International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

Volume 24, Number 2, 2024

GENERAL ISSUE

International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

EDITORIAL

Robyn Andrews and Brent Howitt Otto

We are delighted to be publishing the second issue of the year 2024, in which we include further publications first presented in shorter form as papers at the Research Workshop in conjunction with the 12th International Anglo-Indian Reunion in Canberra. As noted in the first journal issue of the year the *International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies* convened this workshop, as it has done over the last four reunions, and shall again in 2026 in Kochi. This second general issue of 2024 contains two articles that began as papers presented in Canberra.

The first of these articles is by Sean Kelly, entitled: “Unearthing Anglo-Indian Roots: A Personal Journey”, and documents his story of searching for and revealing the extent of his Anglo-Indian roots. As well as being the intriguing description of his own personal journey and what he discovered, it serves as a model for genealogical and historical research for other Anglo-Indians interested in discovering their own roots.

The second article, also presented at the reunion workshop, is from Shyamasri Maji, and examines Glenn D’Cruz’s film, *Vanitas*, a documentary film created by D’Cruz as a tribute to his late father. In the article, titled “Reading the Memories in Glenn D’Cruz’s film *Vanitas* (2022)”, Maji examines the film through a range of theoretical lenses and argues the story D’Cruz tells can be seen as a metaphor for many in the community: that their displacement after migration creates a collective memory that haunts those involved and their progeny who are affected by it. Maji’s close reading of the film draws attention to the way the story is so effectively told: through the use of objects, animation technology and narrative.

Submitted independently, outside of the workshop, the next article is a critical examination of a Malayalam film, *Akale*, that takes up themes of representation of Anglo-Indians in regional Indian cinema. Sreelakshmi KV and Nina Caldeira's article is titled, "The 'Twist' in the Transcultural Adaptation of Tennessee Williams's Play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) into Shyamaprasad's Film *Akale* (2004)", which accurately conveys the focus of their work. They examine the adaptation from play to screen, note the location of the plot moving from the US to Kerala, and an Anglo-Indian family in *Akale* replaces the American protagonists of *The Glass Menagerie*. Their critical analysis of this adaptation includes an examination of how the family are creatively portrayed as Anglo-Indian in ways that both challenge and reinforce various stereotypes.

We encourage our readers to promote the journal among their scholarly colleagues and friends.

Robyn Andrews *holds a Ph.D. from Massey University in New Zealand where she is a Research Fellow and Associate Professor in social anthropology. Her 2005 Ph.D. thesis was on Calcutta's Anglo-Indian community. She continues to research and write extensively in collaboration with other Anglo-Indian Studies scholars in various disciplines on the community in India and the diaspora. She is contactable via R.Andrews@massey.ac.nz*

Brent Howitt Otto, S.J. *is a Ph.D. candidate in South Asian History at the University of California, Berkeley. In the course of post-graduate degrees in international and global history from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, and a theological degree in Indian Church history, Brent has researched Indian Catholic education, Anglo-Indian migration and diaspora, and Christian religious identity and performance. Contactable via botto@berkeley.edu*

International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

UNEARTHING ANGLO-INDIAN ROOTS: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

Sean Kelly

History comprises countless individual stories which, taken together, allow the historian to make generalisations and paint an overall picture of particular aspects of periods in history. Through the pursuit of their family histories, genealogists can contribute to validating or questioning those generalisations. At the same time, those generalisations can help genealogists appreciate and further develop their understanding of the story of individual ancestors, suggesting avenues of research that otherwise might have never been pursued.

So it was for me. A chance discovery that one branch of my family tree included an Indian forebear led me not just on a quest to identify who they were, but also to understand the society in which they and their descendants lived, the particular challenges they faced, and the ways in which they navigated these obstacles. For other people of Anglo-Indian descent seeking to understand their heritage, my pathway to unearthing my Anglo-Indian roots could suggest options to explore in their own search. In addition, the features of early 19th century British Indian society that my search exposed, and how these impacted on people with Indian forebears, may resonate with their own ancestors' experience.

EXPLORING MY BRITISH INDIA HERITAGE

From an early age, I was aware that my family had strong connections with British India. My father would regale us with tales of his experiences as a young British artillery officer with the 17th Indian Parachute Field Regiment, Royal Indian Army, from the latter days of the Second World War up to India's Independence in 1947. Later in life, I became aware that our links to India were much deeper.

My paternal grandfather, Patrick Kelly, was born in Coimbatore, in the west of what was then the Madras Presidency (now the state of Tamil Nadu), and his father, John Fitzpatrick Kelly – something of a celebrity in our family annals - had come to India barely a teenager in about 1865, joined the Madras Public Works Department, prospered, and lived the rest of his life in India. It was the story of this family patriarch John Fitzpatrick Kelly, and his descendants in India, that first excited my interest.

Photo 1: John and Clara Kelly, with children Eileen, Millie, Philip, Cyril and Lily, Bangalore, circa 1902.

In 2013, I was appointed as Australia's Consul-General for Southern India, based in Chennai, with responsibility for the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana[1] – spanning all of the former Madras Presidency and the breadth of places I had discovered my great-grandfather had lived and worked. This spurred on my interest in unearthing more about my family's links to India, and provided opportunities for on-the-ground research.

I subsequently uncovered far more about my connections to India than I ever would have dreamed, information I now imagine my great-grandfather, John Fitzpatrick Kelly, may have preferred to keep hidden. In particular, I unearthed an Anglo-Indian heritage lost to later generations, and insights into the lives of my relatives in the British Raj of the 19th and early 20th centuries – stories not just of soldiers and railwaymen but of the precarious existence of their Indian and Anglo-Indian wives, the treatment of their children, and how they dealt with the pervasive impact of racism and class discrimination.

DISCOVERING MY INDIAN ANCESTRY

John Kelly had been born in Glasgow to Irish immigrant factory workers, but among the surviving Kelly family members, almost nothing was known about the origins of the wife he married in India, Clara – not even her family name. No record of their marriage has been found to this day. Without this, or any other records revealing anything about her background, it seemed that she would remain a mystery. This was the classic genealogist's 'brick wall', and I became determined to break through it.

During a visit to Coimbatore, I paid a visit to St Michael's Church (now known as Kovai Cathedral), where I found a record of the 1880 baptism of my grandfather's eldest siblings - twin sisters, Lilian and Mildred.[2] In the column used for recording '*Father's Caste or Profession'*, I found an unexpected entry – '*Eurasian'*. John Kelly was 100% Irish, so this must have been a reference to Clara. This was the first inkling I had that my great-grandmother's background was Anglo-Indian. It's worth noting that every other entry on that page is of clearly Indian names - suggesting that St Michael's was, at that time, a church that primarily serviced the Indian and Anglo-Indian community rather than European families. This reinforced my belief that she was Anglo-Indian.

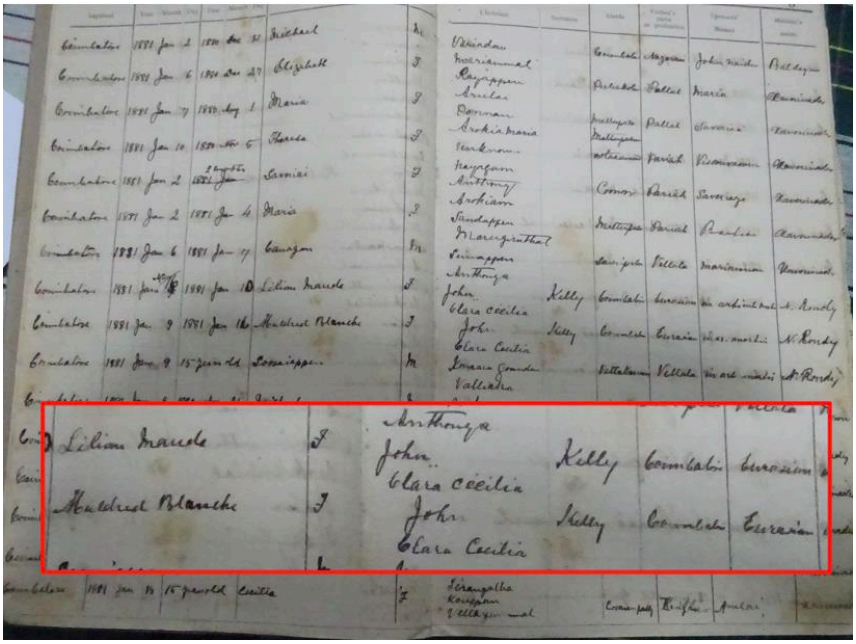


Photo 2: Baptism Register entries for Lilian and Mildred Kelly

Help from DNA Ethnicity Profiles

With this intriguing possibility in mind, I undertook an AncestryDNA test. The results included an ethnicity profile (see Figure 1) that confirmed that I did, indeed, have traces of South Indian DNA (classified as 'The Deccan and Bay of Mannar') from my father's side – around 1%, suggesting that my Indian ancestor was further back in the family tree than Clara.

Figure 1: Ancestry DNA Ethnicity Profile of Sean Kelly

DNA Ethnicity Profiles are a rather imprecise tool. In each generation, DNA does not necessarily break evenly between parents, and each generation only receives a random selection of their parent's DNA, not a share of all elements. This means that I could register a certain amount of Indian DNA, but my cousin with the same lineage could register more – or none at all. But as a rough guide, a 1 or 2% DNA result would suggest the original Indian ancestor might be a 4-x great-grandparent. One of my

father's first cousins registered 7% Indian DNA, so it could be closer. While this confirmed my belief that Clara had Anglo-Indian roots, it took me no further without Clara's family name.

Soon after, I unexpectedly found a reference to a family name for Clara in a Dutch record of the death of my grandfather's brother in Holland, which read 'Bayles'. I found no matching records for a Clara Bayles in India, but I did find a Clara Baylis, who I eventually was able to establish was our Clara. Key evidence that led to that conclusion was details provided by AncestryDNA of a series of descendants of the Baylis family with whom I shared DNA matches and who also had Indian ancestry, including in some cases the same unusual mix of South Indian and Philippine DNA that I recorded. A more detailed account of how I established my great-grandmother's identity can be found in my article, "*Finding Clara: Solving a British India Family Mystery*", published in the Spring 2022 issue of the FIBIS Journal (Kelly, 2022, pp. 24-27). Armed with Clara's identity, I then set about tracing back her forbears, with the particular objective of working out where in the family tree I would find our Indian ancestor.

Identifying Indian Forebears

I traced Clara's maternal family line back to her mother Amelia's maternal grandmother, Mary, who married Richard Plackett, a British soldier with the 69th Regiment of Foot, at St Mary's Church in Fort St George on 3 September 1806. The record of their marriage clearly describes Mary as '*native*'.[3] Richard died in 1812,[4] and soon after Mary re-married. The record of Mary's second marriage was equally illuminating, referring to the marriage of "… Francis Holmes, private of HM 69th Regiment and Mary Plackett, native widow of Richard Plackett, Sergeant of the 69th Regiment …".[5]

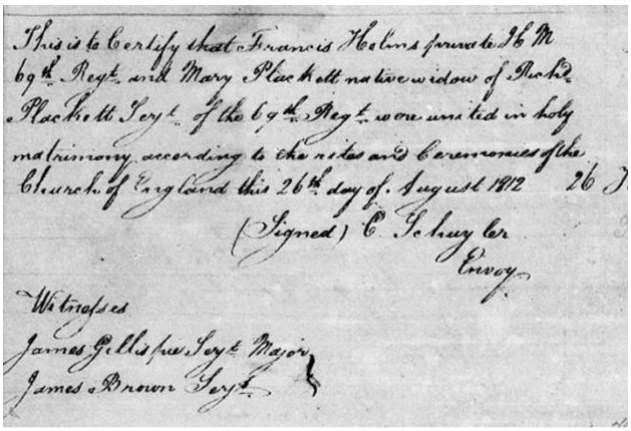

This is to Certify that Francis Holmes private to H.M 69th Regt. and Mary Plackett native widow of Richd. Plackett Sergt. of the 69th Regt. were united in holy matrimony according to the rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England this 26th day of August 1812
(Signed) C. Schuyler
Envoy
Witnesses
James Gillespie Sergt. Major
James Brown Sergt.

Photo 3: Marriage Register entries for Mary Plackett and Francis Holmes

These two records unequivocally prove that one of my ancestors, my 4-x great-grandmother Mary, was, indeed, Indian.

As I turned to look into Clara's father's forebears, I came to suspect that there might actually be a second Indian forebear in our family tree. Clara's paternal grandparents were Thomas Baylis, a soldier who arrived in Madras with the 46th Regiment of Foot in 1817, and Mary Cashier, a widow.[6] Their marriage record and subsequent records gave no indication of it, but I came to believe that Mary Cashier, too, was Anglo-Indian, or more likely Indian. Cashier is a very rare surname, and no record of Mary's previous spouse has been found. However, it is quite likely that he was also a soldier who, like many at the time, took an Indian bride.

My main reason for believing Mary Cashier was Indian relates to their sons, my 2-x great-grandfather Thomas William Baylis (Thomas Jr.) and his younger brother William Baylis. Both joined the Madras Native Infantry – not as officers, as would be the case had they been of entirely European origins, but as drummers. Both advanced fairly quickly to the post of Drum Major (Thomas Jr. in the 4th MNI,[7] and William in the 2nd MNI[8]), posts certainly filled by Anglo-Indians. Since 1791, Anglo-Indians had been banned from serving in the Presidency armies or civil service (Moore, 1996, p. 52), with the only military billet open to a person of Anglo-Indian background being that of drummer, fifer or farrier (Muthiah and Maclure, 2013, p. 25). Consequently, virtually all drummers in the Presidency armies were Anglo-Indian. Additionally, both retired from the army to take up positions as an Inspector of Police, another role often filled by Anglo-Indians.

Further evidence of Anglo-Indian background can be found in the spouse of Mary Cashier's only daughter, Margaret Baylis, and Margaret's children. Margaret married Moses Hill, then a Sergeant in the 57thRegiment of Foot, in 1845.[9] Given the dearth of European women in India at that time, it is unlikely that an English girl, even the daughter of a soldier, would marry an enlisted man twice her age, even a Sergeant, as she would have had better prospects. Even more telling, Margaret's two daughters both married Anglo-Indian pastors,[10] unheard of for English women, and one of her two sons also married an Anglo-Indian woman.[11] In the second half of the 19th century, it was most common for Anglo-Indians to marry other Anglo-Indians.

Based on this, I have concluded that my 3-x great-grandmother Mary (Cashier) Baylis, was also Indian, or possibly Anglo-Indian.

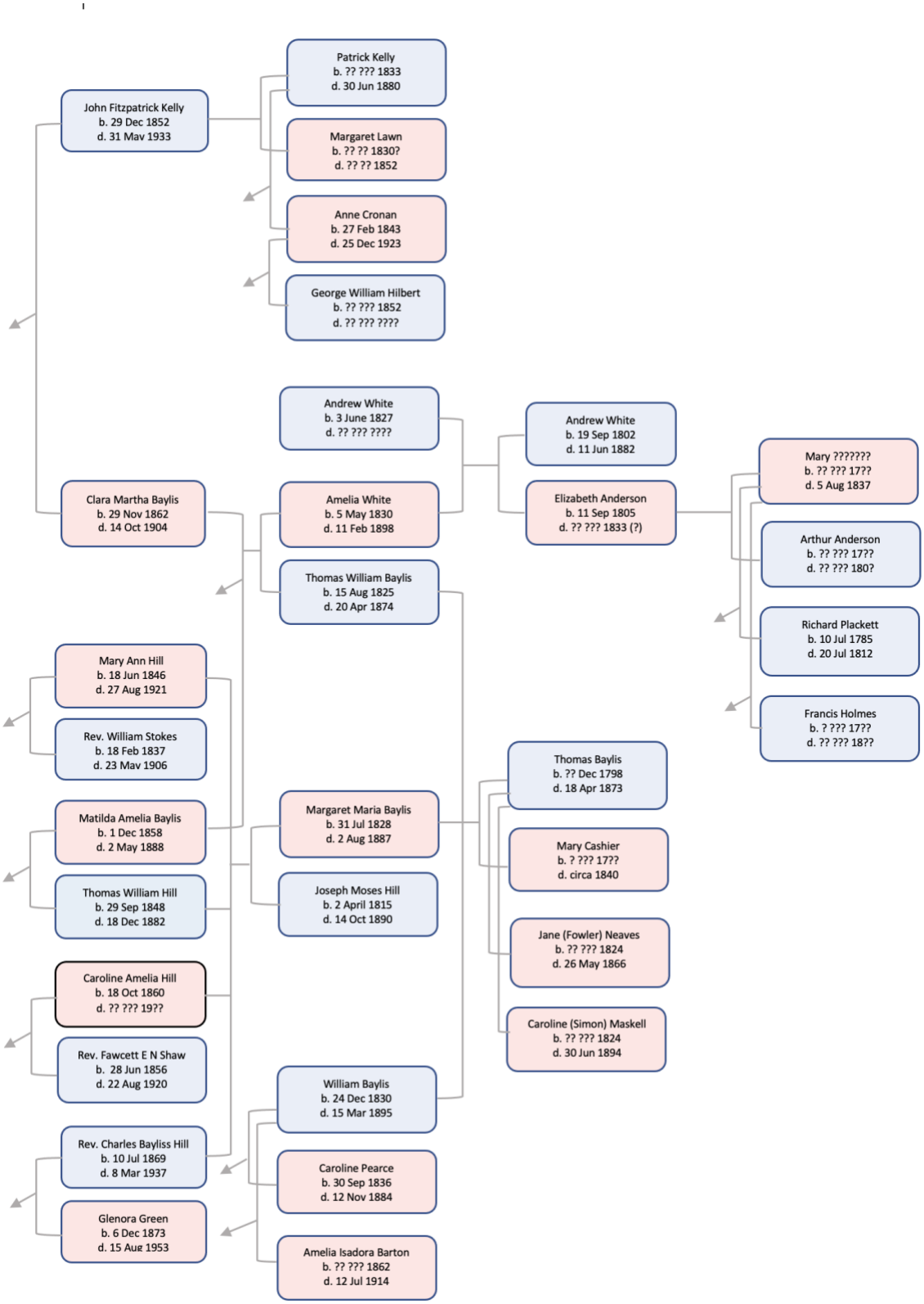
Encouraged by the success I had in identifying the Baylis family using my DNA matches with traces of Indian DNA, I sought to flesh out my family tree by identifying further, as yet unlinked matches, who also shared Indian DNA. I found two such people, both assessed as being likely fourth cousins.[12] I used the associated messaging facility to write to each seeking to identify where, on the Baylis family tree, we were related. I was surprised to hear back that neither knew of any link to the Baylis line – but even more surprised to learn that they were both descended from a Patrick Kelly, who lived in India in the second half of the 19th century.

Patrick Kelly was the name of the father of John Fitzpatrick Kelly (Fitzpatrick, a middle name John adopted later in life, meaning 'son of Patrick'), and their Patrick Kelly's age and details of his story matched those of my great, great-grandfather's.[13] But no-one amongst my remaining Kelly family members had any idea he had gone to India. We believed he had disappeared soon after John's birth and his wife's death, leaving John in the care of an aunt until, at the age of perhaps 13 years, John had travelled alone to Madras, where he settled. Further investigation confirmed that John's father, Patrick, had actually left John behind in Glasgow and come out to Madras, re-marrying and having a large second family in India.

In 1859, Patrick, a carpenter who had found work in Madras as an overseer on the railways, married not-quite 16-year-old Anne Cronan,[14] the daughter of a Gunner with the Horse Artillery, whose mother, Mary Anne Smith, was Anglo-Indian – the source of that family's Indian DNA.[15] All of Patrick and Anne's sons worked on the railways – three as locomotive drivers, one as a railway guard, and one as a Permanent Way Inspector.[16] This is a sector widely recognised as the primary source of employment for Anglo-Indians (Muthiah and Maclure, 2013, pp. 77-78; Anderson, 2020, pp. 198-200). At least four of their grandchildren either worked for, or married men who worked for, the railways, and a further three grandchildren worked with the Post and Telegraph Department, also an occupation dominated by Anglo-Indians.[17] After Patrick died in

1880,[18] Anne re-married to a railway fireman who worked in the same location as two of her sons.[19]

Figure 2: Relationship between Early Ancestors and Relatives Referenced



Patrick died before John married, and Patrick's second family mostly moved northwest to the Bombay Presidency, so any contact would have been infrequent. This likely contributed to the fact that none of the remaining descendants of John had any awareness that his father had even been in India, let alone that he had established a large second family there. If not for my efforts to trace shared Indian roots - and even though the Indian DNA I identified was not actually DNA that I shared with Patrick's second family - I would never have found this entire branch of the Kelly family.

INSIGHTS INTO THE LIVES OF MY ANGLO-INDIAN RELATIVES

Having established the origin of my Indian lineage, I set about tracing their descendants and relatives to build a more comprehensive family tree of those people related by blood to John and Clara Kelly, all of whom were descendants of at least one of these Indian forebears. There were a lot. In John and Clara's generation alone, I found eight half-brothers and half-sisters of John; eight brothers and sisters of Clara; and 24 first cousins of Clara. My awareness of that generation alone had grown from two to 42 blood relatives! As I traced each of their families down, I found several hundred blood relatives who lived in British India and share some degree of Anglo-Indian heritage, providing a rich and somewhat diverse cross-section of ordinary Anglo-Indians in British India in the 19th and early 20th century. And as I dug deeper into the individual stories of many of these relatives, their experiences, while neither unique nor remarkable in themselves, highlighted many aspects of the lot of Anglo-Indians in British India, and provide an insight into their lives.

Soldiers' Wives

One striking feature of the history of the Baylis side of the family in the first half of the 19th century was the extent to which our family's soldiers consistently married women from within the army community. As noted above, my Indian 4-x great-grandmother Mary married soldier Richard Plackett in 1806, and after he died in 1812, she married another soldier, Francis Holmes. In fact, prior to marrying Richard, Mary had a further relationship (perhaps an unregistered or informal marriage) with Arthur Anderson, the father of her illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth.[20] Although I am yet to find evidence to confirm it, I believe that Arthur may have also been a soldier, most likely serving in the same regiment as Richard. Elizabeth Anderson (using Elizabeth Plackett, her

stepfather's surname), married Andrew White, a private from the 69th Regiment of Foot,[21] where her second stepfather, Francis Holmes, was also serving. Elizabeth's daughter, Amelia, married Thomas Baylis' eldest son, Thomas William Baylis (my great, great-grandfather), who was a drummer with the 4th MNI.[22]

As discussed earlier, I suspect that the first husband of my 3-x great-grandmother, Mary (Cashier) Baylis, was likely a soldier, as was her second husband (my 3-x great-grandfather), Thomas Baylis. After Mary died, Thomas re-married again, twice, in both cases to the daughters of soldiers and who had themselves been married to soldiers before marrying him.[23] As noted earlier, Thomas' daughter, Margaret, also married a British soldier.

My family clearly illustrated a consistent pattern in the early to mid-19th century of British or Anglo-Indian soldiers marrying the Indian or Anglo-Indian widows or daughters of other soldiers, an almost self-contained eco-system (Hawes, 1996, p. 5). This was in part a product of circumstances and in part deliberate design.

By the end of the 18th century, the number of British soldiers in India either with British Army regiments or the Company's army had grown from a few hundred mid-century to around 18,000 by 1790, while marriageable European women numbered in the hundreds (Williamson, p.454). Finding it difficult and too expensive to entice suitable British women to risk the long and dangerous voyage to India, the Company initially took a relaxed approach to its soldiers taking Indian wives or mistresses (an EIC guide actually recommended concubinage - see Williamson, 1810, pp. 415-416, pp. 457-458), recognising the vast majority had no alternative and seeing a stabilising influence on the soldiery (Hawes, 1996, p. 4). For many soldiers, marriage to Indians also reflected a decision to settle permanently in India (taking an Indian spouse back to Britain not being a socially-viable option), contributing to the stability of the British presence.

As a consequence, in the 18th century the Company actively encouraged such marriage, instructing its administration to "*induce by all means you can invent, our soldiers to marry with Native women, because it will be impossible to get ordinary young women*" (Hawes, 1996, p. 3). In Madras, the Company also encouraged

formalization of marriages to Indians by payments of one pagoda (a gold coin in Madras equivalent to 3.5 rupees[24]) for their children to be baptized as Anglicans, a practice that continued through to 1835 (Anderson, 2020, pp. 116, 267, 268). As the regiments spent most of their time stationed in military cantonments in remote areas far from the more Anglicised environment of the Presidency capitals, it would have been natural for soldiers to look to the large community of camp-followers, including the families of other soldiers, when seeking a wife (Hawes, 1996, p. 9). Restrictions on soldiers' movements into native settlements and town bazaars would have compounded this effect (Anderson, 2020, p. 87).

A confluence of events during the tenure of Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General and Commander of the Army between 1786 and 1793 led to a change of approach and a series of policy decisions that had the effect of encouraging soldiers to marry the Anglo-Indian widows or daughters of fellow soldiers. Cornwallis' administrative reforms led to

> … the replacement of the free-wheeling British trader/administrator of earlier years by a new breed of salaried officials imbued with the concept of a civilizing British mission … best to be achieved by the exaltation of British 'character', the public display of Christian virtue, and social distancing of ruling caste from those whom they ruled. (Hawes, 1996, p. ix)

Anglo-Indians blurred this divide, so policies aimed to contain and assimilate the Anglo-Indian community and discourage further inter-marriage. The Company's financial support for families of soldiers was made conditional on Christian marriage, which effectively directed soldiers to focus on the convert Indian widows or Christian Anglo-Indian daughters of fellow soldiers who constituted almost all of the non-European Christian women they could marry (Hawes, 1996, pp. 3-4). Until the Company opened India to missionaries in the 1830s, there were relatively few other Indian converts, apart from Catholics converted mainly by the Portuguese, who didn't qualify as an acceptable spouse for an Anglican soldier – British law did not recognize inter-denominational marriages.

At the same time, the Company's approach to Anglo-Indians took on a more strategic dimension. As the Company's focus moved from commerce to conquest, its leadership became increasingly worried about the loyalty to the Crown of the Anglo-Indian

progeny from these relationships (Charlton-Stevens, 2022, p. 49). This concern was amplified by the 1791 slave uprising in San Domingo and Haiti, in which mixed-race "mulatos" played an important role, and was reflected in the Company's decision around that time to ban Anglo-Indians from both the civil service and the military (Muthiah and Maclure, 2013, pp. 24-25). In addition, rampant anti-Catholicism in Britain and enmity with Catholic France, later intensified by bitter wars with Napoleon, created a strong imperative to ensure a loyal, Protestant, Anglo-Indian population. Entrenching the Anglo-Indian community predominantly with the army was a key strategy for achieving that.

Company financial incentives were used to help achieve these objectives. At the end of the 18th century, the Company introduced an Orphan School Allowance of three rupees per month for each legitimate child of a soldier, to meet the costs of maintenance and education of their child (Lushington, 1824, p. 258; Anderson, 2020, p. 117).[25] Since applicable law only recognized Christian marriages between persons of the same denomination (Anderson, 2020, pp. 98-99), the need for legitimacy created a strong incentive for soldiers to marry Indian or Anglo-Indian Protestants. In parallel, orphan asylums were established from the 1790s that provided a convenient and extensively-accessed source of Anglo-Indian brides (discussed further below). In Bengal, soldiers who married young women from the asylums (most of whom were Anglo-Indian) were given an allowance of four rupees per month (Lushington, 1824, pp. 263-264). It is likely that similar incentives were offered in the other Presidencies. These incentives effectively channeled soldiers to the Anglo-Indian daughters of fellow soldiers.

The extent to which our family from the Baylis side during the first half of the 19th century married within the military community is then fully explicable and consistent with the policies of the time.

I was also struck was the speed with which Mary Plackett had re-married. Richard Plackett died (at the age of 27 years) in Goa, where his regiment was stationed, on 20 July 1812.[26] Mary then married Francis Holmes, a fellow soldier from the 69th Regiment, in Poonamallee (just outside Madras) on 26 August, 1812, only six weeks

after Richard's death.[27] This was actually not unusual – the average period during which army wives re-married in India was around six weeks.

This in part reflected the extreme competition among enlisted soldiers for suitable brides at the time (available, willing to marry a European soldier, and most importantly Protestant). A trope that illustrates this is the supposed story of a young Anglo-Indian widow, who after burying her husband, went back to the barracks for a commemorative service, where she was asked by a sergeant if she would marry him. She burst into tears, and he apologized, thinking that he had asked her too soon, on the day of her husband's burial. But no; she explained that she was crying because she had already accepted an offer of marriage from a corporal at the graveside, missing the chance of marrying a higher rank! This story particularly resonates with me, because the sequence of events suggests that Francis Holmes, probably stationed at the 69th regimental depot in Poonamallee, on receiving advice from Goa that Richard had died, beat a quick path to Mary's door to inform her and be the first to propose marriage. Ironically, Richard had been away for about a year, and while away was promoted from private to sergeant[28] – perhaps Private Holmes did not inform her that her standing had increased?

As mentioned earlier, I suspect that Arthur Anderson, Mary's first partner, was also a soldier in her subsequent husband Richard Plackett's regiment, among the more than 100 soldiers from elements of the 69th killed in the Vellore Mutiny of 10 July 1806 (Wilson, 1883, p. 187). The Mutiny was eight weeks before Richard married Mary at Fort St George on 2 September 1806, and the companies of the 69th stationed in Vellore (including Richard) had only re-located to Madras in July (Butler, 1870, p. 47), not much more than a month before the wedding. It is not hard to imagine that, on return to Madras, Richard moved quickly to snap up the former partner (albeit not legal widow) of a fallen comrade.

There were also practical and financial reasons for an Indian army widow to marry again quickly. Soldiers' European widows were supported by their regiment for six months after their death, in which time the widow was expected to either return to Europe or to re-marry (Stanley, 1998, p. 58; Anderson, 2020, p. 85). However, Muster Roll records indicate that Mary was 'paid' out rather than being supported for a period

of time,[29] perhaps an indication of the army's approach to Indian or Anglo-Indian widows. She would have had no other alternative than re-marrying – going 'home' to Britain was not an option, nor would be returning to her Indian family (Charlton-Stevens, 2022, pp. 38-39). To guarantee the financial wellbeing of her and her family, Mary needed to re-marry, and fellow-soldiers of her husband's regiment would have provided an easy option.

'Orphan' Asylums

A detail on the 1847 marriage record for Clara's mother, Amelia (White) Baylis, caught my eye - "from the Madras F.M.O. Asylum", which I discovered referred to the Madras Female Military Orphan Asylum (MFMOA).[30] Records of the Asylum revealed Amelia entered the Asylum in January 1834, at the age of 3½ years,[31] where she remained until she married at the age of 17 years. Initially I took this as evidence that she was, effectively, an orphan, that is, both her parents were deceased. Her father, Andrew White, was a soldier who had been court martialed for mutiny (striking a superior officer) in 1832, and who was transported to Australia as a convict for seven years, never to return.[32] There was no further record of her mother, Elizabeth (Anderson/Plackett) White, so I concluded her mother must have died, resulting in Amelia being admitted to an orphanage. However, further research into the MFMOA and similar military orphan asylums revealed a very different possible explanation.

The military orphan asylums were not run solely to accommodate orphans, but rather became part of a system established to remove the children - predominantly Anglo-Indian - of enlisted soldiers from their families, giving them a 'European' and 'good Christian' upbringing. This practice paralleled racist and paternalistic policies implemented in other colonies to remove mixed-race indigenous children from their families in order to raise them as Europeans (known in Australia as the 'Stolen Generations') (Anderson, 2020, p.118).

The MFMOA was first proposed by then Governor of Madras, Sir Archibald Campbell, in 1786 in response to "the wretched condition of the many orphan children of the soldiers who perished during the late war on the coast", but like similar initiatives in the other Presidencies, it was absorbed into a broader program directed at the mostly Eurasian children of soldiers and other Europeans in India. Once established, the

MFMOA admitted five ‘classes’ of girls: (1) orphans of officers and soldiers; (2) girls who had lost one parent; (3) legitimate daughters of soldiers and their European wives; (4) legitimate daughters of soldiers and their native wives; and (5) legitimate daughters of European civilians of Madras (Penny, 1904, pp. 510-511). Each orphan asylum had different admission conditions, but the overall objective was similar. In each case, the fathers were European, although an exception was made for the daughters of drummers and fifers of the Company’s Army, who were almost entirely Anglo-Indian (Lushington, 1824, pp. 258-259). The vast bulk of those admitted to these asylums were the Anglo-Indian children of soldiers who had died (their Indian mothers being judged unsuitable to raise them) or of living soldiers with native or Anglo-Indian wives.

While surrendering children to the asylums was notionally voluntary, in practice soldiers, in particular, had little choice. As mentioned earlier, the East India Company introduced an Orphan School Allowance of 3 rupees per month, which was paid from birth for the children of European NCOs and enlisted soldiers, on the condition that they gave up their child to the care of an orphan asylum from the age of three years (Anderson, 2020, p. 117).[33] Soldiers who refused to do so were required to re-pay all of the allowance that had been paid to them, an impossible burden, and regiments were empowered to dock soldiers’ pay until the amount was re-paid (Anderson, 2020, p. 117).[34] While for some, sending children to a residential school may have been convenient or even welcomed, for many it was heart-wrenching and traumatic (Williamson, 1810, p. 464).

A variety of explanations were advanced to justify this draconian measure. Some disingenuously tried to suggest it was the equivalent of the practice of wealthier officials and senior army officers of sending their children home to the UK for schooling. The official aim was to:

> … relieve [the soldier] from the heavy burden of rearing a large offspring with very scanty means” and “rescue the children themselves from the vice and intemperance of the barrack, at a tender age in which they have not yet imbibed evil habits. (quoted in Evers, 2022, p. 2)

There was a pragmatic benefit for the regiments, who were relieved of the complication of children among many camp followers when regiments were deployed in action or to far-flung parts of the Presidency (Anderson, 2020, p. 119). It also reflected the racial,

class and religious bigotry of the time. A Report of Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1784 concluded:

> … the fathers of these children being usually soldiers, sailors and the lower order of people, too often neglect their offspring and suffer them to follow the caste of their mothers [such] that the children are not only lost to Christianity, but to the society of which they are born members. (quoted in Penny, 1904, p. 505)

The objective, then, was "to rescue the children of the soldiers from the degradation and depravity of that class to which the mothers mostly belonged." (Penny, 1904, p. 527)

The women remained in the Orphan Asylum until they either married or were placed by the Asylum as domestics. According to one account,

> The girls receive a plain, useful education. They are taught every description of household work, washing and needlework and the care of the sick; and the most promising are trained as teachers to supply the classes in the Institution, and to provide for the wants of the army and other schools. The girls are expected to take such situations as are selected for them. (Bailey, 2001, p. 6)

During their stay, those that had parents had little or no contact with them, and in many cases, records kept were not sufficient to trace the parents, effectively making them orphans (Anderson, 2020, p. 118).Most married soldiers. One account explained that, in the orphan asylums, "the female wards, when arrived at a suitable age, are chiefly disposed of in marriage to Non-Commissioned Officers, and Privates, Drummers, etc. in the King's and Company's Regiments" (Lushington, 1824, p. 263). Enlisted men with a good character reference from their commander were able to visit the Asylum in search of a wife, or attend dances organised by the Asylum that were unashamedly 'marriage markets' (Anderson, 2020, p. 154). Women were frequently 16, 15 or even 14 years of age when they married. Every woman had "the option of either rejecting a proposal of marriage, or of quitting the Asylum as a servant" (Bailey, 2001, p. 5). Most chose marriage.

This new understanding of the military orphan asylum system raised questions in my mind about which other members of the family might have also been given over to an asylum. Amelia's older brother, Andrew, for example, may have already been in the system, at the corresponding Madras Male Military Orphan Asylum, by the time of his

father's court martial (although no record has been found to confirm this). Was Amelia's mother, Elizabeth, also a graduate from a military orphan asylum? Her birth father, Arthur Anderson, was either dead of had abandoned her before her first birthday, and her stepfather, Richard Plackett, was absent fighting in an almost continuous series of military campaigns over the years that she reached qualifying age. While Elizabeth was illegitimate, this status may have been overcome by Richard 'adopting' her and her taking on his family name. If so, it seems likely that at least some of Elizabeth's step-siblings from her mother's two subsequent marriages to British Army soldiers may have also been sent to one of the military orphan asylums (again, no records have been found).

The three children of Thomas Baylis, also a British Army private, and his Indian wife, Mary Cashier, were probably also sent to a military orphan asylum. Thomas' regiment was moved repeatedly between various far-flung outposts of the Presidency, though not into combat. The name of their daughter, Margaret Baylis, who married British soldier Moses Hill at the age of seventeen, appears in the list of residents of the MFMOA.[35] It also seems likely that his sons were sent to a military orphan asylum - a General Order, dated 14 June 1798, required all fifers and drummers for sepoy regiments to be recruited from military orphan asylums, normally joining at the age of thirteen or fourteen years (Greene, 1810, p. 210). As noted above, both Thomas (Jr) and William Baylis were drummers in the Madras Native Infantry, and the dates of their retirement suggest they may have joined at the age of thirteen or fourteen.

The Baylis men also also found wives at the MFMOA. The second wife Thomas Baylis (Snr), Jane Fowler, was also a former resident of MFMOA, and is identified as '*Indo-Briton*' in the record of her first marriage.[36] In addition to Thomas (Jnr) marrying Amelia from the MFMOA, asylum records revealed that Caroline Pearce, the 15-year-old bride of Amelia's brother-in-law, William Baylis, had also been admitted to the MFMOA, in 1838 at the age of 1½ years.[37] There are also signs that at least some of the next generation of the Baylis family also attended the MFMOA. A report on the wedding in 1904 of one of William Baylis' later daughters, Gladys Chloe Rita Baylis, indicated not only that she was from the Asylum, but also that her two sisters, also of the Asylum, were bridesmaids.[38] Gladys' husband was also a soldier.

It is not clear how universal the removal of soldiers' children to orphan asylums was in practice. Accounts from the period suggest that strict application of the policy must have been patchy, and administrative records show that there was a constant gap between demand and supply of places at asylums (Penny, 1904, p. 511; Bailey, 2001, pp. 4-5). While there were a variety of different residential 'orphan' schools run by a range of religious and charitable organisations in addition to those directly supported by the Company, their combined capacity could have not kept up with the large and growing population of Anglo-Indian children of European enlisted soldiers of the British Army and Company armies, even if limited to 'legitimate' children. However, it is clear from documents at the time that it was intended to be a general practice, and that children being sent to asylums from a young age (including those with living parents) was widespread. In my own family's case, all of the Baylis line born in India to British Army enlisted soldiers in the 1820s and 1830s appear to have been sent to a military orphan asylum, and it is possible that many from the next generation were as well, even though almost all had two parents still living in India.

Hiding Indian Background

It is no surprise that racism, religious intolerance, and the upper-class society opprobrium regarding inter-racial relationships discussed above drove members of my family to seek to escape their Indian heritage. It is noteworthy that, of the many hundreds of records of family members that I have found, with the exception of the marriage records of my 4-x great-grandmother Mary and the baptism records for Lilian and Mildred mentioned above, almost no record made any reference to an Indian or Anglo-Indian background. The baptism records found for the three subsequent siblings of Lilian and Mildred, in the same register at St Michael's Church and recorded by the same priest, make no mention of Anglo-Indian background, instead recording the father's caste or profession as 'overseer'. Two later siblings, born in the 1890s, were recorded as 'European'.[39] This suggests that John Kelly took steps to ensure that any further reference to Anglo-Indian background, which could have significant ramifications for his children's position and prospects in British Indian society, was not recorded or common knowledge. Indeed, no one I know from recent generations of either the Kelly or Baylis families were aware of an Indian ancestor in their family tree. Hiding Anglo-Indian background was a common practice, and my family were successful at 'passing'.

A further approach to hiding Anglo-Indian background found amongst our family stories was distancing from or even ostracizing Anglo-Indian family members. The fact that no one in recent generations of the Kelly family knew anything about Clara's family background suggests that John Kelly may have also tried to distance his family from the Anglo-Indian Baylis family. He certainly hid the fact of his father's presence in India with an elaborate and well-known 'origin story' of how he came to be in India, alone – perhaps a reflection of his widowed stepmother being of Anglo-Indian background?

A more extreme example relates to the Rev. William Stokes, who married Mary Ann Hill, one of Clara's cousins, in 1862.[40] Stokes was the illegitimate son of Hudleston Stokes Esq. (1806-1888),[41] an East India Company official from a pious, upper-class family, and an unknown Indian woman – a 'sin' for which the father felt the need to atone for the rest of his life.[42] William's father (no relative of ours!) abandoned William with the Swiss Basel Mission, and while paying for his education in Europe,[43]

Photo 4: Family of the Reverend William Stokes (with beard) and Mary Ann (Hill) Stokes (holding the baby), circa 1895. Their children (from back row L-R) Hudleston Stokes, Harry Stokes, Dr. William Stokes, Bertie Stokes, and son-in-law Hermann Bretschneider; then (seated) Mary (Stokes) Heinecken, Winifred Stokes, baby grandson William Bretschneider and the baby's mother Ellen Hill (Stokes) Bretschneider; then (on the ground) George Edward Hill Stokes and Charlie Fawcett Stokes.

neither acknowledged him nor maintained contact. The Rev. William Stokes became a well-respected Protestant missionary, but there is no indication that he had contact with, let alone received any support from, relatives of Hudleston who held prominent positions in the Madras Civil Service. These included Sir Henry Edward Stokes, K.C.S.I., who by 1887 was Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, and Sir Gabriel

Stokes, K.C.S.I., who by 1906 rose to be Acting Governor of Madras.[44] He didn't exist for them.

Family records show that, for some branches of the family, migration to the United States was seen as a way to escape the constraints of a racially-determined class and social structure. The majority of the Rev. William Stokes' children – Ellen, Mary, Bertie, Winnie, and Charlie – migrated to the United States in the first two decades of the 20th century.[45] Not that the United States was any better when it came to attitudes about race. But migration afforded the opportunity for Anglo-Indians, even those whose appearance was unmistakably Indian (see Photo 4), to leave their racial background behind, declaring themselves on arrival to be 'white' or English.

The same was true of other relatives, for example, some of the children of another Anglo-Indian minister, the Rev. Fawcett Eber Neville Shaw, who married Caroline Amelia Hill, another of Clara's cousins, in 1880.[46] His eldest son, William Fawcett Shaw, also went to the United States, in 1907, where he became a successful doctor.[47] And his second daughter, Alice, studied in the United States and became a missionary.[48] Both had identified their race as 'white' or English (Alice actually claimed her race as 'Scotch' (sic), despite there being no Scots in the family). [49] Fawcett was desperate to also send is youngest children to pursue tertiary studies in the United States, and wrote to the Methodist Mission Board, seeking a special grant, pleading:

> To you who know India so well, and the peculiar conditions that face Anglo-Indians as to prospects, it is hardly necessary for me to say that we want to give these children a fair chance to make good in a country like America where everybody stands on his own merits.[50]

For many Anglo-Indians, migrating to countries like the United States, Australia and Canada, where they were able to pass for Europeans, was their best option, irrespective of the intrenched racism that pervaded those societies at that time (Uther Charlton-Stevens, 2022, p. 147).

These examples from my family's history evidence a number of approaches taken to escape the racially-defined class constraints of colonial British society by hiding their Anglo-Indian background. Strategies adopted ranged from manipulating official records to reinvention through migration, and in some cases keeping obviously mixed-

race family members at arm's length. My forebears were so successful in escaping their heritage that present generations descended from the 200 or so family members born in British India appear to have had no idea of our shared Indian roots. I suspect this is a common experience.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

My journey to unearth my Anglo-Indian roots not only revealed hidden aspects of my family's history, but also cast light on features of British Indian society that would have had a profound impact on the lives of many Anglo-Indians in the 19th century. The centrality of the military in both the growth and management of the Anglo-Indian population came into sharp relief, in particular factors that drove soldiers to marry widows or children of other soldiers, keeping the largest part of the Anglo-Indian community 'in the family'. This study also highlights the phenomenon of 'serial marriage' within the army community, and the factors that motivated many soldiers and soldiers' widows to marry two or more partners from within the army community. It also raises questions about the extent to which rank and file military families may have been compelled to surrender their overwhelmingly Anglo-Indian children at a young age to the military orphan asylums, irrespective of whether their father was still alive, and with no regard to the wishes of their Indian or Anglo-Indian mother, who was dismissed as unsuitable to raise them. Further, it demonstrates how the 'orphans' thus created were subsequently re-cycled into the military in the form of wives or non-combatants. Finally, my research illustrates some of the strategies employed by or on behalf of Anglo-Indians to 'whitewash' their Indian heritage to escape the pervasive impact of racism on their future prospects, efforts that successfully hid my Anglo-Indian heritage from me and other members of my family.

Sean Kelly *is Sean Kelly is a retired Australian diplomat whose last overseas assignment was as Australian Consul-General for Southern India. He holds a first-class Honours degree in Modern Asian Studies, a Graduate Diploma in Strategic Studies, and a Masters of International Law. Sean has been engaged in genealogical research for around 25 years. In addition to being an active member of Family History ACT's India Special Interest Group, Sean is a member of the London-based Families in British India Society and published an article, "Finding Clara: Solving a British India Family Mystery" in the Spring 2022 issue of the FIBIS Journal.*

REFERENCES

Anderson, Valerie (2020), *Race and Power in British India: Anglo-Indians, Class and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, Bloomsbury Academic.

Anthony, Frank (1968), *Britain's Betrayal in India: The Story of the Anglo-Indian Community*, Allied Publishers, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.111609/page/n1/mode/2up

Bailey, Peter (2001), The Madras Military Female Asylum. In *Journal of the Families in British India Society* (FIBIS), No. 6, Autumn 2001, pp. 3-9.

Butler, Lt. W. F. (1870), *A Narrative of the Historical Events Connected with the Sixty-Nineth Regiment*, W. Mitchell & Co.

Charlton-Stevens, Uther E. (2022), *Anglo-India and the End of Empire*, Hurst and Company.

Evers, Maureen (2022), Four Orphan Schools in Calcutta and the Lawrence Military Asylum, Part 1: History. In *Journal of the Families in British India Society* (FIBIS), No. 22, Autumn 2012, pp. 1-14.

Greene, Maj. William Sheppey (1810), *A Code of the Pay Regulations of Various Military Establishments under the Presidency of Fort William, Calcutta.*

Hawes, Christopher J. (1996), *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773-1833*, Curzon Press.

Kelly, Sean (2022), Finding Clara: Solving a British India Family Mystery. In *Journal of the Families in British India Society* (FIBIS), No. 47, Spring 2022, pp. 24-27.

Lushington, Charles, Esq. (1824), *The History, Design and Present State of the Religious, Benevolent and Charitable institutions Founded by the British in Calcutta and Its Vicinity*, Hindostanee Press, https://archive.org/details/historydesignan00lushgoog/page/n4/mode/2up

Moore, Gloria J. (1996), A Brief History of the Anglo-Indians. In *International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies*, (IJAIS) Vol. 1, No. 1, 1996.

Mutthiah, S., and MacLure, Harry (2013), *The Anglo-Indians: A 500-Year History*, Niyogi Books.

Penny, the Rev. Frank, LLM (1904), *The Church in Madras, Being the History of Ecclesiastical and Missionary Action of the East India Company in the Presidency of Madras in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century*, John Murray, https://archive.org/details/thechurchinmadra01pennuoft/page/n7/mode/2up

Stanley, Peter (1998), *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India 1825-1875*, Hurts & Co.

Stark, Herbert Alick (1926), *Hostages To India: The Life Story of the Anglo Indian Race*, The Calcutta Fine Arts Cottage, https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.5970

Williamson, Captain Thomas (1810), *The East India Vade-Mecum, or, Complete Guide to Gentlemen Intended for the Civil, Military, or Naval Service of the East India Company, Volume 1*, Black, Parry and Kingsbury, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53400/53400-h/53400-h.htm#Page_412.

Wilson, Lt.-Col. W. J. (1883), *History of the Madras Army (Third Volume)*, Government Press, Madras, https://archive.org/details/dli.csl.6715/page/n1/mode/2up.

NOTES

[1] Appointment of Consul-General in Chennai, Media Release of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Julie Bishop MP, 10 January 2014, https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/julie-bishop/media-release/appointment-consul-general-chennai.

[2] Baptism record of twin sisters Lilian Maude and Mildred Gertrude Kelly, viewed in the original *St Michael's Church Parish Register*, Coimbatore in 2014.

[3] Marriage of Richard Plackett and Elizabeth Anderson, 3 September 1806, in *Marriage Records at Fort St George, Madras, 1680-1815*, Transcribed and Annotated by F.E.P., Re-printed from *The Genealogist*, Vol. xix-xxiii, 1907, p. 63, https://archive.org/details/marriages-madras-fep/page/63/mode/2up?q=Anderson.

[4] Burial of Richard Plackett, in *British India Office Deaths & Burials* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-5, Page 204; death noted in entry for July 1812, Goa, *Muster Roll of the 69th (South Lincolnshire) Regiment of Foot*, The National Archives (UK) Series WO 12.

[5] Marriage of Francis Holmes and Mary Plackett, Fort St George, 26 August 1812, in *Madras Diocese Protestant Church Records, 1743-1990* (FamilySearch.org), https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6XXK-LNX9.

[6] Marriage of Thomas Baylis and Mary Cashier (widow), Poonamallee, 30 August 1824, in *India, Select Marriages, 1792-1948* (Ancestry.com), FHL Film No: 521838.

[7] His rank is listed in the record of marriage of Amelia White and Thomas Baylis, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-26, Folio 396.

[8] The baptism record of William's eldest child, Margaret Louisa Baylis, 23 March 1853, Poonamallee, describes him as Drum Major, 2nd MNI, in *British India Office Births & Baptisms* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-12, Folio 23.

[9] Marriage record of Margaret Baylis and Moses Hill, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-24, Folio 153.

[10] Marriage of Rev. William Stokes and Mary Ann Hill, Coonoor, 26 February 1862, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: Z-N-2, Vol. REG2, LDS Film 521852; and marriage of Rev. Fawcett Eber Neville Shaw and Caroline Amelia Baylis, Coonoor, 22 September 1880, in *British India Office Marriages*, (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-61, Folio 261.

[11] Marriage of Thomas William Hill and Matilda Amelia Baylis, Agra, 27 January 1875, in *British India Office Marriages* (FIBIS), Archive Ref: Z/N-11-4, Folio 365, https://fibis.ourarchives.online/bin/aps_detail.php?id=225773.

[12] Identity withheld for privacy reasons.

[13] Amongst other matching details, descendants from Patrick Kelly's second family were aware he was widowed and had a son left behind in the UK, but knew nothing of John settling in India.

[14] Marriage of Patrick Kelly and Anne Cronan, Madras, 9 February 1859, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-40, Folio 122.

[15] The record is unclear, but refers to "European parent and native of Vizagapatnam", ie, Anglo-Indian – see Marriage of Thomas Cronan and Mary Ann Smith, Georgetown, Madras, 23 December 1838, in *India, Catholic Church Records, 1751-2014*, (FamilySearch.org), https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6RSK-V9LN.

[16] Occupations listed in the birth records of their children.

[17] Occupations listed in the birth or marriage records of their children.

[18] Death of Patrick Kelly, Chingleput, Madras, 30 June 1880, in *British India Office Deaths & Burials* (FindMyPast.com), Ref: N-2-61, Folio 316.

[19] Marriage of Annie Kelly to William Hilbert, Neemuch, 28 April 1882, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Ref N-3-56, Folio No. 173.

[20] Christening of Elizabeth Anderson, 'natural' (ie illegitimate) daughter of Arthur Anderson, born 11 September 1805, christened 31 August 1806, in *British India Office Births & Baptisms* (FindMyPast.com), Ref N-2-3, Folio No. 3.

[21] Marriage of Andrew White and Elizabeth Placket, Poonamallee, 1 September 1823, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-9, Folio 107.

[22] Marriage of Amelia White and Thomas Baylis, Poonamallee, 22 July 1847, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-26, Folio 396.

[23] Marriage of Thomas Baylis and Jane (Fowler) Neaves, Poonamallee, 14 October 1846, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-26, Folio 83, and marriage of Thomas Baylis and Caroline (Simon) Maskell, Poonamallee, 24 July 1867, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-48, Folio 367.

[24] The gold 'star pagoda', 100 of which were worth 350 rupees, was issued by the East India Company in Madras. See Pagoda (coin) in Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagoda_(coin)#:~:text=The%20pagoda%2C%20also%20called%20the,was%20subdivided%20into%2042%20fanams.

[25] Citing General Order of the Governor-General (G.O.G.G.), 27 January 1821, Orphan School Allowance for Children, How to be Drawn, in *The Calcutta Annual Register, 1821*, Part III, Public Documents, Military Regulations, p. 32.

[26] Burial of Richard Plaskett in *British India Office Deaths & Burials* (FindMyPast.com) Archive Ref: N-2-5, Page 204; death also noted in entry for July 1812, Goa, *Muster Roll of the 69th (South Lincolnshire) Regiment of Foot*, The National Archives (UK) Series WO 12.

[27] Marriage of Francis Holmes and Mary Plackett, Madras, 26 August 1812, in *Madras Diocese Protestant Church Records, 1743-1990* (FamilySearch.org), https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6XXK-LNX9.

[28] Promotion to Corporal noted in entry for October 1811, and promotion to Sergeant noted in entry for November 1811, both 'On Ship Asia' (en route from Java to Goa), 1st 'Vacant' Company, in *Muster Roll of the 69th (South Lincolnshire) Regiment of Foot*, The National Archives (UK) Series WO 12.

[29] Noted in entry for July 1812, Goa, *Muster Roll of the 69th (South Lincolnshire) Regiment of Foot*, The National Archives (UK) Series WO 12.

[30] Marriage of Amelia White and Thomas Baylis, Poonamallee, 22 July 1847, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-26, Folio 396.

[31] Record of Emilia (sic) White in List of Poonamallee Girls' Attending the Asylum in 1839, *India Office Records Collection* (FIBIS) F/4/1855 Coll. 78480, admitted 6 January 1824, https://fibis.ourarchives.online/bin/aps_detail.php?id=619323.

[32] Andrew White in List of Male Convicts by the Ship Norfolk, arrived from Madras via Mauritius, 30 December 1832, Office Copies of Printed Indents 1831-1842, in *Australia Convict Ships 1786-1849 (Nrs 12189)*, (FindMyPast.com), Reel 907.

[33] Citing General Order of the Governor-General (G.O.G.G.), 27 January 1821, Orphan School allowance for Children, how to be drawn" *The Calcutta Annual Register, 1821*, Part III, Public Documents, Military Regulations, p. 32.

[34] This long-standing practice was formalized in a General Order of the Governor-General (G.O.G.G.), 27 January 1821, Orphan School allowance for Children, how to be drawn, in *The Calcutta Annual Register*, 1821, Part III, Public Documents, Military Regulations, p. 32.

[35] Record of Margaret Baylis in List of Poonamallee Girls' Attending the Asylum in 1839, *India Office Records Collection* (FIBIS) F/4/1855 Coll. 78480, https://fibis.ourarchives.online/bin/aps_detail.php?id=618772.

[36] Record of Jane Fowler in List of Poonamallee Girls' Attending the Asylum in 1839, *India Office Records Collection* (FIBIS) F/4/1855 Coll. 78480, admitted 28 February 1826, https://fibis.ourarchives.online/bin/aps_detail.php?id=619225 ; marriage of Jane Fouler (sic) and Thomas Neaves, Fort St. George, 15 July 1840, in *India, Madras Diocese Protestant Church Records, 1743-1990* (FamilySearch.org), https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6XF6-YMZJ.

[37] Record of Caroline Pearce (at Nurse) in List of Poonamallee Girls' Attending the Asylum in 1839, *India Office Records Collection* (FIBIS) F/4/1855 Coll. 78480, admitted 7 April 1828, https://search.fibis.org/bin/aps_detail.php?id=619339.

[38] News report 'A Wedding in Madras' on the marriage of Gladys Chloe Rita Baylis and Sergeant-Instructor John William Gargery, Vepery, Madras, 10 February, 1904, in *Madras Weekly Mail*, (FindMyPast.com), 11 February 1904.

[39] Records of the baptisms of Nora Gertrude Kelly, 26 July 1882, Florence Catherine Kelly, 10 October 1883, Patrick Hugo Kelly, 5 May 1885, Eileen Marjorie Kelly, 26 April 1894, all viewed in the original *St Michael's Church Parish Register*, Coimbatore in 2014, and the record of baptism of Philip

Desmond Lorne Kelly, 8 January 1898, viewed in the original *Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish Register*, Ootacamund in 2015.

[40] Marriage of William Stokes and Mary Ann Hill, Coonoor, 26 February 1862, in *India, Select Births and Baptisms, 1786-1947* (FamilySearch.org), Ref v.12, p. 84, FHL Film No. 521843.

[41] Christening of William Stokes, Bangalore, 14 October 1840, in *India, Select Births and Baptisms, 1786-1947* (Ancestry.com) Ref: v20 p84, FHL No. 521843.

[42] Annotation by Stokes family biographer to A Very Old Indian (Obituary for Huddleston Stokes), *The Harvest Field* (an India missionary magazine), February 1889, attached to family tree *Gabriel Stokes of Dublin (1682-1768) Descendants* (Ancestry.com), posted by Teresa Stokes.

[43] Vera Stokes, quoted in *Stokes Prattent Family Tree* (Ancestry.com); Dr William Stokes, Medical Register for 1889, in *UK Medical Registers, 1859-1959*, p. 1521, attached to *Stokes Prattent Family Tree*.

[44] Biographic Notes for Sir Henry Edward Stokes, K.C.S.I., and Sir Gabriel Stokes, K.C.S.I., source unknown, attached to family tree *Gabriel Stokes of Dublin (1682-1768) Descendants* (Ancestry.com), posted by Teresa Stokes; this family tree demonstrates that Sir Henry and Sir Gabriel were both sons of Hudleston Stokes' second cousin, Henry Stokes.

[45] Bertie Stokes (August 1910), Winifred Stokes (April 1923), Ellen Stokes (June 1935) answered 'English' for 'Race' in *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists* (Ancestry.com); Mary (Stokes) Heinecken declared herself 'white' in the 1910 US Census (Ancestry.com), and Charles Stokes declared himself 'white' on draft cards for both the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

[46] Marriage of Rev. Fawcett Eber Neville Shaw and Caroline Amelia Baylis, Coonoor, 22 September 1880, in *British India Office Marriages* (FindMyPast.com), Archive Ref: N-2-61, Folio 261.

[47] William Fawcett Shaw, in *United States Deceased Physician File (AMA), 1864-1968*, died 30 March 1969, Card ME035-09-12-006-3-M-336.

[48] Notes on Alice Mary Fawcett-Shaw in *Mission Biographical Reference Files*, Mission Bio Reel #62: 2064, File 1467-6-1:08 Shaw, Alice Mary Fawcett- (undated), (United Methodist Archives), created 7 August, 2013.

[49] Alice Faucette (sic) Shaw arrived in New York on 11 June 1907, in *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957*, (Ancestry.com).

[50] "Letter from Rev. Shaw to Bishop Oldham, Board of Foreign Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, New York, 6 February 1914, in *Mission Biographical Reference Files*, Sub-series: Pakistan/ Indus River Ref; mf Call # 435: Shaw, Fawcett (Rev.) (1914-1920), (United Methodist Archives), created 7 August, 2013.

International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

READING THE MEMORIES IN GLENN D'CRUZ'S FILM *VANITAS* (2022)

Shyamasri Maji

ABSTRACT

Vanitas, a documentary film by Glenn D'Cruz, a Melbourne based Anglo-Indian, is a tribute to his late father Antonie Joseph 'Anto' D'Cruz. It falls into the corpus of Anglo-Indian works dealing with colonial nostalgia and postcolonial identity. One of the striking features of this film is its thematic focus on presenting a father-son narrative, wherein Glenn narrates his father Anto D'Cruz hardships and disillusionments as an Anglo-Indian immigrant in London in the 1960s and thereafter in Australia where he died in 1983. This film is an experimental cultural text that uses animation technology, old photographs and select objects of the dead father to present a memory narrative. This article examines their significance through a close reading of the film.

Keywords: colonial nostalgia, transgenerational memory, collective memory, hauntology, memorabilia, mourning

INTRODUCTION

Glenn D'Cruz's[1] 27-minute documentary film *Vanitas* (2022) unfolds the struggles of an Anglo-Indian father, now dead, from the perspective of his son. Though it is based on a personal narrative, the theme of displacement in the film has a wider connotation. It tells the story of a section of the Anglo-Indian community that emigrated to the United

[1] Henceforth, Glenn D'Cruz will be referred to as D'Cruz. His first name (Glenn) will be mentioned when referring to him as a little boy. To avoid confusion, Anto D'Cruz, father of Glenn D'Cruz, will be referred to as 'Anto.'

Kingdom and Australia after Indian Independence in 1947. The film highlights how their collective memory of being the progeny of a white European man (and an Indian woman) in colonial India was shaken by their experiences of facing socio-economic challenges in the Western countries. It presents a mosaic of personal and collective memories that haunt the narrator-cum-performer, D'Cruz. The present study looks into these memories to examine the causes and the effects of haunting.

The methodology used in this article is based on Memory Studies. Material memory and image analysis are used as methods to find out what aspects of Anglo-Indian heritage and history connect the memories of the father with that of the son. The overall tone of narration in the film is that of mourning. The article examines the association of memory and mourning with the cult of haunting in contemporary cultural texts. The analysis is divided into three subsections: The first, "The Title and the Storyline" explains the concept of 'vanitas' and discusses the narrative of the film text. The second, "Haunting Memories" looks into the theoretical precepts of hauntology and reviews its significance in the poetics of *ars memoriae* ("the art of memory"). The father-son narrative offers a scope for looking at the film from this perspective. The third subsection "Memorabilia as Mourning" analyses the belongings of the dead father as haunting metaphors that shaped the son's discourse on mourning in the film.

THE TITLE AND THE STORYLINE

"Vanitas," a Latin word, means 'vanity' in English. In art, "Vanitas" refers to a genre of painting, developed during the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, that symbolically emphasized the biblical thought of *memento mori* and transience of life. Many of these paintings display contrasting symbols of death and pleasure in one frame. "Vanitas" emphasizes mortality and critiques human vanity. On the canvas, these ideas were elucidated through the depiction of certain objects that belonged to the deceased person. They invoke the past to underscore its haunting effect on the generation living in the present time.

D'Cruz's *Vanitas* presents this haunting syndrome as a legacy that pervades the colonial past, the postcolonial present and even the future imagined through the posthuman lenses of technology. The borders between the temporal zones—past, present and future—in this auto/biographical narrative are problematised by blurring

identities of the father (the dead), the son (the living) and other unnamed characters. While animation technology is used to achieve this effect, certain objects that belonged to the father are represented to reify the central theme of the painting. They serve as objects of material memory and signify the haunting trope inherent in the aesthetics of 'Vanitas.'

The generic transformation of 'Vanitas' from painting, a visual form of still-life art, to the audio-visual motion picture takes place through the employment of hauntological dramaturgy. Unlike painting, cinema is a multi-media art form. In *Vanitas,* the film, use of minimal light and sound, choice of vintage colour schemes, close shots, voiceover, animation technology and editing techniques contribute to the intended haunting effect. Unlike the painting, its purpose is not just to remind people about the ephemerality of life. Instead, it disseminates a message on the triviality of ego in an essentially transient life span. It conveys the idea that ego is similar to vanity in many ways, for both create inter-personal barriers in communication.

D'Cruz begins his performance in the film by saying, "There is nothing more terrible, I learned, than having to face the objects of a dead man." In "*Vanitas:* Hauntology and Object-Oriented Dramaturgy," a chapter in his book *Hauntological Dramaturgy: Affects, Archives, Ethics* (2022), he states that this sentence is taken from Paul Auster's book *The Invention of Solitude* (1988). The 'objects' represented on the screen were once upon a time used by Anto (D'Cruz's father): camera, tape-recorder, cine-film projector, a tennis racket, ashtray, job applications etc. Besides, there are a few old photographs of him with his wife and children. In his article "Reflecting on Vanitas: Archives, Affects, Ethics," D'Cruz states, "In many ways these objects are the stars of *Vanitas,* for these objects were once embedded in the fabric of my family's everyday life and I use them to structure the film and tell a story about my perception of father's life and struggles" (*IJAIS,* 2022, p. 68). These objects, like the objects in the paintings, are marked by their archival as well as symbolical significances. While the objects in the paintings convey a general message, here, in the film, the objects dwell on personal memories.

D'Cruz's monologue on his father's obsessive fondness for English suits and his insistence on Glenn's wearing of formal suits since his childhood days sets the plot

into action. When Glenn was a boy of five or six years, he says his father, Anto, wanted him to look like one Lord Fauntleroy. The childhood photograph/picture of Lord Fauntleroy in faded black and white is shown in the film. From the name and the image of the boy in the photograph it is understood that the boy is the offspring of aristocratic European parents. Little Glenn did not like wearing suits and it appears this was one of the primary reasons for his disliking Anto. Anto, it may be mentioned, had his son's suits made from a tailor in London's East End. The suit is a potent symbol of Englishness. Anto's fondness for a proper English suit is suggestive of his anxiety for achieving Englishness.

A number of old photographs are exhibited from their family album in which both Anto and little Glenn are seen in identical suits. Even in his current avatar as the narrator in the film, D'Cruz is seen in blazer-suit, maybe one that belonged to Anto. He finds the suit uncomfortable and the tie stifling. Yet, he chooses to narrate the story wearing it. Here, the suit serves as a theatrical prop through which he objectifies his gripes and grudges against misrepresentation of the Anglo-Indian community in mainstream media. Though he begins the story on a personal note, the narrative takes an impersonal turn when he analyses the reasons behind his father's obsession with the English sartorial protocol:

> It wasn't his fault. I blame the British and the Indians, too. Both groups despised us as much as they despised each other. Chee-Chees, blacky-whites, half-castes, Anglo-Indians, Midnight's orphans. The Brits hated us for giving human form to their rapacious colonial lust…The Indians saw us as British stooges Lackeys, hopelessly compromised by lax morals, alcoholism and music. We were party people. The men: 'good for nothing' …The women: temptress, whores, easy lays. Eve incarnated. Trouser Snake charmers with painted faces, blush, mascara, lipstick. The suit guarded against such slurs by encasing its weaver in a magical mantle of respectability. (D'Cruz, *Vanitas,* 2022, 2:36-3:42 mins)

While D'Cruz describes the stereotypes to which men and women of the Anglo-Indian community were subjected, images of such stereotyped representations are foregrounded on the screen by showing a clipping of a party scene from *Julie,* a 1975-Bollywood film showcasing Anglo-Indian characters in post-Independence Indian society. The scene of their drinking, dancing and merrymaking are presented in the documentary through a sequence of quick cuts and edits to emphasise the absurdity of such an artificial representation. It also reveals D'Cruz's agonised response to such

a stereotyped representation of his fellow community members. An abrupt inclusion of the technically grafted comical-version of this scene from *Julie* (1975), a fiction film, into the non-fictional memoir film *Vanitas*, might appear like an interruption. Its function, however, is similar to that of pastiche in postmodernist satire.

In the documentary, the suit evokes personal memory as well as collective nostalgia of the colonial Empire that defined Anglo-Indian identity and culture. The shame and disgust of inheriting racial prejudices inherent in mixed descent identity is conveyed through D'Cruz's repulsiveness towards the 'suit' which is on the one hand, a symbol of colonial legacy and on the other hand, a stifling source of postcolonial anxiety. The anxiety was about retaining cultural identity and gaining economic stability as an Anglo-Indian immigrant in a postcolonial world.

D'Cruz's account of his father's emigration from India throws light on the genesis of this anxiety. Anto left for England on a ship in the early 1960s. In India he had a well-to-do job of a goods clerk in the Indian railways, but he wished for a better standard of living, which he hoped to find in London. He decided to send air tickets for his wife and son as soon as he had saved the required amount of money. En route, he lost his signet ring, made of gold, to a crafty goldsmith in the Middle East. This ring was not just a valuable possession but a souvenir of prestige. In the documentary, D'Cruz narrates the incident of its loss during the journey through juvenile sketches. It is obvious that he heard the story in his childhood and the naïve sketches in this context trace the course of transgenerational memory of displacement. A sense of loss is embedded in this act of remembrance, which increases manifold times as the narrative proceeds with D'Cruz's recounting of Anto's professional ventures in London.

The loss of the signet ring foreshadows the hardships and disillusionments that Anto would face in London. In spite of having qualifications and experience, he failed to find a clerical job in London. His first job there was that of a bus conductor, which he did for many years till he found an executive post in the Post & Telegraph Office. This job was an improvement on the previous one but it was a short-time engagement as they emigrated to Perth, Australia.

This second-time displacement was more disheartening than the first one. Anto couldn't find a decent job in any of the Postal, Telegraph and Insurance offices in Perth. Though the Australian government claimed to follow a policy of multiculturalism in executing its immigration policies, its implementation was limited to pen and paper. In the film, a sequence of old newspaper cuttings in zoom shot is shown as evidence for unsympathetic and ambiguous attitude of the government towards immigrants of mixed descent identity in Australia. The often racist outlook of white society in Australia seems to have prevented Anto from getting a job in any of the government offices. His desperate efforts in this matter are conveyed through the exhibition in the film of innumerable job application letters addressed to these offices and a sequence in animation showing racist attitudes of the employers. Their spokesperson is a jaw-crackling gatekeeper who appears as a giant and crushes Anto and other coloured immigrants under his large boot. In a wistful voice, D'Cruz reveals that continuous rejections dejected Anto. He took up the job of a night watchman at Mirrabooka bus station to maintain his family. Heartbroken as he was due to his disillusionments and failures, he died within a few years at the age of 53.

Like the identical characters in the train, discussed later, the gatekeeper's role is played by a replica of D'Cruz. Here, the *simulacra* effect created through animation technology is complex. Though 'simulacrum' literally stands for false images, the aspect of repetitiveness in presenting the same image (D'Cruz's face) in different contexts, shifts the attention from the original object (the living person) to the act of repetition and the impact it makes through imitation. Here, the Dracula-like jaw-crackling rendition of D'Cruz's face shows that modernity equipped by the power of technology can dehumanize a human. The role of animation technology in encoding spectral traits into the living object is also clear. Such a representation blurs the differences between the victim and the wrongdoer. It also challenges the objective notions regarding subject positions of individuals and groups, since the sameness tends to suggest that the victim or the Other is mimicking and mocking the wrongdoer/oppressor, who holds a powerful position in the society.

D'Cruz confesses that he hated his father during his lifetime and had also wished for his death to get rid of his scoldings and surveillance. He grudged that his father never appreciated his trendy appearance and unconventional ways. Anto's dislike for his

long hair and wayward teenage habits widened the rift between them. Much later, when D'Cruz realised his father's struggles, he admired the stamina with which Anto had encountered the trauma of being a coloured immigrant in the white societies he moved to. The realisation converted his sense of guilt into profound grief that stayed with him not just as a loss resembling a spot in the loom of time but as an inheritance of loss that flowed with time like chronic melancholia. The film ends with an apology letter addressed to his father. He confesses his mistakes and seeks forgiveness for being insensitive towards his father's struggles.

This letter completes the communion of their souls. The poignancy of this union adds a spiritual note to this personal experience. The ending aptly resonates with the epigraph, a quotation from Johann Friedrich Von Schiller, featured at the beginning of the film: "It is not flesh and blood, but heart that makes us father and sons" (*Vanitas,* 2022). The statement affirms that Anto's anguish is now transferred to D'Cruz and his response to his father's material possessions is an effort to re-discover the old anguish—the ancestral crisis— in a new time and space.

HAUNTING MEMORIES

The father-son narrative presented in this manner highlights the role of transgenerational memory and its connection with the motif of haunting. Unlike the painting 'Vanitas', its narrative frame looks beyond theological maxims and coincides with evocative insinuations in postcolonial narratives representing lost time and its trajectories in narrators' nostalgic recollections.

A survey of post-war literature and cinema shows that increased rate of exile and migration generated the trend of searching for roots and identity in the ruins of history (Dennis Walder, 2011, p. 2). Though history is officially assigned to present a discourse on the past happenings, the material ruins of these incidents carry forward their traces in times to come. In this regard, the linear course of history is challenged and the role of memory in disrupting its borderlines is obvious. Discussing J.G. Ballard's novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), Dennis Walder states, "Like modernity, nostalgia is a way of thinking about time. And not only about time past, but time passing, and to come. The dynamic of memory is that its existence is always in the present, even as it struggles to reclaim the past: this means that it constantly acts as

a drain on the future, which cannot be imagined without reference to the past" (2011, p. 139).

In V. S. Naipaul's semi-autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1986), the unnamed narrator of Indian descent from the Caribbean islands, who migrates to England and settles down in Wiltshire, finds himself trapped in the mesh of memories. His reflections on the topographical objects in the English countryside are marked by his meditations on changing perspectives on immigrant identity and memories of displacement. The title of this novel is borrowed from a 1912-painting by Giorgio de Chirico. A piece of metaphysical Art movement, the painting underlines a play of evocative forms and surreal colours. It presents an ancient cityscape with two cloaked human figures in an ambiguous and uncanny frame. What is interesting in the context of the current discussion is to observe how different art forms negotiate with the eeriness of fleeting time by presenting a playful interaction between word, image and text. In a film text like *Vanitas,* this is done skilfully. Here, the demonstration of the father's belongings and different locations are complemented by the son's candid reflections.

It is clear from D'Cruz's narration that nostalgia can be a source of continuous discomfort. When he says that he had a 'fraught relationship' with his father as long as he was alive, it seems at one level the discomfort is an outcome of their estrangement. However, when viewed carefully, it is apparent that the memory of fraught relationship is a prism that reveals the differences in their responses to Anglo-Indian lineage and transcontinental migration.

Reflecting on the film, D'Cruz remarks, "I never understood a lot of things about my father: his obsession with sartorial elegance, for one, but I was specially confused by his desire to obtain a clerical job" (*IJAIS,* 2022, p. 66). As mentioned earlier, Anto died of heartbreak at not finding a clerical job. His ambition for a mere clerical post baffled his son, though, he often explained the importance of the job to D'Cruz. He started his professional career as a goods clerk in India and this might be one reason for his assigning a nostalgic value to it. The other reason might be his collective nostalgia for clerkship.

The word 'clerk' in the Indian register refers to *kerani* and has a special significance in the history of British imperialism in India. *Kerani* is a Persian word suggesting industriousness. Under British rule, it referred to the English-educated Indian middle-class gentry who helped the Britishers in administrative work. Due to their fluency in English writing and speaking, the Anglo-Indians were preferred as clerks and executives in the British offices. Gradually, with the spread of Western education in the Indian subcontinent, the number of English language-knowing people from other Indian communities increased. After Independence, the clerical posts that were earlier held by Anglo-Indians were gradually filled up by the people of other Indian communities. This increased unemployment and economic insecurity among Anglo-Indians in India. As a result, many members of the community, like Anto, chose to find better job opportunities abroad. To Anto, clerkship was a reminder of the heydays of Anglo-Indian community, and he symbolically cherished it throughout his life as a collective memory.

Almost four decades after Anto's death, D'Cruz made this documentary film. This gap in time underlines not only the long span of his bereavement but also the pressing weight of his suffering over the years. In this respect, D'Cruz's documentary may remind one of Lord Alfred Tennyson's elegy, *In Memoriam* (1850) which was published seventeen years after the death of the poet's friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, in 1833. The prolonged grief invaded D'Cruz's remembrance of his childhood and teenage years, thereby adding layers to his remembrance of things past.

Perhaps it is the long hiatus that transformed D'Cruz's memory (of his father) into "an act of mourning" (D'Cruz, 2022, p. 91). Though his memories of mourning saw light on the cinema screen in 2022, like Tennyson's elegy, it was scripted in his mind over the years, thereby addressing the hinges in the father-son relationship with mellowed introspection. The belatedness comes with the revelation that their fraught relationship, which he had earlier counted as a consequence of inter-personal differences, resulted from belonging to the collective consciousness of an ethnic minority group. So, it was not only his own memories of his father that troubled him but also his father's memories of experiencing life in India and the diaspora. Yet, the way in which they were affected by the collective consciousness differed in degree:

while Anto was enslaved by the memories of colonial lineage, Glenn was apparently free of it.

Anto's thoughts on life, as reminisced by his son, are presented in the film as having been inculcated in him by his rootedness in the Indian soil. This is conveyed by representing two identical characters—a dhoti-clad Indian and an Anglo-Indian in blazer and suit—in animation technology. Both of them resemble D'Cruz. Their inaudible conversation on a night train (Indian railways) casts a ghostly spell. Their look-alike facial features, which may be cited as an example of *simulacrum*, emphasize sameness and repetitiveness. This techno-creative method suggests that in this film, lineage, a crucial factor in transgenerational memory, is to be viewed not only in genetic terms of identity but also in terms of geo-cultural legacy.

Though the identity of the dhoti-clad character is not disclosed, it is understood that he symbolises the pan-Indian geo-cultural legacy of which the Anglo-Indian community is an integral part. In this context, the identity of the characters is not so important because they signify family memory which according to Maurice Halbwachs is a typical intergenerational memory (Erll, 2011, p.17). Explaining Halbwachs' views on intergenerational memory as a source for knowing a social collective, Astrid Erll observes:

> Through a repeated recall of the family's past (usually via oral stories which are told at family get-togethers), those who did not experience the past firsthand can also share in the memory. In this way an exchange of living memory takes place between eye-witnesses and descendants. The collective intergenerational memory thus goes back as far as the oldest members of the social group can remember. (Erll, 2011, p.17)

Intergenerational memory plays a crucial role in the handing down of ancestral experiences to the succeeding generations. While achievements and affluence of the ancestors instil a sense of pride in the progeny, their failures and frustrations generate insecurities in the latter. The trauma of displacement, precarity and loss of cultural identity experienced by the first-generation of Anglo-Indian immigrants tend to haunt their children and grandchildren. This haunting may be described as an uncanny intrusion of the past into the present time. The present analysis looks into this uncanniness with reference to the philosophical concept of hauntology.

'Hauntology' is a portmanteau word combining 'haunt' and 'ontology.' The poststructuralist thinker Jacques Derrida coined it and employed it as a terminology to examine the spectral function of the past in his book *Spectres of Marx* (1994). Derrida's purpose of writing it is implied right at the beginning in the epigraph quoted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet:* "The time is out of joint" (Act I, Sc. v). In the first chapter, he quotes it in detail prior to his analysis of the opening statement of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels, 1848): "A spectre is hunting Europe, the spectre of communism" (1994, p. 2). He compares it with the opening of *Hamlet,* where the apparition of the murdered king appears to the prince and haunts him demanding justice. The haunting sets the plot into action and gradually reveals the rotten affairs of the state to the prince.

Spectres of Marx was written as a response to American philosopher Francis Fukuyama's essay "The End of History?" (1989) that challenged the existence of communism and fascism in the post-World War II decades. The title of Derrida's book referring to Karl Marx (1818-1883), a founding figure of the communist doctrine, emphasises the 'ghostly' influence of Marxist ideal of equality of man on European society and culture in an age of liberal democracy. However, free market economy, the most pertinent outcome of liberal democracy, could not solve the problems of xenophobia, unemployment, underdevelopment, class conflict and poverty that existed for centuries. Consequently, though time moved ahead and political outlook of nations changed, communist goals cast a spectral influence on the new system.

In his article "What is Hauntology?" (2012) Mark Fisher (1968-2017), a British cultural theorist, discussed the spectral intervention of technology on popular culture, in music and cyberpunk cinema, since the 1970s. He observes that even Derrida was aware of it and in a way his hauntology discourse tallied with the techno-cultural discourses on tele-iconicity, *simulacra* and synthetic images (2012, p. 19). Fisher refers to a number of filmmakers such as Kubrick, Coppola and Scorsese who used the haunting effects in their films to convey the "collapse of time and space" (2012, p. 19). In Merlin Coverley's words hauntology "challenges our belief in the unbroken progression of linear time" and stands for temporal disjuncture and dyschronia (2020, p.11).

Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," a chapter in his well-known work *Writing and Difference* (1978), also upholds the idea of non-linear flow of time. His views on interpretation of words and production of meanings as expressed in this chapter, a seminal text on Deconstruction theory, correlate with the non-linear flow of memory in human beings. His concept of 'traces,' the absent part of the signs, is also relatable in the context of hauntology and its effectiveness in the construction of *memorabilia.* Memories drawing on the association of person/people now dead with certain objects are like 'traces' in a Derridean sense. These objects problematise the act of remembering by (dis)placing the living person's perceptions of the dead person's presence-in-absence and absence-in-presence in the roller-coaster of time. While doing that, memories re-create the *loci* ("place") where the people and the objects existed before they were a memory.

MEMORABILIA AS MOURNING

In *Vanitas,* the spectral effect of memory is manifested through representation of objects as well as through measured exhibition of places—the neighbourhoods and courtyards—in old video recordings and photographs. Regarding the objects, D'Cruz remarked, "In what follows, I will unpack the various stages of memorialisation I used to reckon with my father's ghost by focusing on the hauntological dimension of objects" ("Re-membering Anto D'Cruz," 2022, p.90). Select places, presented as sites of memory in this memoir film, widen its hauntological dimension. Family photographs presenting Anto and his wife (Glenn D'Cruz's mother) as a young and loving couple and video recordings presenting little Glenn and his sister playing with other children in the garden of their London home, speak of happy times. Contrary to these images, the ones presenting their house, garden and neighbourhood in Perth (Australia) are desolate, bereft of social interaction and childhood cacophony.

The images of family space and society in Perth highlight the 'absence' of all (human, non-human) objects, activities and sounds that were 'present' in the images of their residential life in London. The sharp difference between the contradictory images is suggestive of unhomely living conditions they witnessed in Australia. The nominal use of sound in these depictions intensifies uncanniness. On the one hand, it hints at inhospitable attitude of the Australian government towards coloured immigrants, and on the other hand, it highlights the shift in D'Cruz's perception of his surroundings as

he grew up from a little boy in London to an adolescent in Perth. Being a young child, he was probably unaware of the racist environment in London but he must have understood its overt and covert manifestations during his teenage years in Perth. The memories of his father that he accumulated in his childhood and adolescence continued to haunt him even in the later phases of his life. The film presents in its narrative scope the different stages of his memory gathering.

Over the years, as he walked through different roles of adulthood, D'Cruz's outlook towards the archive of his father's material possessions—the objects he used and left behind—underwent changes. The shifts in his perception of the past conforms to Aleida Assmann's views on the act of remembering:

> Remembering is basically a reconstructive process; it always starts in the present, and so inevitably at the time when the memory is recalled, there will be shifting, distortion, revaluation, reshaping. In the period between the present action and future recall, memory does not wait patiently in its safe house; it has its own energy and is exposed to a process of transformation. ("Memory as Ars and Vis," 2011, p. 19)

Assmann describes this dynamic mode of memory in her discussion on *ars* (art) and *vis* (power, force). She says that history of *ars* goes back to the Roman tradition of mnemotechnics, a method for transforming memory from verbal to visual form (2011, p. 17). Its purpose was to "provide safe storage and identical reproduction of the relevant information" (Assmann, 2011, p.17). While 'ars,'mostly located in the rhetorical context, refers to the process of storage creation, 'vis' refers to the organic essence in memory that bestows on it an arbitrary force. Assmann explains this trait of 'vis' as follows: "This force can hinder recall, as in forgetting, or it can block it completely, as in suppression, but it can also be steered by an insight, a desire, or a new set of requirements, any one of which may lead to memories taking on a new form" (2011, p. 20).

In the 18th century, the 'vis' approach was more popular and acceptable than the 'ars' approach. Giovanni Battista Vico (1688-1744), an Italian philosopher and rhetorician, viewed memory as a psychological discourse that was in a way connected with imagination and common sense (Assmann, 2011, p. 21). According to Vico, this force is highly active during childhood (Assmann, 2011, p. 21). In *Vanitas,* a strong and active intervention of childhood imagination into the psychological space of adult

memory is manifested in D'Cruz's recollection of his childhood memories. In *Vanitas,* his use of juvenile sketches for tracking his father's *memorabilia* in his childhood memory presents the act of remembrance as an organic entity, echoing what George Eliot described in her 1861-novel *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*: "As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness" (1996, p. 126). The given extract elucidating the bonding between Marner, the father-figure, and Eppie, the child, is significant for understanding the contribution of the child's perception of select objects around her to the cognitive re-construction of the past in adult memory. In *Vanitas,* D'Cruz's re-construction of his own childhood reconstruction of two important incidents—Anto's first trip to England and the loss of his signet ring—that he had heard of from his parents, is an innovative strategy of conveying the vulnerability in restoring parental memories.

Only select objects receive the status of *memorabilia* or souvenir. Anto's belongings are viewed as *memorabilia* in the film. An interesting aspect of this film is that it represents *memorabilia* of two kinds: one that has material reality and the other that is imaginary—the signet ring, for example. Little Glenn did not see it but had heard of it. Yet, after learning about the ring from his mother, it registered in his mind as an imagined material memory. He could re-view his father's character by recalling his childhood impression of the (imagined) ring. He states, "it recalls his pride, his ambition and his desire to craft a persona consistent with these personal qualities" (D'Cruz, 2022, p. 104).

D'Cruz is conscious of its imaginary status. He observes, "I have no clear idea about what my father's signet ring looked like, but the story concerning its loss conveys so much information about his character that it plays as equal a role in *Vanitas* as any of his material possessions that have survived and have become part of my inheritance" (D'Cruz, 2022, p. 104). The signet ring in this context adds a Derridean dimension to its function as material memory. Since materiality of this material memory is imaginary, it stands displaced and distanced from reality and time. Its narrative value as *memorabilia* is available in traces. Its significance is elusive since D'Cruz's thoughts

on it, like the evolution of 'meaning of words' as per Derrida's concept of *différance,* got deferred (postponed/delayed) and differed (changed) over the years.

Other notable *memorabilia* in the film are as follows: father's suit, camera, tape recorder, rosary beads, a tennis racket, a handwritten note on moral conduct, postage stamps that Anto gifted his son, cards, a car in which he had a serious accident one night while returning from work in Perth. D'Cruz's childhood days in London are presented through family album and video recordings. These objects help the viewers to figure out Anto's personality. The suit, the signet ring and the tape-recorder playing "Send me the pillow that you dream on," a song in Anto's voice, are presented as hauntological metaphors for invoking melancholia caused by D'Cruz's gradual acceptance of the flux that constituted their racial memory and immigration history.

The suit, an insignia of father's obsession with Anglo-Indian identity and colonial nostalgia in the documentary, is like the ghost that ontologically belongs to the realm of the bygone era, but it has the power to appear anywhere and anytime. This suggests what Mike Fisher referred to as "collapse of time." The intervention of *memorabilia* being repetitive, the suit exists as an atemporal entity, a haunting agent that possesses the power to present time as "out of joint." This idea is conveyed in the film through D'Cruz's appearance in one of his father's blazer-suits. Though he disliked suits, he uses this sartorial sign to build up his father-son narrative. While at the beginning, he reveals that this sartorial sign was one of the reasons behind their fraught relationship, later, he chooses to incarnate Anto's musician avatar as presented in an old photograph. He wears his father's shirt and hat while singing with his father's recorded voice. This gesture is a conscious effort to merge their identities. Here, the camera and the tape-recorder function as techno-tele means for attributing a hauntological aura to the personified performance.

The duet of the living son and the dead man's recorded voice manifesting D'Cruz's strong desire to embody his father's spirit, reveals the genetic connection between them. But the issue of genetic connection cannot be given sole priority in this context if one goes back to Schiller's words, shown at the beginning of the film: "It is not flesh and blood, but heart that makes us father and sons" (*Vanitas,* 2022). This enactment may be viewed as a theatrical method, a ploy, for creating *simulacrum* effect with

costume heirloom. This ploy aids in underlining resemblances between the two generations in D'Cruz's family or in an extended sense among all Anglo-Indians since the formation of the community in the 16th century. The gesture emphasises D'Cruz's conformity to Anglo-Indian culture and his effort to impersonate the postcolonial history that shaped the doubly hyphened identity of Anglo-Indian immigrants in the diaspora. The act of dressing and singing like his father—a melancholic role play— may be interpreted as a personal rite for mourning. In his discussion on mourning and melancholia, Sigmund Freud observes, "In mourning, the world has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego that has become so" (2006, p. 313). In the documentary film, the objects serving as *memorabilia* symbolise the dead father as well as the death of D'Cruz's ego. In the last forty years, after his father's death, he seems to have realised that the crux of their 'fraught relationship' was their ego. This realisation, of course, was not instant. It was a gradual development that was guided by the 'vis' aspect of memory and eventually it transposed his resistance and non-conformity into self-criticism and guilt. Freud explains this kind of transition as follows:

> In this way the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, which could now be condemned by a particular agency as an object, as the abandoned object. Thus the loss of object had been transformed into a loss of ego, and the conflict between the ego and the beloved person into a dichotomy between ego-criticism and the ego as modified by identification. (2006, p. 316)

Glenn's self-criticism is followed by his confession of insensitivity and ingratitude which he reads out from a letter addressed to the dead father. The letter exemplifies the surrender of his ego. It also objectifies his unconventional method of mourning as an atheist. He appreciates his father's courage to hold on to his principles even during tough times. He apologises for his selfishness and concludes by thanking his late father. Adding to Freud's notes in "Mourning and Melancholia," Ignês Sodré observed, "Failure to mourn creates an internal situation by which the lost object is excessively identified with, and the self lives in the shadow of an internal death, leading to pathological depression" (2009, p. 43). In this regard, the letter serves as a healing agent that relieves D'Cruz from the burden of guilt and melancholia.

CONCLUSION

In this personal recollection, the biographical account of the father often overlaps with autobiographical reflections of the son. It interrogates the linear flow of time and

widens the scope of transgenerational memory in exploring the displacement of their trauma. The study shows that D'Cruz's postcolonial consciousness as an Anglo-Indian immigrant scrutinises their colonial nostalgia in ancestral memory for tracing his Indian roots. At the same time, it reviews their diasporic experiences of tracking the routes through which his identity and cultural history has travelled. His generational location helps him to analyse the colonial hangover of Anglo-Indian identity from an objective point of view. Like his father, he does not hanker after the sartorial finesse symbolizing Englishness. Yet, he acknowledges its presence in his personal and collective memory, documenting its role in shaping the cultural identity of his community. He has great observational skills with which he reads not only the world outside but also the world within, that is the dominion of memory. In *Vanitas*, D'Cruz's memory is multilayered and multidimensional, similar to the gyres in Dante's description of the underworld in *Divine Comedy* (1308-1321), each layer? unfolding a realm and a revelation different from the other. Though he does not believe in God, he confesses at the end that he is blessed to have a father like Anto. This confession, which is made after a prolonged period of suffering, confirms that his heart is now purged of all bitter feelings against his father. His moist eyes symbolise repentance and transcendental feeling. The ending of the film marks the beginning of a spiritual awakening, which in times to come will help him to see the past in a new light. Like the cottage in Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*, where the narrator-cum-writer could blend his memories with mysticism and imagination, the film provided a suitable creative space for D'Cruz to reinterpret the memories of his father with innovation and self-examination. *Vanitas,* the film, in this regard, is enigmatic and evocative.

Shyamasri Maji *is an Assistant Professor in English at Durgapur Women's College, affiliated to Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, in West Bengal, India. She received her PhD degree in English from the Department of English and Culture Studies, the University of Burdwan. Her doctoral thesis is titled* Anxiety of Representation in Select Anglo-Indian Writers *(2018). Her research articles in Anglo-Indian Studies have been published in international journals such as* Antipodes: A Global Journal of Australian/New Zealand Literature, International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies *and* Economic & Political Weekly*. She is the recipient of an Independent Research Fellowship 2018-2019 at* Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute*, Kolkata. Under this fellowship programme she completed a short-term project on Indian documentary films on the Anglo-Indian Community. She can be reached at shyamasri.2010@gmail.com*

REFERENCES

Assmann, Aleida. (2011). *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Arts of Memory.* Cambridge University Press.

Coverley, Merlin. (2020). *Hauntology: Ghosts of Future Past.* Old Castle Books.

D'Cruz, Glenn. (2022). "Re-membering Anto D' Cruz: Intergenerational Trauma and Object-Oriented Dramaturgy." *Hauntological Dramaturgy: Affect, Archives, Ethics.* Routledge. (89-111)

D'Cruz, Glenn, & Steven Andrew Mclyntyre. (Directors). (2022). *Vanitas.* Shameless Films. https//vimeo.com.

D'Cruz, Glenn. (2022). "Reflecting on Vanitas: Archives, Affects, Ethics." *International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies* (*IJAIS*). 22, 2. 66-76. Reflecting on Vanitas: Archives, Affects, Ethics | International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

Derrida, Jacques. (1978). *Writing and Difference.* Trans. by Alan Bass. Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. (1994). *Spectres of Marx.* Trans. by Peggy Kamuf. Routledge.

Eliot, George. (1996). *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*. Penguin.

Erll, Astrid. (2011). *Memory in Culture.* Trans. by Sara B. Young. Palgrave Macmillan.

Fisher, Mark. (2012). "What is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly.* 66, 1. 16-24.

Freud, Sigmund. (2006). "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Penguin Freud Reader*. Ed. Adam Phillips. Penguin. (310-326).

Naipaul. V.S. (2011). *The Enigma of Arrival.* Picador.

Sethumadhavan, K.S. (Director). (1975). *Julie.* Film.

Sodré, Ignês. (2009). "Where the Lights and Shadows Fall." *Memory: An Anthology.* Ed. H.H Wood and A.S. Byatt. Vintage. (40-53).

Walder, Dennis. (2011). *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory.* Routledge.

International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies

THE 'TWIST' IN THE TRANSCULTURAL ADAPTATION OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S PLAY *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* (1944) INTO SHYAMAPRASAD'S FILM *AKALE* (2004)

Sreelakshmi KV and Nina Caldeira

ABSTRACT

The award-winning Malayalam film Akale (2004), directed by Shyamaprasad, exemplifies the transformative power of transcultural adaptation, adding a distinctive twist to The Glass Menagerie (1944), the memory play by Tennessee Williams, a luminary in American literature. The twist in Akale (2004) lies in i) its cultural adaptation to the fading stereotyped Anglo-Indian community of Kerala metaphorically symbolised as 'glass menageries', and ii) the stylistic shift from 'telling' their story to 'showing' or representing them on the big screen. While both texts delve into human tragedy, the cultural and cinematic adaptation explores layers of reinterpretation, shaped by and resonating with the socio-cultural and historical contexts of mid-20th-century America, in the case of The Glass Menagerie (1944) and that of the 21st-century Kerala in Akale (2004). Drawing from Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, this study posits that Shyamaprasad's creative process goes beyond mere replication; instead, it establishes a site of intercultural dialogue. By reimagining Williams's work for a new cultural and temporal setting, the film highlights the universality and adaptability of the art of storytelling.

Keywords: Anglo-Indians, transcultural adaptation, twist, human tragedy, stereotype

FROM SHEAF TO SCREEN: CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS AS LEGITIMATE ADOPTIONS

The cultural and temporal nuances of society shape how tales are received, emphasising the dynamic interplay between stories and the evolving contexts they encounter. Storytelling enables the transmission of ideas across cultures; however, plots get twisted not merely to suit the cultural milieu but also to suit the adaptor's intent. When stories draw inspiration from one cultural background and are transposed into an entirely different cultural context, adaptation comes into play. Linda Hutcheon, a renowned Canadian literary theorist and cultural critic, explores this process in her seminal work, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), offering insights into how adaptations function. Her observations on the Victorian's tendency to adapt all forms of art—painting, poetry, stories, music, and more—illustrate how artistic endeavours can transcend disciplines. Similarly, in *Screenwriting and the Potentials of Cinema* (1991), William Burrough writes, "just because somebody else has an idea doesn't mean you can't take that idea and develop a new twist for it. Adaptations may become quite legitimate adoptions" (Burrough, 1991, as cited in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). Rather than simply transposing a story, adaptation transforms it into "legitimate adoptions", offering fresh meanings and cultural relevance that respond to new audiences. Furthermore, adaptation allows stories to cross cultural boundaries, where new interpretations engage with the original while reshaping it and opening up new possibilities of interpretations.

This paper explores the transcultural adaptation of Tennessee Williams's play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) into Shyamaprasad's Malayalam film *Akale* (2004), focusing on the nuanced narrative transformation and cultural reinterpretation. Thomas Lanier Williams III (26 March 1911 – 25 February 1983), popularly known by his pen name Tennessee Williams, was an American playwright and screenwriter who became a literary giant, notably receiving the Pulitzer Prize for drama twice. His magnum opuses, including *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), garnered critical acclaim and cemented his legacy in the history of American theatre. In 1979, the American Theatre Hall of Fame inducted Williams in recognition of his exceptional talent.

Shyamaprasad, an acclaimed Malayalam director, is celebrated for his distinctive approach to storytelling, blending Kerala-centric themes with adaptations of renowned works. His films have earned him numerous accolades, with *Agni Sakshi* (1999) and *Akale* (2004) both winning the Kerala State Film Award for Best Film and Best Director. The former also received the Gollapudi Srinivas Award for Best Debut Director. Notable among his adaptations are *Ore Kadal* (2007), *Elektra* (2010), *Agni Sakshi* (1999), and *Akale* (2004), each showcasing his ability to reinterpret source material—ranging from literary works to classical tragedies—within the Malayalam cinematic tradition.

The Glass Menagerie (1944) is a memory play set in St. Louis in 1937, narrated by Tom Wingfield, an aspiring poet who works in a shoe warehouse to support his family. The story reflects on his life with his mother Amanda, a former Southern belle obsessed with her past, and his sister Laura, whose physical and emotional frailty are shaped by her childhood illness, pleurosis. Laura, withdrawn and shy, spends her time caring for her delicate collection of glass animals. Amanda, concerned about Laura's future, enrols her in business college, hoping to secure her independence. However, Laura's anxiety causes her to abandon the course without telling her family. Determined to find a suitable husband, Amanda persuades Tom to invite a gentleman caller. He chooses Jim O'Connor, a colleague who turns out to be Laura's former high school acquaintance. Much like the audience, this incidental connection with the past comes as a revelation for Laura, who is suddenly transported to her adolescence and recalls that long ago, this gentleman had nicknamed her 'blue Rose'. During Jim's visit, he accidentally breaks Laura's favourite glass figurine, a unicorn, which she interprets as the unicorn becoming more like other horses—a symbol of her own struggles with normalcy. It is ironic to note that just as Laura, fascinated by Jim's warm and encouraging demeanour, begins to break out of her shackles and emerge as a confident woman, he abruptly reveals that he is engaged to another woman, leaving Laura devastated. This moment emphasises the fragility of the family's hopes and the tension between their dreams and reality.

The universal themes of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) have inspired reinterpretations in various cultural contexts, such as Shyamaprasad's *Akale* (2004), a Malayalam adaptation set within an Anglo-Indian family in 1970s Kerala, India. The film examines

the isolation and aspirations of a family constrained by societal expectations and personal struggles. Margaret D'Costa (Sheela), an overbearing mother, is determined to secure a stable future for her children while navigating the limitations of her conservative environment. Rosemary D'Costa (Geethu Mohandas), her shy and physically impaired daughter, reflects Laura's fragility and sense of alienation. Neil D'Costa (Prithviraj Sukumaran), the son and narrator, is a writer torn between his artistic aspirations and familial obligations.

Departing from the characters presented in the play, Shyamaprasad, in the opening scene introduces a new character, Kamala, Neil's wife, which adds depth to the story, offering a unique perspective to the narrative by complicating Neil's internal conflict. Yielding to the constant pestering by Margaret to find a suitable husband for Rose, Neil invites Freddy Evans (Tom George Kolath), his colleague at the warehouse, to join them for dinner. Freddy symbolises both the family's fleeting hope and their ultimate disillusionment, highlighting the universal clash between dreams and harsh realities. The denouement becomes complete toward the end of the movie where Freddy is seen visiting Margaret with his wife and children.

While the play features a young disturbed Tom in conflict with his mother, the movie gives the audience a peek into the inner turmoil of an older Neil who breaks away from his wife Kamala. The narrative comes full circle when at the end of the film, Freddy with his wife and children appears at Neil's home to meet Margaret. With Kamala at one end symbolising the lacerated open wound, and Betty at the other end embodying a sutured wound, the narrative thus oscillates between the snapping of the volatile family ties to the adhesive reunion in the end.

The play ends with Tom leaving the house, whereas the ending of the film depicts the union of Freddy's family with Neil and his mother, paving the way for the process of healing and the possibility of a final resolution of the conflict and the scope for reconciliation. Betty's role signifies the mending of fractured bonds and the beginning of healing for the family. Diverging from the play's darker, unresolved conclusion, the resolution in the movie harks on familial unity thereby vouching for the importance of emotional catharsis.

This paper introduces the concept of the 'twist' to describe how the adaptation shifts both culturally—from a Depression-era St. Louis apartment to the setting of a marginalised Anglo-Indian family in Kerala—and structurally, from the 'telling' nature of theatre to the 'showing' medium of film. Through these narrative 'twists', *Akale* (2004) effectively bridges Western and Indian contexts, offering the Malayali audience a story that deeply aligns with their multicultural sensibilities. This analysis offers a new interpretation of *Akale* (2004), suggesting that the Anglo-Indian family functions as a 'glass menagerie': a fragile, often invisible community at risk of fading away, much like the delicate glass figurines. Although the film itself does not explicitly state this, the paper argues that *Akale* (2004) invites viewers to see the isolation of Anglo-Indian families not merely as economic hardship, as in *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), but as a distinct form of cultural marginalisation and social invisibility within Kerala. Each character embodies a different facet of this fragile cultural legacy, subtly evoking the image of a 'glass menagerie' in their vulnerability to social pressures. This 'twist' reimagines the Anglo-Indian community as a symbol of vulnerability and endurance, a group whose unique heritage is precious yet constantly threatened by the pressures of social invisibility and cultural assimilation. According to a report in *The New Indian Express* (Rahul, 2024), Anglo-Indians in Kerala have expressed concerns about marginalisation, citing the erosion of cultural identity and reduced opportunities following the removal of electoral reservations.

The 'twist' in *Akale* (2004) extends to its visual and auditory elements. By shifting the setting from a confined American apartment to the expansive Kerala home, Shyamaprasad retains the play's sense of claustrophobia while evoking the unique atmosphere of Kerala's Anglo-Indian community. Cinematographic choices, such as the depiction of Kerala landscapes, symbolic colour palettes, and the use of Western music, enhance the emotional resonance, creating a cultural immersion that deepens the themes of identity, isolation, and resilience. Ultimately, *Akale* (2004) exemplifies how adaptation can transcend simple transposition, instead reshaping a story to reflect distinct social and cultural nuances. *Akale* (2004) reinforces and reimagines Williams's themes of fragile identity, isolation, and cultural survival. This analysis of adaptation as a 'twist' illustrates how stories can bridge diverse cultural landscapes, allowing them to resonate with new audiences while preserving universal themes.

Although *Akale* (2004) achieved only limited commercial success, the film is widely regarded as a masterpiece, earning significant awards, including the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Malayalam. Though not extensively studied, *Akale* (2004) invites deeper exploration, especially given how Anglo-Indians are portrayed in Malayalam cinema.

INSIGHTS FROM EXISTING LITERATURE ON *AKALE* (2004)

Mathew and James (2018) critically address the recurring stereotypes and marginalisation of the Anglo-Indian community in Malayalam films. They argue that such representations lack depth, often portraying the community through negative or limiting stereotypes. Mathew and James thus call for an authentic portrayal that respects the diversity within the Anglo-Indian identity.

Smart (2018) explores the challenges of the film adaptation. She suggests that adaptations should be valued as an art form distinct from novels or plays, with *Akale* (2004) carefully crafted to retain the essence of Tennessee Williams's play while allowing for creative freedom.

Another study of the film, "*Akale* (2004): An Analysis of the Adaptation of Tennessee Williams's Play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) by Shyama Prasad" (Devika, n.d.), analyses the adaptation and suggests that the movie has done justice to the play.

Chemmanam (2021) provides a comprehensive overview of *Akale* (2004) and *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), offering insights into various cinematic elements such as music, cinematography, and costumes which they claim are crucial in enhancing the emotional resonance of the adaptation.

Similarly, in his blog, Ratheesh highlights a key scene, suggesting that Neil's inward journey creates a more introspective, nuanced climax than the play's decisive break. However, I would argue that Shyamaprasad's approach in *Akale* (2004) reinterprets Williams's themes through a Malayali lens, where Neil's internal struggle mirrors the cultural tension within Kerala's Anglo-Indian community. While Tom's departure in *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) represents a literal escape, Neil's story explores a quieter conflict between family loyalty and the desire for freedom, reflecting the values of

familial duty and restraint of Kerala. This choice shifts the focus to the emotional landscapes and unspoken tensions within the Anglo-Indian community, as Shyamaprasad adapts the universal themes of identity and belonging to Kerala's cultural context.

The analysis by Nadira (2011) emphasises how the film's characters inhabit dreamlike spaces, capturing *Akale*'s introspective tone. According to her, the narrative is a poignant reminder that human lives extend beyond personal boundaries. The depth of human connections, whether familial, friendly, or even distant, intricately entangles them. Furthermore, she posits that well-crafted stories, like *Akale* (2004), possess the power to transcend the imaginary realm, leaving a lasting imprint on emotions.

The review of literature reveals a critical gap in studies addressing the Anglo-Indian community's lived experience in Kerala. Although these studies touch on adaptation, gender, and cultural identity, they fall short of a detailed examination of Anglo-Indian life as depicted in *Akale* (2004), overlooking the community's broader historical and social context within Malayalam cinema. The absence of such representation hinders a full understanding of the Anglo-Indian narrative and its cultural significance in Kerala, leaving the community's intricate heritage largely unexplored. In this context, this paper moves beyond the cinematic adaptation itself, proposing a view of the glass menagerie presented in *Akale* (2004) as a symbol of Kerala's Anglo-Indian community and the complexity of their position within the Malayali cultural landscape.

THE TRANSCULTURAL TWIST: REPRESENTATION AND ADAPTATION OF GLASS MENAGERIES

The representation of Anglo-Indians in Malayalam cinema has evolved significantly over time. Earlier films, such as *Chattakkari* (1974), often relied on exotic and stereotypical portrayals, framing Anglo-Indians as 'outsiders' within Indian society. However, subsequent films, including *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* (1992), and *Akale* (2004), began exploring themes of displacement, familial struggles, and psychological depth. This progression culminates in contemporary works like *Hey Jude* (2018), which portrays Jude, a character with Asperger's syndrome, on a journey of self-discovery as he navigates personal relationships and societal norms. This shift reflects a growing cinematic interest in capturing the nuanced Anglo-Indian experience, although some

stereotypical portrayals persist. Notably, Anglo-Indian characters are still often cast with a degree of 'otherness', referred to mockingly by local characters as 'sayippu' and 'madamma' (Malayalam variants of 'Sahib' and 'Madam'), revealing underlying social perceptions that have changed little over time.

Shyamaprasad's meticulous adaptation of Tennessee Williams' play, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), into the film *Akale* (2004) showcases a nuanced preservation of original dialogues and narration while introducing a distinct interpretation of the film's beginning and end. Notably, Shyamaprasad, with his Malayalee background, shifts the cultural context to Kerala in the film, specifically focusing on the Anglo-Indian community. Shyamaprasad's choice offers a unique perspective on the intersection in particular cultures. This deliberate choice raises an intriguing research question: Why did Shyamaprasad choose to depict the Anglo-Indian community amidst the vibrant cultural fabric of Kerala? Did his portrayal do justice to the community's representation? This inquiry is a pivotal aspect of this scholarly exploration, prompting an in-depth analysis of the director's motives and the cultural implications embedded in this cinematic decision. Unravelling the rationale behind selecting the Anglo-Indian community as the backdrop unveils a complex interplay of cultural dynamics, narrative choices, and the director's artistic vision.

What differentiates *Akale* (2004) is its focus on the interiority of its characters rather than their external 'otherness'. The film portrays Margaret, Rose, and Neil not just as Anglo-Indians but as individuals grappling with universal issues such as unfulfilled dreams, emotional isolation, and the weight of familial obligations. The community's cultural markers, such as the colonial-style furniture and lace curtains in their home or the frequent use of English alongside Malayalam enriches the narrative by reflecting their Anglo-Indian heritage. However, these elements remain as contextual details, enhancing the setting without overshadowing the characters' psychological depth. Similarly, the film uses the family's environment—an old house—as a metaphor for their stagnation and marginalisation, rather than romanticising it as a quaint Anglo-Indian setting. *Akale* (2004) situates its characters in a more intimate psychological framework. Shyamaprasad refrains from overt melodrama, instead opting for subtle, character-driven storytelling. Margaret's overbearing nature and Rose's fragility are rooted in their personal circumstances rather than being caricatured as traits tied to

their Anglo-Indian identity. The addition of Kamala, Neil's wife—a character absent in the play—introduces a grounded, contrasting perspective to the narrative, challenging Neil's decisions, particularly regarding family responsibilities and cultural identity. This reflects changing societal dynamics, such as evolving gender roles, the increasing emphasis on cultural integration, and a growing critique of patriarchal decision-making. Kamala's inclusion enriches the story, adding depth to themes of personal accountability and moral conflict, which were less explored in earlier portrayals of Anglo-Indians.

In *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon challenges the conventional view that adaptation is limited to novels and films. She explores the Victorian practice of adapting across various media, emphasising the transition from literature to visualisation. She also questions the perception of adaptation as a "wilfully inferior form of cognition" (as cited in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3), highlighting the bias towards literature over visual representation. She notes a belief in literature's superiority, drawing from Robert Stam, leading to iconophobia and logophilia (as cited in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 4).

Hutcheon raises thought-provoking questions about the prevalence of adaptations despite their often perceived inferiority. She explores the historical roots of adaptation, citing examples like Shakespeare's transformation of popular stories for the stage. Approximately 85% of Oscar-winning movies, she notes, are adaptations, challenging the perception of them as secondary creations (2006, p. 4). Adaptations, according to Hutcheon, are not a modern phenomenon. At the inception of Hollywood cinema, scripts drew inspiration from literature. The early era encompassed black-and-white films, silent productions, and subsequent talkies, all heavily leaning on adaptations from well-known novels, short stories, and dramatic works.

In her self-reflection, Hutcheon posits, "part of this pleasure, I want to argue, comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with piquancy of surprise" (2006, p. 4). Engaging with adaptations, the sparks of "recognition" and "remembrance" awaken this pleasure (2006, p. 4). She remarks, "art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories" (2006, p. 2). This paper explores this dynamic, specifically scrutinising the repetition of a memory play with a unique 'twist'

in the adaptation to a film. The focus is on unravelling the twist in this cross-cultural adaptation.

AKALE (2004): REDEFINING ANGLO-INDIAN NARRATIVES

Shyamaprasad's choice of the Anglo-Indian community in Kerala as the cultural context for his film adaptation, *Akale* (2004), can be attributed to various factors. The community's unique blend of European and Indian heritage provides a rich and distinctive backdrop for storytelling. Known for his nuanced narratives, Shyamaprasad likely found the cultural dynamics, historical context, and marginalisation of the Anglo-Indian community within the larger societal framework to be compelling elements for his adaptation. A notable feature of *Akale* (2004) is the bilingual fluency of its characters, who alternate seamlessly between Malayalam and English. This linguistic duality reflects the Anglo-Indian identity and serves as a narrative device underscoring the cultural hybridity central to the film. By retaining much of the original dialogue from the play while integrating it into Kerala's cultural and linguistic fabric, the adaptation achieves both authenticity and emotional resonance. This creative reinterpretation departs from the norms of Malayalam cinema, aligning with Hutcheon's idea of adaptations involving a fusion of cultures.

In *Akale* (2004), the D'Costa family—Neil D'Costa, Rosemary D'Costa, Margaret D'Costa, and Freddy Evans—is portrayed as Anglo-Indian. The film's setting draws on references to Goa, which contributes to an Anglo-Indian atmosphere but also adds a layer of ambiguity. Goa is historically linked to Portuguese colonial influence, and without explicitly connecting the D'Costas to the Anglo-Indian community, their cultural identity feels less defined. By using a surname like 'D'Costa' in a Kerala setting, the film risks simplifying the complex histories of different communities and presenting them through generalised stereotypes.

The portrayal of Anglo-Indians in media frequently oscillates between romanticised nostalgia and reductive stereotypes, often framing them as relics of a colonial past. For instance, films like *Chattakkari* (1974) lampoon the community's perceived Westernised demeanour, emphasising traits such as their English-speaking proficiency and supposed cultural detachment from Indian norms. While such representations may appear to celebrate their distinctiveness, they often reinforce

reductive perceptions, positioning Anglo-Indians as perpetual outsiders within the Indian socio-cultural landscape. This lampooning is problematic because it reduces the Anglo-Indian experience to superficial traits, ignoring the community's nuanced struggles with identity, inclusion, and systemic marginalisation. In contrast, *Akale* (2004) attempts to challenge these tropes by embedding the Anglo-Indian D'Costa family's narrative within Kerala's broader socio-cultural fabric.

By engaging with these stereotypes, *Akale* (2004) both critiques and perpetuates them, urging viewers to question whether such portrayals genuinely reflect the community's lived realities or merely reinforce their marginalisation through an exoticized lens. This duality in representation—celebratory yet reductive—illustrates the broader issue with media narratives that prioritise aesthetic romanticism over an authentic exploration of identity. As such, while *Akale* (2004) strives for depth, it also exposes the challenges of transcending entrenched stereotypes in cinematic adaptations. Thus, *Akale* (2004) distinguishes itself among Malayalam films by prominently featuring Anglo-Indian characters and centring its narrative around the lives of this community.

AS FRAGILE AS A GLASS: THE 'GLASS MENAGERIES' AND THE ANGLO-INDIAN COMMUNITY

The term 'akale' in Malayalam translates to 'at a distance.' Thus, the title chosen by Shyamaprasad for his film, which reimagines the canvas of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) by Williams, is replete with multiple layers of meaning. At one level, it hints at how each of the characters is distanced from their reality. Neil constantly attempts to walk away from his home, distancing himself from his mother and sister; Margaret is perennially yearning to relive her past glory, unable to come to terms with her present reality; and Laura, too, is distanced from her current life. The characters' distancing from each other, as well as from their lived realities, also seems to suggest that the Anglo-Indians, as a community depicted in the narrative, are distanced from tangible reality. Within this contextual interpretation, the analysis suggests that the Anglo-Indian life and community depicted in the narrative are perceptibly removed from tangible reality. This portrayal underscores the community's continued detachment, encapsulated by a perceived "ghetto mentality" (Mathew & James, p. 32), signifying a psychological and sociocultural distance from mainstream societal integration. The

sense of distance connects deeply to themes of fragility, detachment, and the isolation explored in *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and its adaptation in *Akale* (2004).

It can be argued that the 'glass menagerie' that serves as a metaphor for the Anglo-Indian community in Kerala can also be paralleled with human life that can be broken at any time, falling to its ultimate demise. The human tragedy, emotions, catharsis, and themes of love, fear, betrayal, and escape from responsibility capture the attention of the audience through *Akale* (2004), highlighting universal experiences that provoke reflection on personal and collective struggles. This is exemplified through a medium close-up shot of Margaret and Rose, portraying fear and lost hope, and serving as a visual full stop to their togetherness. These moments reflect Neil's memory of leaving home and convey his uncertainty through the visual distortion.

Figure 1: A medium close-up of Margaret and Rose soon after Neil leaves the house.
Source: Akale (2004), (1:21:26)

Their shared gaze into the distance, as depicted in Figure 1, suggests contemplation of the future, perhaps filled with uncertainty and anticipation. The mixture of hope and fear in their eyes indicates the complexity of their emotions as they navigate difficult circumstances. It symbolises the unknown future, the dreams they aspire to achieve, or even the obstacles they must overcome. The fact that they face this together underscores the strength of their bond and reliance on each other for support.

At the end of the play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), Tom bids farewell to his overbearing mother Amanda and fragile sister Laura. He abandons his family and the

apartment, seeking a new life to pursue his dreams. The play concludes with Tom delivering a poignant monologue:

> I didn't go to the moon, I went much further... I turn around and look into her eyes... Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candles out!
>
> [LAURA bends over the candles.] - for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura - and so good-bye...[She blows the candles out.] (Williams, 1944, pp. 114-115)

Tom has been wandering for ages, searching for something he can't even explain. But no matter how far he goes, something always reminds him of his sister Laura. Maybe it's a glint of light or a broken piece of something, but she's always there. The constant play with the concept of 'light' is heightened in the last act of the play, where Tom tells Laura to blow out the candles, plunging them both into darkness.

However, in *Akale* (2004), Neil angrily leaves, abandoning his mother, Margaret, and sister, Rose, behind glass windows, with a poignant melody underscoring the departure. Shyamaprasad extends the plot with an adaptational twist, transitioning to Neil typing and bringing the narrative to the present, where he meets Freddy Evans on a bus. Freddy later visits Neil with his wife, Betty, and children. Margaret shares a photo album of Rose's later life—a significant addition by Shyamaprasad that departs from the plot of Williams' play. This aligns with Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation as "pleasure of repetition with variation" (2006, p. 4), where familiar narratives gain depth through reinterpretation. The album, symbolising memory and nostalgia, echoes themes in both *Akale* (2004) and *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), highlighting memory's role in preserving identity and connections, with a resonance in the Indian cultural context. This visual and narrative framing contrasts with the play's conclusion, adding a tangible reckoning with loss while highlighting the enduring power of memory. In the next shot, Rose, secluded and withdrawn, is shown with a nurse in a sanatorium in Madurai. In the next shot, her mother, Margaret, makes a passing reference to her daughter's unfulfilled wish to return home and pursue missionary work—a dream thwarted by financial struggles that forced them to sell their home. As Rose's condition worsened, Margaret recounts her emotional decline, her voice trembling as she says, "she was sinking" (1:20:54).

At the end of the film, Rose is snuffing out the candles one by one. There are three candles in the holder. She is seen a little away from Neil in front of a door. Rose, with candles in hand, blows them out, symbolising a quiet release. It's a point-of-view shot from Neil's room, featuring books, a picture—probably of Neil receiving some award—a table, and Rose at the centre. Back in the present, Neil is at his table when his mother calls for dinner. Margaret and Neil, Freddy Evans, Betty, and their two daughters gather around the dining table. Together, they say grace and share a meal. The scene transitions to an old photograph of Rose, with a white scarf gently moving in the air.

While in *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) Tom wanders through life burdened by the intangible memories of Laura, in *Akale* (2004) Neil's encounter with Freddy and the subsequent family visit introduce an opportunity for reconnection. The film concludes with Neil's contemplative words, "There is nothing eternal in this world, Rose, but there is love, gentleness, and life. That is enough. That is enough for me" (1:23:37-1:23:48). This suggests that Neil is ensnared in the cyclical nature of life's tragic phases, much like any other individual. The title of the film appears, accompanied by the song "Roses Are Red (My Love)" (Byron & Evans, 1962), sung by Jim Reeves', bringing a bittersweet end to the narrative. Even after Rose's passing, Neil finds himself unable to move forward in life. The memories of Rose linger, tightly woven into the fabric of his existence.

PLOT TWIST AS PERSPECTIVE: SHYAMAPRASAD'S *AKALE* (2004)

Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation suggests that adaptations are not mere replicas of their source material but involve a creative reimagining that allows for interpretation and transformation. She puts forth the idea of "treating adaptations as adaptations", (2006, p. 14), emphasising treating adaptations independently, free from constant comparison to their source texts. The central question posed about how *Akale* (2004) sets itself apart suggests a conscious effort to adapt and reinterpret the narrative. The narrative focus on Anglo-Indian characters brings a unique perspective, challenging the conventional themes seen in Malayalam films. *Akale* (2004) exemplifies this through its 'twist' on *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), where the story is reinterpreted

within a totally different cultural and linguistic framework, highlighting the universality of the human condition.

The film's Anglo-Indian characters, who speak English as their first language but also converse in Malayalam, are an attempt at maintaining cultural authenticity and reflecting the director's fidelity to the play's dialogue, aligning with Hutcheon's concept that adaptations engage with their sources while transforming them. This choice has enabled the director to retain the original dialogues of the play since Anglo-Indians typically speak English as their mother tongue. However, the seamless incorporation of Malayalam into the characters' interactions serves as a profound marker of transcultural interaction. It showcases the socio-linguistic reality of Anglo-Indians in Kerala, who navigate dual linguistic plurality. Malayalam, adopted naturally within the framework of their lives, enriches the narrative by symbolising their integration into Kerala's multicultural environment while preserving their distinctiveness. By incorporating Malayalam, Shyamaprasad acknowledges and reinforces the Anglo-Indian legacy in Kerala, situating the community within the broader linguistic and cultural fabric of the region. This transcultural representation demonstrates how Malayalam is embraced alongside English, reflecting a lived hybridity that resonates with the community's identity. Thus, *Akale* (2004) successfully intertwines language, legacy, and transcultural interaction to craft an adaptation that is both faithful to its source and uniquely rooted in the Malayalam-Anglo-Indian experience. This deliberate approach highlights Shyamaprasad's creative reimagining of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), transforming it into a narrative that resonates deeply within its new cultural context. Thus, the choice of Shyamaprasad to feature Anglo-Indians helped him with the work of appropriating and adapting Williams' play to Malayalam using these English-speaking characters as the bridge.

In contrast to the typical portrayal of women in Malayalam cinema, where female characters are often objectified or reduced to mere subjects of scrutiny, *Akale* (2004) departs from this norm by presenting its female characters with greater depth and agency. This approach both conforms to and challenges existing stereotypes within the Anglo-Indian community. While *Akale* (2004) aligns with certain stereotypes regarding Anglo-Indian men, it distinctly contests those typically associated with Anglo-Indian women, highlighting Shyamaprasad's nuanced representation. His

choice to set the film within the Anglo-Indian milieu amplifies the adaptation's effectiveness, allowing the film to explore themes of identity and isolation. Unlike typical representations in Malayalam cinema, where Anglo-Indian women are frequently subject to objectification, *Akale* (2004) offers a more complex portrayal. Both Rose and Margaret are crafted with unique and layered personalities that set them apart. A comparative analysis with other young Anglo-Indian characters depicted in Malayalam cinema such as Julie in *Chattakari* (1974), Elsie in *Daivathinte Vikruthikal* (1992), Elizabeth D'Cruz in *Madanolsavam* (1978), and Angel in *Violin* (2011), reveals how Rose's distinctive style, characterised by loose, flowing dresses, is contrasted with the conventional, tight-fitting, glamorous attire often seen in portrayals of Anglo-Indian women in Malayalam films. This deliberate aesthetic choice enriches the narrative, offering a fresh perspective on the representation of Anglo-Indian women.

Rose's character is also marked by shyness and a slight limp, which contributes to her fragile mental state and sense of self-consciousness. Geethu Mohandas, who portrays Rose, brings depth and sensitivity to the character. She effectively conveys her emotional nuances through precise body language, facial expressions, and restrained movements, despite minimal dialogue. This sensitive portrayal not only does justice to Rose's character but also challenges stereotypes by offering a nuanced and thoughtful representation of Anglo-Indian women in Malayalam cinema. Rose, like her favourite unicorn glass figurine, is fragile and different; she lives in her own imaginary world, finding peace and life in the glass menagerie.

Figure 2: A close-up shot of Rose with her glass menagerie.
Source: Akale (2004), (14:15)

She spends time looking at them and arranging them, as demonstrated in figure 2, using them as a form of escape from reality. The glass menagerie serves as her coping mechanism for her inferiorities, insecurities, and fears. The limp prevents her from mingling with people, and she labels herself as good for nothing. However, she finds hope in Freddy Evans, who visits with Neil. Freddy's presence uplifts her; she dances with him, reminiscing about her school days when he, as one of her seniors, had captured her attention. Freddy stands out as the most grounded and practical character in the film. Focused on his future, he pursues evening classes in electronics after working all day at a warehouse, showing his dedication to learning and a practical view of the future.

Margaret, the maternal figure, is filled with enthusiasm and hope, desiring gentleman callers for her daughter. She also reflects on her own youth and past in Goa, dressing in plain, light-coloured, and faded attire—a wardrobe choice likely shaped by limited options rather than personal preference. This modest style contrasts with the glamorous, tight-fitted or bodycon clothing often seen on Anglo-Indian female characters in Malayalam cinema, such as Julie in *Chattakari* or Angel in *Violin*. However, Margaret's style wasn't always so simple. In one scene, she nostalgically reveals a vibrant dress from her youth in Goa, crafted by her mother for the carnival. She fondly recalls attending the carnival aged seventeen, even while unwell, and proudly mentions receiving seventeen marriage proposals, ultimately choosing a sailor as her husband. Margaret's character goes beyond that of a doting, anxious mother; she actively engages with her community, selling items to neighbours, likely fellow Anglo-Indians, as suggested by their attire. This scene highlights Anglo-Indian cultural distinctions, particularly the tradition of financial independence for women. Unlike most Malayali women of that era, Anglo-Indian women like Margaret often contributed economically, reflecting a greater degree of independence within their community. This cultural difference underscores Margaret's resilience and self-sufficiency, further enriching her portrayal.

Music plays a pivotal role in establishing the film's mood. The composer has aimed to create a fusion of Western and Indian classical influences, enhancing the depth of *Akale* (2004). While nine original melodies are recorded for *Akale* (2004), the film version incorporates background music and songs from English albums. All the songs

are crafted to evoke a sense of enjoyment in solitude, with the instruments delicately orchestrated, suggesting the fragility akin to a glass menagerie. The compositions are deliberately slow-paced, demanding patience for their full appreciation. Two songs, namely “Akale” (At a distance) and “Nee Januvariyil Viriyumo” (Will you bloom in January?), have garnered significant acclaim from the audience. The latter, featuring a chorus of “Blue rose”, draws inspiration from Beethoven’s *Fur Elise*, released in 1867.

Building on its unique narrative lens, *Akale* (2004) also employs distinct visual and cinematic techniques to create an atmosphere that resonates with the film’s dramatic core. S. Kumar’s cinematography incorporates sepia-toned and softly glowing visuals, evoking a sense of nostalgia and suggesting an era lost in memory. This visual choice is not merely stylistic but serves to deepen the emotional impact, allowing viewers to experience the story’s reflective and dreamlike quality. By adapting its visual style in this way, *Akale* (2004) reverberates with Hutcheon’s idea that adaptations transform artistic forms, using cinematography to enrich the story’s mood and set it apart from typical Malayalam cinema.

Shyamaprasad creatively adapts *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) into a 1970s Kerala setting, highlighting the Anglo-Indian community through visual storytelling. He uses architecture, music, and character body language to depict this marginal community, skillfully blending realism with narrative. Elements like curtained arched doorways, dining tables set with Western-style utensils, and characters speaking in English reflect Anglo-Indian traditions and blur the lines between reality and fiction. These visual cues immerse the audience in a lifelike world that feels both familiar and constructed, enhancing the narrative’s authenticity.

In its genre, too, *Akale* (2004) diverges by leaning heavily into drama. This marks a shift from the prominent genres in Malayalam cinema, such as action, family-centred narratives, and melodramatic romance. This genre adaptation allows *Akale* (2004) to explore themes of psychological depth and internal conflict, emphasising character introspection over conventional plot-driven elements. Such a choice embodies Hutcheon’s notion that adaptations involve a negotiation of artistic forms, as the film

reinterprets *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) through a dramatic lens that feels distinct and culturally resonant.

In transforming this play into a realistic portrayal, the film relies on the skilful performances of its actors in the film—Prithviraj, Sheela, Geethu, and Tom George—who bring the script's characters to life. Much like musical scores or dance notations, scripts serve as guides, providing dialogue and stage directions that actors interpret and embody on screen. Performers play a vital role in adapting these written guides into memorable presentations, using language, movement, and expression to transform the text into an engaging, expressive experience. In *Akale* (2004), this collaborative adaptation of script and performance allows the film's thematic and visual richness to fully resonate with audiences, creating a lasting impact that honours its source material while establishing its own distinct artistic identity. Hutcheon (2006) reflects on this insight as:

> In a very real sense, every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance. The text of a play does not necessarily tell an actor about such matters as the gestures, expressions, and tones of voice to use in converting words on a page into a convincing performance; it is up to the director and actors to actualize the text and to interpret and then recreate it, thereby, in a sense, adapting it for the stage. (p. 39)

A script does not dictate gestures, expressions, or vocal tones, leaving it to the creative team to actualise, interpret, and recreate the text for the stage, effectively adapting it anew with each performance. Each audience member, in turn, interprets the performance through their own perspective, engaging in a personal adaptation of the story.

In *Akale* (2004), the process of adaptation begins with a distinctive 'twist' in the narration, which Hutcheon would describe as an interpretive act of appropriation or salvaging (2006, p. 9). The film opens in Calcutta with a scene featuring Neil and Kamala in a taxi. The background score in the opening scene, which is the song "Moon River" (Mercer & Mancini, 1963), sung by Pat Boone, conveys longing and aspiration, resonating with the characters of *Akale* (2004) and the emotional tone of their journeys. This contrasts with the American setting of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), as

Akale (2004) introduces a uniquely Indian context through the characters' casual conversation in the taxi. Neil tells Kamala about a film he recently watched, describing

> I have seen in a film that there is a city beneath a city—a secret city with underground paths, shops, houses, and numerous people residing there. Unaware that there exists a world above them, they live in their own air-conditioned apartments, in peace and happiness. Without glimpses of the sky, trees, or mountains, and in fact, without seeing anything. They never see anything; I remember it so well, you know. There are only a few who know about the world above, but they... (0.49–1.35).

This narrative not only sets the scene but also subtly foreshadows the hidden desires and unfulfilled dreams of the film's characters, aligning with Linda Hutcheon's view that adaptations transform and contemporise source material while preserving its core emotional essence. Neil's story about the hidden city serves as a metaphor for his own struggles, symbolising the insular mindset often associated with Anglo-Indians and their reluctance to fully engage with the broader Indian world. Kamala's apparent disinterest in Neil's story introduces an emotional disconnect between them, suggesting underlying tensions in their relationship. After the taxi ride, Neil bids farewell to Kamala, who wishes him success in his writing. Traditionally, Anglo-Indians have been depicted as maintaining close-knit, culturally insular circles. By pairing Neil with a non-Anglo-Indian, Shyamaprasad challenges this stereotype, encouraging viewers to see Neil as more than his cultural identity.

Figure 3: Kamala bids farewell to Neil.
Source: Akale (2004), (5:00)

As shown in figure 3, this farewell exchange also lays the groundwork for the couple's relationship, as Kamala accuses Neil of selfishness, attributing their daughter Rakhi's withdrawal to him. Her question, "Do you hate yourself?" prompts Neil's poignant reply, "always, really, all the time" (5:32), revealing the depth of his internal struggle. This opening interaction sets a reflective tone for Neil's journey, foreshadowing the film's exploration of isolation, belonging, and self-acceptance.

Mathew and James (2018) argue that "Anglo-Indian men have been typified in Malayalam filmic discourses as capricious, mendacious, and lazy, which culminates in them being represented as the 'other', securing the 'centre' for the men of elite castes" (p. 28). Both Tom and Neil attempt to escape the responsibilities of their family, seeking to evade the burdens of a shy and disabled sister and a pestering mother. The absence of a father figure looms large, and the fear of abandonment shapes their lives. Neil decides to follow in his father's footsteps by leaving the family. At a certain point, Neil acknowledges this connection, stating, "I am like my father; we are wanderers" (00:48:54-57). This portrayal reinforces the stereotype associated with Anglo-Indian men, which includes escapism from responsibilities, a tendency to live in illusions and distorted realities, shattered dreams, and struggles with alcoholism. Neil exemplifies this portrayal, feeling disillusioned with life and constantly mourning his unfulfilled aspirations. His struggles with familial responsibilities and societal stereotypes reflect a deeper yearning for a meaningful existence, while his escapism underscores the weight of cultural expectations and the difficulty of adaptation in a rapidly changing world.

CONCLUSION

In *Akale* (2004), Shyamaprasad reimagines Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) through the cultural lens of the Anglo-Indian community in Kerala, a group often associated with a fading cultural identity. The adaptation incorporates a 'double twist' by simultaneously recontextualizing the play to reflect the community's transitions and shifting from the play's narrative mode of 'telling' to a cinematic approach of 'showing'. While deeply rooted in this cultural milieu, the film captures universal themes of familial disintegration and personal longing, emphasizing the fragility of individual lives without reducing the narrative to a sweeping communal

claim. This layered approach highlights the transformational power of cultural re-imagination.

This analysis draws from Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) to posit that Shyamaprasad's act of creative re-conceptualisation elevated his work beyond mere replication, transforming the adaptation process into a regenerative space of conversation. The intercultural interplay between two creators separated by culture and time reflects the malleability and universality of storytelling. A comparison of the two versions fosters the possibility for not just a new appreciation for the original story but also looks at what inspired its re-interpretation. Therefore, *Akale* (2004) is a testament to the dynamics of story-telling and its re-telling in a different cultural setting and a different mode of expression navigating the challenges of translating intricate character dynamics and symbolic elements into a visual narrative.

Shyamaprasad strategically places the Anglo-Indian community amidst Kerala's vibrant cultural fabric. The light, cinematography, music, choreography, art direction, costumes, acting, and every other element have made *Akale* (2004) a fabulous piece of art. It is rooted in the unique cultural fusion and diversity found in the region, using the Anglo-Indian community's Western-influenced lifestyle as a compelling storytelling canvas. The film thus delves into the cultural intersections between traditional Kerala and Western influences. Shyamaprasad's interpretation, despite its innovative narrative choices, appears to align with the prevalent negative stereotypes regarding the Anglo-Indian community within Malayalam cinema, potentially perpetuating existing stereotyping. While Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) portrays human tragedy, Shyamprasad's *Akale* (2004) focuses on the human tragedy further aggravated by the forces of stereotyping within the Anglo-Indian community of Kerala. This intentional departure aims to inject novelty into the cinematic landscape while preserving the essence of the play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944).

The adaptation in *Akale* (2004) demonstrates a notable shift from typical approaches, moving beyond simple replication of source material or the usual norms of Malayalam cinema. Although *Akale* (2004) does, in part, align with certain Anglo-Indian stereotypes prevalent in Malayalam cinema such as such as an emphasis on their Westernised mannerisms or otherness—it simultaneously challenges alternative

stereotypes by portraying the nuances and complexities of the characters' inner lives. Shyamaprasad's creative reimagining of the cultural and narrative elements gives the film a distinctive identity, balancing between conventional genre expectations and fresh, introspective storytelling.

However, the film's portrayal of Anglo-Indian culture raises questions about its authenticity, prompting reflection on whether it adequately captures the community's diversity and intricacies. This research calls for greater awareness of the inherent contradictions in identity portrayal and the importance of amplifying marginalised voices within cultural narratives. The inferences gathered through this study underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of identity in artistic representations, particularly in contexts marked by cultural diversity and historical legacies of colonialism. By challenging simplistic narratives and embracing the complexity of cultural identities, filmmakers can contribute to a more inclusive and representative cinematic landscape.

Akale (2004) reimagines the play's themes, bridging cultures and evoking both universal and culturally distinct experiences of loss, duty, and identity, while honouring the timeless resonance of Williams' work. The film maintains the core elements of the play, the filmmaker Shyamprasad adapts it to the Anglo-Indian community of Kerala who speak English but also converse fluently in the local language, Malayalam. This is in line with Hutcheon's idea that adaptations involve a dialogue with the source material, acknowledging and transforming its essence. The film therefore suggests a form of intertextuality and affirms Linda Hutcheon's idea that adaptations involve a negotiation of different artistic forms. The paper concludes by reaffirming the idea that adaptations may become quite legitimate adoptions.

First Author:
Sreelakshmi KV *is a Ph.D. Research Scholar at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University. Her academic interests include postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and regional literature. Her research focuses on the representation of migration and the cultural identities of Kerala.*
Email id: english.sreelakshmi@unigoa.ac.in

Second Author:
Dr. Nina Caldeira *is Professor of English at the Shenoi Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University. She is the former Dean of the Faculty of Languages & Literature, Goa University. She specialises in Postcolonialism, Multiculturalism and Studies on Goa. She has authored the* book Multiculturalism and the Marginalised Psyche in Select Representative Fiction of Canada *and edited the book* Goa through the Traveller's Lens *and the book* Tradition, Continuity and Change: Goan Society in Transition(s). *Email ID: nina@unigoa.ac.in*

REFERENCES

B, D. (n.d.). 06. *Akale: an analysis of the adaptation of Tennessee Williams's play Glass Menagerie by Shyamaprasad*. Studocu. https://www.studocu.com/in/document/university-of-calicut/english-language-and-literature/06akale-an-analysis-of-the-adaptation-of-tennessee-williamss-play-glass-menagerie-by-shyama-prasad-devika-b/21908095.

Chemmanam, M. R. (2022, July 15). Akale: An adaptation of the Glass Menagerie. Medium. https://mariamroy.medium.com/akale-an-adaptation-of-the-glass-menagerie-e6a5a32175f_9

Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis.

Mathew, P. A., & James, R. (2018). Between two worlds: Anglo-Indian stereotypes and Malayalam cinema. *International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies, 18*(1). https://www.international-journal-of-anglo-indian-studies.org/index.php/IJAIS/article/view/202.

Nadira. (2011, September 16). "Akale" and "The Glass Menagerie". *Nadira from Kannur*. https://nadirafromkannur.wordpress.com/2011/09/16/akale-and-the-glass-menagerie/

Rahul, R. (2024, March 29). Anglo-Indians in Kerala determined to assert 'Indian' rights, voices concern. *The New Indian Express.* https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2024/Mar/29/anglo-indians-in-kerala-determined-to-assert-indian-rights-voices-concerns.

Rajendran, L. (Director). (1992). *Daivathinte Vikrithikal* [Film]. Chalachitra Film Society.

Sethumadhavan, K. S. (Director). (1974). *Chattakkari* [Film]. Navodaya Studio.

Shyamaprasad (Director). (2004). *Akale* [Film]. Tom George Kolath.

https://youtu.be/uBZrNGMCkL8?feature=shared.

Shyamaprasad (Director). (2018). *Hey Jude* [Film]. Ambalakkara Global Films.

Smart, N. E. (2018). Akale: An Honest Transposition of the *Glass Menagerie*. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature,* 6(1), 339-341. http://www.rjelal.com/6.1.18/339341%20NAMITHA%20ELIZABETH%20SMART. pdf.

Vadhyar, R. K. (2005, October 19). Akale. LiveJournal. https://ratheesh.livejournal.com/217646.html.

Williams, T. (1950). *The Glass Menagerie*. Dell Pub. Co.