — and inquire how working-class novels engage with the questions of labor and class culture within the discourse of colonialism, racism, feminism and disability. This east-west contrast of working-class novels shows how a worldly reading of the red decade can enlighten the relationship between class and other variables of identity within the modernist-capitalist socioeconomic system. Finally, studying subsequent working-class novels from World Literature, I inquire how 'postcolonial' authors of India, Kenya and Morocco adapted Marxist tenets and positioned questions of class exploitation within globalization in relation to ecojustice and neocolonialism. This dissertation shows that the working-class novel is not only an international genre but it is also a continual process in the history of World Literature.

Methodology

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the proletarian literary community as an international and global event. Regional elements also played crucial roles in formal

construction and content formation of proletarian texts originating from different geo-political corners. While the regional dimension of a literary tradition helps to locate a text within national literary framework, adding those (national and regional) dimensions poses methodological challenges when contextualizing a particular literary text within the field of World Literature. The regional dimension adds to our understanding of general trends, literary currents and dominant influences, while informing us about historical space and cultural perspective related to the background of a particular text. Literary periodization becomes challenging when we try to position a text with respect to its regional, national and international co-ordinates and merge the three together. Especially in the case of texts originating from the multilingual contexts, regional, national and international 'positioning' of literary works is challenging as the three scales are not always developing in coherence. The case of Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* shows how this problem of regional, national and international periodization can become a methodological challenge in a comparative study. In this dissertation I study *Coolie* as a working-class novel of world literature. Anand, in the national realm, is considered one of the pioneering figures of the Indian-English literary tradition; but Andy Croft situates Anand's *Coolie* within the tradition of British working-class literature. Within a comparative study of eastern and western working-class novels, *Coolie* cannot be located in either of the two camps without addressing the complicated nature of multilingual literary sphere of the subcontinent and its relationship with British literature during colonialism, especially during the last few decades of the British Raj, when a nationalist overtone dominates subcontinental literature. *Coolie*'s position in world literature as a working-class novel is contaminated with colonial literary and social relations, and politics of language and form that influenced subcontinental literature. When studying *Coolie* as a part of the British working-class literary tradition, the text is located within 1930s proletarian culture,

which will be a schematic imposition of literary periodization for a subcontinental text. In order to avoid this problem, I show that as a working-class text, *Coolie* is a part of an ongoing working-class literary movement, which is not confineable within a particular decade but has to be contextualized within the world literary tradition.

While studying proletarian literary movements and working-class texts from world literature, we cannot ignore the regional and national elements. That is why this research addresses the proletarian literary movement as an international phenomenon instead of a super-national occurrence. The spirit of super-nationalism will call for an approach that negates the national-regional aspects of the movement. But while approaching the working-class literary movement as an international incident, I show that despite their regionalism, working-class literary texts were also part of an international class culture. Attempting a study of working-class literature from varied national-linguistic spaces like the UK, the US, Canada, India, Kenya and Morocco, this dissertation shows that world-literary contextualization of these texts does not ignore their regional-national elements; instead this approach shows how global and local elements are in a continuous dialogue which influences the form, content, style, and language of these texts. In her 1969 article entitled "Dialectics of Historical Development of National and World Literature" Irina Grigorevna Neupokoyeva argued that the central challenge of comparative literature remains in establishing a relationship between the concepts of national literature and world literature (106). As a result of capitalist development of modernity universal links amongst nations are established which create "historically new communities of literature" (Neupokoyeva 107). Neupokoyeva identifies the multicultural domain of Socialist cultural and artistic process to be such an emergent literary community (ibid). Following Neupokoyeva, I approach this literary domain consisting of authors, publishers, printers, reading circles,

individual and collective audience as an international working-class cultural community. Working-class texts are always international, though they are rooted in their geo-linguistic specifics of origin. Despite the challenges of understanding working-class literature on a global scale while acknowledging the regional and national dimensions, such a study can show the relative importance of previously 'neglected' texts and analyze their role in the formation of international working-class culture.

My study attempts to fill a gap in World Literature studies which is yet to welcome literary practices for and about working-class peoples. This research also challenges the established trend of studying working-class literature within national-geographical constraints and proposes that a comparative methodology can help us understand working-class literature as a global category; the idea is to find out trends and tendencies within international history that will help us analyze the role of literature within working-class culture. I aim to see how and why literature is used for a movement of self-educated, semi-literate and illiterate people as means of 'education' for 'conscious citizenship' that would harvest humane qualities like solidarity, empathy, and class ethics to every member of society. As stated earlier most academic scholarship has studied working-class literature within specific national boundaries; thus we can find a number of works focusing on American working-class literature, British socialist literature, Soviet socialist realism etc. Such studies have their merit in establishing the importance of working-culture and literature in the formation of their respective national cultures and national identities. However, I will argue that failure to identify the 'total' real-historical situation of global politics that influenced the emergence of an international proletarian culture leads to fragmented understanding of twentieth century working-class literature.

Feminist readings of working-class literature have addressed the subject as a living entity and thus liberated these texts from being shut within the context of the red thirties. Paula Rabinowitz has shown how the internationalized domain of 1930s proletarian literature portrays an essentially masculine concept of such revolutionary literature. However, most of these feminist studies have overlooked the nature of class culture within non-'western' traditions. Even within the context of the developed nations of North America, feminist scholarship has failed to address working-class issues related to indigenous peoples and culture. In order to emancipate working-class literature from the cultural hegemony of 'masculinity' and 'west' I approach the subject from a comparative view. By juxtaposing subcontinental texts that have not been included within scholarly debates of 1930s working-class literature with 'western' texts that are relatively popular titles, I aim to conceive a fuller understanding of the epoch and its revolutionary literary tenets. Also by contrasting these '30s' novels with post-colonial working-class novels from the second half of the twentieth century this study advocates for an inclusive model of working-class literary studies that do not follow traditional hierarchies of highbrow and lowbrow.

Coordinates for this comparison

The praxis of this study explores two fundamental coordinates of comparative literature: time and space. I look into the genre of working-class novels as a world historical category and follow its trajectory within the scope of twentieth century World Literature. By focusing on a synchronic study of Anglophone proletarian novels from the often studied decade of the 1930s, I examine the dominant generic tendencies. Next, I study three novels from the subcontinent which were also synchronically located within the 1930s and show how inclusion of these texts within working-class scholarship helps us analyze working-class writing as an international

category. I aim to contextualize working-class literature as a relevant and contemporary genre and thus my ultimate goal is to look into the surviving practices of the tradition. By focusing on texts from Africa and South Asia, I show how working-class struggles and class politics remain burning issues within contexts of anticolonial and feminist literature. Relating such texts with the ones produced from the 1930s, I aim to show how the genre has played a crucial role in shaping the twentieth-century World Literature and how it still continues to influence political literature of the twenty first century.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter One, I show how journalism and newspapers helped in creating a literary proletarian public sphere, which was quintessential for a genre like the working-class novel. I also demonstrate that the proletarian literature movement challenged the fundamental notion of literature of the preceding era and introduced new ideas of authorship, the literary public sphere and the literary audience. I track how local and regional groups contributed to the making of the World Proletarian Literature movement; many such groups functioned independently, outside of the centralized dictates of the Communist International. Referencing the notion of 'worker-correspondent', I argue that the revolution within journalism and newspapers was one of the major influences towards the birth of this new genre of proletarian novel within capitalist-modernist settings. This evolution from within the literary public sphere not only revolutionized the traditional genre of the novel but also caused a fundamental shift in the meaning of 'literary culture'.

Chapter Two presents a comparative study of western Anglophone proletarian novels from the British Empire, the USA and the Canadian Dominion. 'Typical' and 'popular'

variations of texts from the period are investigated by contrasting Walter Greenwood's 1933 novel *Love on the Dole* (as an example of a typical Anglophone proletarian novel of the time period) with US novelist John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (as an example of a widely 'read' proletarian novel from the decade). Another text discussed in this chapter is the Canadian novel *Waste Heritage*, which is presented as an atypical example of 1930s Anglophone proletarian literature. All three of these Anglophone proletarian novels aim towards transnational representation of their working-class communities. However, through depictions of primarily 'white-heterosexual-able bodied' characters these novels create a hegemonic discourse of class identity which does not include questions of race, sexuality or disability in relation to working-class culture.

In Chapter Three, I focus on subcontinental working-class novels from the 1930s that contest many of the established tendencies of the genre. By incorporating studies of the Hindi novel *Godaan*, Indian English novel *Coolie* and Bengali novel *Padma Nadir Majhi*, I show how new coordinates for analysis of working-class identity are necessary if we want to perceive the subject as an international category. These novels demonstrate how colonialism, a guise of capitalism, influenced class culture within the subcontinent during the 1930s, when the western proletariat was facing the lashes of the Great Depression. This chapter addresses the technical challenges of talking about the working-class of the colony through the medium of realism, in the European form of the 'novel'. It also analyzes the problem of language in the making of the literary identity of the working-class within contexts of multilingualism. Finally this chapter shows that questions of disability, feminism and environmental justice were integral to the working-class novel's interpretation of the global class war of the '30s. By incorporating these

questions the South Asians novels relate class identity with other variable of modernist identity and prepare the path for postcolonial working-class novels.

The last chapter of this dissertation explores how working-class remains a contemporary issue in novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Mohammed Choukri and Mahasweta Devi. Here I argue that instead of tagging these novelists as postcolonial authors, we can look into their works as examples of the working-class novel as they show how 'work' dictates life and death in the subhuman terrains of human lives within situations of neocolonialism, internal colonization, and imperialism in its various facades. Looking into class exploitation in postcolonial contexts through an eco-critical lens, this chapter demonstrates that the struggle for environmental justice and class struggle are part of the same war of the working-class against the capitalist system.

The fictional proletariat of the '30s emerging from the advanced capitalist societies shared their international struggle with the fictional working-class characters of South Asian novels from the same time frame. The literary-fictional space of international working-class literature show us how a variety of occupations contributes to the working-class community and how working-class members, despite their regional and nationalist identities, share similar life experiences on a humanitarian level. Working-class novels from both before and after the 1930s show that change of timeframe does not interfere with the life struggle of the working-classes. It is the relative relationship between the structure of production and one's relationship to this structure which determines the class conditions experienced by working-class characters on a global scale. Creating fictional worlds that can provide its readers with tools to interpret the dialectics of a class society, the genre of working-class novel presents an international worldview through universally identifiable circumstances.

Chapter One

The Working-class Novel as a Category in World Literature

What is working-class literature?

Class exploitation in advanced capitalist societies co-exists with material abundance of resources gained from the profit of the labor of workers. The majority of the population in such societies is affiliated with urban working-class culture and identity, which is the central content of proletarian literature in the European and North American context. However, in the case of societies that did not experience the Industrial Revolution, working-class literature and culture encompass life struggles and exploits of peasantry, farm laborers, and cottage industry workers and so on. This dissertation maintains a terminological distinction between the advanced industrial working-class and the various laboring classes of the global capital economy. All individuals engaged with production of labor are perceived as members of an international working-class community, while working-class members specifically involved with industrial labor are distinguished as the proletariat in my research. Most critics and theorists originating from North America, Europe or the Soviet Union during the first half of the twentieth century perceived the proletariat to be the only class capable of organizing and winning a class war. As a result, many of the original writings of these Marxist critics use the term proletariat, instead of working-class. Except for direct quotations, I will use 'working-class' as an umbrella term that includes the proletariat.

The Communist Party of the United States differentiated proletarian literature from working-class literature during the 1930s: texts written by authors of working-class origin were considered real working-class literature, while proletarian literature was produced by class-

conscious party members, and deployed a political agenda and propaganda in the practice of literature. Such distinctions based on authorial class status at birth become inapplicable in cases of orally based cultures of European colonies and indigenous communities of the world; with limited literacy rate, and education being a privilege, it was unlikely for a person from the working masses to achieve enough formal education to write fiction in such contexts. For example, according to statistics provided by eminent Japanese author Kawabata Yasunari, in the context of the Japanese empire in 1931, only 46 out of 207 works published in the four major literary journals (*Kaizō*, *Chuō kōron*, *Shinchō, Bungei sunjū*) were written by authors of proletarian origin (Perry 186).

Lee Baxandall points out that working-class poetics and aesthetics often remain unappreciated or underappreciated by the laboring class in question, while the literate middle-class audience place it in high regard: "Workers do not normally have leisure and encouragement to develop appreciation of new and complex art, while their tastes are often sentimentalized and debased by the conditions of their life and the art purveyed to them by the class in power. Folk art often is lost to them too" (273). Though this tendency is applicable to the majority of politically stabilized time-periods, the international working-class cultural revolution of '20s and '30s proves this hypothesis wrong. During this time, working-class members were associated with production and consumption of literary texts, which is discussed latter in this chapter. A prominent example of this evolution within literary culture can be found in the East Asian working-class movement, where the form of 'wall novel' was invented for the worker audience. Moreover, Jonathan Rose's study of working-class reading habits shows that during the 1930s' Welsh miners used to read both *Jane Eyre* and *Das Capital.* Baxandell's vision suffers from an

elitist presupposition which attempts to establish the working-class subject as a sub-intellectual entity incapable of understanding the complex nature of classics and theory.

Current scholarship perceives of working-class literature to be a body of works rich in generic experimentation and diverse in manifestations of working-class life and culture, works that inaugurated an idea of literature that contradicts classical notions of the 'literary'[3]. These texts attempted to speak for and about the toiling masses, who often lacked access to leisure and education that is essential for participation in literary activities. In the context of the 'west', throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, political mobilization (of the masses) created 'space' for the proletariat in literature, and also created literature for the proletariat and working-class literature. Communist parties, labor unions and independent working-class organizations found literature and arts to be useful venues to convey political messages which could evoke class consciousness. These left-wing groups treated journalistic pieces, factual documents as well as fictional texts as literature[4].

Conceiving working-class literature as anything and everything that speaks for and about the working-class is problematic itself: this approach encounters questions about narrative agency and 'right to narrate'. I will argue that class-conscious authors and artists of any class origin, who devote their skills to transform the real-historical into fictional-universals with an ambition of enlightening their audience about the reifying effects of capitalist-modernist society, are producers of working-class literature. It is not only the proletariat who reads working-class

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[3] The following works can provide an overview of the diverse literary experiments within international working-class cultural movement: Candida Rifkind's *Comrades and Critics*, Samuel Perry's *Red Culture in Proletarian Japan*, Michael Denning's *Cultural Front*, Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery*, Charles Laughlin's *Chinese Reportage*, Bruce Murray's *Film and German Left in the Weimer Republic*, Michael Richardson's *Revolutionary Theatre and Classical Heritage*, Régine Robin's *Socialist Realism*, Evgeny Dobrenko's *Soviet Riches*.
[4] More on factual and fictional genres of working-class literature is discussed later in the chapter.

literature; in fact working-class fiction has a social function and responsibility: these texts can awaken an understanding of the ideological nature of 'reality'. Thus, a wide readership is targeted.

Within the aforementioned understanding of working-class literature and the working-class subject, this chapter will study how and why the genre of the working-class novel emerged as a weapon of international class struggle. Since the novel was associated with European bourgeois culture from its early appearance as a literary genre, the choice of the 'novel' form as a working-class mouthpiece needs some explanation. Writing a novel requires advanced literary training and thus the role of the intellectual/author in the advancement of the Working-Class Revolution is contested here. The chapter is divided into three sections: working-class literature as an international process, from proletarian journalism to working-class novels, and resisting reification through the literary process: production of working-class novels.

Working-class literature as an international continuous practice in world literature

With the advent of the capitalist economy and print technology, literature faced a transition in patronage, readership and social status. While the term 'literature' was associated with the process of reading and writing in its early epistemology, introduction of print capitalism narrowed its connotation to its present meaning— the literary world limited itself exclusively to imaginary and fictional texts within the bourgeois-capitalist culture. Within this new socioeconomic structure literature achieved "an undifferentiated equivalence" with "immediate living experience" (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 46). Realism emerged as a preferred mode of representation for 'imaginary' fiction; the nineteenth century realist novel, especially within

the European context, attempted to replicate familiar incidents of everyday life for its bourgeois audience.

Documentation of 'immediate living experience' was one of the defining features of working-class literature, especially within the dominant discourses of the early decades of the twentieth century. As a subset of protest literature, working-class texts carried in themselves the message of resistance and an appeal for action. Marxist aesthetics of literature and art call for "a vision of the totality of human life which must be stripped of its alienating mask on the one hand, and a strict dependence on the proletariat, which is tantamount to blind submission to party directives, on the other" (Arvon 39). The *Communist Manifesto* summarizes how artists and authors aid the social struggle against the bourgeois-capitalist structure. The artist and the author serve the struggle by

> …bringing to light and ensuring in the various national struggles of the proletariat the triumph of the interests of the proletariat as a whole which are common and independent of nationality, and at the same time consistently representing the interests of the total movement in the different stages of evolution of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. (Web)

Though questions of working-class culture and literature appear in the intellectual circle of the nineteenth century, it was not until the twentieth century that working-class literary culture achieved adequate momentum to become a social movement. Literature and other arts played crucial roles in constructing a global working-class culture in the twentieth century. Literature was responsible for education of the newly literate proletariat, for introducing issues of working-class struggle in the literary sphere, re-education of the petit bourgeoisie and also served as a weapon of class struggle. Working-class literary and cultural movements revised the older conception of literature, re-formed its social function and introduced new meanings of authorship and readership as well.

The peasant-proletarian population constituted the majority of nineteenth and twentieth century societies; and working-class literature focused on the material conditions and life-struggle of these working people. Thus by default working-class literature becomes the literature of the people or the masses. Though written literature since antiquity has incorporated elements of mass culture of the laboring classes, representation of characters from such backgrounds was limited in depth and breadth. The lettered word remained a prized possession of a fortunate few since the early advent of literature. This is not to suggest that the masses did not have affinity towards artistic things; folk culture had a steady and parallel life to that of the highbrow literary culture. Limited literacy rates amongst the working people posed a primary challenge towards formation of a working-class literary audience. Besides, theorists like Leon Trotsky were concerned that working-class culture, being a temporary and transitory phase in human history, would not have sufficient time to form working-class literature and culture before society moved on to a classless form (thus eliminating the need for a working-class culture).

The Communist Party and the Soviet Union played leading roles in addressing issues of working-class culture in an international sense. Soviet-influenced writers' organizations collaborated to form a working-class literature that would reflect a working-class worldview. The working-class worldview is dialectical-material and class-conscious. In *Dialectical Materialism*, Mao Tse-tung describes dialectical materialism as "the worldview of the proletariat. At the same time it is the method of the proletariat for taking cognizance of the surrounding world, and the method of revolutionary action of the proletariat. It is the unity of world view and methodology" which marks the defining features of Marxian dialectics. Gorky's World Literature Publishing House was the first to bring this dialectical material method in World Literature.

During the Congress of the Second Communist International in August 1920, the first institutional effort to coordinate and promote working-class literature and art on an international scale was pioneered. Though the proposed "International Proletkult" didn't succeed as a world organization of writers, several national working-class writers' and artists' organizations were formed and were influenced by the idea. Literary activities involving the regional working-class emerged on local levels and working-class writers' associations and organizations were formed, which were responsible for producing a large body of working-class literature on the world stage (Murphy 37). In 1927, the First International Congress of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers was held in Moscow, which was attended by writers and artists from fourteen countries. An International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature was established as a result of the discussions of this conference. The congress delegates agreed to accept and embrace differences of varied geo-political spheres, but promised to collaborate in fostering the flame of revolution through literature for betterment of human life (Murphy 38). By 1930 Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Japan and the US had their own writers' organizations. During the Second Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers that took place in Kharkov, in November 1930, a new organization named the International Union of Revolutionary Writers was formed which replaced the International Bureau for Revolutionary Literature. Popularization of art was addressed as an immediate concern in Kharkov. The conference identified Germany and Soviet Union as the two most important centers of working-class literature and culture. During this time working-class novels in these two locations were following two representational styles: in Germany, novels by worker-authors were focused on fact-based reportage while in the Soviet Union realism was experimented with and adapted as the ideal form of revolutionary literature.[5]

[5] More on reportage and realism is discussed in the next section.

The Kharkov Conference and establishment of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW) internationalized working-class literature within the political and public sphere. Between 1930 and 1935 the IURW published *Literature for World Revolution* (later renamed *International Literature*) simultaneously in English, German and French, thus adding to the multilingual working-class literary culture within the European context. In the US, the *New Masses* and in Japan the *Battle Flag* focused on reporting about world working-class culture (Murayama 204). Such evidence proves that working-class literary culture was established as an international multilingual space by the 1930s.

The global working-class literary movement dismissed the national-regional boundaries of literature and addressed the position of literature within the international economic system of Capitalism, which is responsible for the exploitation of the working-class. Karl Radek addressed the worldly nature of working-class literature during the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress, where debates around the issues of socialist realism and its relation to modernism were contested. Radek identifies Japanese working-class literature of the time period as the most 'autochthonous' and identifies it as the second largest hub of working-class writing (after USSR); public interest in authors like Kobayashi, Kukushima, Seketi, Hayashi, Tokunaga forced the bourgeois press and publication houses to support the working-class literary movement in Japan. In the same speech Radek also acknowledges the steady growth and superior quality of German working-class literature, which was not only supported by writers from the Communist Party but included such non-member authors as Marchwitzwa, Grunberg, Kleber, Plivier etc. Contributions from British socialist authors and US writers added to the growing list of international working-class literary works. According to Radek, working-class literature of the '30s had a greater purpose than merely focusing on working-class life and struggle: working-class literature should analyze

the dialectics of class society, internal conflicts within classes, and extend towards understanding conditions of colonial proletariat and peasantry. Thus, by 1934 working-class literature was regarded as a global phenomenon, and literary representations of the working-class included the colonial proletariat and peasantry as well as industrial proletariat of the advanced capitalist societies.

Radek's speech went on to assert that by the middle of the 1930s working-class literature was an international category, inclusive of contributions from varied contexts of production. Working-class authors from different geopolitical locations were in conversation with each other through literary networks and were aware of the development of working-class texts in various linguistic-literary traditions. Then, why is working-class literature not established as a quintessential category in World Literature? Why does academic scholarship on the working-class novel continue to have its nationalist hangover? Why do we study working-class novels and novelists as unique texts and individuals instead of locating them within a continuous conversation of collective history? Theorists like Pascale Casanova prohibits the working-class novel from becoming a part of World Literature, owing to its political nature and ambition. However, there is no consistent dialogue within the existing theories of World Literature which can explain the reason for this collective exile of working-class novels from the domain of world literature. As recently as 2014, Sonali Perera has inquired about this neglect of working-class literature in her book *No Country*; but her inquiry cannot explain the existing tendencies. By moving back to the original Marxist standpoint, which considers working-class subjects as global citizens, belonging to the international class community, I will look for international tenets of working-class identity and culture in the novels I discuss in the following chapters.

Working-class literature is not only a part of the world literary system but it carries in itself a literary methodology that re-imagines the category of world literature within the context of the twentieth century. In the *Preface to World Literature* Albert Guérard stated that besides presenting the "picturesque, delightful variety of mankind" texts of world literature also "make us conscious of its fundamental unity" (24). Working-class novels show that working-class members cannot experience or comprehend this fundamental unity amongst each other until reifying effects of capitalist-modernist society can be resisted through class-conscious struggle. Working-class literature shows how the picturesque variety of humankind is transformed into the grotesque uniformity of working-class life and culture within a class divided society. So this Guérardian view of world literature is not applicable to working-class literature.

Working-class literature facilitated a space within the world literary system where debates about contemporary state of labor politics was addressed, everyday experience of working-class life was shared and working-class cultural life was formed. Union meetings, reading circles, literary conventions etc. were avenues for exploration of the above topics within various public domains. These public networks and gatherings helped the exchange of information about local and national literary trends and set them within an international dialogic space. Thus a working-class text could target a much larger audience beyond its local and linguistic origins. For example, Soviet novelist Maxim Gorky's novel *Mat'* (*Mother*) was published in English and German prior to the publication of the original Russian text (Morris 14), which was possible because of these international networks. According to David Damrosch world literature should "encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (1) and by this definition a pioneering work like *Mother* attains a position within World Literature. According to Damroschian idea of world

literature, working-class texts, which were translated into various languages and reached a much wider audience, should be integral part of world literature. As transnational texts working-class literature belongs to an international audience from their conception—they are written to be accepted by a wider audience. This 'cross cultural circulation theory' is a precondition for working-class literature (especially socialist literature).

Borrowing from Franco Moretti's concept of world literature, I study working-class literature through two cognitive metaphors: tree and wave. As a Darwinian tree, working-class literature develops within its local geo-linguistic and political domain and is internally connected to works which branch out of the same epistemological soil. Thus within its regional scale a genre like the working-class novel will address questions of colonialism, feminism, racism etc. to be in symphony with other local-regional texts and genres. However, like waves, working-class novels spread out into the ocean of the working-class literary sphere and influence its structure and stability while becoming one with the international literary system. Single-disciplinary readings of working-class novels within national-linguistic traditions can take place independently without any knowledge about the comparative international contexts of the texts; but such readings will fail to grasp the texts of working-class literature as transnationalism as an essential dimension of the genre. My current approach to the genre of the working-class novel also shifts from the widespread practice of textual close-reading; it is impossible to present close readings of every working-class novel to analyze the nature of this world literary system. Again, following Moretti, in this chapter I present a "distant reading" approach to the genre of global working-class novel, and show that trends and currents from different corners met within the literary system and became an international phenomenon.

Journalism and the Working-class Novel

The development of Realism, which was the preferred 'mode' of representation of 'real' situations, changed the world of the novel. The genre of the novel became more welcoming to classes other than the bourgeoisie in its content, though readership was still restricted to the handful of literate people trained in the skills of reading a novel. Critics like Ian Watt and Benedict Anderson have identified the four distinct features that emphasize the relationship between the novel and middle-class bourgeoisie as: realism, individualism, universality of point of view and the focus on private life. Watt argues realism to be a novelistic characteristic and relates the genre directly to middle class. On the other hand, Anderson claims that the novel serves the bourgeoisie by creating solidarity through its adaptation of a universal point-of-view. Both critics have found a similarity between newspaper and novel; they propose that the latter is a fictive form of the former. The proletarian novel challenged this approach of restricting the genre of the novel within the bourgeois category. By adapting a proletarian worldview, these novels challenge the bourgeois notion of the 'private', present multiple points of views and focus on working-class collectivity in socialist universalism. During the inter World War period, international working-class journalism acted as a public sphere were culture and political debates were shaped. In this section I will show how working-class members participated in the production of literary content through journalistic avenues. I analyze how more sophisticated literary experimentations with realism were developing simultaneously with fact-based, content rich revolutionary literature by the working-class members. Finally, I argue that revolutionary realism and working-class journalism are codependent and mutually influential; together they established the style of documentary realism which is one of the chief tenets of 1930s literature.

Starting from journalistic pieces on oppressive and abusive situations of work in factories and farms, working-class literature manifested itself in poetry, performance, and the visual arts along with other traditional genres of literature by the beginning of the twentieth century. Though initially confined within the smaller working-class presses, and communist and socialist publishing houses, by the 1920s and 30s working-class literary texts appeared in large numbers within the world literary scene. Working-class writers' associations were not uncommon and these organizations focused on building transnational networks of writers to build a society based on class-conscious education through literature and the arts.

Working-class literary culture was heavily influenced by newspapers, magazines, periodicals and journals, which contested the function of literature and art in the making of a class-conscious society. Some of the most important examples of working-class literary journalism from the first half of the twentieth century are: *Die Linkskurve*, the *Battle Flag* and the *New Masses*. *Die Linkskurve,* the literary magazine of the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller or 'Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Authors' of Germany, published critical pieces that debated the definition of working-class literature; both fictive and journalistic pieces that spoke for and about working-class life were considered to be working-class literature while authors of working-class origin were encouraged to become working-class writers under the instruction of professional writers (Murphy 40). Proletarian literary and political journals were also founding blocks of working-class culture in the context of imperial Japan and its colonies in the inter-war-period. The *Battle Flag* was the most important literary journal in imperial Japan. And the *New Masses* (one of the most renowned proletarian magazines of the time), originating from New York, USA, ran from 1926 till 1948. The *New Masses* discovered 'proletarian literature' and 'proletarian realism' in the American context.

Bourgeois culture facilitated a social space which accommodated newspapers as primary literary public sphere where social debates were documented. Habermas has emphasized the importance of print capitalism in changing the role of newspapers in a bourgeois public sphere. Newspapers became "weapons of party politics" and publishers became dealers of public opinion ("Public Sphere" 53). The working-class literary movement also appropriated this new role of mass produced printed newspapers as 'bearers of public opinion', which is reflected in the high volume of journalistic activities within working-class organizations during the 1930s. Finally, working-class literature transitioned from the factual to the fictional plane, and working-class journalism evolved into the genre of working-class novel. The new genre not only continued the trend of bearing public opinions in 'dialogic imagination' but also transferred the literary plane into an interactive public sphere.

Journalism played an important role in introducing working-class literature to different geo-cultural pockets as well. Members from working-class backgrounds, as well as class educated citizens from bourgeois backgrounds, collaborated together to bring forward this new idea of literature that presented social dialectics of class society. With an ambition to combine the factual and the fictional, working-class literature in the Soviet Union maintained a close relationship with journalism since the beginning of the twentieth century. Owing to the Soviet Union's unprecedented control over the Communist International, global working-class literature was influenced by Soviet literary experiments that accommodated journalistic tendencies as a successful literary device for voicing working-class concerns. Soviet Bolshevik journalists emphasized 'presentation' for political purposes rather than information during the civil war years after the October Revolution. Thus style was esteemed in higher regard than 'fact' itself, which later became an important aspect of working-class writing. Critics like Kate Campbell,

Shiela Fitzpatrick and Jeremy Hicks have shown that this unique approach to journalism shaped the Soviet literary forms and styles until 1934, when the state announced socialist realism to be the only official form.

Soviet journalists also revolutionized the idea of readership by soliciting the participation of readers through letters. Such 'active' readers were entitled 'worker correspondents'; they provided firsthand reports of proletarian and peasant life, and inaugurated a literary cultural communication amongst the working-class members through the medium of newspaper. This movement is known as the worker-correspondent movement and Nicolai Bukharin was one of its most prominent leaders. The movement considered members with direct labor experience as assets to proletarian literary culture. Workers were sought after for their contributions to represent lived-experience of proletarian and peasant life in the public sphere. Evgeny Dobrenko has shown how these worker correspondents were 'instrumental' to the Soviet working-class literary culture in the inter-war-period. The concept of worker correspondent bears in itself the dichotomy between 'literary aspirations and journalistic duties'. While grass-roots proletarian organizations struggled for increasing the number of 'worker correspondents', leaders like Trotsky and literary critics like Voronsky were not convinced of accepting 'non-literary' expressions of proletarian life as proletarian literature, which emerged from the contributions of these worker correspondents. Both Voronsky and Trotsky agreed on the documentary value of pieces produced by 'worker-correspondents' but declined to recognize them as literature. Alexander Voronsky perceived of literary function to be cognitive (as opposed to social); according to him, 'non-talented' worker authors and worker-correspondents could not be trusted with literary activities as they do not have the skills to achieve the desired cognitive effect. However, these subordinate literary figures could contribute by carrying out a "vulgar

descriptive or recording function" which Voronsky called 'bytovism'. Trotsky echoed the same view about literature produced by the proletariat:

> The products of proletarian poetry- not all, but many –are significant cultural and historical documents. But this does not at all mean that they are artistic documents…Undoubtedly the weak, the colorless and even the illiterate poems may reflect the path of political growth of a poet and a class and many have an immeasurable significance as a symptom of culture. But weak and what is more, illiterate poems do not make up proletarian poetry, because they do not make up poetry at all. (167)

The worker-correspondent movement of the Soviet Union challenged the idea of the literary, and helped in designing the concept of working-class aesthetic. Though often lacking the necessary training to produce texts that were traditionally perceived as literature, the movement created a space for conversations about life in the workers' tongue within the literary sphere. The grotesque and the illiterate were accommodated to express their life-story without 'literary' filters; a correspondent said: "no one can give voice to the masses quite like they can themselves" (qtd in Hicks 576). Commenting on the relationship between information and style, worker-correspondent Mikhail Kalinin, wrote in *Bendota* in 1924:

> In *Bendota* I have often have the occasion to read letters by peasants that have been published without any changes. All their clumsiness of style and grammatical errors were left in their original state. And I confess these letters give me far more than those sharpened by the pencil of a literary corrector. In those letters that are printed in what you might call "their birthday suit" I see the genuine inhabitant of the countryside, his genuine psychology, his genuine attitude to things, his cultural level, even a reliable picture of his social identity, his economic position, and ultimately, the degree to which he is sincere. (qtd in Hicks 576)

In 1925 Raskol'nikov distinguished between the proletarian author and worker-correspondent in a piece published by proletarian literary journal *Na postu*:

> The range of interest of the proletarian author is broader that the worker-correspondent: the worker-correspondent reflects on everyday life, ways of doing things, economic conditions, the order or disorder of his own factory, whereas

> what the proletarian writer reflects is not just the life of a factory, not even just the life of the working-class as a whole, but what he reflects is life, the psychology and the outlook of the most disparate classes, of the most disparate layers of society, but of course from a proletarian point of view. (qtd in Hicks 571)

Proletarian authors were required to 'transform' the factual data received from pieces by worker-correspondents into fictional reality that is familiar to most working-class members. The particularity of events was to be changed into universal incidents, and the macro picture of the context was presented from the workers' point-of-view. In some ways the worker-correspondent's role is comparable to the literary informant; the proletarian novelists' job is to create generalizable data from the independent and subjective information. The worker-correspondent movement initiated a debate that will haunt working-class literature throughout the rest of the century: how can we change the subjective data to objective knowledge? Later theories on realism try to describe this process through their analysis of the concept of 'representation'.

Working-class journalists were regarded as existing somewhere between the working-class writer and the proletarian worker. Open calls to worker-correspondents were launched by the VAPP. Jeremy Hicks speculates that the ultimate goal of the worker-correspondent was focused on literary achievement, which weakened proletarian literary practices emerging from engaged journalism (572). While editing played an important role in making the worker-correspondents' submissions 'legible', activist and leader Nicholai Bukharin emphasized the 'documentary' value of the aforesaid texts. Bukharin feared that any attempt to tamper with the original works of these worker-correspondents (either by 'training' for superior literary production or via editing) to attain better 'quality' would result in self-censorship in the part of the working-class author. In order to write in a language that is different from their everyday cultural practice, the worker-correspondent distances their literary piece from real-life, thus

defeating the purpose of revolutionary art. Stylistic corrections imposed political normative tendencies as art became further away from life. From the mid-1920s emphasis of working-class art shifts from content to style. Worker-correspondents' contents, points of views and style were eventually manipulated to create generalizable and comprehensible content that reflects on the working-class as a whole. Later this tendency culminates in creating 'typical' and 'total' pictures of working-class life within socialist and working-class literature in various parts of the world through the mode of realism. The intervention of the Central Committee Press Department marginalized the informal function of the worker-correspondents (Hicks 579). Narrative style overpowered the need for truthful and subjective depiction in the working-class literary movement and correspondents experienced a shift in their motivation and interest as 'violence, intimidation and indifference' from the bureaucratic authorities hindered the movement's focus on 'original' documentation of working-class writing.

In the East Asian context, proletarian magazines, periodicals and journals facilitated a working-class literary public sphere. Mats Karlsson's study shows that in the context of Japan and its colonies the working-class cultural sphere was dominated by literary and artistic endeavors produced from the grassroots level. In addition to fictional pieces and real-historical reports of the contemporary state of capitalism, letters from working-class correspondents about real life incidents were sought and published. Literary circles were meant to encourage and advance these published topics through personal interaction. By late 1932 the cultural movement showed signs of decay. While the working-class members of literary circles focused on transforming themselves into successful authors, the interactive aspect of the movement diminished. To top it all publication ban on working-class literary artifacts by the Japanese imperial government added to the growing challenge of recruiting working-class correspondents.

Prior to 1931 various small proletarian organizations and labor unions boomed in Japan, who contributed towards a bottom-up outlook towards forming a working-class culture. However the journal *Kappu* and its affiliated magazines dominated the cultural domain for a year after its introduction; during this period the proletarian cultural movement got centralized and eventually was crushed by the fascist Empire of Japan.

Twentieth century working-class culture operated within the structure of modernist-capitalism and the working-class literature movement used communicative action for its revolutionary potential. In contrast to the 'western' notion of newspaper, which "still belongs to capital", post October Revolution the Soviet Union produced a revised notion of the newspaper, where the reader was not only a passive recipient of information. The Soviet press encouraged the readers to "gain access to authorship". Such readers were experts in the material conditions from which the literary is derived and had the potential of becoming an author at any given time. A materialistic analysis of the role of readers and authors help us understand how the literary interacts with its contemporary social structure. Most of the working-class magazines, periodicals and journals that were in print in the inter-war period emphasized contributions from worker-authors who had direct relation to labor in the capitalist-modernist system. One of the main agendas of the working-class press was to make the petit-bourgeois skilled intellectuals aware of the reifying effects of class culture and turn them into class-conscious citizens. The Communist International proposed to use these newly 'educated' citizens as skilled writer-workers who would help with literary training of worker-authors. As a result, the nature, scope and function of the literary sphere were transformed.

This new form of public sphere also assumed new functions and challenged the public-private debate of bourgeois individualist philosophy. When the door to public spheres was

opened to people from working-class strata of the society, the public sphere also immediately concerned itself with the problem of wage labor, poverty, surplus and unemployment. Literature (both factual and fictional) showed that 'working-class' life is not locked up inside the factory gates, and class oppression extends its impact into the personal-collective lives of the workers. Questions of wage labor, unemployment and class culture show that the difference between public and private domain is non-existent in the context of working-class societies.

Development of working-class journalism was the first step toward directly engaging working-class members with production of literary content. Though worker-correspondents were highly sought after figures within journalistic avenues, worker-authors were heavily criticized by Hungarian-Marxist theorist and critic Lukács. In four pieces published between November 1931 and December 1932 in *Die Linkskurve* Lukács assumes a conservative position and criticizes works of Willi Bredel and Ernst Ottwalt for un-literary depictions of facts and events. These working-class authors were accused of scientific and stereotypical transformation of events into fictional plots, which failed to achieve the desired typicality of working-class novel. Moving away from bourgeois-capitalist subjectivity, working-class literature embraced objectivity and factuality. But in order to be perceived as 'revolutionary literature' Lukács demanded these working-class texts contextualize examples of collective resistance within a dialectical-material history of the class system. Only documentary style and factual orientation does not produce class conscious novels. Lukács emphasizes the 'total' reality (instead of a fraction of objectified social events) as the most important aspect of working-class literature. In order to capture this total reality the working-class novels use the technique of generalizability. Real-historical particular events are transformed into fictional absolutes through the literary process. Until this transformation, dialectical interaction between subjective experience and objective history of

working-class lives is missing. Though subjective reports from individual's lives and experiences have important documentary value, in order to become a working-class mouthpiece working-class novels are required to represent universal conditions of class struggle.

Stylistically then there were two different kinds of working-class novels. The first category, consisting of texts written mostly by worker-authors, focused on real-historical facts. Reportage was their favorite mode. The second category consisted of texts with more complicated literary techniques. These texts were primarily written by skilled authors who invested their literary interest in working-class culture and experimented with various forms of realism. Reportage or documentary-style and realist modes can be identified as two parallel ways through which working-class culture was represented in working-class novels. During the 1930s, a period when working-class novels were produced in high volume (within world working-class literary sphere) and debates on the method of world working-class literature were addressed in international conventions like World Conference of Revolutionary Writers (Kharkov, 1930), reportage was established as a preferred mode of working-class novel in locations like China[6], Germany and the USA[7]. On the other hand, by the early 1930s the Soviet Union focused exclusively on realism as the mode for socialist literature. Reportage and realism influenced each other; working-class novels' heavy reliance on dialogues revolutionized realism. Documentary realism, integrated reportage and realism and became the most popularly used literary techniques in international working-class novels.

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[6] A detailed analysis of Chinese reportage literature is available in Charles A. Laughlin's *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience.*

[7] Details of the US and German fascination with the reportage style is discussed in James Murphy's *The Proletarian Moment: The Controversy over Leftism in Literature.*

Working-class literature, especially the genre of the working-class novel, appropriated content from working-class journalism and expressed it through the mode of literary realism. As a result, not only was literary content liberated from their bourgeois outlook but the concept of author and literary audience was also revolutionized. Walter Benjamin analyzed the revised role of the author as a cultural producer in his 1934 essay entitled "The Author as Producer". In this essay we see how the author carries out dual roles of a social, political agent and a creative artist; s/he collects her literary content from the material realities of working-class life, and re-creates them to add to the working-class ideal and culture. Benjamin's essay points out the transformative role of the author; literary creations transcend boundaries of representation and mimesis to express the factual history in an alternative format. In prewar Stalinist Russia writers were conceived as new laborers. The working-class author also 'produced' its reader through the text and created a literary space where multiple voices and point of views coexisted.

While the Soviet Union produced engaging conversation about the role of literature in working-class culture, debates on the idea of working-class literature, its authorship, its target audience, and its political implication were burning issues for the US working-class literary scene of the '30s. As the literary space was used to establish working-class cultural symbols, ways to 'represent' the real world situations into the fictional plane became chief concern for critics, theorists and authors. The working-class cultural movement established a new semantic relationship between the real-historical and the literary. In search of the ideal form of working-class symbolism, authors experimented with both fictional and factual genres. Through active participation of class-conscious members, the working-class literary sphere created an interactive political space where questions of class symbolism was debated during the 1920s and 30s.

How does the genre of the working-class novel resist reification and evoke class consciousness?

Following the legacy of "western Marxist"[8] critics like Lukács, Bloch, Korsch, Marcuse, Della Volpe, Colletti, Sartre, Adorno, and Althusser, I look into the genre of working-class novel to interpret how these literary texts overcame reification and became bearers of political opinion. The genre of the twentieth century working-class novel was born of a political purpose. Committed to present a material analysis of modern class society, the genre overcomes reifying effects and shows how class-conscious resistance can liberate the laboring classes from their victimization and oppression within the capitalist-modernist structure. As a part of international working-class cultural movement, working-class novels awaken class consciousness through realistic depictions of class culture in everyday life. Through the analysis of historical materials the class structure of these novels demonstrate that the working-class cannot break free from the exploitative system until they can form a class-conscious collective struggle and overcome the hegemony of bourgeois ideology.

Sharing a referential relationship with the historical material-world, working-class novels show how labor producing classes remain internally conflicted until they can become class conscious. Social and economic relations within the capitalist production system unite a group of people to form a "class in itself" whose objective and material interests contrast with the logic of capital. "A class in itself" remains unconscious of the political and economic hegemony of the oppressing class. It is through class-consciousness that a "class in itself" becomes a "class for itself" and resists the reifying discourse of capitalist-modernist structure. In *History and Class Consciousness* Lukács identifies the complicated problem of defining class as a social category

[8] Perry Anderson defines 'Western Marxism' as a Marxist discourse "displaced from trade unions and political parties to research institutes and university departments."

in relevance with historical materialism. The modern proletariat and bourgeoisie are the only two "pure" classes within the modernist-capitalist system but it is only the proletariat who can have class consciousness. Lukács starts his analysis of the category of class by studying the practical function of class consciousness. He writes:

> Regarded abstractly and formally, then, class consciousness implies a class-conditioned unconsciousness of one's own socio-historical and economic condition. This condition is given as a definite structural relation, a definite formal nexus which appears to govern the whole of life. The 'falseness', the illusion implicit in this situation is in no sense arbitrary; it is simply the intellectual reflex of the objective economic structure. (HCC)

Consciousness is perceived as an opposition to the bourgeois idea of self interest in the *History of Class Consciousness*. Working-class novels in World Literature show how a 'class in itself', which is internally conflicted (with individual self–interests), and can become a 'class for itself' through an awareness of the antagonist relationship between the laboring classes and the property owning bourgeoisie. "Class-in-itself" is a category that is yet to be born; this category is formed on the basis of solidarity from sharing similar life experience and situations of oppression:

> The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter [the individuals] find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it. (Marx, *GI* 1D)

"Class" becomes a class itself only when it culminates in a social process. Transformation of mere solidarity of working-class living experience into a social movement remained a central challenge in Marxist theory; Lukács adds to the field by showing that a class-conscious movement rooted in the actions of a working-class organization can cause this transformation. The working-class (including the proletariat) becomes a class for-itself only when it can establish

a dialectical relationship between social movement and shared living experience (which are two non-identical categories). Through a historical process, communities of wage laborers earn social experience which leads to formation of class identity of the proletariat in modernity. The degree of class-consciousness varies according to the stage of transition from class-in-itself to class-for-itself and it is reflected in community's cultural expression.

Class consciousness plays an important role in the class struggle because "the proletariat and only the proletariat can discern in the correct understanding of the nature of society as a power-factor of the first, and perhaps decisive importance" (*HCC*). Through class consciousness, the working-class becomes aware of the true nature of their class position, though "reification" stands in the way of this realization. Reification is a key concept for analyzing the social structure in Weberian Marxism and it demonstrates how a Capitalist society embodies objectifying tendencies towards laboring bodies and associated culture within the sociopolitical, cultural and economic domain. Mediation amongst social, political, cultural and economic spheres of society is directly and primarily controlled by 'reification.' Literary imagination of a working-class resistance has to overcome the 'reification' effect and show how the subjective worlds of active agents are transformed into objective entities of a commodified world within practices of the capitalist economy.

As devices of class education, working-class novels show that workers are eternal prisoners of class hegemony (that results in reified identity for working-class members) which could only be countered through class-conscious social movement. The working-class novel hero's consciousness shows how "the dialectical relationship between immediate interests and objective impact on the whole of society" (*HCC*) are unregistered by the community until the members can overcome the reification effect. Individual experience of the class process

essentially hinders an understanding of the 'whole' picture of class exploitation and the class conscious working-class hero can establish a link between the two. Class consciousness is neither individual psychological consciousness nor is it mass consciousness; it is a philosophical consciousness that is rooted in the narrative of working-class worldview. Lukács described class consciousness as a process through which the working-class members: "…become conscious, of the historical role of the class" (*HCC*). Twentieth century working-class novels were part of a social-cultural movement that drew attention to the reification effect, which obstructs the development of class consciousness. Reification can be resisted through a historical-material analysis of the class system and the working-class novels show that realist literature as a social-ideological institution can facilitate historically conscious class education.

Though Marx never attempted to theorize an ideal literary mode that would be effective and efficient in serving the class-conscious working-class movement, in his 1859 letter to the Swedish novelist Ferdinand Lassalle, Marx expresses his interest in realism as a medium for creating truly class-conscious literature. After Marx's death, Engels mentions realism as a preferred mode for the writer of class struggle in a letter to Margaret Harkness in 1888. In this letter, Engels provides a critical review of Harkness's novel *A City Girl*. He writes: "Realism, to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances. Now your characters are typical enough, to the extent that you portray them. But the same thing cannot be said of the circumstances surrounding them and out of which their actions arises". Lukács identified typical characters and typical settings as the defining principle for class-conscious realist literature. He elaborates on the concept of typical:

> What makes a type is not its average nature nor its individual character- no matter how profoundly seen- but the fact that it in all the human and the important social determining impulses of a historical period run together and cross each other, the

> fact that the criterion of the type shows these impulses in the culmination of the possibilities they contain, in the most extreme representation of the extreme, showing concretely at the same time the summit and the frontiers of the totality of man and the epoch. (as translated and qtd. in Mittenzwei 228)

In their limited writings on the nature and role of literature in relation to historical material thinking and class struggle, Marx and Engels focus on the representative aspect of the text rather than its didactic capacities. Vivid imageries of the impacts of class relations in individuals' lives and the community's culture reflect on the problems of modernist-capitalist production system, which Engels points out as quintessential quality of class consciousness literature in the above quotation. Realism was the ideal mode for expressing vivid imageries and when combined with many characters, chaotic settings and 'progressive' projection of time, the realist novel was formed; it was the best possible way to represent the 'total' picture of exploitation within a class divided society. Both realism and the novel were appropriated and adapted according to the needs of working-class public sphere, which made it possible for the genre to become an expressive symbol of dialectical-material situations.

Early attempts to develop a truly Marxist and Socialist literary mode struggled around the propositions of Engels. Typical character in a typical setting presented the dialectical nature of human society. Narrative strategy of such a text requires the author to be objective; the author should refrain from influencing the reader with his or her personal analysis of a situation. The goal is to provide a situation that speaks about conflicts and biases in the governing principles of a bourgeois-capitalist society; the readers are required to interpret the texts themselves.

Re-creation of the material world of working-class culture in the fictional plane is a defining feature of the working-class novel; and it is through realism that working-class realities can be represented in the abstract world of fiction. Two important developments in the theories

of realism during the 1930s established it as the most prominent mode of representing the class process. The first one is critical realism, proposed and developed by György Lukács in the early stages and the second is Soviet Socialist Realism, the state-sponsored program of scientific realism developed in the Soviet Union. Lukács questions the ontology of 'reality' in his essay "Appearance and Essence": "what is the reality which the literary work must reflect faithfully?" (17). His idea of Marxist aesthetics is everything opposite to the idea of "photographic reproduction" of the superficial perception of the physical world. The cognitive function of dialectic materialism is interrogated here. Lukács attempts to define a relationship between the essence and appearance of art. He claims that both the essence and appearance of art are forces of "objective reality" and not "man's consciousness." He proposes that reality lies beyond the experiential and empirical and emphasizes the "essence" of reality, which is represented through the "appearance" in ideal realist works.

According to the Soviet-Marxist tradition, the basic principles of the work of art involve a three-step process: the *nàrodnost*, the *klàssnost'* and the *partiinost'* which translates as "peopleness", "classness" and "partyness" respectively. The Soviet school of art and literature that flourished under the state sponsorship and peaked during the 1930s appropriated this three-step methodology to study the relationship between art and the masses (peopleness), the class characteristics of art (classness) and the identification of the work of art with the Communist Party (partyness). Prior to the advent of state sponsored Socialist Realist methodology Soviet literary sphere and international working-class culture were influenced by the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic school that focused on the problems of the naròdnost. The school studied art and literature as the melting point of aesthetic quality, ideological content and social function. Naròdnost is the quality that determines the relationship between the art and the epoch.

According to the Marxist-Leninist school, artistic works become popular when the social ideas and aesthetic forms reflected through the texts are firmly grounded in the progressive tendencies of the time. The fundamental principle of a popular art lies in its deep rootedness in the life of the people in a particular epoch.

During the 1930s Scientific Marxism in the Soviet Union advanced the *klàssonost'* traits of artistic works. In *Soviet Socialist Realism*, C. Vaugham James analyzes the development of socialist realism as a project for the education of the workers in the spirit of communism. The authors were under instructions to produce works committed to the truthful depiction of the historical reality that contributed to a class conscious ideology. The relationship between an artist's work and society is not uniform across the epochs and this function is demonstrated differently in pre-class, class and classless society. Marxism provides a hypothesis of the naròdnost of the progressive art by linking it with the theory of the Socialist Revolution, which revolves around the relationship between art and the masses or literature and society. Soviet Marxism shows that art always bears the symptoms of class interest and participates in the process of class struggle in both direct and subversive ways.

During the 1920s and '30s Lukácsian Realism and Soviet Socialist Realism dominated the international debates on 'representation' and relationship between literature and society. Proletarian literary debates in the US context addressed similar issues. Critics like Rahv, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, and Granville Hicks studied the category of proletarian literature and showed that by resisting reification these texts become active ingredients of class war in the ideological sphere. In 1930 Mike Gold, the editor of the *New Masses*, used the term "Proletarian Realism" in an essay by the same title to introduce a new literary form which could express and comment on the reality of the Depression Era in the USA (or for that matter Canada

or England). Proletarian realism focused on class-consciousness and collective political struggle as their defining characteristics and thus created a new literary mode which was faithful to the Marxist ideas about the role of literature (or art in general) in society. Though both Socialist Realism and Proletarian Realism produce texts with Marxist overtones and attempt to analyze and represent proletarian life, they differ in aesthetic style and their approach to artistic freedom/originality.

Realism mediates the reality of physical-experiential; after deriving its contents from reality, realism gives it a universal quality and liberates it from its obligation of presenting objective reflection of reality (Macherey 118). Representation of real life situations in literary works is more than a mechanical process, abstract theory or purely creative exercise; the theories of fictionality elaborate on the true nature of representation and evaluate the status of the represented as a sociological phenomenon. A portion of critical scholarship focuses on the idea that art and literature, by definition, are a step removed from 'real' life and thus should not be counted as an authentic treaty of social commentary. Instead of studying working-class novels as verisimilitudes of reality I look into these fictional worlds as "signifier" of the material-world. Realist projections of the real historical world are not a reflection, but a signification. As a rhetorical genre, working-class novels follow narrative logic and as such are dependent upon "human propensity for symbolic or primary process thinking" (Bohemeen 91). Rhetoric of working-class literature persuades its audience to become class-conscious and develop of a discourse of class in the public sphere.

Conclusion: Why did the working-class novel emerge as a genre of international class struggles?

A multitude of sociocultural, as well as literary and economic factors, influenced the development of the working-class novel as a popular genre to represent the internal dialectics of social class. Firstly, the novel as a genre can accommodate the depth and breadth of characters necessary to show the multilayered reality of working-class struggle. Secondly, by the early twentieth century there was an established audience for the genre of realist novel, which was often critical of social injustice and played the role of bourgeois conscience; so the genre of the working-class novel was furthering this line of thought to the extreme and suggesting a complete restructuring of the socioeconomic system. Thirdly, the intellectual class (who were indispensable for the class revolution) was often from middle-class background, whose literary and educational training managed to accommodate a revolutionary content within a form that they were used to and comfortable with.

Born out of the political and aesthetic project of class consciousness, working-class novels are dialectical in form and content: they juxtapose a bourgeois literary form and working-class worldview and create a heteroglossia that voices every contradiction of the capitalist social structure. Bakhtin used the term ‘dialogism’ to describe the relationship amongst the languages used in a novel form. All dialogue requires the pre-existence of a difference. Difference of opinion initiates dialogue, which becomes an act of communication, generates new ideas. The “condition” that makes the dialogue possible, i.e., the “difference” or “opposition,” is of paramount importance for the development of dialogism. The double voiced nature of speech lies in the foundation of the theory of dialogism, where “two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 360).

Dialogism emphasizes the dualism of any sociolinguistic entity: “subject is constituted by both self and other” (Young 85). The working-class revolution as a subject becomes a typical

example of this dualism as working-class identity is manifested as a step between 'self' and 'other' through the fictional working-class characters. The class-conscious protagonist is constituted as an 'other' to the bourgeois individualist and a comrade to the struggling worker. The working-class hero maintains this dialogic or oppositional relationship of unity and difference with all the other characters, the novel's setting, its theme and its timeline. Class conscious working-class collective shares a dialogic relationship with all the other existing classes and their ideologies:

> Dialogic relationships exist among all elements of novelistic structure; that is they are juxtaposed contrapuntally. And this is so because dialogic relationships are much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life – in general, everything that is meaning and significance. (*Dostoevsky* 40)

The dualism embodied in the dialogism of characters manifests multiple conflicting points-of-view and agency-structure collision. Perception of identity through formation of collectivity is also a recurring feature in working-class novels. Formal dialectics and internal dialogism maintain the equilibrium between text and context, narrative structure and fictional characterization. Contradictory ideologies of Capitalism and class-consciousness are represented through the projections of class culture in working-class novels; realist presentation of 'typical' incidents show how the state apparatus are structured in a way that contradicts working-class interests and results in the cycle of misery for working masses. The contradiction in formal structure, ideology and presentation style plays key role from micro to macro level in the production, narration and reception of the genre. Being a polyphonic genre, working-class novels embody the dialogic principle at their core. Integrating oppositional or dialectical point of views that exist amongst the narrator, author, characters and their speech, these texts portray a 'total'

worldview that was initially suggested as one of the core features of a class-conscious literary text.

Language is a social construct and each conflicting class in a Capitalist socioeconomic system has its own “voice” in the linguistic sphere. The characters of working-class novels are embodiments of these voices that reciprocate the ongoing class struggle of the ‘real’ world. Each of the utterances that occur in the novel’s space is dialogic in nature. Working-class novels favor free indirect discourse to represent the world of diverse and dialogic ideologies through its characters. Focusing heavily on dialogue in colloquial dialect, the working-class novels create sociolinguistic identities for the working-class members. Dialects also provided regional and specific dimensions to working-classes from varied geographical origins, thus resisting the homogenizing tendencies of universalization. As a result voices of Manchester based working-classes in the novel space are significantly different from working-class members of Oklahoma, which conforms to the diversity of the working-class communities. Similarity of class relations and experiences of these class relations in everyday lives tie the working-class communities of varied geo-historical origins together to form a working-class collective, which is international in character.

The proletarian worldview and the philosophy of class struggle that Mao Tse-tung explained as the basic methodology of dialectical materialism are expressed, appropriated and circulated through the genre of working-class novel. Dialectics is interrelated with ‘dialogism’ in literary criticism. While working-class worldview is dialectic, the “double voiced” or “dialogic” nature is a defining feature of the genre of novel. Thus working-class novels are both dialectic and dialogic. In *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson states that Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism (which provides the essence of heteroglossia) is closely related to the Marxist idea of

dialectic: “the basic formal requirement of dialectical analysis is maintained and its elements are still restructured in terms of contradiction” (84). Both concepts are associated with the “oppositional” or “difference of opinion” and they aid realism with the power to express situations of modernist-capitalist socioeconomic structure. But in doing so the genre challenges the traditional characteristics of the genre of ‘novel’ and in some ways fabricates the formal tendencies and incorporates trends from oral narrative, journalistic discourse and documentary realism.

Working-class novels of the twentieth century embody the sociological tension between producing situations and responsive actions in relation to any particular text. Particular sociological importance attached to this genre derives from its commitment towards presenting (not representing) a “total,” “typical,” and “objective” documentation of the life experiences of working-class, promoted through the conditions of modernity. The settings of these texts are predicated upon sociopolitical events of the time of their origin, but instead of presenting factual reports about particular incidents of class oppression and emerging resistance, the genre of the working-class novel strives to create a typical or generalizable ‘story’ within the fictional plane.

The relationship between typical and generalizable is convoluted. Both techniques aim to construct fictional spaces that correspond to particular real-historical incidents. While typical texts focus on rational and objective representations, generalizable texts aim for identifiable, sentimental depictions. The former is closer to a factual report, while the latter is more inclined towards an imaginary fiction. Working-class and proletarian characters, portrayed in typical working-class novels, are prisoners of their situations and the narratives do not interfere with any dramatic resolution. On the other hand, generalizable working-class characters also carry beams of hope, of change, and empower themselves through dramatic aide. Both typical and

generalizable proletarian narratives aim to present their characters and contexts as aspects of universal working-class culture and struggle. In the following chapters I will analyze how the tropes of 'typicality' and 'generalizability' were adapted in working-class novels of World Literature to speak for and about laboring masses of the twentieth century.

Chapter Two

Dominant Trends in the Genre of the Proletarian Novel: Transnational Narratives of "Western-White-Heterosexual Able-bodied" Working-class Members

The emergence of the proletarian public sphere provided a literary domain where authors and readers, who were interested in initiating debates about the state of labor practice and its related economic and cultural exploitation, could interact and facilitate further political conversation about these subjects. This sphere was international in nature, owing to the global nature of class exploitation and aided the real-historic working-class cultural movement by creating a political consciousness about class hegemony within the material-ideological sphere of literature. Though the proletarian literary movement of the first half of the twentieth century embraced many generic expressions, proletarian novels of the "30s gained the most academic, as well as popular, attention. The genre's capacity to re-tell conditions of material-life in the fictional plane transcends its value as a revolutionary apparatus for its contemporary readers and makes it an important social document for future researchers as well. This chapter analyses how1930s western proletarian novels depict the socioeconomic conditions that gave birth to a class culture, which is internally conflicted due to its false ideology. Each of these novels represents the complex process of class-conscious collective identity formation as a universal reality within modernity.

Thus far, American and British proletarian novels are the most well-researched subjects within the genre of international working-class novel. As a result, trends and tenets established by these two contexts have been accepted as defining features of the genre. In this chapter, I analyze how these dominant tendencies within working-class world literature correspond to the

Marxist ideas on transnationalism and the universality of proletarian life through "typical" representations. I demonstrate that the "typical" and "popular" western Anglophone proletarian novels of the 1930s focus on establishing a "white," "heterosexual," and "able-bodied" discourse of class culture, which fails to address the heterogeneity of the working-class collective.[9]

Marxist critics and theorists (including Soviet scholars) outlined the conditions for "typical" proletarian literature. Literary manifestations of such theories were reflected in the majority of proletarian (as well as working-class) texts during the Great Depression. This chapter enquires into the concept of "typicality" in the context of the proletarian novel and investigates how the genre of novel went through a process of evolution, which included redefinition of novelistic content, subject, plot, theme, setting and, at the same time, produced a revised perception of author and reader. When the public sphere engaged the political concerns of class struggle, worker-writers broke into the literary sphere and inscribed the material conditions of class struggle in their texts. As a result of this alteration, the genre of the novel was capable of expressing dialectical-material conditions of working-class lives, which contradicted the genre's traditional fidelity to the bourgeois outlook. Through close readings of three 1930s Anglophone western working-class novels I will address how the apparent mismatching of the proletarian subject and novel form, embraces a dialectical opposition that brings forth a dialogic literary space where the voices of two conflicting class collisions are manifested.

Realism was developed and revolutionized by literary practitioners and theorists as well and became the ideal mode of representation for working-class culture. In European, Soviet and

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[9]Though a significant body of literature from the 1930s have focused on gender issues within labor politics, these texts were not the "typical" representatives of the genre of "proletarian novel" and often failed to achieve a level of popularity comparable to works like *The Native Son* or *The Grapes of Wrath*.

American literary traditions, the realist novel became the most favored literary/creative mode and aided the birth and growth of the proletarian novel. The genre of the proletarian novel attained its international nature through the depiction of total pictures and typical situations. I will compare the concepts of generalizability and stereotyping in relation to universalization and typicality as methods of representing the twentieth-century working-class and/or proletariat. Comparing Walter Greenwood's "typical" proletarian novel *Love on the Dole* to John Steinbeck's "popular" novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, I show how "typicality" is turned into "generalizability" and adapted within localized literary traditions. Such adaptation is seen as a shift from the original Marxist proposition, but was successful in popularizing the texts, which reached out to a wide range of audiences. Canadian author Irene Baird's 1939 novel *Waste Heritage* is also contextualized within global Anglophone proletarian literature and its contribution to the tradition of working-class literature is contested.

In his book *The Proletarian Moment*, James Murphy shows how events in international history influenced the making of the "red decade" of the 1930s when working-class and proletarian literature surfaced as an important part of the literary public sphere. The Soviet and German proletarian literary spheres of the first three decades of the twentieth century are identified as important influences on international proletarian literature and cultural movement in his study. While the "outside" (international) political and historical influences remain the same, regional literary trends, local politics and internal (including national) variables of social identity, give British, American and Canadian proletarian literature their distinct identity. Any reading focused on nationalist trends within proletarian writing is anti-Marxist by definition, even though the local and regional tropes have important roles in defining proletarian culture.

The Anglophone proletarian literary movement presented an image of an international proletariat; numerous literary works originating from diverse national backgrounds form this montage of international proletarian culture. By reading thirties proletarian and working-class texts through a Marxian lens, I will argue that, despite their Americanism or Englishness, the texts emerging from across the Atlantic present similar portraits of proletarianism while defining the dominant trends of the genre within world literature. I show how this internationalization of "national"/local working-class (including the proletariat) identity was presented through a rational analysis of the socioeconomic process in Marxist-Communist proletarian novels such as *Love on the Dole.* In the case of *The Grapes of Wrath* this internationalization of the working class is achieved through the tropes of "humanism" and personification of class identity. In contrast with the two aforementioned texts, I show that *Waste Heritage*'s flawed attempt at an apolitical depiction of 1930s proletarian culture captures the psychological realm of proletarian identity; the conflict of individual and collective concepts of identity is the central focus of this novel. All three novels discussed in this chapter speak for the "universal" conditions of class culture through varied points of views. Though these novels comply with the transnational idea of working-class culture, they remain conservative in depicting characters of color or disability, thus establishing a "white, heterosexual, able-bodied" discourse of revolutionary resistance.

Proletarian Novels in the English Context and *Love on the Dole* as a Typical Proletarian Novel

Working-class literature in the English tradition can be traced back to the Chartist movement (1837-53), where the working-class not only appeared as a political body but also pronounced the message of class consciousness in fictional literature. Chartist novelists—like Ernest Jones,

Thomas Cooper, Thomas Frost and Thomas Martin Wheeler—attempted to use these forms of melodrama and romance, to voice the political concerns of the movement. Rapid industrialization caused a fundamental transition in English social structure which resulted in a steady rise in middle-class interest in nineteenth-century working-class culture; this phenomenon had an impact on the production of 1840s and 50s social novels like *Sybil* and *Anton Locke*, as well as Elizabeth Gaskell's industrial novels. Authors like Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens also focused on social issues related to working-class life of England. Margaret Harkness addressed issues of British working-class life and struggle such novels as *A City Girl* (1887), *Out of Work* (1888), *Captain Lobe* (1889), *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890), *George Eastmont, Wonderer* (1905) and *A Curate's Promise* (1921). However, it was not until the twentieth century that a proletarian worldview was appropriated by the genre of novel.

In the era leading up to World War I, proletarian novels from the British Isles provide a socialist analysis of their contemporary class society.A classic example of such a work is Robert Tressell's *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, which was posthumously published in 1914. Tressell's life-experience as a house painter, who returned to England from South Africa with his only daughter after the death of his wife, provides the real-historic background of this novel. Tressell, whose original name was Robert Cocker, had a somewhat affluent life in South Africa; however, upon his return to England, he was faced with harsh financial circumstances and was forced to work as a wage laborer (house painter). In a memorial lecture to him, Raymond Williams identifies Tressell as both an insider and an outsider to the English working-class. Owing to his firsthand experience with labor, Tressell's work gained the status of an "internal" working-class novel; however, his high literacy skills and access to a much larger world than most members of proletarian community make him an atypical member. Rather than focusing on

the spirit of collectivity amongst the workers, Tressell's unique position documents how the working-masses were reluctant to embrace class-consciousness. *The Ragged Troussered Philanthropists* shows that workers willingly and unresistingly supported their own exploitation, which was a historical tendency within the English working-class during the first decade of the twentieth century (Williams 77). A dialectical tension in the novel space is derived from contrasting worldviews between the protagonist Owen and his fellow workers. The novel depicts the hope that the class-community that collaborates with its oppressors and exploits its own is still capable enough of becoming the revolutionary proletariat. The text unveils a world of future possibilities (despite its grim realities) which Michael Bakhtin emphasized as a characteristic of the novel. The novel's chapter on "The Great Oration" presents the relationship between the social life of the British working-class as witnessed by Tressell and the state of socialism at the turn of the twentieth century. The everydayness of class culture—linguistic expressions, semantic references and cultural behavior of working-class members—is in dialectical opposition to its protagonist Owen's sociocultural manifestation. Raymond Williams has also observed this cultural contrast between the larger working-class population and that of Owen's. At the end, Tressell's novel presents the multiplicity of class culture within the working-class itself.

A year before the publication of *The Ragged Troussered Philanthropists*, D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913) was published, influencing many writers of the 1910s, including Walter Brierley and F. C. Boden. Lawrence's novel is set within a mining village. In spite of a number of texts produced by both proletarian worker-authors and socialist intellectuals, the state of British proletarian writing was not very promising; talking about the state of British proletarian culture at the Conference of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers in

1927, Harold Heslop said “proletarian art in Great Britain is in a very backward condition — and is in fact hardly begun” (qtd in Croft 18). Despite this “backwardness” of the 1920s, almost two hundred working-class novels were published in Britain during the interwar period, marking the emergence of a new literary tendency in both English and world literature. Authorship of these works was also varied and included more than eighty men and women from diverse class and education backgrounds. Many of them were self-educated worker-writers, who did not have the formal education or training that was necessary for writing novels; however, during times of mass unemployment these authors had the leisure and access to training (often through adult literacy activities sponsored by the Communist Party), which aided in securing authorship as well as audience for the emerging genre of proletarian novel. Some of the proletarian authors were teachers and journalists, who after achieving their class consciousness, created their literary pieces as social protest against the reification of advanced capitalism (Croft 21, 23).

British working-class writings from the earlier decades of the twentieth century did not gain popularity or spark academic interest in the latter half of the century until Gustav Klaus re-discovered the texts. In an attempt to revive the history of working-class writing in Britain, Gustav Klaus presents a study of a range of proletarian texts that were published during the 1920s and 30s; it is evident from Klaus’s work that proletarian writing accelerated during the 1930s, in accordance with the rise of working-class literature on a global scale. Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Lewis Johns, Ralph Bates, Walter Greenwood and Lionel Briton are credited with the most masterful representation of working-class during the 1930s; other novelists like Richard Llewellyn, James Barke, Joe Corrie, Simon Blumenfeld, Willie Goldman, John Sommerfield, Walter Brierley, F. C. Boden, Jack Hilton, Leslie Halward, James Hanley and Jim Phelan, Harold Heslop and Frank Tilsley are acknowledged for their contribution to the genre. Scholars

like Hawthorn, Worpole and Heywood have presented selections from the above-mentioned authors in their study of British proletarian novels.

Nineteenth-century novels, that addressed issues related to working-class lives, were often set within the background of textile industry or mining villages (Williams 74). These texts by middle-class novelists sought sympathy from the readers. With Tressell's novel the trend shifts, as the aim is to teach the reader how the lived-experience of exploitation and education about the social dialectics can cause a class awakening amongst the proletarian population. In contrast to the previous works, which looked into class situations from an archival perspective, or analyzed proletarian and peasant life through the lens of (bourgeois) modernism, British proletarian novels of the thirties present a narrative understanding of the class in question as a participating witness of the historical context. This new trend of novel-writing embraced the proletarian worldview in order to interpret historical-material realities. As a result, the literary space showed that social conditions of proletarian life can be improved only through class-conscious collective resistance. *Love on the Dole*, Walter Greenwood's first novel, is one of the best examples of this modified version of the proletarian novel. Through "typicality" of setting, character, plot and time, this novel represents a universal story of working-class life and struggle within the total picture of a class-divided society.

Walter Greenwood created the world of his 1933 novel *Love on the Dole* in the shadow of Ellor Street, Salford (northern England), where he was born in 1903 to a working-class family. Greenwood had firsthand experience of working-class life. He held several working-class jobs from the age of thirteen, including working as a pawnbroker's clerk; this experience is reflected in the description of the protagonist Harry Hardcastle's life in the pawnshop at the beginning of *Love on the Dole*. Greenwood himself even had a taste of the "dole" during bouts of

unemployment amid various occupations as office boy, stable boy, clerk, packing case-maker, sign writer, car driver, warehouseman, salesman, etc. He was also active within the Labour Party from an early age and later won an election in one of the worst slums of Salford in 1934. However, he did not pursue a career in politics; instead, he went on to write a succession of novels which include works like *His Worship the Major* (1934), *The Time is Ripe* (1935), *Standing Room Only, or "A Laugh in Every Line"* (1936), *Cleft Stick* (1937), *Only Mugs Work* (1938), *The Secret Kingdom* (1938) and *How the Other Man Lives* (1939). During the Second World War, Greenwood served the British government and after the end of the war produced the Trelooe trilogy: *So Brief the Spring* (1952), *What Everybody Wants* (1954) and *Down by the Sea* (1956). He also wrote a few plays, co-wrote two film scripts and an autobiography (*There was a Time*, 1967), though none of his other works ever achieved the popular success of his first novel, *Love on the Dole*.

Love on the Dole is divided into three parts, each of which is subdivided into an asymmetric number of chapters. Part one sets up the working-class neighborhood with a focus on the Hardcastle family. Readers are introduced to the physicality of Hanky Park through its streets, buildings, public houses, factories, pawnshop, etc. The community's social life is depicted through the various characters (many of whom do not appear more than once in the span of the novel) and their parallel life narratives, gossip, jealousy, lust, cravings for companionships as well as working-men's comradery and unwaged women's everyday conversations. Domestic life in the Hardcastle household shows how patriarchy dominates proletarian culture and women, engaged with both productive and reproductive labor, are subjected to a position of subjugation. Part one depicts the typical lifestyle of a working-class community, their hopes and dreams of a promising future. Following his ambitions to become an

apprentice and join the workforce, Harry quits his job as a pawnshop clerk at Mr. Price's pawnshop and starts working at Marlow's Steel factory. Part two represents the stagnancy of proletarian life. Financial hardships of the Hardcastle family do not ease with Harry's new job. Both Harry and his sister Sally work in the factory as under-waged workers given the company's discriminating policy over gender and age of the workers. In the meantime, a romantic relationship develops between Sally and Marxist activist and worker Larry Meath. During this time, Harry manages to win a bet in a horse race and takes a vacation with his girlfriend Helen by the seaside; it is the only action of the novel that takes place outside of Hanky Park. Part three brings on a series of catastrophes that plague the Hardcastle family. Harry is laid off after seven years of service due to the cutbacks of the company; it was more beneficial for Marlowe's to hire young teenagers for a lower wage than paying the workers over twenty-one years, as the latter are entitled to a "man's salary." Around the same time, Sally's life is shattered when Larry takes a fatal blow from the police during a labor protest demonstration in the city. Harry impregnates Helen and finally they are forced to live off the dole. Sally is coerced by circumstances to respond to Sam Grundy's sexual interest in her, which results in employment arrangements for her brother and father.

Typicality of Setting

Detached in narration and subtle in introspection, the narrator represents the fictional world without any unnecessary description. *Love on the Dole* is set in Hanky Park, an industrial slum where the Hardcastle family is one of many struggling dwellers trying to make ends meet. Hanky Park is described as a bleak reality produced by an unpleasant struggle of humanity for survival:

> At one time, in the old days, when local men made their millions out of cotton and humanity, when their magnificent equipages trotted along Broad Street past Hanky Park from the local Eccles Old Road – or "Millionaires Mile" as it then was called – when large families lived in the Park's one room cellar dwellings and when the excess in population was kept in check by typhus and other fevers, it was the custom of the 'sand-bone-men" to sprinkle sand on the newly scoured flag-paved floors of the houses in exchange for bones, which, I suppose, went to the tallow factories to be made into farthing dips. Most of the flag-paved floors are gone, now. The years have brought their changes. Water closets have superseded the earth and tin privies, though not so long ago; the holes in the tiny backyard walls from which the pestiferous tins were drawn when to be emptied of the ordure are still to be traced, the newer bricks contrasting in colour with those of the original wall. Fever is rarer, large families are no longer permitted to live in cellars; instead, by force of circumstance and the simplicity of their natures, they pay much more than their grandparents did for the convenience of living in a single room over a cellar. (Greenwood 14)

Typicality of Hanky Park turns the setting into a signifier of a social reality. The slow decay of the proletarian life in Hanky Park confirms the fate of the community as the market for consumption deteriorated (which worsened with the economic crash).

The main action of the novel takes place in the Hardcastle family's house, the factory and the neighborhood pub. Hanky Park is never described but narrated. Narration selects from a multiplicity of phenomena and employs an omniscient narrator to guide the reader without eliminating the suspense of the plot. In *Love on the Dole*, the author presents Hanky Park as a site filled with the drama of everyday life, buzzing with action, desperation and the conversation of men, women and children; the narrator selects slices of Hanky Park from time to time through the eyes and associations of various characters. This tendency of favoring narration over description can be related to Lukács' proposed idea of realism. The "total" reality of Hanky Park can only be achieved through multiple narratives; objective description is not able to capture the subjective perspective of its inhabitants, whose narrative experience provides the readers a realistic picture, which is derived from multiple angles. Lukács explains the relation of narration and description as follows: "Narration organizes (gliedert), description levels (nivelliert)" (qtd. in

Herman 91). Realist narrative technique of *Love on the Dole* carefully organizes its actions and characters within universal settings and typical circumstances.

Lack of detailed description situates Hanky Park as an identifiable working-class enclave for the international proletariat. While spending their vacation in the countryside, Helen and Harry conceived of themselves as "prisoners" of Hanky Park, a place that was vulgar, ruthless and devalued human emotions and needs: "Hanky Park was unbeautiful…North Street, smoke, bricks and mortar, seas of slates, Price and Jones, Sam Grundy, Mrs. Nattle and her companions, swarms of dirty children" (Greenwood 124). The inhabitants seek temporary escapes from this grotesque Hanky Park, when they receive their weekly pay on Saturdays and the neighborhood celebrates the arrival of "money": children run around for candies, young men and women go to the movie theatres, they dance, they drink; however, early every Monday morning, as soon as the weekend is over, the women line up in front of the pawnshop.

Daunting poverty of working-class life has erased the boundary between the public and private. Sharing bedrooms and attending public baths, the population is desensitized to the bourgeois norms, which the genre of the novel was previously enslaved to. Tom Hare and Helen Hawkins are exposed to each of their parents' "shameless" intimacy, which is also a topic of public conversation. Through dialogues and narration, the linguistic space shows that everything is "communal" in Hanky Park and anything that could be personal is either part of collective knowledge or pawned at Mr. Price's shop.

Just as Hanky Park is left vague, there is no detailed material description of the Hardcastle family's house either: it is a "typical" example of the overpopulated working-class homes of the neighborhood. The reader gets occasional glimpses of the cramped, aged,

multifunctional kitchen-living room-washing room or Harry/Sally's decayed bedroom, when the characters interact with their environment. Living conditions and the material disposition of the working-class quarters are similar to one another, though larger families have a worse struggle maintaining privacy and hygiene. None of the households has a sanitation system, grown-up children are forced to share beds or rooms with their parents and other adult siblings and sexual encounters lack privacy, but there is abundance of domestic abuse and perpetual poverty. The concept of "privacy" is alien to the households as well as the community at large; the younger characters eternally long for a home that would let them enjoy personal moments. Though similar socioeconomic circumstances are faced by most of the households, their inhabitants are unconcerned about the "total" picture and focus on the individual microcosm that affects their own personal discomforts.

Hanky Park's sociocultural life is controlled by the Marlowe's Steel Factory, where most of the male members of the community are employed, dream of being employed or had been employed in the past. The factory is a dominant presence throughout the novel. Its wages dictate the material conditions of life, death and everything in between in the working-class neighborhoods of Hanky Park. Its siren dictates the routine of everyday lives of the workers and their family members. The factory's physical representation is fragmented; the narrative presents images of machines and men working with tools and machines—boiling iron being poured down, pounding of hammers, noise of the drills, but it doesn't provide a complete picture of the factory. The absence of a total picture of the factory accentuates the effect of alienation that Harry and his fellow workers experience. While at the beginning of the novel, Harry is infatuated with the idea of becoming an engineer, his romantic affair with the big machines end as he achieves seniority and is "planted" in a stationary position in the production cycle, where his

only job is to watch over a lathe. Operating as a segment, without any knowledge of the complete production cycle, the industrial worker or proletariat can only achieve a fragmented vision of the total system. As a result there is no creative satisfaction. Once Harry finishes his seven-year apprenticeship contract at the Marlowe's, the factory's sirens do not have any significance in his life any longer; instead of feeling liberated from the impositions of the factory, Harry suffers from an identity crisis: time becomes meaningless and his existence becomes somewhat meaningless as well. Thus the factory continues to have an absent presence in the lives of the community members, even after the individuals stop earning a wage at Marlowe's. The factory is a monumental symbol of modernist-capitalist "progress" and "power," which control proletarian life. Though the factory is dependent on the proletariat for its functioning, due to the dominance of capitalist-modernist ideology the proletarian members accept their maltreatment. The workers consider themselves disposable and easily replaceable social entities, dependent on the factory to fill their stomachs.

Emergence of Proletarian Public Sphere

Besides the factory and the working-class dwellings, proletarian life flourishes in dance bars, movie theatres, pubs, streets and pawnshops. Initially most actions that take place in these settings are apolitical in nature, but eventually a proletarian public sphere emerges from the everyday conversations, neighborly gatherings and gossips. Though Larry Meath, who was involved with the "Labour Club," had always maintained close relationship with Marxist and Socialist reading circles, the other members of the community have been preoccupied with their material deprivation. Disillusioned with false ideology, the community members went to soccer matches, movie theatres, public houses and betting rings, to escape their miserable lives instead of attending meetings where debates on the class politics were initiated. The last half of the novel

presents a change in the community's attitude towards politics. When Mrs. Hardcastle goes to pawn her wedding ring to Mrs. Nattle, the regulars of this "informal" pawnshop discuss the current political developments and their impact proletarian communities. The older women debate the ideological and practical implications of political choice. While Mrs. Bull, a lifelong Labour Party supporter, regrets the community's reluctance to understand how socialism can benefit it, Mrs. Dorbell proudly declares her support for the Conservatives, who have "bought" her vote with blankets and coal throughout her life (Greenwood 163-64). This conversation amongst elderly unemployed women both regionalizes and internationalizes the text at the same time; this dialogue locates the (Hanky Park) community's relationship within both British national politics and international socialism. This interactive social communication from within the community introduced political questions related to universal working-class struggle. Members of the Hanky Park community become a part of the international proletarian public sphere through this political awakening, when they try to locate their agency and position within the discourse of national and international politics.

Typicality in Characterization

In the beginning of the novel the central protagonist, fourteen-year-old Harry Hardcastle, leaves his job as pawnshop clerk with an ambition to become an engineer after serving as an apprentice for seven years. The three parts of the novel can be categorized as follows: the birth of a proletariat; proletarian life: stagnancy and alienation in workplace; and, finally, unemployment, failed resistance and eventual surrender to the system. In the first few chapters of the novel, Harry is seen to be embarrassed by his perpetual poverty, which is reflected through his material disposition—his pants that didn't reach his ankle, his torn waistcoat, which could not keep him warm during the wet winter mornings and his malnourished and underdeveloped muscles, which

earned him much taunting from his sister Sally. He viewed his position as a pawnshop clerk as the root of his misery and reached out to become a part of the "twelve thousand strong army of men" (26), who worked at Marlow's factory. Harry convinced his mother to rent him a pair of overalls from Mr. Price's pawnshop; with his new appearance he was one of the "men": "*they* weren't clerks, they were Men, engaged in men's work" (21). Both the narrator and the character of Harry work together to assert a respectful image of the "working-man"; by wearing overalls Harry achieved a new collective identity and its associated social status. Harry becomes one with the industrial work force which was indispensable for a British modernity that was rooted in its successful industrial revolution. The overalls were material symbols of "sameness"—a fate and a lifestyle that all members of the factory's working-class had in common.

The linguistic identity of the proletariat is developed through Harry's interaction with the other workers at Marlowe's. Unrefined and crude social behaviors emerge as part and parcel of normal life at the factory. Harry's acceptance as part of the collective was marked through a ritual of degradation: "his cries were drowned in the roar of laughter that rose when rough hands tore at his trousers and exposed his nakedness . . . Somebody ran up with a pot of red paint, a brush and grease; anonymous hands daubed it on him wherever exposed" (55). Explicit sexual references are present in most conversations amongst the workers. They fight against each other for personal interests and remain a conflicted collective, unaware of the socioeconomic causes of their economic-cultural situation. The apprentice boys, who work at the Marlowe's, share a relationship of simultaneous rivalry and solidarity as well.

Larry Meath—who was to become the leader of the workers' struggle as well as Sally's future lover—is presented as an atypical member of the working-class collective since his first appearance:

> Nearer the gates Harry glimpsed Larry Meath reading a newspaper and leaning against the wall. Larry Meath! Harry's heart leapt and his eyes glowed with eagerness . . . His quality of studiousness and reserve elevated him to a plane beyond that of ordinary folk; he seemed out of place in his lodgings in North Street. (Greenwood 25)

Larry is "different" in the spite of his "sameness," his attire and disposition; while the common members of the working-class community have lost their individuality in the alienating process of production within capitalist-modernist system, Larry's class consciousness aides in maintaining his subjectivity. The dialectics of the novel derives from the conflicting and contrasting characterization of Harry Hardcastle and Larry Meath—the former represents the "average" proletarian member while the latter personifies a revolutionary proletariat. The workers are objectified within the reified system of class culture and *Love on the Dole* successfully depicts a "realistic" and "typical" picture of this objectification through the technique of depersonalization. Harry's depersonalization started with the "sameness" of the overalls, culminates in a self-loathing, when he finally gets a chance to work with machines and suffers from alienation. Part two presents the universal nature of Marxist alienation. After working at Marlowe's for two years Harry realizes the futility of his once cherished dreams. However he seeks comfort in collectivity: ". . . there was a sorry kind of consolation in being one of a crowd" (79). Finally, when unemployed, he becomes a member of the reserved army of capitalist production system: "Nothing to do with time; nothing to spend; nothing to do to-morrow; nothing to wear; can't get married. A living corpse; a spectral army of three million lost men" (169). Unemployment also brings back the lost shame that Harry had once felt while serving as a clerk at Mr. Price's pawnshop; he tries to stay hidden from public sight, though lack of privacy always finds him lingering around the streets and alleys of Hanky Park.

While the working men of Marlow's show how proletarian culture is shaped by unconventional comraderies, grotesque conversations, man-machine relationships and above all the factory's rules and routine, other segments of proletarian life (outside of working in the factory) are set in the working-class quarters of Hanky Park. Through Harry's eyes (while working in the pawnshop) readers experience the material poverty of the neighborhood which is manifested through the desperate conditions of the women and children who came to Mr. Price's pawnshop to get money against high interest in exchange for their material possessions. These characters are depersonalized in Harry's eyes and thus appear to represent the "typical" working-class woman of the neighborhood: "In the staring glasslight, the women, throwing back their shawls from their disheveled hair revealed faces which, though dissimilar in features, had a similarity of expression common, typical, of all the married women around and about" (33). Similar representations of "typical" working-class members appear throughout the novel space.

In his typical presentation of English proletarian culture, Greenwood assigns the least revolutionary potential to Sally Hardcastle. Sally remains a worker at Marlowe's textile factory throughout the novel space, but there is no narrative of her relationship with her workplace or the conditions of labor that she is exposed. The working-class culture of the textile factory where most of the workers are female is completely absent from the novel. Sally is portrayed as a strong-willed woman within the community and household, but the absolute absence of her "work-life" in the factory from the novel-space eliminates any possibility of her turning into a Marxist revolutionary proletariat. In her conversations with Larry, Sally's ignorance and lack of vision are contrasted with a class conscious revolutionary's wisdom and progressive outlook. Sally's infatuation with a married life with Larry appears as a contradictory superimposition. Finally, her submission to Sam Grundy (to become his mistress) after Larry's death is an

unfortunate narrative escape, which is not coherent with her earlier projections in the novel. It would appear that Greenwood's perception of typical setting and characterization demanded the victimization of a woman. Otherwise perfectly capable of joining the international proletarian revolution, Sally has to succumb to the expectations of a patriarchal society to benefit her male counterparts.

Universality of Proletarian Life

Aspects of universal class conditions are captured in proletarian novels by projecting "typicality" in characterization and setting. In order to represent the universal nature of class exploitation and its victims (within capitalist-modernist societies) of working-class people, proletarian novels present characters and circumstances that are identifiable as lived reality to any working-class member but can help educate any reader about the dehumanizing effects of a class-divided society. In essence, characters of these proletarian novels belong to everywhere and nowhere at the same time and maintain their significance with the international proletariat. While representing how the dialectical material conditions of class-divided society assign human beings a "thing like" identity, *Love on the Dole* shows that working-class members go through a process of slow depersonalization and are objectified by other members of the proletarian community: "They were all the same familiar faces he had seen week after week for years, until they had become like institutions; the same actresses in the same grim play" (34). The novel also shows how false consciousness keeps the proletarian members selfishly self-involved and they refuse to understand how class exploitation can only be resisted through collective struggle.

In representing the typical proletarian life and culture of the British Isles, *Love on the Dole* employs the technique of referential realism rather than mimesis. Fulfilling its commitment

to dialectical methodology, the novel's place/setting and characters maintain a semantic relationship with the material world. Objective representation through an omniscient narrator focuses on presenting a vivid picture of proletarian culture which is identifiable as a universal reality of advanced capitalism. Contemporary to Greenwood and *Love on the Dole*, Mrs. Frankenburg wrote to the *Daily Dispatch*: "Factories in Salford rarely, if ever, begin work at 6 a.m. … Schoolchildren are forbidden by law to work at such trades as clerking in a pawnshop for hours before and after school. . . . An uncertified midwife practicing like Mrs. Bull is quite impossible nowadays as her trade is illegal" (qtd. in Gaugham 51). The letter falls into the misconception of looking for "authenticity" without understanding the role of "fictionality," which is a significant characteristic of proletarian novels. The fictional world of Hanky Park corresponds to a working-class slum life: a lifestyle defined by exploitation, misfortune, insecurity; this fictional space shares a relationship of reference with material-historical realities of Salford and does not claim to merely mirror the latter.

Proletarian novels have always attracted debates surrounding the "truth" and "reality" of the projected time period. The ontological status of a literary work like *Love on the Dole* is different from an empirical document. Typicality of the situation helps it achieve a universal character and at the end of the day, it is still a work of fiction. However, there are definite references to the political and social situations of Salford during the 1920s and 1930s in the novel. The most noticeable of these references is the demonstration where Larry Meath leads the march of the National Unemployed Workers Union on October 31st, 1931. The incident is based on a real-historical event, which was described in *The Daily Reporter* as:

20,000 ON STREETS IN SALFORD. Police meet with stern resistance

> Salford, Thursday. – A huge demonstration of 20,000 Salford unemployed came into conflict with the police to-day. The demonstration assembled in Liverpool Street and marched towards Albion Street Labour Exchange.
>
> Here the police launched their attack. The workless fought back, using sticks and banner poles as weapons.
>
> So vigorously did the workers defend themselves that they drove off the police attack and re-formed their ranks.
>
> They started off to the Town Hall to protest against the police action. At Bexley Square, where the Town Hall situated, the police attacked again. Once more the workless fought back. Women demonstrators were prominent in the resistance to the police.
>
> A number of workers were injured in the fighting, as were some of the police. Dozens of arrests were made. Some of those arrested never got to the police station, being rescued by their fellows en route.
>
> After the demonstrators once more reformed their ranks and went to the Park, where a protest meeting was held. (qtd. in Gaugham 56)

In contrast to this newspaper article, Greenwood's depiction of the protest projects a chaotic outburst of the unemployed mob, which lacked a sense of political cohesiveness and collectivity. Greenwood creates a replica of the October 1st, 1931 incident in the chapter entitled "Historical Narrative." The beginning of the protest is portrayed as:

> The new spirit manifested itself when the march continued. Down the long column and on the pavements the incident was passed on, explained and discussed excitedly. Those who had been concerned in the clash demeaned themselves with conscious pride; hostile glances were thrown policewards and, in general, an air of animated expectancy pervaded the demonstrators. Somebody produced a mouth organ and commenced to play the "Red Flag". Those unacquainted with the words la-la"d the tune. (Greenwood 202)

The march ends in a disaster in the novel. Greenwood writes:

> A murmur rose, grew in volume to a roar of protest: men turned to expostulate with the plain-clothes men; the object of the march was forgotten instantly: arms gesticulated, eyes flashed angrily. The police advanced and began to push the crowd back; tempers already short, snapped. The pugnacious individual in charge of the drum, provoked beyond endurance by the repeated pushings and digs of a policeman and after almost losing balance by an excessively vigorous push, threatened the policeman with one of the drumsticks. Instantly he was arrested,

> the drum removed, flopped on the ground to be rescued by somebody and taken away quickly. (203)

The difference between fiction based on an event and a factual description of an event separates purpose and impact. *Love on the Dole* uses the demonstration/march as a symbol of 1930s working-class culture; the value of the fictional incident adds to the chaos, insecurity and hopelessness that befell working-class societies all across the globe. I disagree with scholars like Gaughan who condemn Greenwood for deviating from authenticity; the addition of the "inauthentic" or the "fictional" elements establish the text as a true working-class or proletarian novel: beyond the boundaries of nation or local. Marxist criticism urges literature to be rooted in the real-historic but does not expect literature to become a government report. Greenwood's novel uses the historical incident as the "basis" of the climax of his novel and succeeds in achieving a typical picture of proletarian politics of the1930s. The narrative of proletarian life presented in *Love on the Dole* presents the epoch and its class conditions.

The invisible chain of advanced capitalist values that imprisoned urban proletarian characters like Harry or Sally within their class conditions and addressed the issues of identity, community and culture in relation to the working-class are analyzed in the fictional space. The world of the novel, through its referential tendencies, provides the audience with a "possibility space," where class exploitation designs the conditions of existence in which "Harry" and "Sally" of the epoch were confined in. A revised theory of "reality" will entertain the possibility of using literary works like *Love on the Dole* as evidence for studying working-class culture of the 1930s.

Locating *Love on the Dole* within World Proletarian Literary Culture

In characterization and setting *Love on the Dole* shares similarities with two pioneering works of proletarian literature: Robert Tressell's English novel *Rugged Trousered Philanthropists* and Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother*. While Greenwood's protagonist Harry Hardcastle represents a typical proletariat who remains oblivious to the grand theories of marxism and socialism, the revolutionary proletarian hero Larry Meath reflects similar characteristics as those of Tressell's protagonist Owen. Both Larry and Owen are educated and analytical; their spoken vocabulary is different from the other working-class characters that surround them. The journey that started with Tressell gathers further momentum in *Love on the Dole*. A hope of overcoming the reifying effects of dominant discourses lingers in Tressell but Greenwood's work indicates that until the selfish proletarian members can identify their strength in collectivity, the class remains in a position of subjugation and doubly exploited by patriarchy and capitalism. The character of Sally in *Love in the Dole* encounters class politics in a second-hand manner through Larry, which can be compared to Palegeia's (in Gorky's *Mother*) introduction to politics and socialism through her son Pavel. However, while Palegeia develops as a novel character and goes through a process of class consciousness, Sally Hardcastle remains a captive of false consciousness.

Like Gorky's *Mother* Greenwood's novel shows overwhelming presence of the "factory" in shaping proletarian life and culture. The "factory" controls not only the "working-life" of the proletariat but dictates their social and private lives as well. Both novels attempt to show that class exploitation does not know boundaries of nation, region or ethnicity and thus both works attempt to universalize proletarian life and its dependence on the factory. Published almost thirty years apart, from two different geo-political-linguistic origins, the novels demonstrate that the "factory" became a monstrous symbol of capitalist-modernist progress. The "factory" also

becomes a generalizable trope in the genre of twentieth-century proletarian novel, as it is the physical manifestation of the oppressive system of wage labor that controls proletarian identity and culture. Near the end of both novels, political demonstrations of the workers are suppressed by oppressive state power. This comparison between Gorky and Greenwood's texts show how universal-generalizable tropes of proletarian novel influenced each other on a global scale.

Though Tressell and Gorky's influence remains apparent in plot, structure, theme and characterization of *Love on the Dole*, Greenwood's originality as a proletarian novelist cannot be overlooked. Greenwood looks into the world of the 1930s—a time when a large number of unemployed, able-bodied men roamed the streets of the industrially-advanced societies—with a Marxist lens and shows why such a situation did not result in a class revolution in Britain. The style and aesthetics of the novel capture the frustration at the individual level but also demonstrates that without direction and organization the members cannot form a class-conscious collective resistance to fight the oppressive system they were enslaved to. As a typical proletarian novel of 1930s *Love on the Dole* presents the typical lifestyle and identity of the typical proletariat of the decade, which were shaped by the greatest crisis of capitalism in the twentieth century. Though the protagonists have the potential of becoming a revolutionary proletariat and the community has the collective power to challenge the flawed system, a catalyst that could ignite the beginning of such changes is missing from the picture. Though the linguistic space incorporates dialects, jargons and accents to provide the characters with their regional identity, a typical proletarian world is presented in this novel, which voices concerns of international class struggle. In contrast to this typical novel, in the following section, I will discuss how an "atypical" proletarian world is constructed in *Waste Heritage*, which focuses on the psychological rather than material disposition of proletarian life of the 1930s.

Waste Heritage and its Atypical Tenets

While *Love on the Dole* is a typical proletarian novel of the 1930s, Canadian novelist Irene Baird's 1939 novel *Waste Heritage* stands as an anomaly within the proletarian texts of 1930s in spite of its significant contribution in diversifying the genre. Baird's own class background and ideological standpoint contrast with the proletarian worldview and living experience. Unlike Greenwood, who was writing within the tradition of proletarian literature with a conscious effort to use literature as a political and social tool, Baird maintained that her intensions were completely apolitical. Baird, careful about avoiding association with party literature and politics, leaves out the names of the CPC and Relief Project Workers' Union in her novel. Describing her novel for the Macmillan catalogue, Baird writes that *Waste Heritage* is a "protest against the stupidity, irony and menace of a policy that allows the country's richest asset to drift from coast to coast, homeless, unskilled, undisciplined and unwanted, its one hope of steady employment the next great European war" (Baird to Macmillan, July 10 1939). In a 1976 article entitled 'sidown Brother," Baird reflects on her political motivation and style in the composition of *Waste Heritage*:

> There will be questions, I suppose, about my politics then, especially as the years draw away from the events my novel is written about. To begin, I have never been connected with Communism and I have never thought of myself as a radical if being a radical means wanting to overthrow the system we live in in favor of another political system. I think a reader of the novel will find, however, that I do not praise or condemn some of the most important people in the novel who are obviously connected with radical politics…The times were too bad to say "I won't talk about that as I don't like the label that you put on it." (82)

Waste Heritage was written to elicit sympathy for Baird's middle-class audience while *Love on the Dole* aims to present a Marxist analysis of 1930s economic crisis and its effect on proletarian life. Baird's text shows that proletarian culture influenced both modernist and realist

trends of the thirties. In her "formless" plot she shows the period's economic crisis through an omniscient narrator who follows the point of view of Matt and Eddy, two transient, unemployed men. This text also shows that just as proletarian literature appropriated forms of bourgeois literary culture, the bourgeois genres and modes were also adapting elements of proletarian world literature and domesticating them for their desired audience. I read Baird's text as an example of Anglophone proletarian novel because it represents a typical socio-historical context in a universal setting, which aides our understanding of proletarian culture of the 1930s. Though Baird does not have an insider's perspective when it comes to working-class life of the 1930s, her novel captures how the labor crisis of the decade affected the society as a whole. *Waste Heritage* shows how material conditions of a class-divided society affect emotional, psychological and ideological realms of individual's existence. The state of "worklessness" of the unemployed sitdowners also represents the decay in human and societal norms which affects the progression of human history—the protagonist Matt cannot have a future with his beloved until his material conditions changes. The novel points out that love, lust, marriage and children are all at stake until the economic turmoil can be resolved. Readers are made aware of the context so that collective actions can be taken to intervene and change the plight of the transient men.

Baird's writing career was initiated by the onset of the Great Depression when her husband—an engineer by profession—lost his job. Baird ventured into writing to ease the family's financial condition, though she always maintained her upper middle-class lifestyle (Hill xiii-xiv). Her first novel *John* was published in 1937 and became a Canadian bestseller. The narrative presents a psychological journey of a middle-class Englishman who relocates to British Columbia and settles in a farm on an acreage. Though Baird's second novel *Waste Heritage* has

nothing in common with *John* in terms of content, there is stylistic similarity; in both novels the author presents psychological landscapes of the protagonists as they are caught in natural, social and mechanical surroundings. *Waste Heritage* was followed by her 1941 novel *He Rides the Sky*, which comprises of a series of letters between a Canadian Air-Force trainee, who became a pilot, fought for England in World War II and eventually was killed in combat and his family in British Columbia. Baird focused on her career as a government bureaucrat and wrote numerous articles during the next three decades. Her next and last novel entitled *Climate of Power* was published in 1971. This novel draws on Baird's personal experiences (working in the Canadian bureaucracy) and firsthand exposure to the Artic as a result of her numerous travels conducted during her government service. None of her subsequent works could repeat the commercial success that her first novel had achieved. Baird's choice of subject has always been apolitical with the exception of *Waste Heritage*, but in all her novels she chose "men" as her protagonists and explored the male psychological realm and its relationship with the outside forces of society and nature.

Transient, unemployed, homeless, migratory workers make up a major share of working-class culture of the 1930s in the U.S. and Canada. Three major workers' strikes provide the regional, socio-political environment for Canadian proletarian literary culture of the period between the two World Wars. Natural disasters like droughts and plagues of insects also added to the misery of the sub- and non-urban working-class and peasantry of Canada during the years of the Great Depression. Thirties' Canadian literary and cultural practices of left-oriented groups and individuals have been primarily associated with documentary modernism (Rifkind 163). *Waste Heritage*'s "plotless" narrative technique and journalistic reporting style have been related to Canadian literary modernism (the modernist realist movement), which was in its early stage

during the thirties (Hill xxx). But one cannot overlook the stylistic similarity between Baird's novel and the trends in the proletarian novel of the 1930s. Newspaper reportage had significant influence on the development of the genre of proletarian literature and, by implementing such technique in her novel, Baird shows that high modernism was influenced by the low-brow literary trends of the thirties. The text is also international in spirit as it speaks about the challenge of "unemployment"—the reserve bench for modernist-capitalist economic security—as a de facto proletarian culture, and a universal reality for advanced capitalist societies.

In *Waste Heritage*, mobilization and displacement are integral to the character of the central protagonist Matt Striker. Based on material-historical events of labor crisis in Canada during the 1930s, the novel focuses on two transient workers, Matt and Eddy, who joined the strikers in the fictional city of Aschelon. The unemployed strikers were demonstrating against the government for causes of social justice and employment. After the strike is broken apart by the police, these "unemployed workers" are transferred to Gath by the union to continue their protest. At the end, Matt is arrested for assaulting a police officer in Gath while Eddy dies in an accident while bemoaning his role in Matt's arrest.

The characters of *Waste Heritage* are not tied to any particular community nor do they claim roots to any particular culture prior to their appearance in the time-space coordinates of the novel. Through social actions these transient men claim individual agency and collective identity as members of the working-class. The workers' relationship to the organization and shared experience of participating political protests—in the sitdowns and demonstrations, form the basis of their collective action. Their working-class identity is also conceptualized by their reception and interaction with the "outsiders," the non-proletarian characters of the fictional world.

Writing for a predominantly middle-class audience, Irene Baird was cautious about her narrative style and characterization techniques. In order to avoid possible adverse reaction from publishers and readers, Baird's text finds refuge in "fictionalizing" the setting; thus Vancouver and Victoria—the two cities on the Canadian West Coast, where Baird lived during the 1930s and collected her notes for the novel by conducting field research in the unemployed men's camps in disguise—become Aschelon and Gath, two biblical cities. Though Baird saves her work from any local political color, her choice of subject makes the text a narrative of universal working-class men, who, when faced with mass unemployment, are alienated from the society at large and seek support of collective comradery.

The central protagonist of *Waste Heritage*, Matt, arrives in Aschelon to join the "sitdowners" who were demanding employment and wage. Like a nomad, Matt roamed from city to city in search of work and wage from an early age. Matt finds a locus for an identity in the workers' union and in Hazel, a girl he falls for during his stay in Aschelon. Through every social interaction, the readers get a partial idea of the character of Matt. The three main denominators of his identity are his position in relation to labor in society (unemployed, so, he basically doesn't exist in the view of the larger society), his relationship with the union and union members and his personal relationship with Hezel. Matt suffers from an existential crisis as his primary locus of identity, the workplace, is missing from his life. According to Daniel Schwarz:

> Characterization is a presentation of the trope of personification within the structural context of an imagined ontology, an ontology that is ever changing through time. It is presented by a teller whose rage for order and understanding compels him to undertake the story, to see if the acts of memory and repetition will discover meaning for us…The presentation of the narrative includes the plotting of the story to give characters" actions—including his telling—shape and significance. (99)

Baird's characterization technique captures the constant oscillation of Matt's idea of self: he is in ontological limbo, trying to find himself as an individual while seeking out a collective identity. Matt's psychological restlessness is echoed by the narrative structure: the plotless form accommodates a wide range of events and incidents, which question Matt's individuality as well as his commonality/loyalty to the organization.

While Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* shows that self-interest hinders the proletarian characters from becoming class-conscious collective subjectivities, *Waste Heritage* narrates this self-interest as a longing to become an "individual." Harry Hardcastle is preoccupied with securing his new suit or getting a separate accommodation for himself and Helen and does not care to understand the complex process of class exploitation that holds him as a prisoner of perpetual poverty. In contrast, Baird's protagonist Matt Striker constantly debates his relationship with the working-class collective, where he initially found a locus of identity through solidarity. Matt's search for individuality is not a typical proletarian. One can read this fixation on "individualism" as an effect of the ideological hegemony of the discourse of capitalism. The upper-middle class author could not free her characters and narrator from yearning for liberal-individual qualities. Matt's continual self-doubt about individual-collective appears superfluous; it is almost an urge to create a bourgeois psychological identity within the material shell of a proletarian character and setting. But by introducing Matt, an unemployed transient, as a complex thinker whose psychological world addresses issues identifiable to Baird's audience, the author personalizes the jobless men of the 1930s. Thus by juxtaposing fictitious, "tag less" settings and personalized, identifiable characters, Baird builds a proletarian world reality for her middle-class audience and educates them about the social reality of their contemporary times.

Unemployed men from different parts of Canada were housed in federal camps in British Columbia, which were closed down in 1938 (Hill xi). About six thousand jobless transient men were seen roaming the streets of Vancouver during May of 1938, and who finally launched a collective protest against the government and demanded a resolution (Horn 37). The novel *Waste Heritage* begins in the aftermath of one of these protest demonstrations, which was repressed by severe police brutality. Matt arrives in Aschelon and finds a disoriented Eddy, who was suffering from an emotional shock—a characteristic trait that accompanies him throughout as a reminder of the riots that failed to earn any significant material aid for the unemployed men. Neither Matt nor Eddy experiences any characteristic evolution within the novel space. Like most proletarian novels, the fictional plane shows that the proletarian characters are caught within a system, wherefrom narrative escape is impossible without class-conscious collective action. Both Matt and Eddy are overpowered by the system as their collective resistance, which appears conflicted within its internal dialectics, is not class-conscious enough to trigger any action.

James Doyle observes that *Waste Heritage* "begins and ends in railway yards, where the trains that carry Matt Striker and men like him and their illusive search of social stability become symbolic of violent, meaningless death" (121). The image of the train is the main propeller of the sense of mobility of the workforce in the novel. As Jody Lynn Mason has rightly pointed out, the train is also a powerful facilitator of the capitalist-industrial economy. Baird uses this symbol to contrast the constraining social situations of the working-men in her novel *Waste Heritage*. W.H. Cole writes: "the train becomes a malevolent symbol of the struggle between labor and management as well as symbol of death and mechanical determinism" (128). The train also maintains a powerful influence in the characterization of both Matt and Eddy: Matt's journey via the train and Eddy's unfortunate end is met with a passing train. In a way, the characters

personify the dialectics of this massive instrument of mobility: the train carries in itself the power and perils of capitalism, the birthplace of the modern industrial working-class. Ontologically, both the characters are born of, live within and end their narratives in the overpowering structure of industrial capitalism that provides a working-class identity to Matt and Eddy.

The author's "apolitical" standpoint hinders the text from becoming a typical proletarian mouthpiece of the decade. Her approach to documenting this proletarian crisis is comparable to the mid-nineteenth-century British novelists, who were primarily writing for their middle-class audience. However, this atypical approach towards documenting proletarian crisis aided in diversifying the literary body of works. By speaking about the victims of the financial crash of the decade, *Waste Heritage* joins the list of thirties' Anglophone proletarian novels. Baird presents a wide spectrum of characters caught in a similar sociopolitical situation: some of them are barely mentioned as marginal characters while others play pivotal role in the narratives of Matt and Eddy. Wide variety and substantial quantity of minor characters also produce diversity of "world views". These secondary characters' relationship with the sociocultural context, debates and doubts about the labor organization and varied levels of loyalty to the cause of the organization depict how thirties' proletarian worldview contained multiple perspectives. Racism and ethnic intolerance keep the transient men conflicted; on the other hand, the narrative itself echoes a racist attitude towards the Chinese immigrants, who are portrayed as indifferent and un-empathetic through their short appearances. Baird's novel also documents how the proletarian crisis remained a "men's" problem and the working-class men's misogynistic attitude is documented through Matt's action, when he beats up a prostitute and leaves her bleeding and unconscious to show his comradery with Eddy (115).

Waste Heritage was produced as a form of social protest on the part of the author on account of the government actions against workers' demonstrations that involved the Vancouver sit-down strike of 1938. The strike mostly consisted of more than a thousand unemployed workingmen who occupied a Vancouver post office and art gallery for a month before RCMP forcefully evicted them. The strike pointed out the failure of the government to find a resolution for the economic turmoil, which left many young men of the country unemployed and unwanted. The real-historic strike was designed and organized under the leadership of Relief Project Workers" Union, which was led by the Canadian Communist Party (CPC). The unemployed working-class characters in *Waste Heritage* form an identifiable similarity with each other through their affiliation with the sit-down strike. Through political action, they claim personal identity. They join the union to become conscious of their solidarity with each other. Despite its unique role in documenting the cruelty of class hierarchy and exploitation Baird's text could not satisfy either her mainstream middle-class reader, nor could it stand out as the "great Canadian proletarian novel": "The problem…lay in the very feature Baird regarded as her strength, the detachment from political commitment" (Doyle 119).

Baird's apolitical and atypical proletarian novel *Waste Heritage* participated in setting the trend of Canadian modern-realist movement and aspired to contribute to a tradition of North American literature and reached out to a wider audience in the south of the us-Canada border. Baird was an admirer of American novelist John Steinbeck and *Waste Heritage* shows the influence of *Mice and Men* in characterization and narrative style. Bennett Cerf, who published Baird's novel for Random House from its Macmillan edition, anticipated that *Waste Heritage* would not be well received in the us:

> I must emphasize three points that are decidedly against the book in the United States. One, the Canadian locale and the certain confusion in geographical detail due to the disguising of the cities involved. Two, the strong possibility that the book will be labeled as warmed-over Steinbeck, with a situation so similar to Of Mice and Men as to almost cry for unfavorable comments by critics. Three, the fact that books of this nature never have sold here and probably never will, especially when they are about sit-down strikes—a labor device that is now illegal in the United States. (qtd. in Hill xliv)

While Baird's novel was neither typical nor popular, contemporary U.S. novelist John Steinbeck was successful in creating typical settings of thirties' working-class in his California novels. In the following section I study Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and analyze why this text was successful in becoming a working-class mouthpiece within the popular domain.

***The Grapes of Wrath*: A Popular Proletarian novel of the 1930s**

Michael Denning describes the proletarian movement in the U.S. ". . . a strategic alliance of workers, writers, readers and political activists, who came together in formal and informal settings, Marxist study groups, May Day rallies, national and international writers' conferences etc." (202). A great number of studies and scholarship on the Anglophone proletarian novel focused on U.S. texts from the 1930s. Authors like John Steinbeck, Agnes Smedley, Ralph Ellison, James Farrell, Tillie Olsen, Jack Conroy, W. E. B. Du Bois, John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman, Josephine Herbst, Langston Hughes, John Howard Lawson, Claude McKay, Clifford Odets, Don West, Nathanael West, Richard Wright add to the long list of novelists, who are critically acclaimed names in twentieth-century American literature. Though the U.S. proletarian movement did not produce any Marx, Lenin, Lukács or Gramsci, world proletarian culture is indebted to the U.S. authors for producing a spectrum of texts which experimented with representation of class culture in the literary space.

The Great Depression influences most of American proletarian novels of the time period. In "Writing Up the Working Class: The Proletarian Novel in the U.S.," Barbara Foley discussed how experiments with working-class novels in the U.S. contributes to the versatility and complexity of the genre. Foley divides the working-class novels into four subcategories according to their formal structure and narrative style: the fictional autobiography, the proletarian bildungsroman, the multi-protagonist social novel and the collective novel. According to Rideout, the genre of proletarian novel did not appear as a stable form with ideological cohesiveness until 1934 (170). Comprehensive statistics of the status of the proletarian novel in the usA are presented in *The Radical Novel*:

> During the decade seventy examples of the form were published, fifty of them, a significantly large majority, appearing between 1930 and 1935. The fifty came chiefly in two waves, a preliminary one in 1932—eleven books—and a larger and more extended one in 1934 and 1935—thirteen and fifteen books respectively. The year 1933, with only four novels, marks a low possibly explained by the economics of Depression publishing and the draining off of the writers" energies into the 1932 Communist political campaign; while the sharp drop on the other side of 1935 to no more than six in any of the last years of the decade represents the decline. (171)

The most well researched novels from the era include such titles as *The Disinherited*,us*A*, *Native Son*, *Jews Without Money*, *Daughters of Earth* as well as Tillie Olsen's novel *Yonnondio*, which was only published much latter during the 1970s.

While many of the works from the period were sidelined in mainstream popular culture and later buried in history, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* not only became a best seller but was also adapted by Hollywood, thus giving it a permanent place in U.S. popular culture. In his encyclopedic work *The Cultural Front*, Michael Denning shows that the popular American proletarian hero was "white," "heterosexual," and "male" and thus Steinbeck's presentation of an Oklahoma family receives overwhelming appreciation from its readers. Familiar, empathize-able

American faces become victims of the exploitative class system in *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is categorized as a collective novel by Barbara Foley. As a result, the novel never had any problem attaining popular readership within its national domain. The novel retained its popularity beyond its producing epoch; even at the end of the twentieth century about 50,000 translated copies were still being sold every year in the international market (Griffith 326).

The Grapes of Wrath manages to ignore the plight of Mexican and Filipino migrant workers, who were more visible as the struggling working-class during the Great Depression. As a result critics have found this novel blindly racist despite its revolutionary representation of American class politics. Following the novel's publication in 1939 Granville Hicks reviewed the text in *New Masses* where he says "No writer of our time has a more acute sense of economic forces and of the way they operate against the interests of the masses of the people". However, after Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize in 1962, Arthur Mizener contested Steinbeck's credentials as a revolutionary writer and an "American" author. In *Cultural Front* Michael Denning (who presents an analysis of the American working-class of the Popular Front era as both subjects and makers of their own culture), sees Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* as an anomaly to the Popular Front era U.S. proletarian novels: Steinbeck's choice of the "white-male" protagonist does not feed into the multicultural class culture of the thirties." Despite the criticisms, it is noteworthy that Steinbeck unveiled the relationship between the larger laws of socio-economics and the everyday life of the American people; his novel's popularity can only be compared to iconic works of protest literature like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Harriet Beecher Stowe), *The Jungle* (Upton Sinclair) and to some extent *The Native Son* (Richard Wright).[10]

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[10] See Dickstein's "Steinbeck and the Great Depression."

Steinbeck was successful in representing an objective analysis of the total situation within a subjective "story," thus making it popular to the "people".

The working-class-collective, who became the stars of proletarian culture, is reflected as American collective identity in *The Grapes of Wrath*—Steinbeck's *magnum opus*. His preceding works — *Of Mice and Men*, *Tortilla Flat*, *Of Dubious Battle* — sketch a symbolic journey from social observation to a political analysis of the "labor" scene of the thirties. In *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck presents a living and breathing working-class collective whose struggle to achieve a universal working-class solidarity is accompanied by dreams, lust, love, greed, heartbreak, abandonment and the subjective experience of becoming a "class for itself." Steinbeck's focus on the "Okies" humanizes the crisis of working people in the domain of literary public sphere. His choice of the white American protagonists resists the reification effect that separates the working-class struggle from the mainstream. Marilyn Wyman notes:

> Although white, in exchange after exchange between migrants and locals, Dust Bowl refugees are stripped of the normative privilege and power of "whiteness" to assume not only the mantle of shiftlessness assigned to Mexican/Mexican-American labor, but also the animalistic trope that separated them from the definition of civilization. (44)

The dehumanizing effects of modernist-capitalism is resisted through the selective inclusion of working-class members, presentation of universal themes of class struggle through personalizeable accounts of familiar people, known landscapes, familiar working conditions and finally a path of reaching class consciousness that is "achievable" by the common American masses.

Popular Aesthetics vs. Marxist Analysis in Structure and Style

Steinbeck alternates between personification and depersonalization while depicting why and how displaced farm workers migrated from Oklahoma to California adding to the narrative of American, as well as international, working-class crisis of the nineteen thirties. *The Grapes of Wrath* presents two different types of chapters: narrative and descriptive. The narrative chapters represent actions that focus on the adventures of the Joad family, while the descriptive chapters, though only contributing to one-sixth of the entire volume of the novel, focus on the sociohistorical context of the era. The plot of the novel develops through the narrative sections: it is the story of a collective struggle of an American family; the hero of this story is young Tom Joad. In the beginning of the novel, Tom appears as an individual with a personal narrative, which is not necessarily tied to any social grand narrative. Tom as well as all the other characters begin their narrative in the novel's setting with an emphasis on individuality and subjectivity, which is put on display through various statements beginning with the imposing pronoun "I."[11] During their long road trip, they establish communication with the fellow travelers, who share a similar history and dream. Their identifiable contexts provide the families with a generalizable "story" which can help in building a "typical" picture of the era. Subjective comprehension of the generalizable circumstances ignites a sense of collectivity amongst the members who do not share familial, hereditary or neighborly ties. The narrative shows how and why collective resistance is the only strength of the displaced and dispossessed:

> One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and the tents come out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the node, you who hate change and fear revolution. Keep these two squatting men apart; make them hate, fear, suspect each other. For this is the zygote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate—"We lost *our* land."(Steinbeck 151)

[11] Peter Lisca has discussed this trait in detail.

The chapter goes on to add that the capitalist-modernist system and its dominant (bourgeois) ideology cannot comprehend the solidarity of half-a-million displaced "people" who are beginning their journey from "I" to "we" as they move west in search of someone to buy their labor. Finally, almost halfway through the novel, in Chapter 17, the individuality of the human beings, the family units and their regional bonds are melted away and a new bond is formed on the basis of grief and aims, which becomes the basis of a collective identity: "the twenty families became one family and the children became children of all. The loss of home became one loss and the golden time in the West was one dream" (Steinbeck 193).

The Joads start their journey west and ultimately settle in the federal migrant camps in California; Tom's identity transforms into a collective subject, caring beyond his personal and family interests. In the narrative chapters readers follow Tom's physiological as well as symbolic journey from when he is released from prison until he is assimilated with the working-class. His travels lead to the possibility of integrating the individual to become part of a collective: thus he starts his solitary journey from prison to reunite with the family; later along with his family he joins hundreds of others migrating to the west and, at the end, he takes off to join the working-class collective to seek social justice and equality for the victims of the socioeconomic system. Though the Joad family as well as the other families in the camp present the total picture of the social context, the events and actions unfold to the readers through Tom's eyes and experiences. Thus the narrative chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath* can be considered as both a *bildungsroman* focusing on Tom Joad and a collective novel.

The descriptive chapters of the novel report on the state of people's suffering—displacement, starvation, death, migration, under-waged labor, unemployment—caused by a "rational" socioeconomic system that fails to comprehend the humane aspects of human society.

The first chapter begins with the onset of the Dust Bowl and how the human and natural environments were affected by it. The Dust Bowl is contextualized as a man-made natural disaster—over-farming of cotton has drained the earth of all nutrients and the land has been left barren. Steinbeck uses reverse reification to resist commodity fetishism and portrays the system as the "impersonal" monster that turns the living beings associated with the land into their thing-like existence. The individuals want to revolt against the situation but they cannot identify their enemy, who has orchestrated the farmers' misery; thus their guns remain silent and they are displaced from the only world they have known and existed in.

The farmers who had been cultivating the fields for generations were turned into squatters on their own land when they borrowed money from the banks during times of financial hardship. As the fields lost their fertility, the crops suffered and "profit margins" were low for the owners—the banks. The farmers were evicted from their land as it was more profitable to plough the land by tractor with a man on a daily wage of three dollars and recruiting the evicted families for cotton picking for fifty cents an acre. Concepts of ownership and profit are contested in Chapter Five—a descriptive chapter—where the collective voice of the "about to be displaced" claim their relationship to the land as their right to the land:

> . . . but it's our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours. That's what makes it ours—being born on it, working it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it. (Steinbeck 33)

The land is part of their living culture to the farmers and their families: labor associated with the farm has sentimental values to the squatters. However, for the financial institution, which represents the modernist-capitalist economic system, the land is rationally evaluated according to its "productivity." The novel's space shows the impossibility of imposing a completely rational

logic of institutional structure and policies on human beings, who are innately sentimental and will always evaluate agents of social and natural environment according to their emotional attachment with their surroundings. No communication can be established between the world which the evicted farmers are leaving behind and the one they are about to enter. After being forced to sell all their possessions for a nominal value, the fear of "powerlessness" sets in: "And now they were weary and frightened because they had gone against a system they did not understand and it had beaten them" (Steinbeck 97). Unable to accept the new worldview that awaited the displaced families, Grampa Joad laid buried under the ground in Oklahoma before the family could cross the state's borders.

Juxtaposing Working-class Typical Plot and American Setting

Steinbeck successfully knits together a collective history and a subjective sentimental story in his fictional world, which presents a generalizable total picture of the Great Depression and its influence on human beings. The transnational spirit of the work is set up in the descriptive chapters which contextualize the background of the novel space as a generalizable setting for working-class crisis. These chapters present an objective representation of the situation through an omniscient narrator from a bird's eye point of view. On the other hand, the narrative of the Joad family, represented primarily through the protagonists' points of views, narrates the emotional, physiological and social experiences of the victims of the objective situations analyzed in the descriptive chapters.

The setting of *The Grapes of Wrath* is spread over wide geospatial coordinates, comprising of Oklahoma cotton farms and California labor camps and Route 66 that captures everything in between. This vast backdrop attaches a pan American spirit to the text. More than

a quarter of the novel is set in Cherokee County, Oklahoma. A total of two days' action takes place here. On the first day, young Tom Joad finds his abandoned ancestral house and meets Casy and Muley. He learns about the forced evictions of sharecroppers and his family's plans to migrate west in search of work. The second day's actions are centered on Tom's reunion with his family and the Joad family's final preparations to set out for a new chapter in their lives.

The Joads along with former preacher Casy begin their journey on the third day, the same day, before crossing the state border, the family dog is run over by a car, Grampa Joad dies of a heart attack and the Joads befriend the Wilsons—a family from Kansas, who are heading west facing similar situation as the Joads—and the two families merge together in empathy and solidarity. The second location of the novel's actions is placed on and along Route 66, which witnesses the gradual unfolding of a new world: it is the world of the migrant laborers, who dream to earn an honest wage and respectful life in California, the land of plenty. Social and cultural protocols are established amongst the hundreds of thousands of migrants, where hierarchy and comradery emerge as dialectical necessities. A collective identity is formed on the road based on solidarity, but there is no political consciousness associated with this collectivity. At these stage the able-bodied workers remain a "class in itself," where they are aware of their collectivity but do not have a class consciousness. During this transitory phase the reality of California surfaces through stories from people moving back east.

The second half of the novel's actions takes place in California—mostly in migratory workers' camps. Describing the nature of these camps, Steinbeck writes in *The Grapes of Wrath*:

> The rag town lay close to the water; and the houses were tents and weed thatched enclosures, paper houses, a great junk pile. The man drove his family in and became a citizen of Hooverville. The man put up his tent as near to the water as he could get; or if he had no tent, he went to the city dump and brought back

> cartons and built a house of corrugated paper. And in Hooverville when the rains came the house melted and washed away. (Steinbeck 234)

Hooverville is a generalizable entity, whose roots are founded upon the factual reports on the conditions of the workers' camps that cramped around the orchards and industrial farmlands of California in the mid 1930s[12]. Like Walter Greenwood, Steinbeck transcends the "local" flavor by superimposing imaginary details to the factual data, which creates a semantic reference to typical working-class living conditions. Characters respond and engage with these typical settings with eternal humane emotions, which are presented through a Marxist lens. A grim picture of the first temporary migrant camp, a Hooverville, shows poverty and deprivation on a new level; starving children gather around to beg for morsels of food from the ones who still had enough to prepare a family meal: "The strange children stood close to the stew pot, so close that Ma brushed them with her elbows as she worked . . .The children stood stiffly and looked at her. Their faces were blank, rigid and their eyes went mechanically from the pot to the tin plate she held" (Steinbeck 257). There is no "tag" of class, race, gender or nationality on this representation of hunger: it is universal instinct and the novel presents this as an identifiable generalization. Ma Joad responded to the situation humanely: "I can't send 'em away . . . I don' know what to do . . . I'll let 'em have what's lef'" (ibid). The narrative points out that such humanitarian compassion cannot fight the circumstances and a systematic intervention is called for. Caring for mutual strugglers remains a characteristic trait for the migrant workers, who manage to foster a sense of collective through their sentimentality.

The descriptive chapters present a Marxist call for an organized resistance against the system that has shown no mercy to the migrant children, adults or elderly who are left to die of malnourishment and starvation in overcrowded unhygienic camps; the socioeconomic system

[12] For more on the actual reports see Simkins.

lacks the perception of "care" for the laborers who help feed the country's belly. The essence of class solidarity is rooted in humane sentimentality that Ma Joad is guilty of. This ability to "care" for another living, breathing soul "humanizes" the working-class members: "…used to be fambly fust. It ain't so now. It's anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do" (Steinbeck 445). In contrast, the novel dehumanizes the bourgeois concept of self-centered individuality, which, driven by the logic of profit, has taken away food from the mouths of a million:

> The works of the roots of the vines, of the trees, must be destroyed to keep up the price and this is the saddest, bitterest thing of all. Carloads of oranges dumped on the ground. The people came for miles to take the fruit, but this could not be. How would they buy oranges at twenty cents a dozen if they could drive out and pick them up? And men with hoses squirt kerosene on the oranges and they are angry at the crime. A million people hungry, needing the fruit – and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains. (Steinbeck 348-49)

This contrast reverses the reification effect which assigns inferior status to working-class culture and contextualizes the modernist-capitalist system from a working-class worldview. The novel also points out that it is not the top down process of class education which formulates working-class collective resistance. Class collectivity is formed through everydayness of class struggle, where caring (for fellow living beings) and solidarity are not limited to ties of kinship or geographical origin but it come as natural human instinct. Thus Steinbeck depicts class-conscious struggle as a humane movement, rather than a rational process devoid of subjective tendencies.

Toward the end of the novel, two instances show how subversive class resistance formed through the everyday deprivation of the average people. Uncle John set the dead body of Rose of Sharon's stillborn child to float down the stream in its wooden box to carry out the message of human degradation in the hands of an inefficient socioeconomic structure: "Go down an' tell 'em. Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk. Don' even

know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain't gonna find out. Go down now, an' lay in the street. Maybe they'll know then" (448). The still-born child symbolizes societal neglect and the planned oppression of the people; by releasing the dead body for public knowledge, Uncle John claims a social recognition of the problem, which has been overlooked by the government and its many organizations. The fetus claims action on the part of the observers as the novel claims action on part of its readers; such action needs to be founded on class-conscious analysis of the socioeconomic structure. Later Rose of Sharon deconstructs the system of capitalism and patriarchy by offering her breastmilk to a stranger, who was dying of starvation. This action has multifold connotations: first she reignites the notion of "care" that provides a philosophical identity to the community, which contrasts bourgeois outlook; secondly, she rejects the societal norms of femininity and motherhood and embraces a stranger, with whom she shares no bonds but those of eternal humanity and international class struggle. Thus class struggle is freed from its theoretical burden and shown as a counterpart of humanity and humane actions in times of great distress.

Characterization of Typical Working-class as Generalizable American People

John Steinbeck never held a membership in the Communist Party and his works have been criticized for their "humanitarian" tendencies; some critics might even question his authenticity as a proletarian author. However, it is the humanitarian tendencies that established Steinbeck as a popularly read novelist and secured an eternal position for *The Grapes of Wrath* in popular culture. Steinbeck's approach is similar to Baird's as both of these writers attempted to "humanize" the victims of class culture, but Steinbeck did not assume an "apolitical" standpoint like Baird. Instead, like Walter Greenwood, Steinbeck focuses on creating a fictional world that can show how the operating socioeconomic system victimizes a large collective body of people

owing to their position in the cycle of production. The Joad family in *The Grapes of Wrath* is comparable to the Hardcastle family of *Love on the Dole*; both of these families are referential symbols of the working-class collective who were facing a major material crisis in the face of economic depression of the 1930s.

Theorists like Lukács emphatically focused on objective representation of the "total" picture to speak about working-class realities, but the popularity of proletarian texts depends on their appeal to the subjective qualities of readers. Proletarian novels serve a political function as they facilitate feelings of solidarity and class-conscious activism in the readers; in that sense, *The Grapes of Wrath* successfully fulfills the promise of the genre. Steinbeck's proletarian characters are rooted in their American ways of living while embracing transnational aspects of proletarian culture and international humanitarian qualities.

Steinbeck juxtaposes Americanism with proletarianism in order to create a wide awareness of working-class crisis amongst an audience whose values have long been carved by the liberal tendencies of "Americanism." That is why readers of *The Grapes of Wrath* "discover in Americanism the kernel of a Marxist meaning" (qtd. in Denning 431). During the Popular Front era, American proletarian literature aimed to "convince the unconvinced" and thus aspired to achieve a wider audience. At the 1935 American Writers' Congress, Kenneth Burke suggested that proletarian writers should replace the term "worker" with "people" in order to reach out to the public (Denning 124). Thus a new understanding of the working-class emerges during this time which equates the average person, capable of earning a wage as a working-class member. *The Grapes of Wrath* appeals to the American mainstream society by presenting the crisis that was faced by a large section of the U.S.'s population.

By implementing techniques of generalizability in characterization and adapting strategies of "sympathetic identification" certain proletarian novels achieve unanimous acceptance and popularity, while others dealing with the complex realities of proletarian life-struggle failed to be "accessible" to a larger audience. Projection of "Americanized" working-class life through the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath* was so readily identifiable that contemporary politicians, journalists and critics started treating the characters as real historical entities (Lye 143). However, in his 1974 criticism of this novel in *The Novels of John Steinbeck: A Critical Study*, Howard Levant argues that the last quarter of the novel creates types rather than characters, which appear to be "unbelievable." While Levant reads the technique of generalization as symbolism and renders the novel's attempts to create generalizable-universals as "allegorical" and incredible, David Wyatt reads the same passages from the novel to conclude that characterization in the novel achieves an eternal sublime:

> *The Grapes of Wrath* offers a reformation of the lonely ecstasies in which earlier characters stood imprisoned. Isolating self-consciousness is raised up as Tom broods on shared homelessness and a potential for human solidarity, into an invulnerable realm of concern. We no longer try to occupy a spot, but survive through love and imagination, in an "everywhere." (Wyatt 24)

Both Levant and Wyatt are imposing aesthetic readings on a political subject. Characterization in *The Grapes of Wrath* is integral to the novel's social critique of the capitalist economic system. As such, characters are designed to contrast bourgeois individualistic tenets and embrace an alternative collective identity. This process of the collectivization of identity relates the individuals to both national (American) and international (working-class) generalizable variables. I study the novel's characterization technique through a political-philosophical lens. Relating this novel's characterization strategies to the theories developed in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and early 1930s, I argue that Steinbeck's characters are neither allegorical nor

do they represent a sublime. Instead these characters strive to represent "typical," real-historical conditions of working-class life as a universal truth.

While I read this universality from a material-historical dimension, Mimi Reisel Gladstein makes similar observation in "Steinbeck and the Eternal Immigrant" through a (left) liberal political reading of the text. She states that "the Joads gain much of their cachet from the similarities of the problems suffered by immigrants everywhere" (134). By shifting the focus from working-class universals to the "challenges of immigrant life," Gladstein's approach fails to contextualize the "total" picture. Humanization of the working-class characters (for which Steinbeck is often criticized as a sentimental" author) helped readers empathize with the victims. Mollie Godfrey's study aligns with my argument. She shows that Steinbeck's Popular-Front era literary style not only embraces humanity to fight the dehumanizing tendencies of racism within fascist ideologies, but it also forces the "middle-class" reader to develop solidarity rather than sympathy for the characters and their social conditions.

Semantic relationships between the novel's characters and settings and their signified real-historic counterparts change along the axis of time. As a result, signification of the Joad family members and their forced migration have different connotative value to the novel's contemporary readers, who shared the same time-space coordinates as the novel's fictional world, and twenty-first century readers. Daniel Schwarz writes in "Character and Characterization: An Inquiry":

> A characterization is a trope—a figure or vehicle for a character formally realized by an author in an aesthetic structure. What is being troped is how humans live and the signified of the trope includes the narrated, the author, the audience for whom the work was written, our contemporary audience—most notably us. It stands for the nominalism of particularity and the universality of the general. The very descriptions of this human figure (I use the term in its meaning as individual

> and trope) are often the text—its ideology, politics and culture system. (Steinbeck 90)

Looking back at *The Grapes of Wrath* almost eighty years after its original publication, it is particularly important to emphasize "how" the "nominalism of the particularity" turns into "the universality of the general" through proper characterization technique. Steinbeck not only universalizes or generalizes the characters of this novel but also makes them easy relatable figures within popular culture. The characters are neither overtly political nor are they purely sentimental; instead, the characters sit in a dialogic space that appears as a boundary between the public-political contexts and personal-human reactions.

Though the Joad family has always been involved with labor, even as farm workers in Oklahoma, the lack of class-consciousness holds them back from emerging as a class capable of acting for itself. It is only through the newly found class-consciousness that Tom overcomes the reifying effects of the socioeconomic system and becomes capable of identifying the oppression and maltreatment of humanity along class lines. Tom and Jim Casey voice class-consciousness only after joining the struggle of the immigrant workers in California. A new journey begins in Tom's life when he bids farewell to his family after killing Casy's murderer. During his final parting with mother he swears to fight for the cause of the workers all his life: "I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever there is a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there . . . An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build . . . I'll be there" (Steinbeck 419).

While Tom embarks on his symbolic journey as a revolutionary proletariat joining the international working-class struggle, Ma Joad subverts the system and shows how class revolution can also destroy the patriarchal structure that join hands with capitalist ideology to

position women in a submissive role. *The Grapes of Wrath* shows how working-class life redefined gender roles and subverted the patriarchal system during a time of material crisis. Over the course of the narrative Ma Joad takes over the leading role within the family structure. Her first resistance to the men's decision to separate the family members during their journey was a violent display of desperation to keep the family together; she refused to let Tom and Casy part from the family and threatened her husband to make him accept her opinion:

> On'y way you gonna get me go is whup me . . . An' I'll shame you, Pa. I won't take no whuppin', cryin' an a-beggin'. I'll light into you. An' you ain't so sure you can whup me anyways. An' if ya do get me, I swear to god I'll wait till you got your back turned, or you're settin' down, an' I'll knock you belly-up with a bucket. (Steinbeck 169)

Later when Ma initiated the family's move-out from the federal camp, sarcastic Pa commented: "Time was when a man said what we'd do. Seems like women is tellin' now. Seems like its purty near time to get out a stick" (Steinbeck 352). Ma's position in the family hierarchy has been established as an equal to Pa at this point; she comments: "I got a stick all laid out too" (ibid). Ma assumes the position of independence and authority by the end of the novel. When water rose in their cotton-picking camp's box car Ma declared: "We're a-getting" outa here . . . getting' to higher groun'. An' you're comin' or you ain't comin', but I'm taking Rossharn an' the little fellas outa here." (Steinbeck 450). Ma's first name is never mentioned in the novel. She is predominantly referred to as "Ma" and occasionally as Mis' Joad. This universal nomenclature as the "mother" and her humanist characteristic traits present her as a counterpart of the revolutionary proletariat Tom Joad.

Ma's character is comparable to Palegeia in Maxim Gorky's *Mother*. Both these novels rely on "motherhood to the rescue" technique. Both mothers encounter the political discourse of class analysis through their sons, but while Palegeia's class consciousness emerges from her

engagement with party literature, Ma Joad's class consciousness emerges from her everyday struggle of survival which leads to her right to protect her fellow strugglers. *The Grapes of Wrath*'s subversion of the capitalist-patriarchal system shows that eternal humane qualities are not weaknesses but strengths of class revolution. Unlike Greenwood, who did not let Sally Hardcastle escape her captivity from capitalism and patriarchy, Steinbeck topples the dual oppressive system for women by revolutionizing the concept of motherhood itself.

One major failure of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the absence or limited description of the relationship between labor and laborer. Until the very end of the novel, where the Joads work as cotton pickers, the novel space shows only one incident of workers' relationship with wage-labor (in the peach farm). Steinbeck's limited access to working-class life and working conditions influences this shift of locus of working-class culture from workplace to the domestic world. The novel space presents generalizable circumstances of everyday life to attain empathy from its audience, but lack of information about the nature of labor and its effect on the physical, mental and cultural realm hinders it from being a typical working-class novel.

The Grapes of Wrath has a long established trend of inviting critical attacks from both leftists and rightists alike. John Ditsky identifies over one hundred critical works (books) on Steinbeck's novels, which were published between 1939 and 1998 in the U.S., the U.K. and Canada. My research contributes to this expanding body of critical insight on Steinbeck's literary works by positioning *The Grapes of Wrath* within a continuous process of the working-class literary movement. Steinbeck never considered himself a Marxist, a socialist or a communist, which makes it challenging for his critics to assign his works specific label within a particular literary tradition. In "I Am a Revolutionary" Steinbeck admits that his individuality and striving for literary independence prohibited him from becoming a designated member of the Marxist

movement (90). For the aforesaid reasons many scholars may contest my choice of *The Grapes of Wrath* as a representative proletarian novel of the thirties. Irrespective of the author's political affiliation, the novel clearly affiliates with the international working-class literary movement. It contextualizes an American reality within a collective resistance against the operating exploitative socioeconomic structure.

Steinbeck shows that a "typical" working-class setting can become an "enduring icon of popular culture" by juxtaposing objective narrative of universal working-class realities and subjective stories of identifiable individuals. Frank Eugene Cruz argues that "subtleties of an in-between experience" is the central reason behind the novel's uncontestable popularity (55). Steinbeck situates the "typical" problem of "unemployed members of the working-class" (most of whom appear as part of a transient population in novels of the Great Depression) as a challenge of humanity. Stuck between "being at home" and "homelessness," the Joad family experiences this "unnatural boundary," which subjectifies the objectified reality of migratory labor force. The boundary between Marxist rational and humanist affect is eradicated in *The Grapes of Wrath* and, as a result, a rational-emotional connection is established between the readers and the characters.

Conclusions

The aforementioned Anglophone novels-- *Love on the Dole*, *Waste Heritage* and *The Grapes of Wrath*—present typical, atypical and generalizable characters and settings, and create fictional-referential worlds that inform their audience about the struggles of working-class members during a time of global material crisis. These texts overcome reification effect by

personalizing objective information. Realistic depictions of real-life conditions show the "total" picture of class relations and the victimized position of working-class members.

Despite their progressive outlook in bringing forward questions of working-class lives and struggles, these novels capture the working-class worldview as a white-heterosexual-able bodied discourse of class culture. Greenwood fails to relate his protagonists to their counterparts in the British Colonies. Baird's narrator is blindly racist to Chinese immigrants. Steinbeck almost completely ignores the narratives of Chinese and Filipino workers, who shared similar or worse challenges than the Joads. By silencing the multiple voices that shared similar socioeconomic oppression, these novels establish a hegemonic discourse within working-class culture; such discourse fails to capture how class interacts with questions of race, ethnicity and disability.

Chapter Three

South Asian Working-class Novels of the Late Colonial Period: Dormant Tendencies within the Genre

> Who produces knowledge about colonized people and from what space/location? What are the politics of production of such knowledge?
>
> - Chandra Mohanti

While the genre of proletarian novel has been a product of long debates within and between Marxism and Realism in the western context, lack of theorization, influence of religion in everyday life, system of caste hierarchy and British colonialism are some of the major factors that challenge our understanding of the subcontinental working-class novel and class culture. The politically, socially, psychologically and rhetorically ignored sub-continental laboring class adds to the challenges of narrative representation of the working-class and pushes the boundaries that define class relations. In contrast to European and American working-class literature, where the narrated subject has been defined by "law, political economy and ideology of the West" (Spivak 271), the young genre of colonial novel and its protagonist suffers from a geo-political 'homelessness'; the case of working-class protagonist expresses this emptiness as an ontological challenge. Narrative representation of this ontological limbo cannot be expressed through established norms of western proletarian novels. While the western tradition of working-class literature aimed to capture the 'total' picture through representation of 'typical' and 'total' contexts, the 1930s subcontinental novels show that a colonial working-class subject requires representations of absence, rupture and silence, to produce a complete signification of their

material conditions. A true world literary study of the red decade remains incomplete without careful analysis of the subcontinental scenario.

‘Knowing’, ‘writing’ and ‘representing’ the colonial working-class in the novel space also invite questions regarding political aspirations behind such acts. When a middle-class English educated Indian man, or *brown shahib* as they were popularly referred to, writes about the working masses of the colony for a middle-class audience, with the knowledge that lack of education and leisure would hinder working-members’ ‘access’ to the text, then what political position and purpose does the aforesaid author have to ‘narrate’ about a lifestyle that is outside of his own lived-experience? Or should we reject all texts that were produced by these ‘middle-class’ class-educated authors, who like Baudelaire, found their ‘flowers of evil’ within the struggling working-class members, child laborers and women workers within the colonial setting?

Narratives of subcontinental working-class culture from the late colonial period were recorded by a group of class conscious citizens (nascent subcontinental nations) who pledged to use literature as a means for ‘social awakening’ much like Soviet authors of the Russian civil war. In first half of the twentieth century in British India the printed word was primarily an educated man’s world, so having working-class members write their own life struggles was an impossible conception. In recording how class hierarchy exploits the majority of the colony’s population and how class awakening is crucial for the true independence of the people, these class conscious authors assumed various political positions. This chapter investigates how colonized working-class lives were narrated from varied (political/authorial) positions — through the eyes of a native informant, through the lens of a nationalitarian (not nationalist) conscience, and from the point of view of a revolutionary consciousness — in the genre of the

novel during the 1930s. While studying working-class novels from South Asia, this chapter maps such texts within their regional and national literary trends while locating them within world literary culture of the time period. By focusing on the "dialectics of national and international factors in literary development" (Neupokoyeva 111) of the subcontinent during the last few decades of British colonialism, I study how these texts, which have peripheral status within World Literature, are integral to our 'total' understanding of the genre of the working-class novel on a global scale.

Wai Chee Dimock points out the challenges of imposing the concept of genre onto a dynamic field like literature in her article "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge". Critics like Benedetto Croce and Jacques Derrida were against generic categorization. Croce found a fundamental fallacy in labeling a work of art into a particular category; the authors are not consulted while compartmentalizing their works under one or another genre, generic categorization is an imposition that goes against trends of the creative work. However, in case of proletarian literature, many of the authors were involved in outlining the generic tendencies and aimed towards fitting the texts within the realm of proletarianism. The genre of the subcontinental working-class novel was an intellectual child of the class conscious authors who advocated for politicizing the literary space for class education and decolonization of the mind.

Categorization and generic divisions impose different kinds of problems in the case of proletarian literature. In contrast to the western proletariat, who dominates the literary discussions on working-class culture, the non-industrialized national and regional working-class cultures from the colonies were assigned marginal status. As a result class conscious literature and art produced from these coordinates were not considered as ideal representations of working-class expressions. Derrida points out: "As soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a

norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity" (224-225). Texts produced from outside of the center of communist and socialist power hubs were thus considered as 'anomalies' or 'impure' forms of working-class literature.

In the case of the working-class novel, one can trace this politics of center and periphery in twofold ways. First, the working-class novel itself is an anomaly; within the novel form it contradicts its fundamental commitment towards presenting bourgeois culture and philosophy. Secondly, working-class novels from regional pockets such as colonial Korea, colonial China or colonial India were considered as anomalies within the genre of the working-class novel itself. These texts, which shaped the dormant trends of '30s working-class novels, remain "unstudied examples" of the genre in World Literature. Focusing on selected subcontinental novels from the 1930s (as examples of these sidelined texts) this chapter analyses how the dormant tendencies added to the vibrant and evolutionary literary tradition. Shedding light into the internal contradictions of the world of working-class culture this research demonstrates the challenges of the genre on a world-historical scale.

While analyzing E. P. Thompson's understanding of the term 'English' in *The Making of the English Working Class*, where he considers migrant Irish workers working within England as a part of the English working-class (but the Irish workers of Ireland do not find a place in the study), Dipesh Chakrabarty asks what will be the status of the working-classes of colonial India who were technically serving under the same crown as the English working-classes:

> What would happen in the histories of men and women who filled the ranks of the industrial working classes in a country like India but whose cultural heritage was significantly different from that of their counter-parts in England? Was there a Marxist rule of historical providence that guaranteed that even these people would, whatever their historical differences with the English, inevitably find themselves on the high road to class-consciousness and socialism? In what way

> could their differences frustrate and make ambiguous the universal sociological schema of Marxism? (207-8)

Though the South Asian working-classes of the 30s share many of the struggles that workers in England or the USA were facing during the Great Depression, class consciousness in the subcontinental context was also woven with questions of caste consciousness, anti-colonial struggle, gender inequality, peasant consciousness and religious culture. Thus inclusion of subcontinental novels of the 30s within a study of global working-class literary culture indicates that new registers for analyzing class culture and identity are required for a complete insight into the importance of class in World Literature.

This chapter traces the dormant trends of the genre of the twentieth century working-class novel by focusing on three subcontinental novels from the 1930s. It is divided into four sections. The first section analyzes how the 1930s' subcontinental literary sphere appropriated and domesticated the European form of novel and mode of realism to express the colonial context. I will argue that through representation of the colonial working-class the subcontinental novelists of the 1930s were subverting ideologies of both colonialism and capitalism. The second section focuses on Munshi Premchand's Hindi novel *Godaan*, for which I will cite Gordon Roadermel's 1968 English translation. My reading aims to demonstrate that neither socialist realism nor proletarian realism was capable of presenting 'total' reality of the subcontinental working-class culture. *Godaan* appropriates 'silence' and 'rupture' as necessary tools of colonial realism to represent the three hundred million working people of the colony. The third section studies Mulk Raj Anand's 1936 novel *Coolie*. In this section I will address the politics of language associated with working-class writing, and investigate how such politics influence the ontological homelessness of the colonial working-class. The fourth and last section of the chapter presents a study of Manik Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel *Padma Nadir Majhi*. Here, I will argue that

narrative representations of working-class subjects of the late colonial period address questions of gender and disability and explore the relationship between productive and reproductive labor. By addressing the issues of colonial public sphere, colonial appropriation of the novel form, relevance of realism in the context of subcontinental class conscious literature, politics of language and questions of gender and disability within the subcontinental working-class novel, I argue that inclusion of these novels complements the existing west-centric scholarship on the subject and show how working-class novel has lasting influence in world literature.

Background to the introduction of the working-class novel in the subcontinent

Existing scholarship relating the literature and politics of the late colonial period (of British India) identifies the Independence Movement and Gandhi's non-violent philosophy as two major socio-political factors that influenced subcontinental literature of the time. However, recent academic interest in the Progressive Writers' works has 'discovered' a vibrant body of multilingual literature that addressed the problems of the sub-continental society from Marxist and realist perspectives during the last few decades of colonialism. The first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed steady growth in the literary public sphere of India, which was propelled by radical advancement of print capitalism. Though literacy rate (in the indigenous languages as well as English) was still significantly low at the time, and only a privileged few had the opportunity of associating with literary activities, the highly politicized body of Indian literature was successful in narrating the ways in which colonialism and nationalist struggle complicated the structure of a class society. One of the first direct contacts between the subcontinental literary space and the Soviet socialist literary culture and ideology was established through the Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who visited the Soviet Union in 1930 at the request of Anatoly Lunarsky (Sarajmohan Mitra115). However, this visit did not

culminate in any organized socialist trend in South Asian literature. It was through the establishment of the All India Progressive Writers' Movement[13] that a systemic literary trend was established, which focused on issues of class along with other variables like gender, caste, religion, age etc. as pertinent questions for imminent citizenship identity for the masses:

> …a leftist movement in the arts did not gain ground in the country before 1936 when the All-India Progressive Writers' Conference was held in Lucknow under the presidency of Premchand. This was possible only when a generation of declassed intellectuals had appeared, who were not only beginning to see a crisis in our culture but sought for a more revolutionary ideology in all spheres. (ibid)

The All India Progressive Writers' Association (IPWA), which took a leadership role in organizing a literary movement to address the subcontinental working-class issues, was established in London by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjid Zaheer in 1935. Authors associated with the IPWA introduced a new vision of literature that was political in essence and integrated the project of decolonization with class conscious resistance and a struggle for gender equality.

Arousal of 'progressive' emotions remained the central focus of the IPWA[14]. The progressive writers called for political action as their readers were invited to an emotional journey which would affect their way of thinking and looking at the world. Debate around the aesthetic stand point of the IPWA focused on the question of emotive phenomenon, i.e. affect. Though emotion as a category remained under-theorized in the manual of the IPWA, the texts produced under their banner introduced the concept of affect as an unavoidable step towards decolonizing the cultural mind. The organization held its first congress in Lucknow, India in 1936, which was presided over by Premchand, one of the most influential literary figures of the time. In his inaugural speech to the 1936 IPWA annual congress Premchand said that this arousal

[13] IPWA henceforth.
[14] Neetu Khanna explores the subject in detail in her dissertation entitled "Visceral Logics: Revolution of Feelings and the All India Progressive Writers Association."

of emotions will be attained through a "sense of beauty". Premchand added: "Realism, within this framework, is less a specific aesthetic technique than a philosophy that brings together an affective sense of justice, fairness and harmony with an understanding of all that violates that sense. Beauty – our sense of the aesthetic and the affective – has to be recaptured from the orthodoxy and redefined" (qtd. in Gopal 26-27). Here Premchand initiates a concept of a politicized aesthetics, which remained an important aspect of the IPWA throughout its history.

The ideological roots of the IPWA were tied to a Paris based antifascist group called the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture. The founding members of the IPWA saw themselves as a part of a global movement against the anti-democratic tyranny of imperialism, fascism and colonialism. IPWA was also influenced by the soviet experiments with socialist realism; the organization embraced tenets of the traditional Indian forms, English modernist styles and Soviet socialist realist techniques. The low literacy rate of India (at the time it was only about 10%) presented severe challenges for the IPWA's attempt to bring their 'cultural revolution' to the masses; as a result the Writers' Association was replaced by Indian Progressive Theatre Association in 1942, which aimed to create new consciousness and political identity for the citizens of the nascent nation state through live performances.

Authors associated with the IPWA domesticated western ideologies and literary forms within indigenous techniques and traditions while producing a powerful political discourse. These class-conscious writers of the nineteen thirties established new paradigms of citizenship identity and pushed the limits of literary discussions and activities surrounding the concept of class. Their texts analyzed the colonial social structure from a Marxist perspective and showed that colonialism is only another form of capitalism, where the fruit of labor produced by the

many is enjoyed by a few. Reflecting on the class subject through political lenses, the literary works problematized the question of labor within the imperial capitalist economy.

The introduction of a literary and interactive society (a social product of capitalist economy, supported by print capitalism) provided literature with an opportunity to contribute towards the formation and circulation of ideology and class-consciousness in the subcontinental context. In “The Struggle for the Ideological Transformation of the National Congress in the 1930s,” Bipan Chandra writes: “On the economic plane, the national movement from the beginning adopted a pro-poor orientation and accepted and propagated a programme of reforms that was quite radical by contemporary standards and was basically oriented towards the people” (19). Among the proposed reforms were changes to education, taxation, rent, debt relief, credit, and workers’ rights. In spite of this egalitarian worldview, the nationalist movement of India managed to ignore the important question of class inequality. Instead, by identifying the ‘foreign’ government as the enemy, the nationalist movement diverted public attention from class war to a war of independence.

While mainstream political discourse of the Indian National Congress centered around the concept of the ‘rebirth’ of the Indian nation, the political-literary circle of Progressive Writers’ envisioned the project of decolonization as one of ‘reconstruction’ (Gopal 14). The IPWA members were nationalitarian (like Frantz Fanon), who distinguished between independence and freedom. For these writers, the task was to “build an all-India character” (ibid). Instead of focusing on the lives of a handful of westernized, English educated, bourgeois colonial members, the IPWA associates found the daily lives and struggles of the majority of colonial people as their ‘novel’ subjects. The Progressives identified the socio-political transitional phase of the late colonial period as an opportunity to decolonize the mind, state and

culture; these writers embraced realism as a favored mode to reconstruct an Indian culture that was insensitive to the issues of class, gender, caste and religion. While the 'realism' that IPWA is referred as "progressive realism", I will use 'colonial realism' as an umbrella term to indicate the literary mode that was appropriated by the subcontinental authors of the late colonial period to express a class conscious resistance. It is imperative to mention here that there were left-minded subcontinental authors, who worked independently of the IPWA and shared similar concerns for the challenges of class exploitation, colonialism, patriarchy, castism – issues that were of central importance in the literary works of the IPWA associates.

While the political-aesthetic ambitions of the IPWA were sketched out at its first conference in 1936, the organization's manifesto didn't appear until 1938. Mulk Raj Anand drafted the manifesto during its Second Annual Congress, in which he stated:

> Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical culture, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find a refuge from reality in baseless spirituality and ideality….It is the object of our association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes…We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and un-reason we reject as re-actionary. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and customs in light of reason, which helps us to act, to organize ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive. (Anand, "On Progressive Writers' Movement" 20-21)

Anand's manifesto shows that the primary focus of the IPWA was to ignite a consciousness in the reader; this focus on the cultural and political awakening of the literary audience places the organization as a Marxist group, somewhat similar to the Russian 'proletkult'. Experiments with

content, technique, aesthetics and the medium of IPWA's literary works maintained this purpose of mass cultural consciousness as their target.[15]

Freeing colonial fiction (in various regional languages) from its traditional baggage of 'sentimentality' and establishing literature as a 'rational emotional' practice with sociological importance, the Progressives' movement identified literature as a primarily political institution. In her work *Realism in the Twentieth Century Indian Novel*, Ulka Anjaria documents the Progressive's contribution in establishing the mode of realism as an Indian category:

> The progressive writers… defended realism as a means of representing the marginalized and the downtrodden…Their statements and most of their literary works could easily be read as claiming not only to represent but also to speak for the subaltern in fiction, much as Nehru and Gandhi did in political discourse. (7-8)

The hierarchical power structure of the colonizer-colonized relationship dictated that a purely European genre like that of the realist novel enjoyed an elevated status within the narrative of the empire. An act of subversion can be identified in the Progressive's obsession with realism. Realist representations of the colonized people not only overcame reification and but also resisted imperial hegemony which has previously conceived of subcontinental literature as inferior. According to Anjaria:

> Where colonial discourse had accused the Indian writer of distortion and dissimulation in her writing, in a classic gesture of nationalist consciousness, the Indian novelist of the 1930s wielded the powerful ideal of mimesis to suggest that she too was able to grasp the realities not only of her conditions but also of colonial hypocrisy (2).

[15] For a more information on the All India Progressive Writers' Movement see Sajjad *Zaheer's The Light: A History for the Movement of Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, Talat Ahmed's *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism: The Progressive Episode in South Asia, 1932-56*, and Priyamvada Gopal's *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence.*

The Progressive Writers used realism not only for 'representation' but also invoked "possibility, desire, aspiration, reflection and imagination" (Anjaria10). Colonial realism can be characterized by its dual tendencies of referential and performative presentation. Progressive realism's task was not limited to authentic representation of the material world. Through the performance of a subversive act, where narrative transcends the semantic and becomes one with the referential framework, the mode surrendered into its own referent.

Progressive Writers used their narrative mode not only as literary technique but also as political philosophy. Priyamvada Gopal writes: "realism, within this framework [of IPWA] is less a specific aesthetic technique than a philosophy that brings together an affective sense of justice, fairness and harmony with an understanding of all that violates that sense" (27). In the hands of the colonial writers realism experiences a transformation from narrative to philosophy, which is a result of assimilation of native literary practices (where morals were an important aspect of religious literature) and western ideologies (primarily Marxism).

Like realism, the novel form was also domesticated by the subcontinental authors. In the case of the colony, historical novels pioneered the practice of novel writing and established an audience who was capable of comprehending and interested in reading novels in indigenous vernaculars. The journey of Indian realist works originated from Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyay's 1864 novel *Rajmohan's Wife*, which symbolized the nation-in-formation as the mother goddess. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century there was strong and steady progress to unite the indigenous aesthetic techniques with the realist forms that were introduced through the colonial encounter. An extensive body of literary works from the time period attests to the versatility of languages, genres, forms and styles that dominated the subcontinental literary sphere; these texts often developed a hybrid narrative style that cannot be

categorized in the established generic clusters. Nineteenth century realism was an accomplice of the colonial machinery. Orientalism, a form of radical realism, constructed the subaltern as 'other' in European literature of the time (*Orientalism* 72). In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said argues that realism silenced the 'other' and acted as an ideological and repressive force during the nineteenth century. Realist novels in the colony projected the foreign power as the 'other' and subverted the original ambition of nineteenth century realism. These novels were attuned to the interests of the colonial bourgeoisie; as a result the nineteenth century colonial realist novels addressed bourgeois insecurities within the colonial structure.

Novels emerged in the colonies as an extension of the imperial cultural hegemony and there is no denying its roots within the bourgeoisie. The cultural infrastructure and class hierarchy of the colonies ensured that only the elite and the educated could associate with the culture of novel reading in the colony:

> …under conditions of illiteracy and shortages, and given simply the leisure-time necessary for reading one, the novel has been an elitist and minority form in developing countries compared to poem, song, television, and film. Almost inevitably it has been the form through which a thin, foreign-educated stratum (however sensitive or committed to domestic political interests) has communicated to metropolitan reading publics, often in translation. It has been…a naturally cosmopolitan form that empire has allowed to play a national role. (Brennan 56)

Novelists associated with the IPWA were often part of this elite minority, who had access to higher (European) education and its related cosmopolitan identity. Though, this is not the case for everyone: subcontinental novelists like Premchand and Manik Bandopadhyay lived and died in abject poverty despite their non-working-class origins. However, novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, who were exposed to a cosmopolitan lifestyle, 'imported' the questions of class struggle (from the west) and contextualized those issues within the late colonial period. As a result, a

transnational working-class subject was introduced in the literary domain of the novel; this newly introduced novel subject could also contest the role of nationalist movement in relation to the colonial class struggle.

Subcontinental working-class novels challenge the ideological hegemony of colonialism-capitalism by introducing the colonial laboring classes within the 'elite' and 'exclusive' sphere of novel. Through a process of twofold subversion, these novels appropriate and domesticate the European genre and mode to express subcontinental realities in the language of the working-class. In the following sections I will study *Godaan*, *Coolie* and *Padma Nadir Majhi* as representative examples of the subcontinental working-class novel from the late colonial period to analyze how the question of representation, politics of language and discourse of working-class body were addressed by the genre.

Premchand and *Godaan*

Premchand was the adopted penname of Dhanpat Rai Srivastav, who started his career as a novelist in 1903 (arguably), when his first novella *Asrar e Ma'abid* was serialized in an Urdu weekly. He has written around two-hundred and fifty short stories and sixteen novels along with numerous essays and translations of works from World Literature. Poverty was Premchand's life-long companion. He also struggled in his personal life: losing his mother at seven, father at seventeen and beginning an unhappy marriage at fifteen. However, his second marriage (sometime around 1907) was more successful. Premchand's formal education began in a Madrasa, where the medium of instruction was Urdu; he also learnt Persian during his time at the Madrasa. He later completed his Matriculation from the Collegiate High School at Benaras and was admitted at the Hindu College. Financial hardship disrupted his formal education as he was

responsible for supporting his stepmother and two step-brothers as well as his own wife once his father passed away. He started his professional career as a school teacher in 1900 and was later promoted to the rank of a school inspector. In response to Gandhi's call for non-cooperation to the British government, Premchand resigned from his position in 1921. In the meantime he had already established himself as a literary figure in both Urdu and Hindi literature. His 1908 collection of Urdu short stories (*Soz-i-vatan*) was banned by the government for its anti-British sentiments. After this incident, the author adopted the penname 'Premchand' and the first short story under this new alias was published in 1910. Premchand's first collection of short stories in Hindi was published in 1917 after which he concentrated on publishing in Hindi rather than Urdu.[16]

After resigning from his job as a school inspector, Premchand tried his luck in journalism, political activism, education, and even in Bollywood. He is said to have attempted to translate and publish a Hindi version of the *Communist Manifesto* from his own printing press during this time. Though none of his ventures brought him financial success, his literary success remained uncompromised and he achieved a national reputation. Premchand was already envisioning a national literature for India when the IPWA was formed by the Indian diaspora in London in 1935. Premchand's writings were influenced by both Gandhian and Marxian philosophies. His literary works indicate how each of the aforesaid philosophies interfered with the everyday life of the colonial subjects. He was also greatly influenced by Russian novelist Maxim Gorky (G. Mukherjee 195). From 1918 till 1936, Premchand's writing addressed the challenges of subcontinental peasantry.

[16] For more on Premchand's personal life see Amrit Rai's *Premchand: A Life*, translated by Harish Trivedi.

Premchand is one of the most popularly read Hindi novelists of the twentieth century. In a poll conducted by Hindi weekly *Saptahik Hindustan* Premchand's novel *Godaan* was selected as the most widely read and discussed novel in the Hindi literary sphere even in 1980 (Meenakshi Mukherjee 148). He domesticated and surpassed the western realist mimetic tendencies, while representing the colonial society and its class structure. By reflecting on the ontological crisis of mass culture, Premchand starts a trend in Hindi literature that contests the applicability of realism to express dialectics of nationalism and socialism.

Hindi as a language has been the center of nationalistic debates and politics since its formation. Hindi originated from Pali, a derivative of Sanskrit. During the nineteenth century the languages Hindi and Urdu were identified as cultural symbols of two main religious groups of the subcontinent: Hindi acted as language of the Hindu nationalism while Urdu was primarily associated with Muslim cultures. Following political tension along religious lines between Hindu and Muslim communities, leaders of the Indian National Congress advocated for emphasizing Hinduism and Hindi as unifying national symbols in the early twentieth century. In 1910 an organization called 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan' was formed which took pivotal role is giving Hindi national exposure (Bhatia 137). During the first decade of the twentieth century Brajbhasa and Khari Boli (two other languages, which were derived from Sanskrit) dominated literary and colloquial culture of Northern Indian Hindu community (Gaeffke 11). Gaeffke's research show that the Hindi literary sphere grew significantly during the first two decades of the twentieth century (17).Nandi Bhatia observes that Hindi literature of the pre-independence period unifies culture and politics, and voice nationalistic values against British colonialism.

After Gandhi's return to India from South Africa in 1915, Hindi received a renewed 'power' as a national language. Non-cooperation movements against the colonial rule rejected

everything ‘foreign’, including the language of the foreigner. Under Gandhi’s political influence, a number of established Hindi-Urdu writers produced texts that urged the nation to unify against colonial rule. Premchand was one of the most famous indigenous writers of the time period, who devoted his career to write about the challenges of everyday life in the colony while addressing the issues of nationalism, colonialism and socialism.

In his 1936 inaugural speech at the first annual congress of the All India Progressive Writers’ Association Premchand urged his fellow writers to adapt a progressive outlook in their works. He states: “By ‘progress’ we refer to that condition which creates in us strength and vigour, which makes us aware of our misery, which enables us to analyze the internal and external factors that have reduced us to the present state of inertia, and which attempts to remedy them” (qtd. in Meenakshi Mukherjee 145). In contrast to another contemporary Hindi literary movement called Chhayavad which advocated for individual creativity and addressed the political issues of the day by turning “to an infinite transcendental reality, holding onto a rhetoric of mysticism and spiritualism” (Bhatia 143), Premchand’s call for “progress” demanded a ‘reaction’ about the sociopolitical conditions that progressive texts reflected on.

Agenda and politics of the Progressives are closely related to the project of the Third Period and Popular Front of the Communist International. Premchand’s writings present alignment towards the vision of the Popular Front while his reflection on lives of rural peasantry in India shows his commitment to ‘collectivization’, a dominant theme of the Third Period. Gaeffke identifies Premchand as one of the pioneering figures to embrace the technique of collectivization to express realities of colonial life in the subcontinent (51). Appearing as a go-between the two distinct approaches to cultural policies of the Communist International,

Premchand shows the complications of bracketing Indian writers within specific phases of western periodization.

Written in the context of thirties' global economic crisis, the Hindi novel *Godaan*, published in colonial India in 1936, presents a narrative about the formation, meaning and function of class identity in the context of colonial economy. *Godaan* was Premchand's last completed novel as he died later in the same year as that of the novel's publication. In this novel Premchand attempts to represent the complexities of class structure in the colonial, semi-feudal Indian society and in doing so he shows how western realism has its limitations in representing subcontinental context. Premchand's characterization technique changes throughout his writing career and by the time *Godaan* appears Premchand's point of view has shifted from individualistic to collective; his former works "… concentrated on educated characters or on a simple man with the mental power of a saint" which "had to change and focus on the majority of Indians who were illiterate, poor and utterly dependent economically as well as intellectually" (Gaeffke 52).

Premchand wrote *Godaan* after his introduction to the writings of Marx and Lenin. In spite of being a supporter of Gandhian politics and practices, by 1919, Premchand announced himself as a subscriber of the Bolshevik ideology. In a short story entitled "Katil" Premchand expresses his inclination towards Marxism and distances himself from Gandhian non-violence: "…You don't make a country free by singing pious songs and parading streets in non-violent batches… kill a couple of thousand English today, and you have freedom coming to you on a platter. Yes, mother. That's exactly what happened in Russia, that's exactly what happened in Ireland, and that's exactly what is going to happen in India" (as trans. and qtd. in Sarin 151). Though *Godaan*, or *The Gift of a Cow* as it is translated in English, is the most celebrated of his

works and remains one of the most famous works of modern Indian literature, Meenakshi Mukherjee has observed that the novel lacks 'thirties style Marxism' (145).

Premchand's commitment to a dialectical worldview and anti-colonial stance has a strong presence in his novels. Rapid urbanization and industrialization challenged the traditional Indian ways of life and culture. Exploitations of peasants in the feudal world were replaced by labor exploitation within the urban-industrial setting. Migration of labor from rural to urban setting destabilized the already complex, overdetermined class structure in the colony. Modern South Asian industrial working-class was thus born of this displacement from their traditional homes in the rural communities. With this spatial dislocation, a new consciousness of identity is formed that does not rely on the rural communitarian structure.

In *Godaan*, Premchand re-presents the complex structure of the village world, where a peasant's identity is not just related to a profession but is dependent on factors like religion, caste, family, along with wealth and gender. Events of the novel show how the urban colonial society expresses its class characteristic and how the proletariat is exploited through modernist-capitalist practices. Working-class is presented as a social process rather than an identity site in *Godaan*. Multiple worlds are layered in the fictional space of the novel. The village has its own world with its own morals, hierarchy, exploitation, etc.; alongside, there lays the world of the urban poor, living in city slums and fighting to survive in sub-human living conditions while overworking in factories; the other world is that of the wealthy and elites who engage in debates about the nationalist movement, fight over petty interests and fake prestige, and live mostly disconnected and unconcerned about the larger mass of the country. This multilayered world of the novel demonstrates that the total reality of the colonial society is chaotic and unevenly layered.

Politics of center and periphery is problematized in *Godaan*. The novel replaces the binary conception of class structure with a far more complicated social order that incorporates elements like ancestry, religion, caste, and gender into consideration while identifying any member's class position. Michael Sprinker points out that the world of the lower-class people is controlled by the upper-class ideologies in the world of *Godaan*. Sprinker analyzes the social structure of this fictitious world of the novel in relation to the colonial politics and economy:

> Our account of *Godaan* has shown that while the larger Marxist story about the transition from feudalism to capitalism did not follow its familiar European trajectory in the Indian sub-continent, the pertinence of class as an analytic instrument remains undisturbed by this charge in the narrative structure of history. The failure of Indian National Congress to achieve a class alliance of the Bolshevik type – a conscious failure, be it noted; the Congress was from the first a bourgeois party, and even if it did on occasion mobilize the peasantry and portions of the urban working-classes against imperialism – precisely doomed Indian nationalism to its reformist denouement in the run-up to independence and beyond. (73)

This transition from the feudal to capitalist society (in India) kept the class relations mostly intact for the members of the lowest strata. The politics of nationalism added another dimension to the newly categorized working-class which was absent from pre-capitalist agrarian economic structure. The old world of the landlords and feudal land owners is replicated under new names with the onset of capitalist economic practices in the subcontinent. The old sense of community is replaced by the idea of class in capitalism.

In *Godaan* Premchand demonstrates how Marxian ideas of class identity and Gandhian idea of citizenship identity influenced the colonial working-class consciousness through their dialectical interaction. Gandhi, an influential political and social figure in colonial India, did not support or trust class welfare. In his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi envisions a free India with its citizens embracing a collective identity within the rural socioeconomic structure:

“Gandhi insists on modernity’s transience, presenting the village as a unit of collective survival from out of the apocalyptic telos of urban progress (Mohan 16). Premchand, who was somewhat influenced by Gandhian ideals, represents the village as “an organism, interconnected even in the face of significant daily strife, is also reminiscent of Gandhi’s belief in the village as a site of India’s future” (Anjaria 34). This is clearly reflected in his earlier works like *Premashram* or *Karmabhumi*, where the focus is on the struggle of the rural elites, who are suffering along with their peasantry. Premchand perceives the crisis of peasantry inseparable from the challenges of native aristocracy, as both experienced the sudden growth of industrial capitalism that dislocated the center of power from rural units to urban centers.

The politics of representation of the subaltern rural population affected Premchand’s works:

> Premchand seems to have been acutely aware that the problem of the peasantry could not be separated from the question of who represents them, and how an entire generation of young reformers is conditioned by this privilege. Premchand presents this class-based, pedagogical relation as an irresolvable problem, not only of politics but of representation as well. (Anjaria 35)

Struggles of everyday life faced by rural peasantry were interrelated with questions of national identity during the ‘30s. Premchand elaborates on the village life as a background to emerging identity of subcontinental industrial working-class. Multiple layers of social-political-cultural-religious categories inform subaltern working-class identity, which faced spatial transformation from villages to cities. While the village nurtured space-based epistemology, the dislocation of rural peasantry to the urban centers as modern working-class introduced them to a class identity that was transitional, mobile and transnational.

The making of the colonial working-class is a process of hybridity. On one hand, it is the imperial economy that regulates the demand of manual labor (form and function) and thus can be

identified as the primary influence; on the other hand, century old caste hierarchy, patriarchy and agrarian division of labor have their equal share in configuring the characteristics of the colonial working-class. This complex social process which conjoins class with the aforesaid variables is in the center of *Godaan*'s plot formation. Realism, which was used as the ideal mode for expressing working-class realities in the western context, is domesticated and subverted in *Godaan*. The realist representation of the myriad challenges of the colonial working-classes incorporates silence, absence and rupture. The novel also assimilates idioms, dialects and other linguistic idiosyncrasies of rural vernacular through this realist depiction of colonial situations.

Colonial realism, as presented in Premchand's novel, addresses the politics of inequality between the urban and rural mass by focusing on the challenges of representation that results in silenced voices. While the village represented quintessential properties of the imminent national culture of the nascent state, these representations of rural poor also symbolized a political concern: "in effect, elites, intellectuals, industrialists, and urbanites were "more equal" than the rural masses" (Anjaria 34). *Godaan* captures the politics of inequality that continued to haunt the discourse of citizenship in post-independence period. Premchand portrayed "this crisis of rurality affecting the nation at large" (ibid). As Anjaria points out in her book, colonial realism is by nature meta-fictional and exceeds the boundaries of the represented world and its 'own referentiality'.

Godaan primarily represents three worldviews and their interactions: the urban elite/the feudal class, the urban/industrial worker and the agrarian labor class. It does not confine itself to the western style thirties' Marxism, but instead shows that working-class consciousness, nationalist struggle and the project of decolonization cannot be separated from each other in case of the socio-historic reality of British India during the late colonial period. Indian colonial

realism that influences the majority of Premchand's works also represents contradictions, which corresponds to the Marxist idea of dialectics. In *Capital* Volume I Marx expands on his concept of 'material' dialectics: "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought". Premchand captures the dialectic relationship between the old meanings of 'labor' with the rapidly transitioning new concept of identity by presenting the three worldviews that dominate the fictional space.

The novel begins in a village setting. *Godaan*'s protagonist Hori's family operates within the strict dictates of the feudal social structure. The novel records how the two worlds — one rooted in the feudal system while the other incorporating industrial class system — merged together and formed the working-class of the sub-continent. These two worlds differ in their socioeconomic settings: the feudal order operates within the rural frame while the capitalist economy dominates the urban spaces. "Hori Ram finished feeding his two bullocks and then turned to his wife Dhaniya. 'Send Gobar to hoe the sugarcane. I don't know when I will be back. Just get me my stick": these opening lines of *Godaan* introduce us to Hori Ram, a small sugarcane farmer in colonial India. Father of three children, Gobar (son), Sona and Rupa (daughters), Hori Ram dreams of getting a cow, a symbol of wealth and good fortune in the Hindu Indian society. Hori manages to buy a cow on credit by luring an old widower, Bhola, with the promise of a young bride. In the course of the incidents, Bhola's daughter falls for Gobar and conceives a child. Being from different caste backgrounds, they knew that their union would not be approved and kept it as a secret affair. In the meantime, the cow that brought Hori all the joy and pride is poisoned by Hori's brother Hira, as an act of revenge, owing to ongoing dispute between the households over distribution of their hereditary property. Hira flees the village to escape from severe punishment that one is subjected to for killing a cow, a religious sin

that cannot be forgiven. The death of a cow symbolizes great misfortune in Hindu society and mythology, and the incident starts a cycle of disasters for the household that ends in Hori's death.

Following the evil omen of the death of their cow, Gobar flees the village to escape the wrath of his family and community for his affair with a woman of a different caste. Hori and Dhaniya take care of the Jhuniya, the mother of Gobar's unborn child, in spite of their initial anger and grievance. They are penalized and charged with a penalty for giving shelter to an adulterous woman like Jhuniya, who dared conceive a child outside of wedlock with a man from a different caste. Hori's financial burden adds up as he also pays fines to the court for his brother Hira's crime out of sibling affection to rescue the latter from the harassment of the police. Hori sinks deeper in misery of debt after loaning money at a high interest from the moneylenders of the village. Gradually as time passes by, Hori takes care of both his and his brother Hira's sugarcane field; the family arranges for a humble wedding for their elder daughter Rupa, to a prosperous farmer from a nearby village.

Readers are presented with detailed analysis of the social structure of the village economy at this point. The Bramhins, or the priestly caste, the highest caste in the Hindu social ladder, exploits the villagers in the name of religion; the people with 'connection' with the British colonial power owing to their employment in lowly positions within the government exploits villagers in the name of law and order of the empire; moneylenders and rich farmers exploit poor villagers by drowning them in debts (which the latter can never pay off due to monstrous practice of compound interest), and eventually the low caste, small farmers are uprooted from their land and property, forced to work as under-wage laborers in their own farmlands.

The novel cuts out of the village and focuses on Gobar's life. Gobar has managed to establish a successful small business and rented a small shed for himself in the city of Lucknow. He is unaware of his newborn son as he never found the courage to write to his folks back in the village. Finally, after he has saved some money, Gobar decides to return to the village. Hori's family welcomes him back with great excitement and he tries to help around with the family (with money and labor). But eventually he returns to Lucknow with his wife and child where money has come easier. The entire family is faced with a disappointing reality in the city as Gobar's business was overtaken during his absence and he did not have alternative arrangements for supporting his new family. The relationship between Gobar and Jhuniya deteriorates and suffers a big blow when their child passes away. After losing his business and stall at the bazaar, Gobar is forced to work at a sugar mill where the working conditions are harsh and wage is low. Gobar gets involved in a strike of the workers demanding higher wages, which is repressed brutally by the police. Eventually Gobar is appointed as a gardener at English-educated lady doctor Malati's house, where he settles with his family in the servant quarters.

Premchand spends little time analyzing the nature of the sugar mill workers' strike or the internal construction of the proletarian collective. Instead, the novel aspires to present the working-classes and their struggles in relation to the socio-political turmoil of the late colonial period. Premchand depicts how class identity of the characters is inter-related with other coordinates of identity like gender, ethnicity, caste, etc. By locating the traditional practice of labor within the rural agrarian economy, Premchand also shows how feudal aristocracy and modern industrial labor are related through their original hierarchy. The rural land holdings of the zamindars or feudal lords are shown as the resources of prosperity of the rich in the cities. The Rai Sahib or Amarpal Singh is one such character who tightens the taxes on the tenants of

his villages to ensure his luxury in the city. The two other main characters are Mr. Mehta, a philosophy professor, and Mr. Khanna, a banker and sugar mill owner. The central plot of this elite layer of the society revolves around the rivalry of Khanna and Mehta over Malati's affection and love. Finally Malati devotes herself in charity work and settles for working in Hori's village.

Premchand incorporates indigenous narrative strategies along with the techniques of characterization from the western genre of novel. Folk elements run strong throughout the text and function as an integral part of working-class identity in the colonial context. Thus the motif of 'the gift of a cow', which has its origins in Hindu mythology and exists as a popular cultural practice, has a powerful 'absent' presence in the novel. Embedding folk elements within the structure of this socially conscious, politically motivated and aesthetically pioneering (within the Indian literary context) novel Premchand engages in a new literary imagination. Representation of the 'folk' in the genre of the novel he brings together the 'high' and the 'low' cultures, which has been identified as an essential characteristic of realist-nationalist novel by Brennan (52). In case of colonial working-class novels, awakening of class consciousness and invention of national identity are interrelated and happens simultaneously. *Godaan*'s fictional space represents the masses (prospective citizens of independent of India) and the folk elements become quintessential to provide it with a 'national' (as opposed to 'nationalist') essence.

Instead of focusing on one single character and following their development, the fictional world represents multiple voices in each of these three worlds. *Godaan*'s strength and weakness of characterization are centered on the sheer volume of the number of characters. The novel creates a polyphony, where characters from varied socio-economic backgrounds present conflicting and contrasting worldviews. Exhausting amount of information about the minor

(urban and village) characters makes it difficult to develop attachment with any single character's formation, situation and evolution, and thus provides total and objective overview. These fictive characters are defined by the social, religious, caste-based, racial (imperial) and economic class-based identity. However, affiliation to a class identity does not seem to be manifested so much in the personal realm as it does in the collective. Through the presentation of characters from a variety of socioeconomic levels, *Godaan* reflects on the form and function of class as a social process.

While the worlds of the peasantry, urban working-classes, and the wealthy and the intellectual classes operate primarily in segregation, there are occasional interactions amongst the realities of these worlds. When Gobar goes to the village, a dialogue is established between the struggling debt-ridden farmers of the village and their counterparts in the cities, who work in sub-human conditions. Both are underpaid and are politically repressed by the Indian land owners and the foreign government through imperial law enforcement. The world of the elite colonial intellectuals and wealthy aristocrats intersect the rural world of poverty and deprivation when Malati and Mehta are hosted by the lower-class village people during the Rai Sahib's shooting party; the encounter intensifies when Gobar's starts working at Malati's garden; and finally a dialogue is established between the two when Malati starts serving the villagers with the much needed medical attention.

The aspired 'totality' and 'typicality' of working-class realist narratives is captured in *Godaan* through the aforementioned worldviews and their infrequent interactions. However, the novel also indicates that the colonial class culture cannot be transformed into a continuous literary narrative; a true representation of the colonial working-class culture is obligated to express the fragmentations and discontinuities in the formation and function of the class process.

The ruptured historiography of the colonial working-class is personified through the character of Gobar. Anjaria argues that Gobar not only becomes representative of the crisis of colonial laboring class but also embodies the problems that accompany any attempt to mimetic representation of the aforesaid class. Gobar's continuous dislocation and disappearance from the fictional plane presents him as a realist ideal. Anjaria writes:

> Coupled with novel's overall interest in writing a realism premised on the multiplicity of significations of terms such as "human" and the "real", Gobar seems to take furthest Premchand's literary experiment by presenting a realism at the limits of representation itself…Gobar fails to be the paradigmatic peasant rebel. (*Realism* 56)

In order to represent this failure of realism, the novel starts with Gobar's absent presence. In the opening sentences Hari and Dhaniya talk about Gobar, who is absent from the scene. As the novel proceeds, Gobar takes spatial and metaphorical refugee in absence and silence; through his character the novel presents its critique of the social order. Gobar "becomes the site at which the novel offers its most radical critique, locating its political centre in the sensibilities of impermanence and absence that realism is commonly considered unable to describe" (ibid). While in Lucknow Gobar disappears within his dehumanization and the overwhelming pressure to survive. After his return from the city Gobar's identity is split between essence and appearance as he tries to adjust to rural life and fails. His reification stops him from grieving his dead child. Through Gobar's alienation and silence *Godaan* speaks for the realities of the urban working-class culture of the late colonial period.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*

Contemporary to *Godaan*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* addresses some of the similar anxieties and challenges in presenting the subcontinental working-class through the language of

fiction. By writing in English, Anand adds a new question to the existing framework, the question of language. Given the political importance of the introduction and enforcement of English in the sub-continental life, it is no wonder that Indian literature in English continued to have political significance in the colonial society. Unlike any of the indigenous languages of the subcontinent, Indian English did not have an infancy, childhood and adulthood. It was born of the project of colonialism and remained a language of 'purpose', 'politics' and 'authority' ever since.

Following Macaulay's 1835 report on the Indian Education system that outlined the benefits of introducing English as a mandatory language of instruction as a colonial policy, English entered the life of the 'literate' masses. The language remained 'foreign' (which was later replaced by its new status: 'official') and only a handful of people, who had access to formal education, would receive a firsthand experience of communicating in this medium. The implementation of English medium education was a political strategy for the British bureaucracy, who wanted a class brown in skin and white in taste. This English educated 'native' Indians served in the clerical positions and mediated between the colonial policies and the colonized people.

Gandhi rejected English in his political activism and literary endeavors. The nationalist movement promoted by the Indian National Congress (led by Gandhi) refused to embrace any aspect of modernity as it was against the imperial imposition of modernist thoughts and life-style into the colony. Gandhi blamed western education, language and life-style as the cause of prolonged servitude of the colony to its white masters. He claimed: "It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny etc., have increased; English educated Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people"

(56). Gandhi and his ideology had profound influence on Anand. The author spent time living in Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in 1927 to engage himself with the masses. His experience provided him the context and material for his future literary pursuits: "I wished to recreate the folk, whom I knew intimately, from the lower depths… the suppressed, oppressed, repressed, those who had seldom appeared in our literature" (Anand, 'Sources' 20). His first published work *Untouchable* uses Gandhi as a fictional character in the novel. Anand's choice of language for representing the people whom he has observed from within, presents an interesting twist in the literary tradition of India. In a later interview Anand comments on his use of language: "No one can say that I am not influenced by English language. At that time, no language in India except Bengali was ripe enough to write a novel" (L. Gandhi 146).

It should be noted here that though Gandhian politics rejected and resisted the English language (along with other foreign products), not all indigenous political bodies shared this spirit. It was the early nationalists and reformists, who demanded and lobbied for English to be an accessible tool for the Indians. These pro-English activists believed that creating a common language and opening the colonial society to western advancements in philosophy and sciences, the native subjects will receive a more powerful position within the colonial structure (which would eventually be helpful in achieving independence).

Anand and his choice of the literary form and language can be accused of an 'educated elitism'; however, I argue that *Coolie* embraces these choices to talk back to the empire in a language and form that the later has dominated so far. Like Roberto Fernandez Retamar's Caliban, colonial working-class protagonist appropriates the language and form to serve its own message: thus the dialogues are non-standard, full of indigenous idiosyncrasies and genre projects influence of classical Indian literary techniques. While writing and composing the novel

Coolie, Anand resided in London and was a member of the Communist Party. As discussed earlier, Anand was also one of the pioneering figures to establish the All India Progressive Writers' Movement, which gave a platform to writers and served as a political voice. This newly formed literary group pointed out th crisis and decay of class structure, struggle and hierarchy in colonial Indian society. Anand's first published novel, *Untouchable* (1935), received great appreciation from its Western audience as this work primarily focused on evils and exploits of the caste system that served as an organic compound of the Hindu society. *Coolie* problematized the concept of working-class and class-exploitation by presenting a case of a colonial society and its exploitation along the lines of economic, political, cultural and ideological spheres. His third published novel of the decade *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) is a narrative of working-class life in the tea plantations of India. These three novels of the decade shape the early practice of the working-class novel in the context of Indian-English literature. As Fanon has shown in *The Wretched of the Earth*, even economics is a superstructure within colonial economic system; Anand's novels elaborate on the relationship between the colonial laboring class and the British ruling class. Colonial working-class identity is not only dependent on one's position within their domestic production cycle: its locus can be traced within the empire's production structure and colonial policies. Anand's novels attempt to understand the meaning of class culture and ideology within this overdetermined economic system.

Writing in English Anand achieves a political target: he can now communicate about the state of the colony (which is a superstructure of the English economy) with the tax payers of England, who were indirectly responsible for financing the poor working-class conditions in the subcontinent. In 1942, English novelist and journalist George Orwell wrote:

> Mr. Anand does not like us very much, and some of his colleagues hate us very bitterly; but so long as they voice their hatred in English, they are in a species of alliance with us, and an ultimate decent settlement with the Indians whom we have wronged but also helped to awaken remains possible. (219)

Not only did English establish a dialogue between Indian context and western criticism, it also enabled communication amongst the different indigenous languages and cultures and provided a sense of unity. Aijaz Ahmed observed “India was internally so fragmented, so heterogeneous, such a mosaic of languages and ethnicities, that it needed a centralizing language to sustain its national unity” (74). By narrating Munoo’s struggle for survival in English, Anand provided subcontinental working-class literature a truly national essence.

Anand customizes the language of his novel by juxtaposing linguistic norms of various North Indian languages: “… (Anand) transforms the language and the words, using them in a different way and context with many idioms, proverbs, abusive native words, and translation” (Maxharraj 261). The descriptive sections of the novel vary in style and tone with that of the dialogues. While Anand followed accepted English tradition for describing scenes, situations, characters etc. he used Indian dictum and style in the dialogues that take place amongst the characters. Using everyday oral language of working-class people within the high-brow concept of English novel (for the colonial audience) Anand revolutionizes the literary space and provides the colonial working-class with a linguistic identity within the novel space.

I argue that though the Indian English novel is a pan-Indian entity, the genre also incorporates linguistic, symbolic and modernist homelessness as defining features, which refers to a lack of national identity for the genre. Anand’s protagonist Munoo adds characteristic homelessness to the genre and thus successfully articulates the genre’s position in World Literature as well as within the Indian literary tradition. In *The Indian English Novel: Nation,*

History and Narration Priyamvada Gopal points out that the Indian English novel has been a 'national' phenomenon since its conception. She writes:

> …the anglophone Indian novel is part of a heterogeneous corpus in which certain dominant trends, shared concerns, and recurrent themes are, nevertheless, discernible. It is a genre that has been distinguished from its inception with both history and nation…Inasmuch as its very emergence was generated by the colonial encounter, the novel is an ineluctably postcolonial entity. (5)

On one hand Anand's *Coolie* is a national phenomenon, international in theme and scope, on the other hand it is 'homeless' and thus doesn't have a definitive position in world literature. Like the novel itself, its protagonist also suffers from a sense of 'homelessness'. Anand tries to fit in the problems of class structure within the purview of the nationalistic political debates of the 1930s. However, the literary form of novel in the language of English invites questions regarding its target audience and attempted public debate. Though Anand's choice of language and form helped in situating the work within international debates of socialist realist literature, he also alienated the text from the lives of the subcontinental masses.

Anand acknowledged the influence of British novelist Charles Dickens in composing *Coolie*. Referring to Anand's article "What the Dickens Do You Mean?" Cowasjee observes that Anand wanted his readers to accept him as the 'Dickens of India' as he published *Coolie* (13). Socialist overtones analyze the socio-economic structure of colonial capitalism in *Coolie*. The novel also depicts how a class-conscious working-class can be borne out of the exploited masses through the journey of Munoo. *Coolie*'s excellence lies in presenting the challenges of forming a class-conscious identity and class struggle within the narrative of nationalism.

The events of this novel take place over a period of two years at the end of which Munoo faces an unfortunate death at a young age. Displacement, disillusion, alienation, struggle and experience of solidarity provide Munoo his identity as a working-class protagonist. *Coolie* is

divided into five chapters: the first chapter narrates the incidents of the morning when Munoo is displaced from his roots and traditions of his village; chapter two depicts his life of misery as a domestic servant in Sham Nagar; chapter three shows Munoo's life in Doulatpur, where he works in a pickle factory; chapter four introduces the readers to Munoo's life as a cotton mill-worker in Bombay; the final section, chapter five, records Munoo's life and death as a domestic servant and rickshaw puller at an Anglo-Indian household in Shimla, the summer capital of British India. Anand craftily presents Munoo as a case with which most Indians of the time could sympathize (though his readers would not be able to share class solidarity with working-class characters like Munoo); generalizable characteristic features liberate Munoo from his geo-historic specifics and allow him to be a part of greater narrative of working-class life.

Representation of the colonial working-class in an English novel has its advantages and limitations. Anand successfully creates a subgenre of 'Indian' English working-class novel that presents the class in question as a national as well as international phenomenon. The form of the novel is a "function" of the triangular relationship of man, world and value systems [Jha 35]. Anand's novel questions the very concept of totality and introduces a new worldview. *Coolie* offers a laborer's worldview. The total picture represented in the context corresponds to the social picture as perceived from a class-conscious viewpoint. In *Coolie* discourse and narrative work together and act as a political statement and aesthetic piece at the same time. In the descriptive sections, Anand paints pictures of several locations where Munoo had found temporary shelter: they are filthy, unhealthy, unprotected and mostly un-livable for human beings. The households of Indian clerical class or British bourgeois class are painted in contrast to provide an aesthetic view of working-class life. The narrative sections of the novel focus on the psycho-physical effect of labor on working-class protagonists. However, it is important to

note that presenting working-class aesthetics in a language 'foreign' to real life experiences presents its own set of challenges.

Adapting a documentary style and projecting a generalizable life-story of Munoo as a 'coolie,' Anand ties in the question of child-labor with that of the role of class consciousness within the nationalist discourse of Gandhian politics. The author trusted that fiction had the power of transcending particular situations and thereby his novel can address a larger mass:

> As soon as a story, picture or novel becomes prismatic by making the individual character into individual type, it lifts the particular to the universal, almost as in a folk tale or symbolic story… is the novel can achieve this kind of ambivalent form...the individual character is more suggestive in all his or her implications than in a merely realistic work. (*Letters on India* 7)

The power of generalizable characterization for delivering political and social message is an established phenomenon in world literature. In his Preface to *The Forgotten Village*, American novelist John Steinbeck wrote:

> A great many documentary films have used the generalized method, that is the showing of a condition or an event as it affects a group of people. The audience can then have a personalized reaction from imagining one member of that group. I have felt that this was the more difficult observation from the audience's viewpoint. It means a very little to know that a million Chinese are starving unless you know one Chinese who is starving. (qtd. in Lisca 301)

It would indeed be futile to have quantitative and statistical knowledge of employment, wage, and other accepted economic denominators without having a humane insight about the everydayness of the class process in the lives of the colonial working-class.

Munoo's life journey starts and ends in a village; in the intermediate period he is forced to assume various working-class roles like domestic servant, sweatshop worker, railway station porter, homeless street hobo, (under)waged laborer, rickshaw puller etc. The railway plays an important part in this constant spatial dislocation. In contrast to indigenous tradition of place-

based knowledge and identity, the Indian railway system helped perpetuate an idea of class-based identity in the colonial society. Instead of being rooted in one's village or family, this new concept is directly related to one's position in the class structure. Throughout the novel Munoo transits through various locations, which add mobility as a dimension of his identity. The Indian railway has been associated with imperial success in the colonies, which also provided the modernist class structure to the sub-continental society. Mobility, associated with the railway system, also poses as an icon of modernity. Once uprooted from his village, Munoo's changing workplaces provide him with physical homelessness and psychological alienation—tropes that define his working-class identity.

Munoo becomes a coolie via his access and surrender to this mobility (the train) that uproots him from Kangra, brings him to Daulatpur and later takes him to Bombay. Railway induced mobility of working-class characters is a unique feature for colonial working-class texts. Colonial working-class novels capture the dialectic of this mobility: the progress of modernity promised by the railway also determines the fate of the colonial laborer in the lowest strata of the production machinery. The railway induced dislocation assists the novel with its forward tempo as well. In his article "History of the Novel, Theory of the Novel" Franco Morretti argues that prose creates a sense of "forward looking or front falling" (1), so modern novels in prose have automatic tendency to lean forward and discover the future. The forward movement of the trains complements the tempo of working-class narratives. Tense or the sense of temporality determines the tempo of the genre. In the genre of the novel, past is conceived as a constraining temporal frame (a "creative necessity" according to Bakhtin), which also carries within itself multiple options for the present. The immediate future is the most important temporal factor for the genre of the working-class novel. As a political-literary medium, the genre calls for action to

challenge and change the existing exploitative structure. This ‘revolutionary temporality,’ of the colonial working-class novel is aided and guided by the appearance of the railway.

Coolie depicts how situational identity informs a human’s agency, subjectivity and authority over her/his claim to a social identity. Munoo’s spatial transformation does not change his position in the structure of the socioeconomic system. His movement from place to place avails him with a lateral change of identity, but his confinement in the vertical position does not help with his class identity as an under-(w)age worker. The narrative takes advantage of its power to analyze the embedded nature of exploitation in several layers of the social system. Interaction, performance, agency and subjectivity (or the lack of the latter two) construct Munoo as a generalizable child laborer of the colonial economic system.

During the inter World War period, the colonial working-class was facing a rapid transition from their feudal origins to various urban settings of labor practices. The urban working-class was still in the process of ‘formation’, which can be analyzed as a stage of infancy in modern working-class historiography. Munoo represents this infancy of the modern working-class. Initially he is not class conscious and his ignorance about the class process hinders the formation of his class identity. As he becomes aware of his position within the class system through his personal experience and involvement with various unions, he achieves an identity through solidarity. The novel presents a synopsis of the core concepts of class consciousness and its role in the class struggle through Munoo’s life-story. This struggle ends in the release of the worker from oppressive socioeconomic position, and aborts the whole social system of class division based on labor and capital. Anjaria has observed this transition in Munoo’s charater:

> …the disillusionment and dehumanization of the protagonist, Munoo, find expression at a meeting of the All-Indian Trade Union Federation, in the course of

> which Munoo finally begins to see the contradiction between himself and the other workers…Yet despite this seemingly liberating narrative of humanist socialism, Munoo ends up falling ill and dying…Anand seems to be suggesting the insufficiency of traditional narratives of working class awakening in contexts such as India – and, more generally, of allegorical narratives to necessarily redeem their complex and irreducible protagonists' relationship between "contingency" and "overdetermination". (67)

Munoo's character emerges from the reified social relationships of colonial-capitalism, which destroyed traditional family and community relationships, and reduced the laborer to a non-human identity.

Class culture is primarily depicted through its everydayness in *Coolie*. Munoo becomes a working-class character through the everyday practice of class hierarchy and exploitation. Within the span of the forth chapter, where Munoo works in the textile industry and is introduced to union politics, he begins his journey towards a class awakening. However, it is only in the last chapter, Munoo achieves true class consciousness in the last phase of his life. Luck brings Munoo from Bombay to Simla, the summer capital of British India, after he is hit by Mrs. May Mainwaring's car. Munoo is first appointed as a servant at the Mainwaring household, thus completing the cycle of his domestic servitude as a child-worker. Later, his duties included pulling a rickshaw for his employer. In Simla Munoo becomes aware of the multi-faceted process of class exploitation, and his emancipation from the system is attained through his death.

Apart from representing the lived-experience of class by depicting a fictional child-laborer's journey through villages, towns and cities of colonial India, Anand shows that the sub-continental experience of class is interrelated with questions of religion and nationalism. In the fourth chapter, the narrative represents the challenges of forming a class conscious struggle within the subcontinental context. As the coolies (the traditional name for the day laborers in India) are united by a feeling of solidarity evoked by an inspiring speech during a labor

demonstration, a riot breaks out between the Hindus and Muslims. The readers observe the ease with which the problem of the mill could be sidetracked by igniting the spark of religious hatred that had resided in the Indian society for centuries.

Despite its unique relationship with religion and nationalism, subcontinental working-class struggle of the '30s is represented as a part of an international phenomenon in *Coolie.* In the course of the novel we meet the working-class activist and communist leader Sauda, who unites the workers through his inspiring speech about the discrimination between the rich and the poor (a similar speech can be found in most proletarian novels):

> There are only two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor… and between the two there is no connection. The rich and the powerful, the magnificent and the glorious, whose opulence is built on robbery and theft and open welfare, and honoured and admired by the whole world, and by themselves. You, the poor and the humble, you, the meek and the gentle, wretches that you are, swindled out of your rights, and broken in body and soul, you are respected by no one, and you do not respect yourselves. (224)

Though this speech fails to capture the complications of the colonial/caste divided society of the subcontinent, it does contextualize the subcontinental working-class and their exploitation as a challenge of the international working-class movement. While dialectics of a class society is simplistically presented in Sauda's words, dialogism of the subcontinental class culture is represented throughout the novel by portrayals of class actions carried out by members from every layer of society, which includes British managers, 'Indian' clerks, small business owners, union leaders, and Anglo Indians. Integrating an oppositional or dialectical point of view that exists amongst the narrator, author, characters and their speech, the novel portrays a 'total' worldview that was initially suggested as one of the core features of a class-conscious literary text. As a colonial working-class novel written during the high tide of nationalism, *Coolie* carries

the responsibility of presenting a total worldview that can behold the mainstream political discourses including that of the nationalists, the reformists, the communists and the imperialists.

Anand's mastery lies in conceiving the 'total' real-historic, and showing how each class and entire nations are related to each other within the system of capitalism. The economic depression hit India as an obvious de facto due to its relationship with the British Empire via colonialism. The impact of the '30s Depression in the lives of the Indian working-class is reflected in a notice put by Mr. White Little, the British owner of the cotton mill in Bombay:

> In view of the present trade depression and currency crisis…the Board of Directors regrets to announce that in order to keep the plants running and to curtail expenses, the mills will go on short time immediately. There will be no work for the fourth week every month till further notice. No wages will be paid for that week, but the Management, having the welfare of the workers at heart, have sanctioned a substantial allowance. This change will take effect from May 10th. (249)

By inter-relating the tension of the local with that of the global, Anand not only locates the working-class of colonial India within the world-historical, but he also captures the plurality of voices and discourses that characterize working-class collective. The presence of Sauda, a working-class activist from Manchester, and his commitment to the causes of the subcontinental working-class establishes the text within a continuous history of international working-class movement.

While the regional-national-international aspects of working-class lives is captured and reflected through the characterization of Munoo, he also represents the ontological limbo of the subcontinental working-class. *Coolie* imitates the form of a *Bildungsroman* in certain aspects; in a *Bildungsroman* the protagonist struggles to become an individual through various narrative experiences. In order to become a modern individual, like the hero of a *Bildungsroman* Munoo left 'home', got real-life 'education' about social class structure and hierarchy, agonized over

political institutions etc. However, the striking difference lies in the fact that while a protagonist of a *Bildungsroman* finally try to find a consciousness of self through eventual development of family life, Munoo's life ends in death and disease that he accumulates through his exposure to the narrative elements of a *Bildungsroman* . Though alienation is not completely absent from the classical *Bildungsroman*, it is qualitatively different from the development of working-class *Bildung* in working-class novels. Working-class alienation, resulting from a mismatch between protagonist's consciousness of individuality and socialization hinders a coherent development of selfhood for the working-class hero.

Munoo is a modern hero, who grew up in sensitive national-historical time of the formation of the modern nation state of India through its nationalist politics and narratives. Gregory Castle points out, in severe social situations, Bildung becomes the 'mediated route' of 'social mobility'; for Munoo, working-class life of the colony hinders his possibilities of social mobility across the lines of class and thus suffocates him, and symbolically and literally kills him in the narrative process. As Anjaria observes, the accelerating alienation of identity "as indexed by the anonymous appellation "coolie" directly ironizes the model of self-formation offered by the Bildungsroman as Munoo matures" (135). Munoo's body becomes and "increasingly empty vehicle, worn down by the injustice of an imperialist, capitalist system" (ibid). *Coolie* captures the metaphoric and symbolic death of the working-class hero in situations of colonial modernity.

By choosing to write a novel in English to present living conditions of the laboring bodies of the colonial subcontinent, Anand invites debates related to the applicability of the language and genre. The rudimentary questions in this relation are: how can we identify colonial working-class literature as a genre in itself? And if the genre can be studied as a unique category, what will be the form and language in which the colonial working-class life can be best

presented? Anand's task as a writer of working-class life and struggle is to document local (regional) problems that conjoins colonial working-class with imperial social order. Migratory nature of the working-class, still caught in its naivety and infancy, is personified by Munoo. It is an allegorical journey where the class in question cannot but exhaust itself within the structure of labor propagated by the law of the Empire.

Working-class identity in *Padma Nadir Majhi*

Sharing similar political and social conditions of literary production with Anand's *Coolie* and Premchand's *Godaan,* Manik Bandopadhyay's 1936 novel *Padma Nadir Majhi* adds to a worldly understanding of working-class identity by focusing on a fishermen community of colonial Bengal, who lives in the Sunderban delta around the Bay of Bengal. Working independently of the All India Progressive Writers' Association, Bandopadhyay shared concerns over class politics and class identity within colonial setting; however, his concern with nationalist debates and international audience remains limited and thus presents a sharp contrast with Premchand and Anand's literary ambitions. Bandopadhyay's novel focuses on different registers of class identity within the socio-economic structure of Bengal; the text introduces gender as an important variable within the class collective and also establishes a dialogue between reifying effects of a class society and the environment.

In the local context, Bandopadhyay shared the literary stage with Bengali modernist poets (such as Sukanta Bhattacharya, Jibanananda Das, Buddhadev Bose, Sudhindranath Datta and Subhas Mukhopadhyay) and prose writers of 1940s Bengali literature, such as fellow novelist Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay of the socialist realist school. Bandopadhyay is described as part of a group of writers:

> …who in the twenties of the present century broke new and hitherto forbidden ground by depicting the realities of the life of the common people till then avoided by the older and 'respectable' writers. A social edifice built up and maintained almost intact over the preceding seven centuries was breaking down under the impact of industrialisation, urban development and changes in the economic pattern [...] The young rebels struck out resolutely against the prevalent sentimentality and romanticism and in the course of a decade succeeded in establishing a major trend which quickly influenced the course of literature in other Indian languages. (Ghosh v)

These writers were (in their own ways) dedicated to retrieve Indian literature from the elitist and sentimental approach, which was predominant in the literary tradition of the preceding time period.

The dominance of middle and upper class readership and limited literacy amongst the lower economic classes can be identified as primary reasons for the bourgeois outlook in traditional Indian literary practice. As the Progressive writers aimed for a literary tradition that represented struggles of people who were divided along material, caste and religious lines, the socialist-realist authors of the period focused on Marxian analysis of system, thus providing a 'total' picture of the exploitative structure of colonial economy. This approach demanded a complete restructuring of taste, status and definition of the 'madhyabitta bhadralok' (middle-class gentleman) and the ideologies that restricted them from accessing the larger mass of the society. The writers invested in establishing democratic and egalitarian ideologies in the literary sphere and substituted the romantic tendencies of the preceding tradition.

Bandopadhyay's leftist politics influenced his choice of subject and style for his literary creations. His novel *Padma Nadir Majhi*, or *The Boatman of the Padma River*, situated within the marginalized working-class of the colonial society, provides "an unemotional, accepting view" (Seely 152) of a community of poor Bengali fishermen. The novel represents and describes the working-class cultural practices, the religious festivals and rituals of the working-

class life, which give the community a semantic definition. The original work in Bengali was written in a colloquial dialect which was a rare event in the literary tradition of Bengal, and especially for the genre of novel. Unfortunately, the 1973 translation by Barbara Painter and Yenn Lovelock fails to capture the polyphony of this dialogic space through their representation of jargons, dialects, accents and so on. The narrative carries us through approximately one year, beginning at the peak of the monsoon, which is also the season for hilsa (Bengali: ilis), the main commercial resource for Padma boatmen. The central character, Kuber, has three children at the beginning of the novel; a fourth is born during the course of the narrative. Mala, his wife, is permanently disabled with confined mobility, but her fair-complexioned compensates somewhat for the physical 'defect', as the society values fairness of skin. Her lighter skin tone is a positive, high-caste attribute: "her complexion gives rise to some suspicions about ancestry: Had her mother been too friendly with some Brahman?" (Seely152).

Everyday struggle of Kuber to survive with his family is one of the central themes of the work. The narrative introduces a romantic interest in Kuber's life when Mala's younger sister, Kapila—who had been turned down by her husband—comes to visit her sister. The course of events causes Kuber to lose his job on the boat, and on a whim he promised a fellow villager the hand of his elder daughter in marriage. However, Hossain, the money lender/creditor comes to the rescue of Kuber, who is offered a job at Hossain's business. The family gradually recovers from the blow of misfortune that had struck them earlier.

During this time, Kuber is introduced to the concept of "Moyna": Hossain's dream project. The idea of leaving one's community and history behind to settle in an uninhabitable island appears terrifying to Kuber. Hossain has been colonizing Moyna, an island off the coast of Noakhali District, where he plans to start a settlement of people who will not be bound by the

exploitations of the class society. Both Moyna and Hossain are deliberately left ambiguous to the readers and the author never gives any omniscient knowledge of Hossain; the readers are introduced to him through his interactions with the villagers and especially Kuber.

Bandyopadhyay's narrative technique presents an objective image of Kuber and his fellow working-men. The author avoids any compassionate depiction of this lower economic stratum of village life and thus resists the previous tradition of sentimentalism that dominated Indian prose. The narrative starts *in-medias-res*, a common trait of several working-class texts. The third person narrator introduces the protagonist Kuber, who is working on a boat with two other fellow fishermen on a stormy night on the Padma River. Within the first few pages, the reader gets a taste of the deception and oppression that Kuber is subjected to in his everyday life: through his conversation with Dhanajay, the boat-owner, it is clear that Kuber is deprived of the share of the fish and thus the profit from it; on the other hand, Kuber's interaction with the office-clerk Sital babu shows the nature of *babu* culture and its class-exploitation in the very beginning. Narrative identity of Kuber is shaped through his direct actions as well as interactions with other characters in the novel. The minor characters contribute in presenting a complete profile of Kuber in an indirect fashion. These characters are indispensable in Kuber's performance as a working-class member of the society; through the minor characters' interactions with Kuber, about Kuber (amongst each other) and around Kuber, the readers get a total picture of Kuber's multi-faceted identity. The narrator's descriptions follow the trends of social realism and present unbiased pictures of working-class culture and life within the colonial setting. Kuber's character develops throughout the novel and his role as a distressed father of a sick child, husband to a wife with disability, a man attracted to a beautiful sister-in-law, a genuine friend of Ganesh in the rough days of unemployment, a crude liar who broke his

promise to Rashu, etc. create a modernist identity for Kuber. Kuber is not only a versatile social entity; he is also a fluid subject, capable of evolving with the changing sociocultural setting. These attributes establish him as a perfect candidate for the study of ever evolving nature of working-class as an identity site within the context of colonial societies.

Although the narrative mostly follows a third person perspective, it doesn't portray any omniscient view. The narrator is as ignorant of the future as are the characters and readers in any specific moment. The temporal space of this heterodiegetic fiction is shared by the narrator, character and reader, and they take a journey to this topos altogether. Character identities are constructed by active presence of other characters in the fictional space, the narrator and readers. Thus a perfect heteroglossia is created through the novel which represents a narrative identity of the working-class subject within particular socio-economic situations. This working-class subject engages in a dialogue with the other classes within the novel and beyond; the protagonist participates in the narrator's and the readers' world as they form a network of shared reality through the narrative. The anthropological identity of the colonial working-class of Bengal is constructed through the manifestation of the cultural representation of working-class life in this novel. Bandopadhyay focuses on the language as it is spoken by the community in question and introduces it for acceptance as a speech pattern in the literary public sphere, which was dominated by diction of the written prose (significantly different from the colloquial dialect of the illiterate lower economic classes).

The fictional world of the novel doesn't provide any promised land with a desirable lifestyle, agency and authority to the characters or their future generations. However, when presented with an opportunity to start a life away from the world of oppression and exploitation, Kuber finds himself in a hopeless situation. Ultimately he is forced to choose the journey of a life

that will give the opportunity of finding a new identity in Moyna. The novel leaves an open ending where Kuber is about to be sent to live on the island after he is accused of stealing from a neighbor. Kuber never confronts the events himself; neither does the third person narrator. The readers as well as Kuber come to know about the legal charge against the latter through Kapila. Thus, several versions of reality, mostly fragmented and subjective, decide the fate of Kuber's life. These fragmented narratives show how the realist ambition of capturing the 'total' picture of working-class life is ruptured by modernist tendencies of multiplicity of representation; the multiple possible interpretation of class culture present working-class as a modernist entity. Life in the real-historical sense is created of and from multiple narratives provided by a variety of people; working-class identity is no exception. The working-class protagonist is created through all these social and personal narratives, which comment on, add to and influence the class conditions of the modernist-capitalist life.

Every character except Hossain conceives of Moyna as a dystopia; the narrator portrays an unbiased impression of this place which provides the readers the freedom to develop their own opinion about the island. Through the conversation of the characters and Kuber's visit to Moyna, the readers get the impression that it is not a desirable place for the inhabitants of Debi-ganj. However, for Hossain, Moyna is a land of Utopia: the convicted, the outlawed, the outcast, all can have a place in Moyna and have a new identity. Moyna is also a socialist utopia in a metaphorical way. It is a classless society where the community stands together and gives a new life and identity to the adult immigrants.

I see Moyna as a socialist cultural utopia, which is planned and executed by Hossain. According to Hans Jonas "any determinate speculation of the Utopian condition is naturally so meagre in literature, because Utopia is so different from what we know; and this meagreness

applies particularly to the question of what humankind, living under Utopian conditions, or even day-to-day living will be like, although the liberating power of Utopia is meant to release the still hidden abundance of human nature" (qtd. in Iser 953). In Bandopadhyay's novel, this land of utopia is mystified as a horrific reality for the villagers: it is a nightmare, never a dream. The inter-play amongst truth, reality, narrative and fiction create this Utopia which manifests a sense of curiosity along with fear. I read Kuber's journey to Moyna as a metaphor of transition of the members of the working-class community from a class to a classless society. Since the proletarian identity is completely dependent on the hierarchical class structure of capitalist-modernist socioeconomic structure, it is impossible to conceive of the proletarian life outside of the conditions of origin. Kuber and his fellow villagers are trapped within the false consciousness of this bourgeois capitalism and hence feel terrified of starting a life without the sociological factors, which controlled their working-class existence.

The literary public sphere of Bengal was largely a political sphere where questions of social reform and alternative ideologies of nationalism and nationalist resistance to the process of colonialism were evoked for the first time. Manik Bandopadhyay's novel *Padma Nadir Majhi* reflects on the problem of the periphery in the political debates of the time. The fishermen community presented in this novel is an indispensable part of a colonial modernist society where Kuber is situated in the bottom of the class, caste, and social ladder, but more interestingly the author introduces the variables of 'gender' and 'disability' within the conception of working-class identity through the character of Mala. While the narrative provides the likes of Kuber a chance to join the crisis of labor force in an international spectrum instead of limiting him within the constraints of the colonial, racial or otherwise by accepting a life in 'socialist utopia'; in

contrast Mala is silenced and confined within the narrative without any opportunity to escape her situation.

Bandyapadhyay composed *Padma Nadir Majhi* before becoming a member of the Communist Party. Thus the text falls in the category of works which were produced outside of the direct influence of the Communist Party. Besides introducing the class subject Bandopadhyay also provides a deep analysis of the class structure in question, which embodies the functions of colonial, imperial, religious, gender-related, and caste-based hierarchies. Though the novel primarily focuses on Kuber's life, he is portrayed in relation to his family, community and class, while his class and community are portrayed in relation to the other classes and communities, which share a dialectic relationship with that of his.

Padma Nadir Majhi (for analyzing the category of working-class) demonstrates the formation and function of class structure and class identity within the colonial non-industrial context. Kuber's journey from class confinements of a colonial and caste-based society to a classless, community-less space where he does not have the working-class identity, is documented as a multilayered process. Ironically Kuber's liberation from his class position is achieved through Hossain's colonial desires. In contrast Mala is forgotten by the narrative and is left to face the challenges of life as a single mother of four children while grappling with her disability.

Kuber has a linguistic identity which he shares with the community; in the novel, the readers are introduced to this non-standard use of vocabulary as it becomes a signifier of Kuber's semiotic presence in the ideological sphere. Kuber's collective or community identity is established through his relationship and networking with his fellow villagers, etc. They also

share ‘stories’ from each-others’ life journey. Kuber has a family identity, where he is situated as the male authority playing the roles of husband, father, lover, etc. However, the narrative shows that each of these relationships is connected to his class position, position with respect to labor, and potential for material earning. His community acknowledges him as a fisherman, working as a wage laborer in a fishing boat. When he loses his job, his status in the community changes: it shifts from being an under-waged laborer to unemployed member and serve as the reserve labor force of capitalism. His family relationships are also directly affected by his potential to earn, as he is the only source of financial support for the family. In contrast Mala’s position as a domestic laborer remains constant throughout the narrative; her free labor is taken for granted by Kuber, her family and the society at large. It is important to notice that neither Kuber nor Mala actually achieves true class-consciousness; situations dictate their life-trajectory and they follow their fate which has been decided for them by outside elements.

In various roles as a community member, family member, wage laborer, etc., Kuber ‘performs’ specified roles. Following Goffman’s theory, I argue that his social identity is an integration of all these performances. Once his earning potential changes, his ‘performance’ or behavior also changes in each of these categories. His agency in each of these institutions (family, religion, community, etc.) is also directly proportionate to his labor power in a reified society; thus his social agency, vis-à-vis, social identity, is a dependent variable of his ‘class identity’ which he refuses to lose until forced to.

Kuber’s move to Moyna frees him from all the role-playing – he does not need to conform to the assigned social behaviors which are mandatory for his identity within the socioeconomic sphere of Ketupur. The individual-collective dilemma plays a vital role in Kuber’s hesitation to leave and he is keen find ways to be rooted in his own community. His

journey from Ketupur to Moyna would lead to the complete removal of his identity; he becomes a 'nobody' in Moyna. Solidarity gained through similar experiences of labor define collective identity for working-class members and Kuber risks losing this collectivity through the physical dislocation from his village, profession, family, etc. Though Kuber can be liberated from his working-class identity in Moyna, this spatial shift does not provide him with an alternative sense of collective. The novel demonstrates that escaping the known world of class exploitation cannot secure interests of the working-class members; only through an organized class conscious revolution the working-class can achieve social and economic agency and replace the hierarchical class system.

While Kuber matures as the working-class protagonist, Mala's silent presence points towards the tradition of neglect towards the feminist issues related to working-class studies. "Laboring Feminism and Feminist Working-Class History in North America and Beyond", a conference held at the University of Toronto in 2005, brought new questions about working-class studies. In this conference Ava Baron and Eileen Boris raised theoretical and methodological issues in relating labor and body for contemporary scholarship. Baron and Boris point out

> … the laboring body remains marked as white male, represented by bulging biceps and prodigious strength. Thus, despite significant theorizing and research about intersectionality, working-class historians still struggle with ways to conceptualize the dynamics of difference. As a category for historical analysis, "the body" allows for incorporating difference more fully, for it is one of the most powerful and pervasive cultural symbols that define who and what we are. (24)

As Joan W. Scott has shown in her book *Gender and the Politics of History*, the material body is a crucial category for historical analysis. Working-class body holds in itself the materialistic, the representational and the symbolic functions of the class in question within its producing society.

Mala challenges the heteronormativity of working-class 'bodily' identity, which is dominant in world literature.

Mala appears in the novel space as a pregnant woman, who is engaged with both productive and reproductive labor. Mala also shares symbolic similarity with the river Padma, and both are important factors for shaping Kuber's identity. As the river Padma bears the fish that are extracted by Kuber and his fellow fishermen for profit, who are again exploited by the class system itself, Mala experiences twofold exploitation, both along the class axis and the axis of patriarchy; to add to it Mala's physical 'deformity' positions her as a vulnerable category in world literature. As reification affects humane and social relationships, it also changes human's relationship to nature. Mala's character symbolizes this dualism between man and nature that manifests itself in neglect and abuse towards its female counterpart. Kuber does not care about the river Padma, neither does he care about his wife Mala; Kuber refuses to take Mala to the hospital despite her repeated requests to treat her leg, which is crippled from polio since childhood. Kuber internalizes and accepts his oppressed position within capitalism, which helps other characters gain profit from his labor; at the same time, working within this system he assumes superior role in power hierarchy within domestic and natural realms.

Padma Nadir Majhi represents commodification of women within colonial capitalism through the characters of Mala, Gopi, as well as Kapila. Baron and Boris suggest a three-step process to 'embody' working-class study: understanding body as discourse and representation, as a site of power and as material entity. The female characters in this novel show that their identity as women are inevitably related to class, caste, religion, and disability. Mala's bodily manifestation captivates the three steps proposed by Baron and Boris. Mala operates within the private sphere; her 'habitat' is situated within the household as opposed to Kuber's, which is

directly related to the capitalist- modernist system that is manifested through his interaction in the market place. Her domain and social interactions are also shaped by her disability, which places her in a role of submission to all the power structures.

Disciplines of humanities and social sciences are yet to establish categories that can analyze disabled colonial working-class bodies. In the North American context there is a recent turn towards a feminist understanding of the working body, though as Burton pointed out, feminism and socialism are intertwined in the context of European working-class studies. Question of gender was a later adjunction to the categories of class, caste, religion and nationalism with the South Asian context, though the nation was conceived as a mother figure in the nineteenth century. Bandopadhyay addresses an issue that is not only mostly untouched in academic scholarship but we are yet to establish the methodology for studying them.

Mala's social identity consists of roles like 'mother', 'wife', person with disability, village dweller, etc.; she is also portrayed as Kapila's sister. Her socioeconomic identity is depicted through her engagement with domestic chores, giving birth, and finally being abandoned by Kuber. The novel does not speculate about her fate as a single mother with disability who will be the sole provider for their young and infant children. Throughout the novel Bandopadhyay depicted Mala through 'absences': absence of power, absence of mobility, and finally absence of her husband Kuber from her life; and the novel ends in absence of a future for her. The novel space captures the real-historical situation of the likes of Mala, who are completely ignored and mostly absent from the discourses of citizenship identity that was a prime political concern of the contemporary times.

Binaries play important role in the characterization of Mala. Mala's identity is embodied in a series of contrasting characteristics that define generalizable working-class identity. Within the novel space her identity contrasts features and characteristics of Kuber and Kapila. Power relationship between Kuber and Mala, situates the latter in a weaker position. On the other hand, Mala is the opposite of her wild, free-willed, and 'sexy' sister Kapila, as she plays the role of loyal subjugated wife and devoted mother. Though Bandopadhyay addresses the right issues, he fails to understand a character like Mala except for binaries. As a male author, he shows lack of insight into Mala's situation and escapes the challenge by 'silencing' Mala's story.

In "Not Just Any body" Susan Burch and Lindsay Patterson show that disability and gender are co-constituted. Historical marginalization of men and women with disability and their de-valuation within the capitalist system through public policies has been illustrated by labor historian Sarah Rose. These studies show that race, ethnicity, ability and gender determine workers' access to working-class culture. Mala's narrative confinement and marginalization point towards the global neglect and exploitation of the a-typical members of working-class society.

Presenting a non-novelistic life-story filled with characters of non-novel origin in the fictional world of Bandopadhyay's novel helped the literary public sphere of Bengal engage in an exercise to imagine and address the world of the working-class. Bandopadhyay's endeavor not only politicized the question of labor and working-class life in colonial Bengal, but expands the domain of working-class studies as a whole by contextualizing the element of 'class' along the variables of gender and disability. This text calls for a reading of working-class in its narrative manifestation of masculinity, physicality and sexuality.

Though 1930s Indian literature provided an enriched literary sphere where formal experimentations, ideological debates and political actions were surfacing, participation from women writers was significantly low, almost absent. It is not to mean that women writers didn't exist in any literary terrain during the decade, but in most cases these authors were not affiliated with literary organizations or networks that played crucial role in developing the idea of South Asian nation states and citizenship identities. Female Indian authors were mostly working in isolation with little to no contact with other literary figures and thus didn't have a strong voice in raising questions of identity in the public sphere (Mukherjee 82). Susie Tharu and K. Lalita's *Women Writing in India* has retrieved and translated works by women authors from the decade which share social and ideological concerns which were prominent within the All India Progressive Writers' Association. However, these authors' voices were never heard within the dominant social discourses. As a result, it is only through depictions of female characters like Mala in the novels of male authors like Manik Bandopadhyay we see questions of productive and reproductive labor as well as 'empowerment of able body' surface, which brings us back to our initial question: whose purpose does such representation serve?

Analyzing women and labor within the colonial frame by addressing the bodily discourses of working-class can help in furthering our understanding of labor as well as social identity of the 'feminine' within aforesaid situations. Challenging the notion of 'normalcy' *Padma Nadir Majhi* adds to the decade's struggle to bring forth issues of working-life from around the globe.

Conclusion

What does the inclusion of 1930s subcontinental novels add to the study of Working-class Literature?

Colonial realist novelists like Munshi Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand and Manik Bandopadhyay understood that representing the 'total' picture of class formation in the subcontinental context is challenging; they also identified that realism as a literary technique or mode cannot deliver the promised 'totality'. Colonial realism, with the agenda of decolonizing culture within a reified society like that of the colony, accepted this limitation of the literary process and utilized it to show that colonial society is fragmented and their realities are complex as well. However, by using a mosaic of partial reflections, a montage of events from the lives of working-class members, and a collage of dialogic idiosyncrasies, colonial realist novels presented referential worlds of colonial working-class cultures in the fictional plane. Socially conscious working-class novels of the subcontinent also enabled their readers to maintain a "critical distance" from the myth and illusion presented in the text. It is important to reemphasize that unlike its western counterparts sub-continental working-class issues were directly related to the question of nation formation. Class struggle for the colony also meant the struggle for decolonization and an imagination of an imminent citizenship identity. So, colonial working-class literature appropriated an anti-colonial overtone from its conception.

Dedicated to the cause of presenting the total picture of working-class life, *Godaan* incorporates realist narrative mode to 'document' typical working-class masses of the colony. At the same time, Premchand shows that western realism has integral challenges in representing a non-western scenario; postcolonial writers and critics have invented mediums like magic realism or art negré to express their particular geo-historical realities. The Progressive Writers domesticated and appropriated the mode of realism to represent the social conditions and cultures of the colonial proletarian masses. While sharing significant similarities with Soviet Socialist Realism and Proletarian Realism, Progressive Realism adds a new dimension to the

school of realism. Since the Progressives focused on 'arousal of emotions' rather than 'authentic representation', they initiate a new concept of literary realism.

Anand's *Coolie* does not aspire to capture the complete socio-political structure of colonial modernity like *Godaan. Coolie*'s focus is on contextualizing colonial working-class conditions within the global economic structure. In a circular journey, Anand's protagonist locates himself within the global working-class struggle, thus setting the local problem in the global stage. Bandopadhyay's novel, on the other hand, varies from both *Godaan* and *Coolie* in its ambition and disposition. Written in a colloquial dialect in a regional language, the novel tries to bring the 'real-life' conditions of colonial working-class in the public sphere in a language of their own. Bandopadhyay also adds the dimensions of gender and disability as issues within working-class identity. *Padma Nadir Majhi*'s ambition is restricted within its 'local' premise; however, Bandopadhyay has incorporated the conceptual elements of the macro structure of capitalism within its confined localized representation in the novel space.

There are significant challenges in reading colonial novels like the *Godaan,* the *Coolie* or the *Padma Nadir Majhi* through the lens of western Marxist criticism. Trying to enforce a comparative study of these texts with western proletarian novels of the time period might result in naïve generalizations and superficial theorizations. New coordinates of comparative analysis might be necessary to address these peripheral texts within World Literature. Inclusion of these novels within worldly studies of working-class culture and working-class novel adds new registers for understanding how class identity is constituted through the social process of class formation and how working-class struggle can address issues of gender, colonialism, disability etc. within their purview.

Chapter Four

Emergent Trends in the Genre of Working-class Novel

Third world cartography experienced major shifts in the decades following the Second World War. European colonies in the continents of Asia and Africa gained independence, while neocolonialism ensured continual labor exploitation and extraction of natural resources to provide profit for the few. Oppression and exploitation re-adjusted their positions along the axis of class instead of race in this new timeframe.

In this chapter I study how authors from (South) Asia and (North and East) Africa addressed the class process within post-colonial frameworks and how they analyze the formation of class consciousness and identity within such domains. Combining Marxist literary analysis with Ecocriticism, this chapter demonstrates how class conscious novels from outside of the global-North have shown that people's struggle for equality and justice is interrelated with 'just' treatment of the non-human world. Class struggle in the corridors of Asia and Africa manifests in an environmental consciousness where class solidarity is also rooted in empathy for the ecological world.

Following the trends established by western-Anglophone novels produced during the 1930s, where typical and total pictures of class culture (which showed how the capitalist-modernist system is founded on exploitation of the proletariat) were the primary criterion for reflecting on proletarian worldview, the Asian and the African novels from latter half of the twentieth century shows that in order to capture the 'total reality' of class culture in such

contexts, literature has to explore the various narratives that form the community's cultural, social and political lives. As such, working-class novels originating from such backgrounds capture how class culture is produced and reproduced through oral narratives, performances, collective resistance and struggles for survival—all of which become part of realistic depiction of class exploitation in the postcolonial epoch. Songs, legends, mythological tales, as well as documented historical incidents, become part of a realistic portrayal of such working-class culture.

Class consciousness in postcolonial situations is rooted in the history of imperial and racial oppression and is intertwined with racial consciousness (and caste consciousness in case of South Asia). If we compare postcolonial texts of the late twentieth century with working-class novels produced from the colonial contexts of South Asia, we see that in both cases resistance against racial and imperial oppressions form an important aspect of class struggle. Another similarity is that in both these situations literary production as political action is also mostly confined within the endeavors of middle class authors. However, the relationship between class, race and ecology varies in the contexts of colonial and neocolonial working-class novels. While working-class novels from the neocolonial era position class consciousness in terms of both racial/caste consciousness and ecological consciousness, working-class novels of colonial India interrelate class consciousness with national consciousness. A reification effect is applied to the natural world in novels set within neocolonial situations or contexts of internal colonization; as a result, the 'total picture' they represent is more inclusive than both western and non-western texts of the 1930s. The Marxist ambition of representing the whole situation is thus achieved in the working-class novels of the second half of the twentieth century through consciousness of

class relations, awareness of racial, caste-based, and patriarchal repressions, as well as care for the subhuman world that supports humane living conditions.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In section A, I will study works of Mahasweta Devi and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, who identified how class hierarchy exploits the masses, and how collective consciousness and resistance for agency and rights can lead to a class awakening after the 'end' of colonialism. In the section B, I study how the collective autobiographical novel by Mohammed Choukri has broken the silence of the subaltern. With his firsthand experience of working-class life in the streets of various urban centers of Morocco, Choukri shows how the class process affects survival in everyday life and how the collective identity of the subaltern working-class is formed. While the novels discussed in Section A focus on the importance of mapping a historical trajectory of the subaltern working-classes of Asia and Africa, Choukri's novel is centered around the everydayness of the class process. Thus through these three novels we see the theoretical-historical and everyday real-historical class process within postcolonial contexts.

Section A. Writing about and for working-class in the 'third world' in the postcolonial era

Adivasi working-class communities in Mahasweta Devi's novels

While authors like Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand or Manik Bandopadhyay introduced the working-class subject in the context of twentieth century colonial India, the meaning and manifestation of working-class in post-independence India is explored in works of novelists like Mahasweta Devi. Writing in Bengali, Devi addresses issues of class struggle in rural regions of the subcontinent. Such resistance is led by communist rebels, revolutionaries and tribal people (or Adivasi people as they are locally known) for rights to survive, for employment, and for a

minimum living wage. Devi's works show how gaining independence in 1947 did not bring an end to the process of colonialism in the lives of the majority of the Adivasi peoples of India, who contribute around 8% of India's population, and (according to a 2011 census) constitute over 104 million members.

Born in an upper middle-class family in colonial India with intellectual parents, Mahasweta Devi stands as an exception or an anomaly within working-class literary studies, if we restrict the genre to the traditional west-centric definitions of the proletarian author. Amidst the contemporary South Asian writers, Mahasweta Devi is arguably the most 'class-conscious' author, finding her literary contents in subjects like the urban-intellectual's role in the class struggle, the historiography of aboriginal resistance and issues of working-class (tribal) women. Her protagonists are struggling against state sponsored oppression of patriarchy, globalization and class-caste repression. Devi assumes a position of an 'allied other' to the subaltern of contemporary India and presents narratives of subaltern history, struggle and consciousness. During an interview with Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, who has translated many of Devi's works into English, the latter explains why she chose to write for and about the aforesaid subjects with whom she did not share any hereditary connection or lived-experience – to record the history of the subaltern for their contemporary generations, to have a place for them in literature. Devi tells Spivak: "Once a tribal girl asked me 'When we go to school, we read about Mahatma Gandhi. Did we have no heroes? Did we always suffer like this?'" (*Imaginary Maps* xi)

Devi's attempt to create a space for the marginal, working-class aboriginal people of the subcontinent can be related to the importance of communicative action as social agency as described by Habermas. By securing a place within the literary public sphere, Devi forces the 'literate' and 'educated' readers, who often contribute to the dominant ideology, to engage

withthe concepts of the struggle for work and survival that are faced by the Adivasi people in post-independence India. Devi's short stories, a number of which have been translated into English by Spivak, speak about the physical, social, emotional and psychological struggle and alienation of Adivasi women. In her novels, Devi contests the western notion of historicism and incorporates myths, and legends alongside government documents and journalistic reports to elaborate on the struggle of the subcontinental Adivasis. The Adivasis resisted reifying effects by revolting against the British colonizers and later the Indian nation state, both of whom targeted the natural resources of the landscape to satisfy their capitalist efforts. Instead of imagining the tribal or Adivasis as 'pure,' 'primitive,' or 'exotic,' Devi's works represent them as historical-material entities, who present a worldview that contradicts bourgeois-capitalist notions of individualism, private property and profit.

Devi's writings can be thematically categorized into two groups: communist Naxalite movement and subaltern/Adivasi historiography and struggle. For the current study, I focus on *Chotti Munda o Tar Tir or Chotti Munda and His Arrow,* a novel by Devi, that relates the (tribal) people's struggle with the ideological struggle of communism for political hegemony in the context of independent postcolonial nationalism. Devi deviates from the traditionally accepted diction of the genre and incorporates elements of oral culture (of Adivasi communities) in the novel form and thus provides her subjects of literary inspirations linguistic, historical and cultural presence in the public sphere. Her texts add to the oral literary tradition of tribal culture as well as written Bengali literature while being part of the international working-class culture. The third person narrator works as a mediator between the oral culture of the tribal world and the world of literate novel readers. The original work in Bengali as well as the translation by Spivak

successfully captures the difference in the diction, dialect and style between the ones used by the tribal oral culture and the written literary tradition.

In *Repression and Resistance in India: Violation of Democratic Right of the Working Class, Rural Poor*, *Adivasis and Dalit* A.R. Desai shows that these 'native' people of the land are exploited by landlords, contractors/businessmen and government officials (237-239). A. Irudayam and Jayshree P. Mangubhai argue that in many parts of independent India, Adivasi communities continue to live as bonded laborers, a state that is comparable to slavery. As a result of such exploitations, communist affiliations, which were also influenced by the Naxalite movement, emerged as political action within these communities from the 1970s. The communist activists claimed agency over the habitat, economy and livelihood of these people by "politically rousing the people and organizing them for the struggle for recovery of the lands illegally occupied by the landlords, for the occupation of the forest lands, against illegal payments of the forest officials, for increased wages in the forest" (Desai 24). The subaltern consciousness of the Adivasi community is thus politically related to communist ideals of class consciousness in many parts of the independent nation-state of India.

In her novel *Chotti Munda o Tar Tir* or *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, which was first published in Bengali in 1980 and later translated into English by Gayatri Spivak in 2002, Mahasweta Devi explores Adivasi struggle and identity within the politics of the nation, practices of colonialism and questions of labor. This novel is the second of a series of three works all of which attempt to bring narratives of Adivasi Indian lives within the mainstream public print culture. The first work of the series is *Aranyer Adhikar* or *Rights Over the Forests*, which was first published in Bengali in 1977. In this novel, Devi narrates how Birsa Munda advocated for the ecological rights of the aboriginal communities and organized a movement

against British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Though British newspapers categorized it as an agrarian movement, it was a collective struggle against both feudalism and colonialism's imposition of capitalism. K.S. Singh shows that it was through the Birsa movement that the Adivasi communities resisted both feudal and colonial oppressions at the same time.

The third novel of the series, *Sal Girar Dake* or *In the Name of Birthday,* was published in Bengali in 1984. Events of this narrative take place in the eighteenth century. The East India Company's expansion into the Chhotonagpur region and its exploitation of regional ecology and tribal communities provide the historical background of this novel. The narrative explores how the conditions of modernity were imposed on ecologically balanced life-systems of tribal communities, with the traditional barter system being replaced by the capitalist monetary economy, and with the colonial encounters affecting the regional space-based culture of the various sects of tribal communities. At the end it shows how a collective consciousness brings the conflicting tribes together to fight the oppression of colonialism, feudalism and caste-class-religion-patriarchy.

In the beginning of the novel *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* we are introduced to the trend of displacement that has become integral to the community's culture. The forests and lands that are fundamental to the Munda's spiritual beliefs, cultural practices and survival have always been taken away: first by feudal lords, then European imperialists, and later by the Indian government, whenever 'resources' were found in and around the tribal dwellings. This collective displacement is comparable to the eternal homelessness of the colonial working-class protagonists, which was reflected in the characterization of Munoo in *Coolie* and Gobar in *Godaan*.

Chotti Munda was born in 1900 and was named after the Chotti River that supported his community's life. The novel starts by introducing Chotti as a descendant of Purti Munda, an average man from Munda tribe, who after facing numerous forced evictions tried to settle down by the banks of Chotti River and focused on bringing up a family there; but once he found gold dust in his fishing net, he knew that another dislocation was imminent for his family. In order to safeguard his family, Purti set out to look for a recruiter, to work as hired laborer; but he was jailed as a result of a false accusation, thereafter he was 'recruited' and working in Mauritius wherefrom he never returned. Chotti Munda is Purti's great-grandson. The novel focuses on Chotti's life from when he first met Dhani Munda around the time of the First World War. As a teenager, Chotti Munda, learns about tribal resistance movement that took place under Birsa Munda's leadership (narrated vividly in Mahasweta Devi's novel Aronyer Adhikar). Dhani Munda, a village elder who fought in the Birsa Movement and participated in other tribal resistance movements, protests against the exploitation of the Mundas at the hands of the police and the moneylenders; he tries to evoke a revolutionary consciousness against the practice of bonded labor. Dhani Munda is a living legend who is given magical power by myth, stories, and oral history. Due to his past involvement with the Birsa movement Dhani was in house arrest and prohibited from using his bow and arrow. Dhani's stories document the cultural history of the community, which is otherwise silenced in the dominant discourses of the Indian nation.

Dhani, one of the oldest living members of the community, remembers a time before the concept of landownership was in practice; a romantic vision of those old days surfaces from his stories: the Mundas cultivated the land around their villages, hunted game, drank alcohol made from nectar and lived peacefully maintaining ecological harmony. Conversations amongst other family members as well as with Dhani enlighten us about how the tribal communities ended up

as bonded laborers; during famines the families are forced to borrow rice or money from 'lenders' who in turn are held as bonded laborers for generations. Collective resistance and a prolonged social movement under Birsa Munda's leadership demanded an end to the practice of bonded labor as well as fighting for the rights of living their lives according to the traditions of their ancestors. The movement was not successful in achieving its aims and we see how the communities suffer from internal colonialism, government exploitation (in colonial India), and are crushed by the oppression of the class-caste-patriarchy during Chotti's life-time.

The hegemony of the dominant discourses of anti-colonial struggle, nationalism and global economic progress do not let the Munda community share their stories and worldviews. Dhani has a story to tell but there is no one to listen (Devi 7). Dhani presents a worldview that contradicts and upsets the system in place, which not only makes profit from the bonded labor of tribal members but also exercises state sponsored violence in order to ensure that collective resistance cannot be formed. 'Gormen' and 'diku' appear as the main threats to Munda survival in Dhani's stories, which show that he was never able to internalize the structure of modernity, which provides legal, political and economic guidelines for the community's cultural expressions.

A revolutionary in heart, Dhani Munda left his family and village, when everyone was celebrating the Hunting Holiday as well as Holi, the Hindu festival of color. As a symbol of revolutionary resistance, Dhani showed up with a machete and his bow and arrow in his old operation ground of Jejur market in Chaibasa, where he was prohibited from entering by the law of the colonial government due to his past involvement with tribal riots in the area. He is shot in the head by a local police officer but his death doesn't mean an end to his narrative – he is eternalized in rumors, stories and myths.

The narrator emphasizes that orally transmitted stories are quintessential to the cultural history of the Munda community: “Munda language has no script. So they turn significant events into story, and hold them as saying, as song. That’s their history as well” (Devi 18). Oral narratives that contain the whole community’s history do not present a linear perception of time; instead time is presented as a spiral concept, many events add to the spiral to create its movement—which zigs and zags. Therefore the novel does not unveil in chronological symphony. Rather, the flow of the central themes of Chotti Munda’s life is interrupted by tangential and parallel anecdotes. The novel is a metanarrative of the life-stories of the Munda people, and though we follow Chotti’s life in the greatest detail, the secondary characters are all somehow related to this journey with Chotti. Chotti emerges from a laborer and becomes a class, race and ecologically conscious revolutionary. It is noteworthy to mention that though the novel zooms in to focus on Chotti’s life as a typical narrative of aboriginal and working-class struggle it does not lose sight of the collective struggle of humanity for a ‘just’ world.

Chotti Munda is not the formless novel hero of this narrative. The novel presents the village community as its hero; Chotti Munda’s life is the thread that ties the events to provide a collective history and a collective future. Both Adivasis and low caste untouchable Hindus coexist peacefully in Chotti’s village, which, in the beginning of the novel, is surrounded by pristine natural resources. Existing in seclusion from the outside world, the villagers consider the ‘white man,’ the upper caste Hindus, as well as the government and its various associates, as ‘dikus’ or outsiders. With this othering of the external world system, the tribal community conceives of a sense of self that is collective; individual identity of each of the community members is immersed within this collectivity. Unlike the prescription of the Marxist school, where ‘typical’ characters emerge as individuals from the collective, become working-class

heroes, and disperse into the international working-class identity, Munda and lower class Hindus of the novel space, who are focused on communal ways of living, participate in the international working-class as a collective entity.

Chotti Munda and his community's journey is influenced by their past conflicts with the outside world, their history of collective movement, experience of social oppression in everyday life, as well as their indigenous knowledge system, ecological ethics and values, and their narrative culture, which makes history a category of the present and constantly contextualizes the community's existential locus within the praxis of narrativity. News of Dhani's death reached the Munda communities through their local police station, and the communities commemorated him by incorporating him in their living history. They sang:

Dhani, ye came out of t' je-hellhouse
Big polis boss said with red eyes
Ranchi and Chaibasha are forbidden for ye
Ye won' lift bow and arrer
…
T' ones with whom ye stayed in
Murundi were given grace
Murundi's water-sky-earth became blessed
…(19)

Chotti Munda was trained in archery by Dhani Munda, who also passed on knowledge about the forest and its many living beings to the former. Dhani's death meant a personal loss for Chotti; though there was no blood relation between the two, they shared the bond of a mentor and a mentored, a teacher and a student, a revolutionary and a reformer, a visionary and a dreamer[17]. Chotti also inherited Dhani's 'magic' bow and arrow, which aided the myths that formed around Chotti.

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[17] Dhani refused the system in place, while under Chotti's leadership the community tries to use the system to voice their struggle, failing which they pick up their bows and arrows as a symbol of protest.

Persistence, hard work and a dream to become a great archer defined Chotti's teenage years and his early adulthood. Soon after Dhani's death Chotti wins an archery contest using his 'magic' arrow and his skill in archery captivates everyone. Following this he is married off to the grand-daughter of the village chief and priest. There is always a prize for the winner in the traditional contests, and Chotti's victories bring his family some cash money, a piece of cloth or two and sometimes even a whole pig, which feeds the village during their victory feast. Chotti continues sharpening his archery skills, living in their traditional multifamily household, where his father and mother share equal authority. Time spent with Dhani has given Chotti a consciousness about the structure of exploitation that binds the tribal communities in generational subjugation. He convinces his apprehensive father that instead of toiling in the moneylender's field all through his life, he will attend all the archery competitions of the region and support his family that way. Chotti earns a living for his family by appointing his skills in competitions and game hunting—"Chotti brings twenty-five rupees in a year just playing the arrow. In 1915-16 twenty-five rupees is a lot of money" (25).

Chotti's family doesn't borrow from the local landlord and moneylender Lala Baijnath, who "lends money, takes interest, takes bonded labour" (27). Lala becomes worried about the possibility of a self-supporting Munda family, who will get by without being caught into the creditor-debtor relationship. His displeasure with Chotti's father culminates in a dispute over a discussion about the latter's growing wealth. This incident results in police arrest and torture—eventually Chotti's father is brought back from police custody, and though he heals from the physical wounds, he sinks into deep depression and eventually commits suicide. Within a short time-span the moneylender, Lala Baijnath, dies of an accident and Mahabir Shahay, the police officer who arrested and tortured Chotti's father, succumbs to an unknown disease. Prior to this

point, Chotti's skills in archery made him a cultural legend within and beyond the Munda community (Devi 22, 30), but from this time onwards even the priest of his own community believes that Chotti has magical powers, which destroys anyone who harms his loved ones.

When 'outsiders' enter Chotti's village space, the worldview of the subaltern community experiences its power relations with the world that has legal authority over economic, political, cultural and ideological spheres as the dominant culture. Mahabir Shahay was the first police officer to set foot in the remote village, and the events that followed ensured an eternal mistrust of police; men in uniform became the hallmark of oppression and violence, who looked after the interest of the moneylenders. Later, when Chotti met a Mundari speaking 'white man' Hugh and brought him to the village as a guest, a new understanding of 'whiteness' emerges in the community's consciousness. This encounter reformulated the previous relationship between Munda community and imperial government; the villagers, who perceived the white skin as personification of the 'government', welcomed the foreigner and sang:

Gormen has come to our place
Gormen has made pichers
Gormen hasn't brought a gun
Hasn't killed us folks
Gormen has eaten holy food (35)

Later, these relationships are revised again when the novel presents a complicated picture of the politics of human aid during the colonial era. As widespread drought threatens survival, the new moneylender and landlord, Lala Tirathnath (Baijnath's son), agrees to give out grains only to those who sign for bonded labor in his field. Finally the collective wins the bargain with Tirathnath and manages to get 'bug-eaten' maize in exchange of wage for their labor in the latter's field. This event reaches the imperial governor's office through the chain of police command and finally alerted the provincial governor's office in the following form: "Chotti

Munda got together a huge group of Mundas armed with bows and arrows and lowcaste Hindus armed with spears, threatened the sharecropper Tirathnath, took away his keys and looted his granaries" (Devi 43). An internal investigation finds the officer of the local police station guilty of suppressing information about the famine-like situation from the government, and he is given a warning; in the meantime Lala Tirathnath manages to get the title of Raishaheb from the imperial crown for his contribution in saving the villagers from starvation.

Chapter five captures the parallel journeys of the Indian nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership and the tribal communities' fight for the right to survive. The former struggle is meaningless to the latter; the 'white man' is as foreign as the upper caste urban Hindu or Muslims for the Mundas. Thus the ideology of the nationalist struggle has no value to the Munda worldview. Humiliation of the Mundas in the hands of landlords and moneylenders, their managers and clerks, protected by the imperial police are represented through individual's everyday experience; some of these individuals (like Dukhia, Bharat, Prahan) take extreme actions by killing the immediate abuser after years of deprivation, insult and exploitation but such actions fail to make any change in the operating system.

The national independence of India in 1947 does not have any significance in the lives of the Mundas, but the drought of 1950 brings forth another encounter between the villagers of Chotti and Lala Tirathnath, who does not spare water to anyone who refuses to become a bonded laborer in his fields. The Mundas and lowcaste Hindus, the men and the women, labor together and dig up the bed of the Chotti River and collectively survive the drought. Colonialism didn't end for the villagers even in the 1950s—as sharecroppers, they still provide their labor in for "a quarter or an eighth of Tirathnath's crops" (Devi 107). But the end of colonial rule created a new position within the new bureaucracy: 'tribal welfare officer.' This position symbolizes a dialogue

between the tribal worldview and the national political system. The tribal officer plays an important role as a cultural mediator.

In order to escape the stagnancy of Tirathnath's exploitation, about hundred and fifty men and women from the village find additional work as laborers for open caste mining, as workers in a brick factory, and various other low paying, labor intensive, dangerous jobs, which does not end their misery. Chotti's son Harmu picks up his bow and arrow to protect his land from Tirathnath's henchmen, which results in a violent collision and Harmu ends up in police custody. During Harmu's trial, the Munda community experiences two different encounters with the nation state. The first one contextualizes how the judicial and education system obstruct any possibility of two-way communication between the 'uneducated' and 'illiterate' working-class tribal members and the legal system of the country. With the help of the tribal officer, Harmu gets a good lawyer, who manages to save him from falling victim to the ignorance of the court system and illiteracy. Harmu is sentenced to only two years of hard labor in prison. The second event is experienced by Chotti Munda, who encounters free India when he spends days in the city following his son's arrest and subsequent trial. He finds a statue of legendary Munda leader Bisra—the narrative shows how the theory and praxis has separated the real-historic from the symbolic. The statue of Bisra Munda in the big city commemorates him as a great 'national' hero but within the discourse of newly formed citizenship identity the Mundas are still considered as 'jungle people', and treated that way within the judicial-political system.

Revolutionary resistance by the villagers emerges in the last phase of the novel. The community picks up their traditional adivasi weapons of bows and arrows to face the 'diku' who came to burn down their village. The 'diku' opens fire at the villagers in order to ensure the continuous practice of bonded and under wage labor even after such things were constituted as

illegal. Chotti analyzes the system of oppression (as an inescapable trap) for his community, whose members have always been considered as disposable within the narrative of development and progress during the imperial and post-independence era. Devi's novel shows how the birth of a class culture is nascent in this community's tradition of collective resistance, cultural history, and narrative performance.

The novel documents two points of contact between the victims of class oppression and ideologically driven revolutionaries. One is through the nameless Naxalite student, and the other is through Swarup and his political organization. Through these contacts worlds of ideas meet the practical realities of repressed lives. Historically and culturally the Munda community has considered members from outside of their immediate community as 'diku,' a foreigner— not to be trusted. Chotti and his fellows met a young fugitive communist student from Durgapur, who was fighting for justice – for the peasants and for the adivasis. He dreams of a day without the oppressions of class and power. This student is shot and killed by the police. Later, Chotti and the other villagers meet and work with Swarup, who is fighting the battle for a future of equality. Swarup, the 'diku boy' was tortured to death by the IAD, a special police force tasked with ending political violence by hunting down 'naxal' or 'communist' sympathizers. These points of interactions are also contact points between the regional and the international within working-class cultural and political movements. Both these characters from outside of the Adivasi community are empowered with knowledge of the international class struggle and have vowed to contribute to this struggle by organizing armed resistance against the oppressive state apparatus. But Chotti Munda, an illiterate member of one of the most backward communities of the subcontinent (in terms of modern progress), does not have access to this knowledge.But Chotti and his fellow villagers have firsthand knowledge about the micro-scale oppressive system; their

struggle becomes a part of an interconnected and continual working-class movement which transcends geographical, linguistic, historical, social and cultural limits when they establish a collaborative relationship with those who are ideologically motivated to organize resistance against the national government and its many apparatus.

The 1960s and 1970s were important decades for the communist party in South Asia. A large body of the student population was involved in the class struggle and communist politics in urban context. State sponsored police brutality, aimed at stopping this movement, resulted in the mass murder of intellectuals in both cities and towns, while fugitive ideologues and activists were hunted down in rural areas where, upon capture, they would be tortured and killed. *Chotti Munda* provides two windows through which this urban ideological and Marxian struggle is seen by the Adivasi and the low-caste, who had traditionally been moved aside from the public and political debates of the Indian nation: through the communist student's revolutionary action, and through sociopolitical activists like Swarup and his group members' collective resistance.

Adivasi revolts took place even in the imperial era, but these movements did not project the collective consciousness of class relations and thus were not documented as a working-class struggle by the colonial government. However, these communities' collective fight for legal rights to be freed from bonded work, their demand for a survivable wage, and finally their revolutionary protest against violent state oppression, in post-independence era, is identifiable as a working-class struggle. Both Karl Marx and Max Weber have theorized how class formation happens in the context of modernity. Their theories vary widely in the perception and disposition of the social process that generates class society. Marx's hypothesis regarding class formation is further developed in sociology as expressive collective action, while Weber's concept culminated in the theory of affectual collective action. In spite of their differences in positioning

the loci of collective action within the 'total' socioeconomic structure, both theories consider collective action to be the basis of solidarity and quintessential to the concept of the working-class. The center and focus of collective action is in the economic base in Marxist theories whereas political action conforms to the basis of collective action in Weber's writings. One's position in the workforce and in the structure of production of labor determines one's working-class status in Marxist writings. In contrast, Weberian theory considers that the essence of working-class identity is rooted in its working-class community, culture and lifestyle.

Collective action has been central to the struggle for political opportunity, collective identity and cultural hegemony. Social movements are the most common and most influential forms of collective action. The classic form of working-class collective action, according to the Marxian standpoint, is the factory strike. The workers' demonstrate solidarity by participating in collective action at their workplace. The political logic of collective action serves to create a consciousness and solidarity by calling for political power of the working-class. The economic logic of collective action comprises the disruption of capital accumulation, structural power, within limited time through homogeneous constituency. Characteristics of the political logic of collective action are the following: disruption of political legitimacy, lack of structural power, long-term diverse constituency and expressive or emotional suppression. Chotti and his fellow laborers actively participate in a strike-like situation when they demand wages from the local landlord and stop him from importing labor from other subaltern communities. The enslaved laboring community and working-class community are politically different, owing to their agency over their own labor. The first category possesses nothing — not even their own labor, while working-class members retain ownership of their own labor. By withdrawing their labor from their employer in strike-situations the working-class can claim collective agency and

political voice, forcing the exploitative class to enter negotiations. Collective action manifests itself through complex economic and cultural actions that are based on solidarity and communal unity in the context of Chotti's villagers. Though they are bonded laborers in the Lala's land, by denying the landlord their labor, they claim similar political agency as that of the proletarian classes working in factories within contexts of advanced capitalism. Their collective action is fueled by both economic logic as well as political logic given that their exploitation is twofold as well – economically they are bound to provide free labor at the lands of the feudal lord, who is protected by the nation-state, and politically they are dominated by the hegemony of the upper caste-class ideology. Political-ideological subjugation of the tribal working-class is ensured through the elimination of their historical, epistemological and spiritual practices from the discourse of the nation and national identities.

There are four levels of consciousness related to classes that operate within this novel's space. We have the Adivasis and lower caste Hindus, whose struggle is guided by a unique subaltern consciousness which can be compared to class consciousness, and also the money lenders, land-owing farmers, government contractors etc. who form the petit bourgeoisie who are interested in directly extracting labor from the first category and exploiting them in social, religious, economic and cultural spheres. The third group, consisting of government bureaucrats, police, and politicians, do not have direct contact with first group but they form the dominant ideologies and design policies that move the repressive mechanism forwards. The members of the second group do not form the dominant discourse, nor fight for class awakening; they act as implementers of the dominant ideology and help in reproducing it. (In the *Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci has discussed the role of class consciousness in such cases.)

The communist student and Swarup along with other members of his organization form a fourth group, which is consciously fighting a class war against the third group, who produce the dominant discourse of a repressive system. In a simple analysis it can be said that the primary conflict exists between the first group and the third; the fourth group aides the first and the second group aides the third. All the groups interact with each other collectively in collaboration, appropriation and conflict.

No dialogue can be established between the Mundas and the dominant political ideology, which is executed by the police and elected politicians, as their views and actions are dialectically opposing. The Mundas under Chotti's leadership experience the forward movement towards modernity in the form of bullets, burned huts, police agitation and life threats from political party members; information about the minimum wage law reaches the communities more than two years after it is constitutionalized. On the other hand, abolition of bonded labor does not change policies and practices of the local landlords and contractors, who refuse to follow such laws. When the villagers collectively decide to stop being bonded labors at the local Hindu farmer's agricultural fields, the ruling party backed thugs appear to put them in their place and extract their labor as a traditional right.

The narrative also shows the difference in the nature of revolutionary movement between Dhani's fight against feudalism and imperialism and Chotti's fight against class-caste oppression in the postcolonial era. Chotti's fight is similar to the struggle of the modern working-class, who have to overcome the system that gave birth to their entity. Though the modern nation state of India did not produce the 'tribal' or aboriginal identity of the Munda community, their postcolonial entity as exploited victims of the progressive capitalist economy is produced by the legal, educational, custodial and political systems of 'free' India. Thus Chotti Munda's struggle

is not very different from the struggle of Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* who seeks asylum in international proletarian identity after committing his revolutionary action.

The desperate situation of Chotti Munda's community in the 1970s is a result of decades of colonial, religious, classist and nationalist oppression. The community that once roamed free amidst the natural world and established their own rules of an ecologically balanced worldview, are left as bonded laborers, comparable to medieval serfs, after facing a series of forced evictions and criminal prosecution. As a teenager Chotti stopped his family from borrowing money from moneylender Lala Baijnath, whose material comfort depended on the desperation of the local Adivasis and 'untouchable' communities; many of Munda families become bonded labor for generations in the Lala's fields after borrowing money or food during tough times. In his book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought,* Sainath shows that in the times of natural disasters like flood, famine and drought, the Adivasis are forced to leave their known world and accept 'work' as laborers in tea plantations, which are infamous for illegal labor practices and inhumane living conditions even in the 21st century. Though Chotti and his biological family members are not bonded slaves, he takes the leading role in challenging the practice after analyzing the cycle of exploitation to his fellow villagers.

Chotti's narrative is a narrative of the collective history of the Munda tribe; stories end in stories and one journey leads to the next. As generations related through blood are held hostage to bonded labor practices, revolutionary resistance also flows through generations, gaining inspiration from oral narratives about ancestors who protested against abuse and died fighting for a better life for the community. Constant ruptures and new beginnings provide the novel an arbitrary tempo, where the community's 'space-based' traditional ways of knowing helps them survive during their fight with the modern nation state. Though most of the actions of the novel

space take place within the village itself, this space also represents the chaos, which Bakhtin identified as indispensable to the novel form. Polyphony of the linguistic arena is achieved through multiple dictions, dialects, jargons and idiosyncrasies. Multiple ideologies and point of views are also present in every layer of social encounter within the fictional plane. Characters show their internal conflict between ideology and practice by questioning their own actions in comparison to their historical traditions.

The meaning and the making of the working-class in the context of the subcontinent is complex and it is further convoluted in case of the Adivasi population. The Adivasi communities were 'used' for labor by 'foreign' societal structures throughout history (be it the British or those of the Indian nation, as the Adivasi lived secluded lives in the forests with their own sustainable socioeconomic systems). Their labor helped spin the wheel of modernity in the colony and later in the independent nation/s, but the laborers remained outside of the purview of modernity. As a result, the Adivasi and lower caste working people of the novel *Chotti Munda* struggle to fit within narratives of working-class as their lives keep operating outside of modernity.

Devi's novel is similar to *Padma Nadir Majhi* (discussed in the previous chapter); while Bandopadhyay introduced a working-class village as 'novel' subject and showed that these peripheral colonial workers can be represented in the literary public sphere and their political and linguistic marginalization can be addressed through the genre of novel, Devi opens the proletarian public sphere to questions about aboriginal people's struggle within both national politics and international working-class movements. It is imperative to mention here that the English translation of Devi's text is the primary object of analysis in the current discussion, and as such Spivak's translated version, which brings forth these aboriginal peoples' struggle from their local/regional pockets to global debates on working-class culture, is treated as a text of

world literature (as opposed to Bengali or Indian literature). The translated text is a material and ideological addition to the international working-class movement.

Both Marxist and subaltern theorists are focusing on expanding our paradigm of knowledge about the working-classes; as a result working-class literature and culture of the non-western origins are receiving academic attention. In *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies* we find an attempt to relate Marxian praxis to subaltern struggles:

> It seems to us that Marxist theorists should engage with postcolonial studies in mutual sites of concern, and conceded to the field the authentic insights and advances that have generated within it. Among these we would list the extension of the discussion of subalternity and political representation in the non-metropolitan context; the demonstration that in their aspirations towards unisonance or universalism, many of the most historically resonant "master narratives" of nationalism, secularism and internationalism have typically been appropriative, neglectful of difference, and even of active dissidence; the expansion of the purview of literature departments to include opportunities for the study of a geographically wider range of texts; the provision of detailed knowledges of particular local conditions, situations, and texts; the recognition that the former colonial languages are no longer the possession of the former colonizers alone; the identification of concepts, practices, habits of thoughts; (Bartolovich 10-11)

Chotti Munda and His Arrow shows that the postcolonial concerns of 'nationalism,' 'secularism,' and 'internationalism' are inseparable from issues of wage-war, working-class alienation, and neglectful treatment of both humane and natural resources within a reified world system. Though a typical Marxist lens cannot be applied to texts that represent Adivasi class exploitation owing to the complicated context of class-caste-colonial exploitation, a Marxist analysis fueled by ecological ethics can show such texts' contribution to literature of class politics. Neither exclusively postcolonial nor strictly Marxist interpretation can relate these texts to their regional and international contexts. Integration of the primary questions raised by the

schools of post-colonialism, Marxism and Eco criticism can help us address the issues of Adivasi people's struggle within international working-class literature.

***Petals of Blood* as an example of African Working-class Novel**

Devi's work in establishing a cultural history of the tribal communities of India within the literary sphere can be compared to the task of post-colonial African authors like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Festus Iyayi, or Ayi Kwei Amrah, who targeted to document how imperialism, as a guise of capitalism, destroyed the traditional cultural practices and natural resources and left a continent plagued with flawed political and economic policies, distorted and destructive internal oppression through the lines of class and patriarchy, ethnic violence and an overall crisis of cultural expression. In an attempt to contextualize working-class struggle and proletarian questions within globalization, literature of the 'third world' addresses these issues as struggles for survival of the common masses. Like Devi, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o presents subaltern characters and protagonists to show how struggle of the working-class masses continue in the so called post-colonial era.

Neo-colonial repressions in post-colonial African countries have created complex socio-ethnic-political situations which perpetuate class exploitation through ethnic violence and civil war, poverty, chronic famines and droughts, bureaucratic corruption, illegal harvesting of forest ecology, and so on. In this context, class conscious Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o points out the responsibility of literature as a political instrument in resisting the multi-faceted process of class oppression; in Thiong'o's own words:

> What is important is not only the writer's honesty and faithfulness in capturing and reflecting the struggles around him, but also his attitude to those big social and political issues…what we are talking about is whether or not writer's

> imaginative leap to grasp reality is aimed at helping or hindering the community's struggle for a certain quality of life free from all parasitic exploitative relations. We are talking about the relevance of literature in our daily struggle for a certain quality of life free from all parasitic exploitative relations. We are talking about the relevance of literature in our daily struggle for the right and security to bread, shelter, clothes and song, the right of a people to the products of their sweat. The extent to which the writer can and will help in not only explaining the world but in changing it will depend on his appreciation of the classes and values that are struggling for new order, a new society for more human future, and which classes and values are hindering the birth of the new and hopeful. And of course it depends on which side he is in these class struggles of his time. ("Writers" 476)

Thiong'o is an essayist, playwright, novelist, academic and human rights' and social activist of international repute. Born in colonial Kenya in 1938 he grew up witnessing the effects of British colonialism (settler colony) and the Mau Mau war of Independence (1952-62). After completing his secondary schooling in Kenya, he studied in Makerere University, Uganda, and Leeds University, England. He served as a lecturer of English at Nairobi University from 1967-77, while also contributing to Mekerer University and Northwestern University as Temporary Appointees. Thiong'o's literary success began with his play *The Black Hermit*, which was staged in 1962 at the National Theatre in Kampala for celebration of Uganda's independence. He gained international attention through his novel *Weep Not, Child* which was published in 1964, followed by *River Between* (1965) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). In the following years Thiong'o presents his political voice on issues of post colonialism and questioned the purpose of the continual existence of English literature departments as a symbol of colonial hangover. His next novel *Petals of Blood* was published in 1977, which presented critical insight on the neo-colonial power structure in post-independence Kenya. His play *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, which criticized the dramatic inequalities in 'free' Kenyan society, was staged by actors from working-class and peasant backgrounds in the same year. He was imprisoned without charges later in 1977, and was subsequently released in 1978 as a result of campaign and pressure from Amnesty International. While in prison he decided to write only in his native tongue Gikuyu and started

his novel *Caitani Mutharabaini* (1981), which is translated into English as *Devil on the Cross* (1982). From 1982 till 2002 he was in exile in the United Kingdom and the USA as the Moi dictatorship of Kenya, who is sharply criticized in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's works, threatened the writer's life. After facing political aggression upon his return to Kenya in 2002, he resumed living in exile. He continued his writing career throughout and published *Wizard of the Crow* in 2006.

Ngugi's first three novels were published under the name James Ngugi. Thiong'o's last English work, *Petals of Blood*, which was written over a period of five years and completed in 1977 while the author was in Yalta as a guest of the Soviet Workers' Union, was the first text bearing his African name Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Unlike his first three novels, which are all set in the background of colonial Kenya, *Petals on the Blood* addresses the tensions within the new social order of independent Kenya. Previously in *A Grain of Wheat* the author has shown that the citizens of the country were not a collective but a conflicted whole. During the Mau Mau war both the patriotic fighters as well as the British loyalists were native African peasants who fought against each other to 'free' the country from foreign rule. The novel ends in a tone of hope – an admission to the fact that atrocities were committed by members of both conflicting groups and everyone was damaged in the process. The consumption of a child by members from these oppositional teams presents a symbolic message: a new nation of Kenya will be formed where the ones previously fighting each other will come together to build a free country. However, in *Petals of Blood,* corruption, exploitation and violence mark the failure of the promised independence.

Petals of Blood is set in the aftermath of Kenya's liberation from British rule. The workers' union of the Theng'eta Brewery (a company owned and managed by Europeans,

Americans and rich Africans) is planning a militant strike after the directors refuse to raise their wages. Some hours later three of the directors – Kimeria, Mzigo and Chui – are found dead in a fire set in the town's brothel. Following an initial investigation, police arrest three residents: a school headmaster, a shopkeeper and a union leader. The narrative travels back in time and the readers learn about each of the protagonist's personality and character as well as their history. Resistance from workers of Ilmorog Brewery contextualizes the crisis of African working-class within the greater narrative of world proletarian revolution. Thiong'o shows that exploitation of labor within the global political-economy benefits the few who sit on the top of the hierarchy of race-ethnicity-class-gender. The novel attempts to relate the class exploitation of Ilmorog's workers with global capitalism that provides the African working-class – whose ontological entity is rooted in imperial history – an international locus of collective identity. Writing in English, Thiong'o attempts to reach out to an international audience, for whom crisis of Kenyan working-class would remain a 'foreign' problem unless the text can show that class exploitation transcends national boundaries. In this way, Thiong'o's task is similar to that of Mulk Raj Anand's, who showed that colonial child labor Munoo is part of the collective struggle of international working-class.

Actions of the novel begin in Ilmorog – a once a thriving market town, then a decaying village and now a 'developing' industrial town – where each of the four main characters, Godfrey Munira, Karega, Wanja and Abdulla, have found themselves in the post-independence era. Abdulla, a former patriotic fighter in the Mau Mau war of independence where he lost a leg, was the first to arrive there. The bitter betrayal of independence forced him to retreat in this remote village where he earns his living as a shopkeeper. Previously, he also worked in a shoe factory, and this firsthand experience with labor helped him question the exploitative nature of

the class structure: "how was it that a boss who never lifted a load, who never dirtied his hands in the smelly water and air in the tannery, or in any other part of the complex, could still live in a big house and own a car and employ a driver and more than four people only to cut grass in the compound?" (Thiong'o 136). Munira, a declassed bourgeois intellectual from a wealthy Christian family, comes to Ilmorog as an elementary school headmaster. He was previously expelled from an elite boarding school for partaking in a strike; prior to his arrival to Ilmorog, he spent many years as an educator and married a pagan woman, who ultimately converted to Christianity to be ingratiated with Munira's rich family. Abdulla and Munira are joined by Wanja in Ilmorog. Wanja is hired to work in Abdulla's shop, where she transforms the business and successfully persuades Abdulla to send his brother Joseph to school. Wanja's relationship to Ilmorog dates back to the time of her grandmother, who is one of the elder matriarchs of the village. Prior to her arrival in Ilmorog, Wanja worked as a barmaid and/or sex worker. As a child and a teenager, she was a promising student. While still in middle school, she conceived a child as a result of an affair with a much older businessman and neighbor Kimera, who had made his fortune as a "Home Guard transporting bodies of Mau Mau killed by the British" (293). Wanja committed infanticide by throwing the child in a latrine. The last to arrive is Karega, who was a former student of Munira, and was expelled from the same missionary institute for organizing a strike; he assumes the position of 'Untrained Teacher' at the only elementary school of Ilmorog, but was later dismissed by Munira as a result of blind romantic jealousy. Karega eventually becomes a union organizer.

In the beginning of the novel the three men – Munira, Abdulla and Karega—are arrested for 'questioning' by the police for investigation of the Ilmorog fire that claimed three lives; Wanja's statement is taken from her hospital bed, where she is recovering from second and third

degree burns. The dead victims of the fire were prominent successful figures within the 'developing' socio-economic situation in independent Kenya, while the suspects are 'failures' and ill-adjusted within the post -colonial society. The *Daily Mouthpiece* reported the incident in the following way:

> A man believed to be a trade union agitator, has been held after leading industrialist and two educationists, well known as the African directors of the internationally famous Theng'eta Brewery and Entrprises Ltd, were last night burnt to death in Ilmorog, only after taking a no-nonsense-no-pay-rise decision.
>
> It is believed that they were lured into a house where they were set on fire by hired thugs.
>
> The three will be an irreplaceable loss to Ilmorog. They built Ilmorog from a tiny nineteenth century village reminiscent of the days of Krapf and Rebman into a modern industrial town that even generations born after Gararin and Armstrong will be proud to visit….etc…Kimera and Chui were prominent and founding fathers of KCO. (Thiong'o 6)

The betrayal of the promise of independence has benefited the oligarchic capitalist system of the neocolonial state, while resistance from the disillusioned and revolutionaries points towards an imminent change. Exploitation of human labor and natural resources in the hands of colonial rulers and post-independence dictatorships pushed the common masses to the edge from where the only narrative escape is through violent retaliation, and the Ilmorog murders are beginning of such a journey.

A snap shot of twelve years of the communal history of the geospatial locale of Ilmorog is presented through a mixture of the following narratives: Munira's memories and confession statements, written during his stay at police custody, and the occasional appearance of the first person collective narrator, who voices the Ilmorog community – an omniscient narrator, who describes more than s/he narrates. We also have dialogues amongst the characters, scattered personal narratives from the major and minor characters, and legends and myths that present a

historical overview of Ilmorog and Kenyan society from the precolonial times. In the aftermath of Kenyan independence, the village of Ilmorog is abandoned by most of its able bodied working-men and working-women, who left for the cities in search of better and modern ways of living. The only school in the village cannot keep any teacher due to the remoteness of the area and the apparent hostility of the villagers to any newcomer. Material conditions of the villagers' lives were very poor, however culturally they were living in harmony with the travelling herdsmen (who belonged to a different tribe and clan from the settled farmers).

By the time Godfrey Munira was appointed as the Acting Headmaster of Ilmorog Primary School, Abdulla had already set up his business as a shopkeeper in the village. Wanja, whose 'secret' purpose to return to her ancestral village was to find a traditional cure for her infertility,[18] quickly becomes an object of affection for Munira. A temporary relationship is established between the two but Wanja abruptly disappears from the village, leaving Munira heartbroken. Until this point Karega has limited involvement with the narrative. He shows up to meet up with Munira, his former teacher, after being expelled from his high school in Siriana. He is introduced briefly to Abdulla and Wanja as well, but he doesn't spend more than a night in Ilmorog. Later, Munira meets both Karega and Wanja in bar, while he was visiting the city, and the two accompany him back to Ilmorog. During this timeframe, the national political scene of Kenya has witnessed some dramatic changes; their Communist political leader of South Asian origin, who was also a freedom fighter and was jailed by the British police during colonial times, was murdered. Rumors said that he was trying to aid an agrarian revolution and vowed to end foreign control over the economy (Thiong'o 94). Another political development during this period was the innovation of the 'Tea Drinking Ceremony'— a mysterious ritual where ordinary

[18]She was unable to conceive a child since her first conception.

people were coerced into donating money to political parties while being preached about national consciousness; in reality, this ‘national consciousness’ was meant to stage the various tribes as each other’s competitors and enemies. Thus a new idea of citizenship identity was forced onto the people, which was the beginning of a tradition of ethnic politics and conflict.

National political changes influenced Ilmorog’s lifestyle and culture. Unlike the village of Chotti (discussed earlier in the chapter), where the national political development was practically incomprehensible and irrelevant (to the villagers), Ilmorog does interact with the national political discourse of the Kenyan nation. ‘Foreigners’ like Wanja, Munira, Karega and Abdulla take leading roles in establishing a dialogue between the worldview of the Ilmorog community and the political ideology of Kenya. Ilmorog’s original inhabitants follow traditional cultural values, while occasional visits from ‘outsiders’ create a conversation between the old world and the new nation. Munira’s bicycle was a mystery to the villagers in the beginning as was Wanja’s household products; eventually the village even goes through a process of modernization which turns the original inhabitants into landless squatters and alcoholics, with brothels and bars frolicking on every corner. After Wanja and Karega return back to Ilmorog with Munira, Karega works at the school and Wanja joins the village workforce, who worked in each other’s shambas (farms) following their philosophy of sharing.

When Wanja and Karega found their escape in Ilmorog for the second time, the village was already facing a ferocious drought. Though initially the superstitious villagers wanted to blame the drought on Abdulla’s donkey for drinking a lot of water and eating a lot of grass, but ultimately they understand that they have been deprived of the promises of independence, which failed to provide them even with safe drinking water. The community formed collective resistance and encountered the hegemonic system when they endure the tedious journey to the

city to claim their rights from their elected Member of the Parliament. The significance of this journey was multifold: it unified the community through their shared narratives of life-struggle; the collective opted for resolving the conflict through communicative action by representing their voice in the political public sphere; they broke the tradition of secluded superstition and opted to form a dialogue with the modern nation state, and they also linked the natural calamity with the political neglect and marginalization, which has tactically sucked all the nutrients from the geo-human space of Ilmorog and left it to die of starvation and thirst.

The villagers of Ilmorog set out for claiming justice for themselves, which can be achieved only if one addresses how natural ecology dictates the social ecosystem. Within the reified social structure both human beings and nature is objectified, and this results in the destruction of harmonious living conditions for communities that are ontologically and epistemologically rooted in the natural-ecological world. The dominant ideology of mechanical progress, which fuels the dominant capitalist-liberal discourses of identity, culture and society, manifests in the exploitation of the global South by its more powerful master. Hierarchical value systems dominate the modernist-capitalist class culture that treats the poor, women, the young and the natural world as inferior to the products and producers of industrial and technical progress. Thiong'o and Devi show that colonialism does not put an end to such hierarchical evaluation systems – it is not the white, male, revolutionary proletariat, who can challenge and topple the dominance of such exploitative structure. Resistance from the most exploited stratum demands complete abolition of the superimposed discourse of capitalist-modernist value system and the restoration of an ecologically just worldview.

The men, the women and the children, of Ilmorog collectively protested against the national neglect that has brought draught and famine. Karega's leadership establishes the drought

within the context of failed independence for Kenyan people and the current famine stands for the deprivation of the Kenyan society by a handful of their fellow citizens. When the delegation reaches the capital to ask for government aid, they encounter the 'foreign' culture of capitalist-modernist system. The collective of Ilmorog is introduced to the new individualist African-Kenyan identity, with private enclosures of luxurious dwellings and feasts which are not shared possessions of communal collectivity. They are refused help from political, educational, religious, and financial sectors. However, a former friend of Wanja—a class conscious lawyer, rescues them from political repression when the MP tries to prosecute them in the court of law. Besides, newspaper publicity about their exodus from Ilmorog to the city appeals to the heart of many Kenyans and Ilmorog receives charity and support to fight the drought.

Ilmorog forms a collective consciousness for the second time when they renew a precolonial communal custom: theng'eta drinking ceremony. Symbolically presented as 'the petals of blood' the theng'eta plant was used to produce a special kind of liquor in pre-modern Kenya; the plant was supposed to have magical qualities and was drunk in communal ceremonies in village settings. Through a complicated integration of art and science, the liquor is prepared under the watch of Nyakinyua, Wanja's grandmother and one of the most respected village elders. The villagers gather together and a ceremony consisting of songs and dance initiate the ritual. Through narrative performances of cultural history, the village reclaims its collective identity.

Following the theng'eta drinking ceremony, Karega and Wanja form a romantic bond, which makes Munira jealous. As a result he plots to remove Karega from the position of a school teacher and succeeds after two years. After losing his job, Karega leaves Ilmorog only to return five years later. Wanja stays at the village and works with Abdulla. Munira continues as a

teacher and years pass. During this time the Trans Africa Highway is built through Ilmorog, which brought outside laborers to the village. Wanja, fueled by the ambition of making profit from the situation, starts brewing and selling theng'eta at Abdulla's bar. Ilmorog becomes a popular hub for drunkards who find the call of theng'eta irresistible. While the town goes through a transition with the installation of the Trans Africa Highway, Ilmorog witnesses the drastic addition of shanty towns and shopping Malls. Soon Abdulla and Wanja lose their license to brew theng'eta and instead a foreign owned alcohol plant is set up to produce liquor from the theng'eta plant, symbolizing the commercialization of natural-cultural resources and negation of indigenous values. The Thereng'eta Brewery relates the exploitation of indigeneity within capitalist reification and shows how struggle for decolonization of African vis-á-vis Kenyan people is directly linked with international working-class movement and its ambitions.

At this point Karega abruptly returns to Ilmorog to find Wanja running a brothel, Abdulla selling sheepskin and oranges to make a living, and Munira as an alcoholic. Karega gets a job as a clerk at the Theng'eta Brewery and succeeds in unifying the workers, who were previously divided by the false consciousness of ethnic conflict. His success in formation of a workers' union leads the way to unionize the barmaids, and the peasants as well, who all saw the power of collective struggle.

Of all characters, Karega is closest to the western concept of the revolutionary proletarian hero. In an attempt to sum up a Marxian adaptation of historiography of class relations, Karega explains:

> The true lesson of history was this: the so-called victims, the poor, the downtrodden, the masses, have always struggled with spears and arrows, with their hands and songs of courage and hope, to end their oppression and exploitation: that they would keep struggling until a human kingdom came: a

> world on which goodness and beauty and strength and courage would be seen not in how cunning one can be, not in how much power to oppress one possessed, but only in one's contribution in creating a more humane world in which the inherited inventive genius of a man in culture and science from all ages and climes would not be a monopoly of the few, but for the use of all, so that all flowers in all their different colours would ripen and bear fruits and seeds. (Thiong'o 303)

Karega's new world is claimed through revolution. In his view, the decolonization of Kenyan people can only happen through a complete eradication of the socioeconomic system in place. Like Karega, Munira also dreams of a new world, but his means and methodology to materialize such dreams are different. Owing to his petit bourgeois false consciousness and lack of exposure to working-class life and culture, Munira is limited in his ability to conceive of a more liberating imagination. He wants to reconstruct the past and find solace in 'god's' creation.

Karega's working-class background, education, and firsthand experience with labor provided him with the tactics to initiate a revolution from below. The pamphlets that helped uniting the workers said: "workers were all children of the machine and the New Road" (Thiong'o 361). Following a strictly Marxist analysis of the class system Karega pointed out to the workers: "Every dispute was put in the context of the exploitation of labour by capital, itself stolen from other workers. Why should so few wield power of life and death over so many?" (Thiong'o 362). Many years before Karega's pamphlets, similar message was heard by Wanja's grandfather while working as a porter during the First World War: "…in a land called Russia, peasants had taken spears and seized guns and drove out the enemy" (Thiong'o 385). But lost between the tensions of European imperialism and racism, the call for class revolution lost its meaning in Ilmorog, until Karega organized the workers to fight for their rights. The authorities tried to practice a policy of divide and rule to repress the workers' growing power; the most outspoken were promoted to positions within 'management' and forbidden from involvement with union politics. The owners tried to separate the workers into smaller groups according to

their tribal heritage to break the union. Christianity also aided the capitalist interests – an American Church funded an egalitarian movement, which pursued the workers to believe that employers and employees are all equal in god's eyes, so there was no moral relief to be achieved through class struggle. Books that were circulated by the organization for spiritual relief focused on anti-communism and as such titles like *Tortured by Christ* and *World Aflame* appeared as popular reading materials.

After his arrest by the police, Karega was interrogated by inspector Godfrey, who used Munira's confession notes as guidance for questioning. Karega knew that the arson and murders were useful to the authorities to banish their union and that was the reason for which the police tried their hardest to accuse Karega of the incident. But Karega's 'method' of revolutionary path wasn't in elimination of individuals; he states during his police interrogation: "I do not believe in the elimination of individuals. There are many Kimeras and Chuis in the country. They are the products of a system, just as workers are products of a system. It's the system that needs to be changed… and only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that" (Thiong'o 366). Though there was no evidence, Karega's interrogation ended in an act of police brutality as the inspector gave him the "famous whip of seven straps" to force a confession owning up to the crime.

Through Wanja's confession statement from her hospital bed, inspector Godfrey's final interrogation session with Munira and the voice of the omniscient narrator the readers know about the night of the murder: Wanja had invited the three men, Mzigo, Chui, and Kimera, all three of her wealthiest clients, who were also co-owners of the Theng'eta Brewery, to her brothel. Her intension was to introduce Abdulla, who had previously offered to marry Wanja, to the clients and declare him as her man and end her relationship with the other three. However, she could not hold her anger when she saw Kimera, who was not killed by the fire but from a

blow to the head by Wanja. Munira, on the other hand, felt driven by god to save his friends Abdulla, Karega and Wanja, used petrol to burn down the town brothel.

The novel ends in a note where the four strangers – Abdulla, Munira, Wanja and Karega—are separated in their lives' journeys. Abdulla returned back to his former ways of living, and received a visit from Joseph. Wanja founds herself pregnant with Abdulla's child and she was reunited with her aging mother. Munira awaited his trial. Karega, who was detained for being a communist sympathizer, received the news of his mother's death . While he grieved his loss he realized that as long as he fought for the working-people he was fighting for his mother. His jail warden also identified himself as a worker and offered his support for the cause of the movement. The novel ends with a message for Karega from the workers: workers of Ilmorog will go on strike; not just the union members but all the workers of the town will strike. Karega knew that he was no longer fighting alone. The people of Ilmorog are fighting for justice for the ones like his mother.

The novel depicts a transformation of the status of women in Kenyan society over the span of the narrative. Capitalism and patriarchy worked hand in hand and positioned women in a situation of accentuated exploitation. Karega's mother Mariamu fought against her situation where "She was expected to work on the European farms; to work on her own piece of land; and to keep the home in unity, health and peace" (Thiong'o 69). She was subjected to domestic violence and class exploitation which presented themselves as two sides of the same coin. Profit of her labor is enjoyed by her husband, who in turn is subjected to the exploitation of the class-race hierarchy of colonialism. Acting against such a system of exploitation she ran away from her husband with her eldest son Nding'uri (who later became a revolutionary in the Mau Mau War of independence and was hung), only to become a bonded laborer in Brother Ezekeil's

(Muria's powerful father, who held a high position within the Presbyterian Church and owned one of largest estates in independent Kenya) land. Her eldest son was a 'collective sacrifice' for the country's liberation and the youngest son Karega was imprisoned for fostering a dream of people's emancipation from the shackles of perpetual exploitation. Karega remembered how she labored and toiled all her life only to die without any kin around her: "She had remained a landless squatter all her life: on European farms, on Munira's father's fields, and latterly a landless rural worker for anybody who would give her something with which to hold the skin together" (Thiong'o 407). In the wake of a mass consciousness and resistance against the system, the novel ends with the message that only through a complete reconfiguration of the existing system the working people of Kenya will bring justice for Mariamu and her likes.

Women enjoyed a position of power and authority within traditional value systems of African tribes. Nyakinyua, Wanja's grandmother, demonstrated her leadership and authority over the collective when she persuaded the villagers to follow Karega's suggestion about sending a delegation to the city instead of sacrificing Abdulla's donkey (during the fatal drought). She also led the women to chase out the two political musclemen, who came to the village to extort money and terrorize the people in the name of the 'tea drinking ceremony'. However, with the thirst for capitalist development the Kenyan population also revised its traditional value system: the younger women of new generations were quick to find money in prostitution, but lost their social status and authority alongside. Wanja found escape from repression in such a trade; in new Ilmorog her motto became 'eat or be eaten.' Thus unlike Nyakinyua, who led collective resistance against the system, Wanja appropriated the system and redeems her financial status by exploiting the commodified society, where 'nothing is free.'

Petals of Blood shows that working-class resistance and revolution within neocolonial settings inevitably address issues like colonial hangover, racial tensions and patriarchal oppressions. Class identity within such contexts operates alongside race, gender, religious identity sites. A simple Lukascian explanation of the journey of working-class from a 'class in itself' to a 'class for itself' cannot be applied to such complex situations as the meaning of class in Africa is rooted in its history of colonialism and slavery, in its struggle for independence from European empires and in its resistance against modernist value systems which have directly attacked the community based, nature-oriented ways of living that the indigenous people of Africa were accustomed with. Thus, in order to become a 'class for itself' the community has to establish its own history independent of the European documentations and presentations, locate its epistemological identity within ecological worldview and address their role within the rise of global-capitalism.

Gun, coin and the bible are the three tools that aide in successful progression of the exploitative systems within neocolonial settings. The role of Christianity in erasing traditional Kenyan practices is comparable to the hegemony of Hinduism and its repressive tendencies towards tribal people of India. As we have noticed in Devi's works focusing on the Adivasi population of India, exploitation of the labor of native inhabitants is directly related to ecological imbalances that affect not only human cultures and societies but also misbalance the forces of nature, threatening life on the planet. Similarly, Thiong'o also shows how the logic of profit, the forward moving force of capital, does not stop only with exploitation of labor but almost inevitably robs the planet of necessary resources that foster life. Colonialism, capitalism and ecological injustice are inherently related. Though nature does not appear as an important factor in socialist theories, Marx's theories, or in western proletarian literary debates, working-class

cultures of communities with 'space-based knowledge system' are founded on their relationship to nature and ecology. Thus exploitation of natural resources becomes symbolic to the injustice of the people, whose cultural, social and economic lives are directly linked to the ecology.

The human's relationship to the non-human living world in a non-reified context is captured through a realist and in-depth analysis of Abdulla's relationship with his donkey. After being freed from the British prison in Kenya at the dawn of independence, Abdulla returned home to find that his entire family has been killed by the British police. With an overwhelming feeling of rootlessness Abdulla tries to start a new life in 'postcolonial' Kenya; he bought the donkey to use it to deliver goods. At this point he found Joseph, who is trying to save himself from a group of boys, while digging through some garbage in search of food. The other boys accused Joseph of trespassing in their territory in the garbage. Joseph was an orphan boy, who had lost his family in the turmoil of revolution and Abdulla chose to introduce himself as Joseph's lost brother, and the two maintained the same relationship throughout the novel's timespan. Abdulla arrived in the village of Ilmorog with both the donkey and Joseph to escape the new nation state of Kenya. The villagers did not welcome the donkey and its eating and drinking habits were always closely monitored. The villagers thought that the donkey was taking a large share of the resources which could otherwise be used for their cattle. Abdulla fought tooth and nail for the donkey. The primary reason for which he joined the delegation and went to Nairobi was to secure his donkey's life as the villagers were planning to beat it out of the village territory. Later a survey airplane crashes and kills the donkey. The death of the donkey symbolized the end of the 'unconditional care' and 'nurturing' that Kenyan people were accustomed to before 'greed for profit' hypnotized everyone. The donkey indirectly influenced the formation of collective resistance within the people of Ilmorog during the time of the

drought. The novel appeals towards an ecocritical understanding of class consciousness, where collectivity is not only achieved through solidarity with fellow human beings but it is extended to the entire living world around human lives.

The discipline of ecocriticism shows how the natural world and its relationship to the human population is reflected in literature. The landmark work *The Ecocriticism Reader* defines the discipline as:

> …the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of originally the discipline focused on nature-centered literature, the extension of an ecocritical lens can help in the Marxist analysis of the indigenous contexts of production. Applying ecocritical tools to the study of class struggle of the post-colonial Asian and African contexts show that reification plagued the communities' ecologically balanced ways of living damaging their economic, social, natural and cultural practices.production and economic class to its readings of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth- centred approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty xix).

Though, originally the discipline focused on nature-centered literature, but extension of an ecocritical lens can also help Marxist analysis of indigenous contexts of production. Applying ecocritical tools to the study of class struggle of the post-colonial Asian and African contexts show that reification plagued the communities' ecologically balanced ways of living and damaged economic, social, natural and cultural practices.

In Devi and Thiong'o's 'post-colonial' novels, we see how railway destabilized indigenous epistemology of 'local' people by distorting the natural world through displacement of its resources. So, natural ecological worldview, which fashioned the cultural lives of such working-class masses, is connected to the logic of class struggle within questions of indigenous working-class movements. Comparative study of *Petals of Blood* and *Chotti Munda* shows how the question of class identity in the postcolonial era is intertied with the discourse of the nation

state, located within debates of international class politics; the novels add the dimension of ecojustice to the ongoing narrative of working-class identity. Ecojustice carries the message of 'caring' for and 'about' our fellow creatures – "to be human is to live engaged in a vast system of life, and human well-being depends on learning how to protect it" (Martusewicz and Edmundson 71). Within the reified system the element of care shifts its target: thus the world of the living — both human and natural, is seen as an inferior category and taken less care of than that of the world of the objects, which are products of technical advances of modernity.

The exploitative relationship between reification and ecology is presented in a conversation between two residents of Ilmorog, Muturi and Njuguna. Muturi relates the drought of Ilmorog to the deforestation for the development of the railway in colonial times. For village elder Muturi, colonialism is related to this forced extortion of life out of the land, and she sees the white colonizers who "…only know how to take away everything" (Thiong'o 82). However, extortion and exploitation does not end with the end of British rule as it continues in the neo-colonial era, where a handful of 'black' Africans benefit from the tears, hunger, and labor of the rest of the people. Thus the objects of exploitation remain the same though repression shifts axis from race to class. The railroads in the European colonies of Asia and Africa were built by cheap labor and/or unpaid labor or slave labor, often enforced by the colonial government; once the projects were finished, the railway then was used to transport natural resources away. In the wake and aftermath of industrial revolution the colonies of the British Empire (as well as most other European colonies) became the chief resources for fueling the empire's industries that required energy sources like coal and wood. Both Ngugi and Devi are vocal about the exploits of imperialism and show how exploitation of natural resources and superimposition of monetary capital destroyed the local economies of Adivasi communities and native African communities.

Their respective cultures, nestled in natural ways of knowing, were challenged as well. Traditionally, members of these communities practiced a lifestyle that was based on hard physical labor: herding cattle, cultivating and farming, and occasional hunting. With the loss of human and natural resources, it became difficult to pursue such occupations; besides, the industrial economy needs a reserve workforce of unemployed men/women, so the eradication of traditional ways of living and traditional knowledge was quintessential for the 'progress' of newly independent nation states. The farmers and herdsmen of Ilmorog were forced to work as either farm laborers or as industrial laborers by the end of the novel, though many of them were simply 'jobless' waiting for their turn to be called in by the goddess of the capitalist profit machine.

Role of the middle class authors

Chotti Munda and *Petals of Blood* voice their strongest criticism against the repression of the workers and peasantry in the post-independence era. In *Chotti Munda* and *Petals of Blood* the end of colonialism merely means a shift in position within the members of the uppermost layer of the international class system. Both Devi and Ngugi 'speak for' the struggle of the people; however neither of them has direct lived-experience of the working-class lives that they represent. Their knowledge about the 'represented' is gained partly through their national, regional and local origins, and partly through research of government documents, narratives of oral history of the local people, etc. By the act of writing about these contexts they assume an important role in the class revolution, comparable to the notion of the vanguard party. The working-class novelists of the second half of the twentieth century are petit bourgeois intellectuals and they can be compared to the subcontinental writers of the thirties' who wrote for a middle class audience. In doing so they (writers like Devi and Ngugi) ignite 'class awakening,'

which is considered one of the main aims of working-class literary and cultural-revolution. Both novels address how the literate and the intellectual can empathize and participate in building an international working-class culture that analyzes how global class oppression occur within localized pockets. Contexts of production of these novels are thus integrated within their content in this way. These self-referential novels incorporate characters that become part of a continuing class struggle through their actions and not via their inheritance of a particular class position. The Naxalite student and the activist in *Chotti Munda* and the lawyer in *Petals of Blood* are representative of class conscious intellectuals, who have an integral role in the international class revolution. Like Devi or Ngugi, these characters fight alongside the revolutionized masses and create dialogic interactive spaces where the dominant nationalist political discourses and repressive ideologies of class society are faced with resistive consciousness from below.

Inadequacy of educational facilities limited or eliminated the probability of representative voices from the working-classes in literary public sphere within the post-colonial contexts of India and Kenya. When working people of previously colonized landscapes are presented in the literary public sphere, the sphere in question immediately experiences a shift in power and agency. Previously unheard and unrepresented voices show the exploitative nature of postcolonial societies where the needs of the few out way the needs of the many. Though such literary pieces are seldom authored by the working-class members, these texts are integral to the international working-class literary sphere, as they represent lived realities of global capitalism for its victims. Instead of seeking sympathy from their middle-class audience, these novels ‘educate’ their readers about the unheard histories and social realities and urge for a change of such contexts.

Section B.

Working-class narratives by working-class members in late twentieth century

Working-class writing by working-class authors themselves is rare within the context of third world literature as the literary public sphere still remains inaccessible to these members in most cases. Moroccan author Mohammed Choukri has presented first-hand accounts of working-class struggles in North Africa in the context of colonialism, class exploitation, patriarchy, and religious-ethnic tensions. His work questions if the western notion of the novel can be a linguistic expression of working-class culture within the context of the third world.

Mohammed Choukri's Arab-African autobiographical novel *Al-Khubz Al-Hafi* claimed international repute through its 1973 English translation entitled *For Bread Alone*. The novel was simultaneously written in Arabic and translated by Paul Bowles into English, though the original piece was rejected by most publishers in the Arab world and was not printed until 1982. Choukri sees the narrative as a collective autobiography. The English text, which is a product of joint collaboration between Choukri and Bowles can be read as a testimonial. The former's life-writing was narrated to Bowles, who could not read traditional Arabic. So, Choukri 'translated' the text into Moroccan Arabic, which is then re-translated into English by Bowles.

Nirvana Tanoukhi observes that the translated version is a 'rewriting' that was meant for a foreign academic audience who would 'read' *For Bread Alone* as a 'representative' of third world texts within World Literature or Postcolonial curriculum included in 'western' academic departments. As a result academic reception of the text has focused on finding tenets of an 'imaginary' Africa that is anti-modern, illiterate and poor. Though the novel has documented

how 'work' is directly related to survival, the academy didn't allow it a place amongst 'working-class' literature.

According to Tanoukhi, Bowles purposely de-politicizes the novel and translates it into a postmodern narrative from a social realist work. An obsession with the pristine imagination of the illiterate prevents Bowels from capturing the socio-economic struggle of the subaltern (130). My study considers the translated English version as a semi-autobiographical collective novel; though Bowels has failed to capture the collective struggle of North African working-class reality as a continual process and instead presents a fragmented narrative of personal life experience, I argue that the latter account is a generalizable narrative with potential for coding collective reality within the nutshell of a life-journey. Choukri himself describes the text as a 'communal autobiography'; in 1986 Choukri wrote:

> When I said that my autobiographical Al Khubz Al Hafi is more of a social document than a work of art I meant that I actually attempted a semi-documentary endeavor about a social group that included myself and my family. A work of art, be it a novel, a short story, a play, or poem is more condensed, symbolic, inspirational…I did not overload my characters (including myself) with cultural dimensions except as benefits their simple social status.
>
> Most literary works stem from a combination of social and political experiences that are often closer to a documentary. (Ghazoul and Harlow 220)

Choukri's semi-documentary style in this collective narrative points towards a duality of subaltern working-class identity. In contrast to their western counterparts where proletarian identity is conceived as a dualism there is a constant tension between individual and collective aspects of identity in the formation of proletarian identity,[19] for Choukri's text that the collective

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[19] The 1930s' proletarian novels document how the working-class protagonist emerges as an individual with access to agency from within a community. In *Waste Heritage*, Baird shows this process through the character of Matt, who, through his actions, claims a subjective agency and becomes a protagonist. Similarly, *The Grapes of Wrath* documents the process of 'becoming' in the case of Tom Joad and Jim Casey. However, the novels also show the failure of certain

and the individual are inseparable within contexts of the African working-class. This concept of class identity, formed through lived experience as a collective entity, calls for a new understanding of the social self.

The idea of working-class as a collective social agent can be analyzed through the lens of sociology. British sociologist Anthony Giddens explains the idea of collective action in his 'structuration theory.' His theory claims that the tension between the unitary action and collective agency is a duality, not a dualism. Giddens defines structuration as "the structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure" (376). Social relationships are based on social interactions; interactions initiate the production and reproduction (through repetition) of social relationships which establish an identity for an individual. Structuration theory follows elements of Erving Goffman's theory of the self, as well as George Mead's reading of social self. Working-class characters in fictional literature create a symbolic world for society to explore and comprehend how the working-class 'performs' as a collective social subject. Interaction amongst in-group members shapes the internal consciousness of their collective existence, while encounters with external organizations, foreign groups and individuals help the marginal working-class ignite an awakening of their collective identity as an 'other' to the dominant groups of the socioeconomic structure. Goffman identified 'performance' as a basic characteristic of any social self. The sociologist used the theatre as an imagery to show how social interaction forms the foundation of the consciousness of social identity. Goffman's theory of identity, which echoes the romantic theorist Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of self, can be applied to the moments when working-class collective is awakened through communal performances. Another important perception of social identity for

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individuals in attaining such agency claims, and such an example is the case of Harry in Hanky Park, presented in *Love on the Dole*.

the working-class collective can be derived from theorist George Mead, who considered the social self to be both subjective and objective. Without self-consciousness, the subjective self turns into an objective social entity. The concept of becoming a subject through consciousness or identification of the self is replicated in the idea of class consciousness as well. As the social self turns into a subject in itself only when it becomes aware of its self-existence, the working-class becomes a social identity site only through the process of class consciousness, which is inseparable from awareness about racial repression, feminist struggles, and hegemony of 'normalcy' and eco-critical worldview.

Formation of working-class collective within contexts of indigeneity, subalternism and other marginal population groups follow different routes than that of their western counterparts, which originated from within the capitalist-modernist social system. Working-class novels, which attempt to capture the process of class formation as a requisite for international class struggle, can be subdivided into groups (one such categorization has been proposed by Barbara Foley, who shows that American working-class novels can be divided into four categories), to demonstrate the wide variety of narrative techniques that can express the total picture of the class process. In the case of a collaborative work like the text *For Bread Alone* western forms appear to be inadequate for the nomenclature process. Thus Mohamed Choukri's text is not an individualistic autobiography in the western sense; Ghazoul has called this text a 'subaltern autobiography.' The current study considers it a collective autobiographical novel, which is rooted in experiences of collective struggle to survive within contexts of class repressions.

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak argued that the subaltern cannot speak for themselves and this contention is proved somewhat true in the works of Devi or Ngugi, which has been discussed earlier in the chapter. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak argues that the dominant

ideological discourses of patriarchy and imperialism do not allow the subaltern to represent herself, and even if she does her symbolic action is misinterpreted by the recipient audience. In Devi and Ngugi's works, the authors speak for the ones' who are unable to represent themselves in the literary public sphere; thus the representation of the relevant subaltern and their reception in the dominant culture is 'mediated' via middle-class intellectuals. In Choukri's case the English translation does have a mediator, Bowles, who brings the text to its western audience. Ghazoul argued that Choukri's text proves that the subaltern can indeed speak for herself – though such a statement is not applicable for the English version, which is the text under discussion for my current study. The mediator plays an important role, similar to that of subcontinental authors in the colonial era, and supports the development of working-class literature by bringing the political message into the literary realm.

Choukri's journey from boyhood to adulthood amidst famines, domestic violence, sexual abuse and constant displacement is narrated in *For Bread Alone*. Though the text primarily follows the individual, but the shadow of the collective follows this individual. It is not a unique life-story, but rather a social reality for the majority of the population. Mohamed remains eternally homeless (which Lukács identified as a 'novel' characteristic in his pre-Marxist works) and in transition in search of food, shelter and security. In the beginning of the narrative, his family, consisting of his parents, himself and a younger brother, sets out for Tangier as their hometown Rif was going through a period of drought causing mass starvation and death. Tangier didn't fulfill its promise of guaranteed bread. Shortly after their arrival in the new city, his little brother, who was too sick to cry for bread, is murdered by their ill-tempered father during a fit of rage. After getting into trouble with a local Moroccan soldier his father is sent to prison, and his mother is left alone to fend for the two of them.

Mohamed is introduced to race relations and police brutality from his observations of everyday life in Tangier. His mother, who found work as a vegetable seller, gives birth to a baby girl while his father was away. After his father is released from prison the family moves to Tetuan, where Mohamed finds work in a café, though all the thirty pesetas that he earns is taken away by his abusive and exploitative father. In Tetuan, the protagonist is introduced to drugs, sex and alcohol along with thieving and stealing. His everyday life consists of layers of exploitative relationships and he constantly adapts and subverts his role in situations in order to survive the ordeals. Tanoukhi has observed that the Arabic text presents a correlation between the protagonists' socioeconomic struggle and adolescent obsession with sex:

> Mohamed's feelings of loneliness and insecurity lead him to fixate on sexual gratification. Elaborate descriptions of sexual fantasies and experiences permeate the entire text. However, while the Arabic presents sex as the product of oppressive socioeconomic conditions, Bowles's translation separates Mohamed's sexual experience from its economic motives (136).

Mohamed is displaced again and sent to live with his father's extended family in Oran, when he was fourteen. Here he works as a Frenchman's servant. In Oran he engages in a homosexual encounter by tricking a young boy into having sex with him. As a result he is returned to Tetuan as his aunt and uncle in Oran were afraid that a scandal could stem from the 'sinful' incident. In Tetuan, he finds himself trapped in his father's abuse. He escapes to Tangier to bring an end to the exploitation of his father whom he has loathed throughout the course of the narrative. Alone, starving and without any support Mohamed earns fifty pesetas by engaging in a homosexual encounter with a Spaniard.

Sex is represented as a commodity throughout the novel; both men and women sell their bodies for a few pesetas in an economic system that fails to offer other opportunities for earning a wage. Having no option to sell her/his labor, the characters turn to succumbing to the world's

oldest trade. The relationship between such prostitution and class exploitation within settings of colonialism and neocolonialism was addresses by Karega in the *Petals of Blood*: "We are all prostitutes. In a world where a man who has never set foot on this land can sit in a New York or London office and determine what I eat, drink, read, think, do, only because he sits on heaps of billions taken from the world's poor, in such a world we are all prostituted" (240). One can relate prostitution and the wage-slavery of the working-class within the global economic system as a result of the original problem of reification, which can only be resisted through class-conscious struggle.

In Mohamed's world the social oppression of patriarchy, class and colonialism work simultaneously; domestic violence and abuse that chased him away from his beloved mother and the world he knew were perpetrated by the father, who symbolized all the evils of patriarchy. His family as well as many others suffers from the exploitation of class oppression. Begging, stealing and prostitution are the only available choices of profession for the poor. Colonialism and race relations are depicted through regular harassment of the poor Moroccans. Inequality of class-race relations is presented through bodily and social imageries; a semi-naked beggar boy whose scalp wound is filled with maggots is shown in contrast to the affluent and wealthy Europeans with expensive accessories. The difference in material conditions of living between the ones who have it all and the ones who have nothing is exponential, shocking the reader with its realistic presentation. Instead of describing and analyzing Choukri shows what class society does to its victims, who live in the margins of the circle of power and have to endure a lifetime of exploitation due to lack of access to the resources of both the natural world and human society.

Three concentric exploitative systems are responsible for Mohamed's social situation and identity: the patriarchal abuse within the family system, the immediate social circle of the

protagonist where others of the same fate are constantly bullying each other (though friendships are also formed amongst them), and then larger socioeconomic and political oppression that work along the lines of both class and race. The macrocosmic effects of the laws of imperialism, as a guise of capitalism, can be directly connected to the microcosmic suffering on an individual level. On the other hand, religious, cultural, political and economic sectors empower a system of patriarchy that deprives women and children of their social agency, political voice and cultural respect. The narrative also captures how political unrest for Moroccan independence from being a French protectorate affected the members of the lowest strata. Mohammed and his likes live their lives alongside this nationalist turmoil; the brothels run business as usual, the drunkards fight their routine fights, and the thieves, pickpockets and smugglers continue with business just to survive.

Although, from time to time the narrator does question why such injustice has been imposed on him as he finds almost all his 'friends' facing similar threats from their social conditions, he never really becomes aware of a collective idea of a 'class' identity. As a child he asks his mother for a religious explanation for their misfortunate which never gets answered. As he grows up he internalizes the exploitative nature of society, one where he is in the bottom stratum. There are only two means to his survival: either by attempting to reproduce oppressive social relations along the horizontal lines or subvert the system by rebelling in silence through stealing, thieving, and prostituting. Class consciousness is not in the horizon of conception to any character in this narrative.

Absence of revolutionary consciousness in *For Bread Alone* gives it a unique position within working-class literature as it is different from the novels of Ngugi or Devi, both of whom claim revolutionary agency for the marginal and exploited in the post-colonial era. Writing

almost half a century before the Arab Spring, Choukri shows that majority of the youth population in the Arab countries are facing similar challenges to survive, and a lack of a sociopolitical grand narrative pushes the marginal even further out, causing them to be absent from the international working-class movement. However, Choukri's narrator claims agency by learning to read and write, and through his newfound literacy he retells his life-story and the stories of the many like him. Securing a place for the narratives of lived-experience within literary public sphere, Choukri begins the debate. How can the subaltern talk about the crisis of class culture and evoke class consciousness in the contexts of child labor, colonial and neocolonial political structures, and patriarchal exploitation? How can we use the literary sphere to claim agency for those illiterate and oppressed like that of Mohamed in *For Bread Alone* and locate their place within the international working-class struggle? The journey of *For Bread Alone* is later joined by Bama, a Dalit South Asian author who documented a collective narrative of lived experiences of Dalit women, and Rigoberta Menchu, who presented the worldview of the aboriginal people of Central America in an effort to break the silence of the subaltern in World Literature and working-class studies. Though the traditional novel form has not yet achieved a point where such voices can be heard easily but there is hope that such presentations are not beyond the genre's scope.

Conclusion

The working-class novels of the twentieth century fall within the category of political literature. Though the revolutionary proletarian subject of advanced industrial societies exercise hegemony over working-class studies in general, literary appropriation of the working-class subject by anti-colonial writers in Asia and Africa have adopted the subject as an indispensable topic in contemporary World Literature. In the narratives of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Mohammed

Choukri and Mahasweta Devi class is represented as a transitory concept. Class remains one of the most important sites of oppression within societies which are tangled amongst the grand narratives of globalization, internal colonization, racism, gender and sexual violence and cultural injustice. Instead of looking into these novels through the lens of post-colonialism, this research analyzes how these narratives present their subaltern subjects. I argue that the subaltern is essentially a subset of the working-class, one that is located in the margins of the working-class with the least agency and power. While the revolutionary proletarian hero leads the industrial workers' revolution in search of a socialist society, the collective subjectivity of the subaltern fights for survival in the face of starvation, disease, state violence, and overall challenges to continue living in ways that contradict the rules of modernist-capitalist society.

The field of 'subaltern studies' was belittled and stripped of its originality as a methodology by Arif Dirlik who sees the field as a continuation of the project of British Marxist historiography. In "Third-World sensibilities" Dirlik writes that "the historical writing[s] of Subaltern Studies historians… represent the application in Indian historiography of trends in historical writings that were quite widespread by the 1970s under the impact of social historians such as E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and a host of others" (302). Following Dipesh Chakrabarty's analysis I understand subaltern studies as a new way of understanding the historical paradigm. The colonial and postcolonial subaltern are the working-class people from various agrarian sectors, whose consciousness can be related to class consciousness but intertwined with discourses of religion, ethnicity, caste etc. Peasant revolutions, indigenous/tribal revolts, and any other collective resistance against the hegemony and oppression of global capitalism can is read ad subaltern resistance in this study.

Through my chosen novels I have engaged with the subaltern working-class subjects, who are fighting the continual exploitations of the legacy of empires, newly formed nations and the logic of global capitalism. These literary pieces are influenced by both the dominant and the dormant tendencies of the genre of working-class novel that has been discussed in the previous chapters. The texts from the 'post-colonial' epochs show how the genre of the working-class novel has evolved within World Literature and found its subjects within the subaltern of the 'third-world' who face many similar crises that were faced by the proletarian protagonists of the red-thirties within 'western' literature and the working-class and peasant population of the colonies.

In these writings of African and Asian anti-colonial novelists ideas of 'work' and 'working-class' are conceived in ways different from the dominant and dormant trends of 30s proletarian and working-class novels. While the dominant trends of the most studied era focused on the proletarian culture of dvanced capitalism and the dormant tendencies explored the race-class and colonialism-classism relationships, the novels produced by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Mahasweta Devi and Mohammed Choukri question the meaning of 'working-class' as a subject within situations of internal colonialism, neocolonialism and subaltern historiography. The aforementioned authors emerge from varied geo-political locales, but the one thing they all share in common is their choice of the subject; they contextualize the subaltern working-class within the global political economy. Giving voice to the subaltern who would otherwise be caught between "subject constitution and object formation" (Spivak 102), these novelists show how class subjectivity is related to issues like imperial oppression, exploitation of the environment and gender oppression within a system of globalization.

Concluding Remarks

In an attempt to understand the working-class as an international, transnational and trans-historic category I looked into World Literature to find how various literary traditions have presented the working-class subject within the span of the 20th century in the genre of novel. Anglo and American traditions of proletarian literary studies suggest that the idea of such literature is perceived on the basis of 'academically approved' texts from European and North American origins. My study shows that a diverse body of working-class novels was written throughout the twentieth century from varied political, cultural, and linguistic origins.

It is not possible to present a close-reading of texts and contexts from all the geo-cultural pockets to analyze how the genre of the working-class novel has been a continuous process in World Literature. Relying on distant reading of the genre's theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, I initiated this study by arguing that the nationalistic divisions of working-class texts are anti-Marxist. In order to present the genre as a transnational category in international literary history, the original Marxist proposition on class-conscious literature calls for the eradication of national boundaries. The relationship between working-class journalism and emergence of the working-class novel unveils how the genre (of twentieth century working-class novels) evokes a new idea of World Literature. The corpus of this research addressed three sets of working-class novels from three coordinates. The first set, consisting of texts from the UK, the USA and Canada argues that despite their regionalism, which is expressed through colloquial dialects and cultural habits (ex, the English working-class families in *Love on the Dole* rely on fish and chips as their daily staple while the American working-class family of *The Grapes of*

Wrath takes turns between fried dough and side meat), they portray the working-class as a generalizable international category. The second set, consisting of 1930s subcontinental texts, argues that the colonial context of labor exploitation is too complicated of a process to be turned into generalizable realist narratives. These colonial texts show how the popularly studied red decade also challenged the westernized perception of the working-class hero, and embedded questions of race, colonialism, age politics and disability as part and parcel of the burning issues of colonial labor politics. The third set of novels show that working-class novels continued to be written during the second half of the twentieth century as well. These texts, originating from India, Kenya, and Morocco portray neocolonial and postcolonial settings of working-class struggle. These novels associate questions of class politics with an awareness of ecojustice; by linking reification to ecological violence, these postcolonial works historicize labor politics from indigenous, native, and non-western perspectives, showing that true class-consciousness also includes environmental consciousness. While most existing scholarships perceive the working-class as a "western" and able bodied entity, my research demonstrates that the working-class is a diverse and fluid category.

In order to liberate literary studies from its 'west-centric' outlook Frederic Jameson suggested that inclusion of non-western texts is essential. In contrast, Aijaz Ahmed points out 'third-world' texts do have a strong presence within the Anglo-American academy, however such texts are selected through the 'literary' lens of poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, and they are read within established norms of the western academia. Unfortunately, working-class literature of non-western origins cannot make the cut for this selection, and so these texts remain outside of most university curriculum in North America. Working-class studies also suffer from fragmentation along national boundaries and historical

time periods due to academic selection. My research attempts to address this problem by introducing a comparative lens to understand working-literature, especially working-class novels.

This research demonstrates that ecojustice and subaltern struggle are interrelated in many ways and orthodox Marxist historicism has failed to address these issues as integral to class struggle. In order to establish working-class literary culture as a live, evolutionary and transnational category, I have shown how the subaltern's struggle on the local scale shares similar ambitions as that of the class struggle on an international scale. Addressing the continuing trend of the oppression of the subaltern as presented in novels of the second half of the 20th century and relating them with the western and non-western working-class novels of the 1930s, we can study how the class process and class identity are quintessential to our understanding of modernity.

In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels proposed that the dialectical material methodology should involve "the real individuals, their activity, and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity". The focus in this statement is both on 'real' and 'individuals,' which poses the question: how do you 'know' about these real individuals and their life activities? Both quantitative and qualitative research has attempted to gather such data for policy purposes but the challenge remains in achieving a 'total' picture for such realities as the material culture of working-class historiography also demands an objective and complete vision of the social realities that shapes (and is shaped by) the aforesaid lived experiences.

The novel space is revolutionized by invoking trends of oral narratives and cultural performances in working-class novels. These texts infiltrate the global literary public sphere, which were traditionally ruled by bourgeois interests. Both western and subcontinental novels of the 1930s and more recent novels from post-colonial era incorporate dictions and styles of working-class culture and create a linguistic identity of the class in question within the literary space. In context of world literatures in English, the authors represent the subaltern and their speech patterns into the world of standardized English letters and expand the boundary of established literary practices. The introduction of these subaltern voices demonstrates that the novel can become an expressive symbol of marginalized social and political groups in World Literature.

Class collectivities within these fictional spaces are evoked through collective performances, which provide the communities with their cultural identities. The working-class novels attempt to historicize their represented communities' cultural pasts by contextualizing their present day exploitation to greater narrative of class exploitation. The past is not just a frozen moment in history as it offers the possibilities of the future. The 'present' is a moment in the narrative which ignites agency and voices the collective resistance of the people who are otherwise absent from the literary public sphere. Social identities of these working-class characters are projected through everydayness and collective performance in the narratives.

A contrast amongst the western proletariat, the colonized working-class and the postcolonial, subaltern working-class is presented in my study. While the western proletariat suffers from a crisis of culture when his/her positon within the capitalist production system is shaken, the colonial working-class experiences ontological homelessness; in contrast, subaltern communities of former colonies are faced with epistemological homelessness.

Migration from place to place in search of employment posed challenge of self-identity for the victims of the modern production system; thus characters like Munoo (in *Coolie*), Gobar (*Godan*), Matt and Eddy (*Waste Heritage*), members of the Joad family (*The Grapes of Wrath*) are alienated from their inherited collectivity, which was rooted in their communities of origin. These characters drift from place to place not only in search of work, food and shelter but also to satisfy their yearning to become part of something bigger than themselves, to be a part of a collective. Being part of a collective which consists of members with similar life experiences provided opportunities to become one of the many through solidarity and remain individual through the uniqueness of one's personal life performance. On the other hand, indigenous communal identity, which is threatened by globalization and modernity, finds agency through class conscious collective struggle. It is through comparative study of working-class lives and cultures within the literary domain, we can see how class culture defines concepts of self and other within working-class contexts.

Structural model of society configures social identity within any particular context. My study investigated how the fictional creation of a particular class identity corresponds to the specific real-historic world in question as a sociological ent. Literature is in no way an authentic document of 'reality,' but the narrative and poetics associated with the different genres create a semantic relationship between the signified and signification, between the real and the fictional world. In the case of working-class novels, the fictional worlds create referential documentations of modern society that gives birth to the working-classes.

Role of fiction in analyzing sociohistorical realities is a debatable issue. Transnational study of working class literature with a focus on its fictional-referential as generalizable and comprehensible situations of class relations can help us understand the relevance of class culture

and working-class literature within an international globalized economic system. Margaret R. Somers writes that "the older interpretation of narrative was limited to that of a representational form; the new approaches define narrative and narrativity as concepts of social epistemology and social ontology" and "it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (606). Following Somers, I have studied proletarian and working-class novels as cultural texts that provide us a new opportunity of knowing of class culture and its impact on modernist social identity.

Since the mainstream societies of the global north are getting increasingly distant from the sites of 'labor production,' the difficulty in understanding the 'working-class' and the 'proletariat' and their role in creating modernist capitalist socio-economic conditions is accelerating. The contemporary struggle of the American working-class (including the proletariat) is alienated from the popular culture, and the English working-class suffers from a lack of self-identification and the story remains similar in many of the 'developed' economies. Maintaining a steady kinship with this process of social 'othering' of the 'working-classes,' literature departments seldom if ever offer courses on 'working-class literature.' The subject is restricted within history and geography in the rare occasions when an opportunity to educate about class conditions surface.

Integrating Marxist interpretations with discourses on subaltern studies, disability studies, and ecocriticism, we can study how cultural crises of working-class communities are related to the reified sociopolitical structure. Such an approach also shows us how working-class identity remains revolutionary and evolutionary at the same time. By comparing manifestations of class culture from the 1930s with later day works, I have shown that working-class literary movement is a continual process which is international in character with roots in national and regional

cultural expressions. Comparative studies of transnational and transhistoric working-class culture captures how class relations are internalized and reproduced within modernity. In order to understand how globalized economic and social hegemony control and oppress laboring bodies, and silences the history of working-class culture, we need to liberate compartmentalized studies of working-class literature from their national and regional boundaries. When studied as a continual process within the world literary tradition, working-class novels show that questions of color, race, gender and environment are indispensable for a class conscious literary practice.

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