

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Shauna Singh Baldwin was born in Montreal and grew up in India. Baldwin is the author of *English Lessons and other Stories*, *What the Body Remembers* and *The Tiger Claw*. She is also the co-author of *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America*. Her short fiction, poetry and essays have been published in literary magazines in the United States, Canada and India. From 1991-1994 she was an independent radio producer, hosting "Sunno!", the East Indian-American radio show.

Baldwin holds an MBA from Marquette University. Her first novel *What the Body Remembers* was published in 1999. It has been translated into eleven languages, and was awarded the 2000 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Canada/Carribbean region. Baldwin's awards include India's International Nehru Award for public speaking and the National Shastri Award. She is the recipient of the 1995 Writer's Union of Canada Award for short prose and the 1997 Canadian Literary Award. *English Lessons and Other Stories* received the 1996 Friends of American Writer's Award. She is the nominee of Giller Prize 2004.

#### **A Glimpse of *The Tiger Claw***

Shauna Singh Baldwin's second novel, *The Tiger Claw*, fictionalizes the life of Noor Inayat Khan. She is the daughter of the well-known Sufi, Hazarat Inayat Khan. Her life story exemplifies the message of universalism. A nationalistic descendant of Tipu Sultan, an Indian ruler who had fought against the British Raj, Noor, nonetheless, becomes an allied agent in the occupied France during the Second World War. It is a magnificent portrait of a very courageous woman, the legendary French resistance fighter, who fights against the Nazis in World War II.

At the outset of the novel, we come across a bleak German prison cell with Noor, where she is shackled and freezing from the winter's cold. It is December 1943, the turning point in the war raging in Europe. Noor's captor Herr Vogel allows her onionskin paper on which he directs her to write children's stories. She not only does so, but also secretly writes letters to someone she addresses as ma-petite, the sprit of the child she had conceived with Armand Rivkin, a French-Jewish musician and her love of her life. Although she must keep the letters hidden from her captor, it is through these words to her unborn child, alternating with a thrilling third-person narrative, that we learn Noor's courageous and heart-rending story. Noor's mother is an American from Boston who married the Sufi musician Hazarat. Growing up in France, Noor is extremely close with her liberal Musician father, but when he dies, Noor's conservative uncle Tajuddin and her brother Kabir govern the family. Uncle Tajuddin and Kabir disapprove of Noor's love for Armand and as the men of the family in 1930s France, they have the legal right to stop her engagement. Noor is then faced with the choice between defying her family and turning against her heart. She stops seeing Armand, but is devastated and lonely. Once the war begins, Noor's family heads to England while Armand's family stays. When Germany invades France, Noor despairs of ever seeing Armand again, until Kabir unwittingly introduces her to his new friend who is recruiting bilingual women for the resistance. Noor is offered training and she accepts it. She will help defeat the Germans, but her true purpose will be to find and reunite with Armand. As a resistance agent, Noor trains to be a radio operator, taking on a second identity—Nora Baker, one of many names she will eventually assume. When she arrives in France, she plays Anne-Marie-Reginer—a woman caring for sick aunt—and to other spies in her resistance network, she is known as Madeleine. She has secret rendezvous with other agents,

transmits radio messages from very safe houses, and risks capture at every turn. She rents an apartment across Drancy, the concentration camp where she knows Armand is being held. At great peril, she sends him a message—the tiger claw pendant which she always wears for luck and courage. But she is captured by the Nazis and even after the fall of Nazism and the end of the Second World War, she remains disappeared.

*The Tiger Claw* has been analyzed from various perspectives. The periodical *Macleans* sees it as "a startling story of an upper-class Muslim woman . . . [that] parallels with post—9/11 America—not the fight against a ruthless enemy, but the locking up of people without charge or trial, the crackdown on non citizens' rights and judicial impotence in a time of war fever" (Iss 46). The critic Juliet Waters in the periodical *Flare* views it as "an adventure-romance inspired by the life of Noor Inayat Khan, an Indian Muslim princess who worked as a spy during the Second World War (2004). In an interview with Anne Hines, Shauna Singh Baldwin says *The Tiger Claw* teaches that "hope and optimism are essential if we are to overcome the worldwide return to fascism and hate-based politics" (Hines 2004). It is also a criticism of imperial powers through the eyes of a Muslim heroine. It can be interpreted as a portrayal of the triumph of love and hope over the forces that try to kill our compassion, our humanity. Nevertheless, my focus in this dissertation is to explore the exploitation of political irony in *The Tiger Claw* with the purpose of shedding light on the rebellious part of the nature of women that subverts that delimiting patriarchy supplanting it with the feminist ethos.

I have divided it into four chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction of Shauna Singh Baldwin and her latest novel *The Tiger Claw*. The second chapter deals with political irony in line with Linda Hutcheon in detail. The third chapter is the

textual analysis in which I have tried to throw light on Baldwin's ironic intention in her novel in order to empower a subaltern female subjectivity. The last chapter, conclusion is the summary of my whole thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Methodology

#### The Outline of Irony

Encyclopedia Britannica divides irony into two categories: verbal irony and dramatic irony. In verbal irony, "the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the literal meanings of the words" (390). In dramatic irony, there is a theatrical situation in which there is an "incongruity between what is expected and what occurs" (390). For Samuel Johnson irony is "a mode of speech of which the meaning is contrary to the word" (qtd. in Enright 5). The single and unanimous definition of irony is quite impossible as new meanings evolve from the same work because of its overuse over time. Etymological study of irony reveals that it has its roots in Greek antiquity. The Greek word *eironeia* derives from Greek comic character Eiron, a clever underdog, who, by his wit, repeatedly triumphs over the boastful Alazon. In Greek comedy, irony denotes a mode of behaviour or expression with the pretence "to be saying or doing one thing while really conveying quite different [often opposite] messages" (Muecke 33). The Greek term *eironeia* for irony has been used in Plato's *Republic*. The Socratic irony in Platonic dialogues derives from this comic origin. Socrates exposes the profound ignorance of other participants in the dialogue. To achieve this purpose, he feigns ignorance and humility asking silly and obvious questions of all sorts of people on all sorts of subjects. Likewise, Latin term *ironia* is used by Cicero to elaborate the rhetoric of irony. Irony, especially in its Greek use, is the result of the pretence with volition of the eiron, an ironist, and the self-deception of the alazon, a victim of the irony. That dialectical chasm or cleavage between appearance and reality or eironic and alazonic traits in irony has been later explored as a powerful rhetorical enforcement for its special rhetorical and artistic effects and then later as "a

discursive strategy" in order to corrode the dominant ethics" (Hutcheon 194).

Therefore, irony can be defined as involving disjunction between intended and explicit meaning. To put it clearly in different terms, irony emerges out of the contrast between what is implied by actions and what are the actual consequences, what is stated and what is the intent, or what is expected to happen and what actually occurs.

The rhetorical dimension of the irony came into being in Socratic dialogue for the first time. It later came to be known as Socratic irony with an association with Socrates' feigned ignorance in order to enrich his arguments. Socratic irony is engendered from the speaker's pretence "to be ignorant . . . under the guise of seeking to be taught by others. But, ultimately s/he teaches others by" . . . investigating the things beneath to the earth and in the heavens . . . (Muecke 9). Socratic irony conceals a skeptical, non committal attitude towards some dogmas or opinions lacking reason as their basis. The ironic effects of such an irony is enriched by the audience's knowledge that speaker is wiser than s/he permits himself/herself to appear. To some extent, the speaker is aware of the fact in advance that the apparent naive interrogation is in fact a tool to lead to the exposure of ignorance on the part of the participants of the discussion. Cicero and Quintilian make use of Socratic irony.

Verbal irony's site is the statement in which "the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from" the apparently stated meaning (Abrams 135). Sometimes it is anti-phrastic. The signified is just the opposite of the signifier. Here, the ostensible expression is signifier and the opposite meaning is the signified. In this case, it is " a rhetorical device by which one 'praises-by-blame' or 'blames-by-praises'" (Seery 164). Throughout the English classical period verbal irony was associated with "mockery and derision" (164). The incommensurability between the said and the unsaid meaning produces verbal irony. Verbal irony, to put it in terms of Muecke, is:

a game for two players, the ironist, in his role of naif, proffers a text but in such a way or in such a context as will stimulate the reader to reject its expressed literal meaning in favor of an unexpected 'transliteral' meaning of contracting import . . . . The basic technique is either that of going with the ironic butt and placing him [/her] in high relief or that of depreciating oneself, which is the counter sinking ontaglio method. (35-36)

Muecke further adds that verbal irony depends upon ironists intention shared with the reader.

In structural irony, there is no use of verbal irony. Rather there is a structural characteristic that helps to produce "a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work" (Abrams 135). Either the text invents a naive hero, or a naive narrator or spokesperson. The difference between the verbal irony and the structural irony is that the former relies on the knowledge of fictional speaker's ironic intention, which is shared both by the speaker and the reader, where as the latter relies on the knowledge of the ironist's intention, which is shared by the reader but is not intended by the fictional persona. The use of the fallible narrator is another structural device to create irony.

Sarcasm is taunting and invective, so provocative. Sarcasm refers to the crude and taunting use of apparent praise for dispraise. It derives from the Greek verb "sarkazein", "to tear flesh" (135).

Dramatic irony consists of a situation either in a play or in a narrative in which the ironist shares the knowledge with the interpreter of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant. The devices to create dramatic irony are - (a) to present a character who unknowingly acts in a way that is inappropriate to

the particular situation and (b) to present a character whose speech anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way the character intends. The ironic intensity in dramatic irony is achieved by lending its alazonic characters maximum conviction over what they believe and act so that the inevitable reversal of the situation or the recognition of reality generates intense tragic or comic irony. Dramatic irony becomes tragic when the demystification of real situation leads to:

a typical case of involving a victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who, acting on the basis of these, takes step to avoid a foreseen evil or profit from a foreseen good, but his [/her] actions serve only to lock him [/her] into a casual chain that leads inevitable to his [/her] downfall. (Muecke 69)

Dramatic irony occurs also in comedy. Here, the revelation of reality effects humor leading the characters to the happy resolution.

Cosmic irony is the irony of fate. It is portrayed as a clash between human endeavours and divine villainy in tipping over the human hopes and ambitions. In cosmic irony, a deity or fate is engaged in manipulating events. As a result, that leads the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them. Thomas Hardy is famous for this structural device. The proposition put forward by cosmic irony theorist is that human actions result in their own tragic end because of the hostility between the humans and the divine.

Romantic irony came into being in the nineteenth century that saw the extension of application of irony from verbal phenomena to events, dramas and fate itself. Irony, during this period, designated "an entire philosophical outlook, a particular way of recognizing contradictions and disparities, not just in sentences but somehow in the world at large" (Seery 164). G.G. Sedgewik contends that in the

Romantic Period, irony represented not "a mere clash of speech with meanings or of apparent situations with real situation but also the mental attitude of being divine or human, who beholds such things" (qtd. in Seery 164). The evolution of irony, from the Classical to the Romantic period has seen a shift of focus from words as objects to ironists as subjects. For Sedgewik, "there are two sides of the concept of irony: an objective and a subjective side" (165). The objective side refers to the "clash between appearance and reality in events or language" and the subjective side represents the "sense of this clash as felt by a dramatist or a spectator" (165).

Muecke summarizes the evolution of irony in Romantic period as follows:

We have seen the concept of irony enlarged in this Romantic Period beyond instrumental irony (someone being ironical) to include. . . (things seen or presented as ironic). These observable ironies—whether ironies of events, of character (self - ignorance, self- betrayal)' of situation, or of ideas (for example, the unseen. inner contradictions of a philosophical system. . .), could be seen as local or universal. They were all major developments, not least the development of the concept of . . . Cosmic Irony or General Irony, the irony of the universe with man or the individual as a victim. (165)

Muecke saw the development of irony one step further. According to Muecke, the irony of events "turned back toward a consideration of man as an author, for a general word—irony posed the question of man's ability to comprehend such a world and to act within it" (165-66). Friedrich Schlegel sees the revelation of irony on its own in the structure of the text, yet the lexeme irony means the artists' mental stance with respect to his own creations. The artist is "fully aware of the ironies inherent in the very fact of being an artist" (166).

New critics used irony "as a general criterion of literary value" (Abrams 137). I. A. Richards defined irony in poetry "as an equilibrium of opposing attitudes and evaluations" (138). The greatest poem, for new critics, "incorporates the poets' own ironic" awareness of opposite and complementary attitudes (138). Cleanth Brooks argues that irony is the basic principle of poetry. According to Brooks, poetry creates an experience not by direct imitation but by indirections and connotations; but these metaphors and connotations are not released from a statement until its meaning is "warped" or "loaded" from the pressures of the context (Seery 183). Brooks call the warping of the statement by the context "ironical", and "irony" as the acknowledgement of the pressure of the text (184). For Brooks, there is a universe of discourse which is different from the context.

The categorization of irony into stable and unstable by Wayne C. Booth covers all types and approaches to irony in his book, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1975). Stable irony involves four marks in application—"intended", "covert", "fixed" and "finite" (6). The stable irony offers some patent clues that serve the interpreter to unravel what is implied. The irony, in such case, provides "literary fixity" of which we can have "absolute", "univocal" and fixed interpretation (6). The stable irony, therefore, covers all intentional, socratic, verbal, structural, dramatic and cosmic ironies, which say one thing and intend to mean something opposite (3-5). On the other hand, the unstable irony lacks the fixity to offer the ground for fixed meaning. It is rather an attitude toward irony with the belief that there is no logos that can guarantee the determinacy of the implied meaning. It's like a duck - rabbit picture depending on the different angles to look at it for the certainty of its meaning. Unstable irony is quite closer to the deconstructive irony.

The deconstructive irony has its basis on the conceptual framework of theories of Jacques Derrida and Paul De Man:

Its overt production of meaning through deferral and difference has been seen to point to the problematic nature of all languages; from a purely semantic point of view, the ironic situation of plural and separate meanings—the said together with unsaid held in suspension—might challenge any notion of language as having a direct one to one referential relation to any single reality outside itself. (Hutcheon 57)

The fluctuating nature of language undermines the ground for fixed meanings. The irony operates where, as in De Man's terms, "the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference" (qtd in Hutcheon 64).

Beerendra Pandey throws light on deconstructive irony further in *Intellectual History Reader*:

Deconstructive irony "becomes the motor of the entire rhetorical system. It signifies a refusal to hypostatize notion of the self, of meaning, or interpretative as an end point" to the "otherwise vertiginous process of textual such as Booth's sharable norms" (55). The deconstructive irony is inherent in its signification, in its deferrals and in its negations of certainty. It is a power to entertain widely divergent possible interpretations to provoke the reader into seeing that there is . . . radical openness surrounding the process by which meanings get determined in the text and interpreted by readers (665).

Even the deconstructive reading does not entirely negate the possibility of meanings in the text. Derrida interprets "a text . . . 'lisible'" (readable or intelligible),

since it engenders effects of having determinate meanings, no matter how provisional they are (Abrams 58). My position is that there are different factors involved in bringing about the irony: the ironist, the interpreter, the text, the discursive communities, the attitudes, preconceptions and intentions of the ironist and the interpreter, textual, historical cultural contexts and many others. To sum up the classification of all ironies, it can be said that there are some signals in the text that the writer wants to convey something implicitly which is different from what he/she apparently says. It does not necessarily mean what he/she wants to say is just the opposite to what is stated.

### **The Politics of Irony**

Discursive analysis conflates irony with wider historical and cultural contexts. The discursive strategy of irony is associated with discursive analysis—the politics of representation in the practice of cultural studies. The discursive analysis examines the nexus between knowledge, power and the discourse. The production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures: rules of exclusion, classification, ordering, and distribution, as well as rules determining who may speak, when, how, where and on what topic. This is where "the political dimension reveals its inescapable presence within the social" (qtd in Hutcheon 90). Irony is used and understood as a discursive practice or strategy. The scene of irony is social and political.

Irony happens in all kinds of discourse ranging from verbal, aural, visual to common speech to highly crafted aesthetic form to high art to popular culture. Irony is a matter of concern in issues like gender, race, class, or sexuality. There is a gendered attitude toward irony throughout history in discourses. Kierkegaard sees it as a "feminine vampire" when it is "debilitating" (qtd in Hutcheon 8). Woman is thought

to be incapable of using and understanding it, when it is thought to be a sign of intellect. Irony can be used as a backlash. Hutcheon calls it the "edge" of irony (Hutcheon 10). Verbal and structural ironies are either praised or criticized depending on how and on whose interest they are seen to function. Anyone might come under fire as "[I]rony's guns face in every direction" (Enright 110). The ironic position is no exception to the fact that no epistemological or ideological position is ever intrinsically either right or wrong, either dangerous or safe, either reactionary or progressive. In this sense, nothing is absolute and everything should be considered vis-a-vis relativity. Irony does not entirely lie in the ironist's intention, nor is it solely found in the text without the participation of the interpreters. The irony, instead, comes out of:

dynamic and plural relations among the text or utterance (and its context), the so-called ironist, the interpreter, and the circumstances surrounding the discursive situation: it is these that mess up neat theories of irony that see the task of the interpreter simply as one of decoding or reconstructing some "real" meaning . . . a meaning that is hidden, deemed accessible, behind the stated one. (Hutcheon 11)

The major participants in bringing about the ironic meaning in this game are the interpreter and the ironist. Clarifying the distinction between an interpreter and the victim of irony, Hutcheon further delineates that "the interpreter may—or may not—be the intended addressee of the ironist, but s/he . . . is the one who attributes irony and then interprets it . . . the one who decides whether the utterance is ironic (or not), and then what particular irony it might have" (11).

The reader response position of Linda Hutcheon regarding irony gives the interpreter upper hand in bringing it forth. Therefore, Hutcheon calls it a risky

business because there is no guarantee that the interpreter will get the irony in the same way as it was intended. It does not mean that the ironist has very little role with respect to irony. It is the ironist who intends to set up an ironic relation between the said and the unsaid. Nevertheless, s/he may not always be successful in communicating that intention. Since irony is edgy, the issue of intentionality in a post-Derridean, post-Barthesian and post-Foucaultian age is unavoidable. However, it sounds ironic. The political issues that arise around irony's usage and interpretation invariably focus on the issue of intention. Irony has become an important strategy of oppositional rhetoric because of its very foregrounding of the politics of human agency. The semantic dimension of the irony is difficult to treat in isolation, without keeping not only "an eye on the receiver, but the other on the surrounding tension-filled environments" (Collins 79). From the view point of irony as a discursive strategy, it is not simply an anti-phrastic substitution of the unsaid for its opposite, the said which is then either set aside or partially effaced. Political irony values both the said (the literal meaning) and the unsaid (the intended meaning). Irony happens in the realm between and including both the said and unsaid. The ironic meaning is not then simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said. It is always different—other than and more than said. The semantics of irony can not be studied separately from its syntax, pragmatics, its circumstances (both textual and contextual) and its conditions of use and reception.

For political ironists, irony is not a detached aesthetic rhetorical device which has nothing to do with life, politics and verticality of axis of power. Hutcheon believes that irony "always has an edge; it sometimes has a sting" (15). Irony's edge is always a cutting one. Its affective or consequential intention has become a weapon for both authoritarian or subversive purpose. Therefore, irony is not an end in itself, it is

a means, a medium or a tool for achieving political goal. Irony, for Hutcheon, can be "provocative when its politics are conservative or authoritarian as easily as when its politics are oppositional and subversive" (15). This is what she calls the "trans-ideological nature" of irony (15). Nothing is ever guaranteed at the politicized scene of irony. Even if an ironist intends an irony to be interpreted in an oppositional framework, there is no guarantee that this subversive intent will be realized. The deployment of irony in such situations turns out to be risky. Despite the fact that it is a risky business to use irony, the indirection and critical edge of irony still make it "a possible model for oppositionality whenever one is implicated in system that one finds oppressive" (Chambers 18). Unlike most other discursive strategies, irony explicitly sets up and exists within a relationship between ironist and audience.

Since irony happens in discourse, its semantic and syntactic dimensions can not be considered separately from the social, historical, and cultural aspects of its contexts of deployment and attribution. Issues of authority and power are encoded in that notion of discourse. Irony as a speech act involves this broader political frame for irony to come into being. Communicative exchange or discursive activity is a form of social activity and it, therefore, involves relations of not only real but also symbolic power. Irony "happens" because "discursive communities" already exist and provide the context for both the deployment and attribution of irony (18). We all belong simultaneously to many such communities of discourse. The multiple discursive communities to which we each differently belong can not be reduced to any single component, such as class or gender. They certainly involve "openly held beliefs, but also ideologies, unspoken understandings, assumptions—about what is possible, necessary, telling, essential and so on—so deeply held that they are not thought of as assumptions only" (Fish 190). Of course, things like class, race, ethnicity, gender and

sexual preferences are involved, but so too are nationality, neighborhood, profession, religion and all the other micro-political complexities. In other words, irony "maps the micro politics of power relations" (Pandey *The Atlantic Literary Review* 11). Irony, therefore, is neither trivial nor trivializing" (Hutcheon 26).

Not all serious and humorous ironies work to demystify or subvert oppressive hegemonic ideologies. The trans-ideological nature of irony makes it clear that irony can be used and has been used either to undercut or to reinforce both conservative and radical positions. There are clearly two positions regarding affective functionings of irony. The position that irony operates in a positive and constructively affirmative way is usually held by those who see irony as a powerful tool or even weapon in the fight against a dominant authority which irony is said to work to destroy. Most recently, it is the "feminist, the post-colonial, the gay and the lesbian theorists" who have argued this position in different but related ways (27). The contrasting view of irony as negating, as largely destructive is held at different times by almost anyone who has been on the receiving end of an ironic attack. Irony is both affirming and negating. Irony not only works to "point to the complexities of historical and social reality but also has the power to change the reality" (Enright 108-109). While irony can be used to reinforce authority, it can also be used to oppositional and subversive ends. During the revolutionary struggle, irony is made welcome for its "thrusts at the . . . enemy. . . Once the revolutions is in saddle, irony gets a prompt and dishonorable discharge" (Enright 108-9).

The oppositional functioning of irony is often connected to the view that it is a self-critical, self-knowing, self-reflective mode. It has the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very sites of discourse, a hierarchy based in social relations of dominance. For Stallybrass and White, that challenges the capacity to

undermine and turn upside down the "politically transformative power" (qtd. in Hutcheon 30). Terdiman sees this political dimension of irony as "counter-discourse" (30). The concept of irony as a counter-discourse is the mainstay of oppositional theories that resist such hierarchies—whether they are based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality. As it is a "mode of combat", irony becomes "a negative passion, to dispatch and annihilate a dominant depiction of the world" (Terdiman 12). It is a passion that is seen to be crucial when the dominant, established discourses show greater "absorptive capacity" (13). Hutcheon shows the irony's negative intimacy with the dominant discourses. She further makes it clear that "irony's intimacy with the dominant discourses it contests—it uses their very language as its said—is its strength, for it allows ironic discourses both to buy time (to be permitted and even listened to, if not understood) and also to relativize the (dominant's) authority and stability", in part by "appropriating its power" (Hutcheon 30). Irony's ability to relativize the oppressive ideology shatters its claim to absoluteness, to truth.

Because of this subversive power of irony, it has become a most appropriate mode not only for politically suppressed groups but, more generally, for those with the "divided allegiance" that comes from their difference from the dominant norms of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual choice (qtd. in Hutcheon 31). Irony functions to repeat and yet, to revise the white discourses and this allows negation along two axes of power, the social and the mental, and the public and the covert. Irony enables, Hutcheon puts:

the marginalized . . . [to] be heard by the centre, and yet keep its critical distance and thus unbalance and undermine. The complexity and multivocality of signifying are seen as a means of critique of the metaphysical presuppositions both of western white culture. . . and also

of any . . . notions of the "transcendental [marginalized] subject,  
integral and whole. (Hutcheon 31)

The large majority of women writers believe that the suspicion of irony's instability is countered by the realization of the power that lies in its potential to destabilize. Sometimes, this power is directly harnessed to oppositional and critical ends. Sometimes it is an indirect attempt to "work" ideological contradictions and not let them resolve into coherent and, thus, potentially oppressive dogma (31). In both cases, irony has been seen as a serious play, a rhetorical strategy and a political method deconstructing and decentering patriarchal discourses. Hutcheon calls it a form of "guerrilla warfare" (191). Hutcheon, here, notes that "irony's trans-ideological nature has meant that it has often been used as a weapon of dominant cultures to keep the subservient in their place. . . [On the other hand] irony . . . springs from the recognition of a socially constructed self as arbitrary and that demands revision of values and conventions" (Hutcheon 32). In this latter case, irony works to deprive hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. Women use irony as a particularly potent means of critique or resistance to patriarchal social restrictions or even essential male claims to truth. Irony both empowers and empowers.

The trans-ideological nature of irony is exploited in order to recode into positive terms what patriarchal discourse reads as negative. So, the silencing of women's voices is transformed into the willed silence of the ironic and traditional feminine manner.

Women's marginalized and divided self is interpreted as the enabling preconditions of irony's distance, doubleness and even duplicity. This strategically essentializing reading includes mimicry — as staged representation — and mimicry

is said to come easily to women, who can replay the original discourse with ironic differences. Mimicry is useful for feminist ethics because it "involves the subversive potential contained in the forced and . . . half - hearted adoption of the style or conventions of a DOMINANT authority - whether national-CULTURAL or GENDER-political" (Hawthorn 209). Hawthorn further maintains that "in mimicking [others] . . . [one] stick [s] to the idea . . . of . . . [his/her] authority but . . . attempt [s] to signal . . . [his/her] rejection of its spirit" (209). In appropriating mimicry for political irony:

one must assume the feminine role deliberately, which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. Where as a direct feminine challenge to this condition means demanding to speak as a (masculine) "subject" . . . to play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. (Irigary 76)

Hutcheon labels the feminist writer's deployment of irony as "IRON", "the familiar household pressing and smoothing device" because of "the appropriation of irony's transgressive, provocative and subversive potentialities into women's domains" (Hutcheon 36). The irony is also a "branding device, one that hurts, that marks, that is a means of inflicting power" (36). It is also a "golf club", "with an oblique head", "subtle" and a "means of distancing Objects", but it can also "miss" (35).

To put the whole exploration of Hutcheon's political irony in laconic terms, it is political. Both the dominant and the marginalized can appropriate its consolidating as well as subversive potentiality in their own different interests. Hutcheon says that it

has an "edge", "can put people on edge" and "is decidedly edgy" (37). Both rebels and conformers use irony at each other, and both suffer from it.

## Chapter Three

### Textual Analysis

Noor, the major character in *The Tiger Claw* (2004) is charismatic. Shauna Singh Baldwin places a seemingly radical twenty-first century's feminist Noor in pre-war France in a way that surprises and fascinates many because of her actions performed heroically to corrode patriarchy from its roots. The most surprising fact that Noor performs such actions, which even majority of twenty-first century women don not think of, amounts to the political irony with an agenda to bring forth the subversive and rebellious power of women. Authoritative and delimiting patriarchy can topple over and what is necessary is unwavering courage that Noor shows through her endeavors. The irony I am trying to discuss in this text is that there is an incongruity between our expectation that Noor will give in to the injustice and inequality, be it precipitated by the minimal patriarchal unit, family or be it by colonialism, the product of extreme oppression of colonizing states, the maximal patriarchal unit, and her deeds to supplant the privileged ideology with the feminist one. This is the structural irony where there is a naive narrator who confuses mid-twentieth century Europe with the early-twenty first century. But this ironic intention is shared both by the feminist ironist Baldwin and a good reader. Encyclopedia Britannica calls it the dramatic irony when there is an incongruity between what we expect as an audience and what actually happens in the novel.

This irony "equips the subaltern narrator with a much needed critical perspective that underwrites a feminist agenda" (Pandey *The Atlantic Literary Review* 107). The revisionist feminist historiography has brought to the fore all the facts that remained effaced to the present to delineate the pain, torture, violence, injustice, inequality the society has been inflicting on women to retain the status-quo. Baldwin's

exploitation of political irony comes under this revisionist feminist history. The revisionist feminist history, as put forward by Mirnal Pandey, "has developed a third subaltern eye, that glosses over accepted social mores and eminent personalities of the day, for the working class women's version of what history and society look like from a woman's perspective" (120). Noor's unrelenting defiance against Nazism makes her an epic hero. Nazified tyranny, for Noor, ranges from male coercion and hegemony from family to Hitler's slaughtering of innocent people in the name of purism at a massive scale. Noor cannot simply see it happen without any resistance. Noor is a historical figure who was born before World War II when Nazi fervor of purification was on an extreme scale. But Baldwin's Noor differs from the real Noor that served the Allies in world war II against German as a radio operator. Baldwin's "depiction of Noor begins from fact but departs quickly into imagination, bending time, creating characters around her, rearranging or inventing some events to explore as if through her eyes to feel what may have been in her heart" ("Author's Note"). Her purpose is as luminous as quartz—to heighten the subaltern female subjectivity mobilizing political irony to radically map the micro-politics of power relations between men and women. In this dissertation, I would like to elaborate some remarkable tenets that exemplify Shauna Singh Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* as a counter-discourse for feminist ethics to be brought forth.

### ***The Tiger Claw* as a Novel Subverting Stereotypes**

Baldwin subverts naturalized female stereotypes, fixed ideas or images about women that are not true in quality. Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* interrogates, analyzes and challenges the feminine stereotypes like passivity, instability, confinement, spirituality, piety, materiality, irrationality and compliancy along with two incorrigible figures—the shrew and the witch. The stereotypes fall apart when we see

Noor in her action as a "tigress" (210), a descendant of "Tiger of Mysore" (310). As a refugee in Britain, she joins the Allies to serve in the war against the Axis. She takes Nora Baker as her name and states "her religion as church of England instead of Islam" (43). Nora's eagerness to show that she is not submissive is explained by these lines—"if there hadn't been a war, she might have said she was Muslim just so the English might understand that Indian Muslim women were not as they imagined; weak, meek stupid or spineless. But she adjusted like everyone else" (44).

Noor is a rebel against tyranny in all forms. She says, "I resist all tyranny. . . say no to all oppression, whether it rises from those you love or from any enemy, for the shame and self-hatred . . . [I] carr[Y] for not resisting when I was younger are worse by far" (109). After the fall of Nazi, Noor becomes a disappeared prisoner. Nobody has any idea as to her whereabouts. But an inscription on a wall in an empty cell in Pforzheim prison is traced—"I resist, therefore I am" (544). This shows Noor's endeavours to resist despotisms. In her journal, Noor writes "I wish I had learned to fight oppression as early in life as Odile" (146). Her argument with Viennot in which her disapproval of male/female binary dichotomies underscores Baldwin's subversion of naturalized gender stereotypes. Viennot is of the opinion that French women should not have been allowed to engage in resistance because it has placed women in dangerous situation. He further adds that "it offends his chivalry" (183). In response to this sexist attitude, Noor says, "Monsieur Viennot," . . . "hundreds—may be thousands—of French women are in very dangerous situations. All of us, men and women, are in dangerous situations at every moment" (183). Baldwin, here, absolutely negates the idea that women are weak and therefore they need men to protect them from anything dangerous. The subversive view about gender stereotypes is that there is no difference between men and women except for some biological

differences. Therefore, gender stereotypes are cultural construct and they work to subordinate women to the religious and ethical needs of men. These following lines better portray how Noor's vision of Armand being capable of protecting her breaks into pieces. "She had expected Armand to argue with Kabir [for his approval in their marriage], to fight like a knight for his lady" (79). There are some characters in the text who are surprised because of Noor's involvement in espionage because they are "unaccustomed to the idea that women can take action" (183).

Noor's talent is indescribable. When she is twelve, she has already "read and discussed the Quar'an enough with Abbajan to know that restraints on women's conduct and marriage . . . [are] inventions not of Allah but of the Mullahs who succeeded the prophet" (253). When Noor shoots two German soldiers who chase her, she says, "I am not a trembling kind of woman" (303). Shauna Singh Baldwin redraws the history by unveiling the involvement of women led by Noor Inayat Khan, a second generation Indian immigrant, in the fight against Nazism to liberate the occupied France from the Axis. Noor is "hiding in Paris and from [her] purdah behind a radio. . . [is] telling the Allies where to bomb, when to hit, provide [s] damage assessments and report of roundups" (425). There are other women in Paris who help Noor in transmitting radio messages. Noor says:

But it . . . [is] not only me. Jossaine [is] at my side, decoding. Odile [is] my courier, thinking up a million excuses any time she [is] stopped after curfew. One night she. . . [went] out to call her German soldier from a phone box because her mother wouldn't let her call from home. Another night she. . . [went] to her sister who was having a baby and the doctor had no gas for his car and my surrogate mothers Madame

Aigrain and Madam Prenat support, shelter and feed us . The power and anger of our *zenana* stemed like an engine to its goal. [425]

### **Rebellion against Patriarchy**

Noor's rebellion against patriarchy extends from her defiance of family, a minimal patriarchal unit to the colonialism, the product of expansion of patriarchal rule across the world as society at large. After the arrival of Noor's uncle Tajuddin, the masculine propriety begins in Noor's family. Noor is aware of that from the very beginning. There are so many do's and don'ts in the family and her uncle is in charge to uphold them. Later, her brother Kabir also begins to feel that his consent is necessary if her mother, Daadijan, Zaib and Noor have to do something. Noor confronts the coercion within family when it is known to Kabir Tajuddin and her mother that Noor has been clandestinely meeting with Armand Rivkin, a Jewish. They do not approve her relation with a Jewish. Although there is no antisemitic fervor yet in France, her mother's experience is that cross-cultural marriage brings nothing except for the trouble. Her uncle is "vindictive, hate-filled and angry—and powerful" [76]. His extremism and religious dogma do not allow Noor, a Muslim to marry Armand, a Jewish. In such a traditional society, "the intra-familial and inter-communal love and relation do not matter where the masculinist and the capitalist notions of honor and shame with monetary benefit have been so deeply internalized" (Pandey *The Atlantic Literary Review* 110). Noor is not a silenced woman. She asks her uncle, "why. . .did Allah allow love in the world if marriages are to be forced by our elders?" (Baldwin 74). For her uncle, their relation brings shame to the family. Here, family honor is more important. This deeply rooted patriarchal convention regards the purity and honor of women as the purity and honor of the family. Such a patriarchal ideology dealing with the women's purity and pollution on one hand and

the honor and the shame on the other hand conditions the "women to be the locus" of double subordination "in incidents of collective violence" within family and outside (Das 56). Baldwin's deployment of irony in *The Tiger Claw* unleashes the patriarchal treatment of the "women's body" as "a territory" either "to be conquered" by the men of other communities or to be protected by the men of their own families (Menon and Bhasin 42).

Uncle Tajuddin makes use of patriarchal construction of honor as a tool to subordinate Noor to the position of Other. This process of subjugation of Noor by Tajuddin is the result of an effort "to keep. . .[her] within . . .[her] *aukat*, . . .[her] ordained boundary" relocating her "actions. . .into the comfortably symbolized realm of sacrifice" — the symbol of the honor of the family, community and the nation in which the women's sexuality occupies a territorial but subordinate significance in all patriarchal arrangement of gender relations between and within the religious or ethnic communities (Butalia, "Tradition" 171). In her earliest years, Noor is not so much conscious of the fact that "patriarchy is at its strongest when women themselves participate in it, colluding in the notions of honor that privilege male control over sexuality and over their lives and desires" (Pandey *The Atlantic Literary Review* 108). Noor delineates her awareness of subjugation through the patriarchal notion of honor and marriage which is sanctioned by patriarchal institutions such as family, community and religion gradually:

I learned that my body belonged not to me but to my family and it was my uncle's right [as the head of the family] to say yea or na to marriage. Because I lived in Paris, he said, did not mean I was no longer Indian and Muslim. He expected me to deposit my life in his care, and was so hurt and then insulted at my slightest hesitation.

Seeking to change me he spared me no diatribe against Jews, no lecture about the degradation of Muslim women who shame their families by consorting with non believers. He forebade me to leave Afzal Manzil for one month and I spent that month weeping, confined in the dead air of my room . . . Never will I forget that feeling of changelessness of being held hostage by a strong man's will. (Baldwin 75)

Kabir also does not give permission for their marriage. In France as well as in India, she "need [s]. . . permission to marry", although she is twenty six, mature enough to marry at her own will (77). In this case, her brother Kabir is no less villain. Kabir says:

It is impossible that you could love Rivkin, . . . "You've never been in love. You don't know what it feels like . . . That alone one can feel for a Jew-pity ! . . . Listen to me ! If I marry an unbeliever, she'll become a Muslim. But if you marry Rivkin, Jews will inherit Afzal Mazil. That's so disgusting. Think how you would feel if I told you I wanted to marry a man. (78)

After her uncle's departure for Baroda, Kabir begins to play the role of the head of the family. He begins " to name . . . [her] feelings on . . . [her] behalf, tell . . . her what . . . [she] . . . [feels]. So . . . [she] . . . [will] know what he permit [s]. . . [her] to feel . . . He . . . [is] playing head of the family, posturing to show he . . . [is] a man (78). At that time she is no too weak to break . . . blood ties, too anxious to please, too frightened of penury" (78). She does not protest enough but war makes way for her to liberate herself from the ties—relations as well as strangulations. But Noor neither bows down to her uncle's restrictions, nor could she give into her brother Kabir's

desires. Before she leaves Paris for London, she has already married Armand Rivkin, though clandestinely. This subaltern character pokes fun of the marriage as an institution sanctioned by family, community and the religion. Their marriage takes place in a new way. They marry "though no synagouge or mosque sanctifie [s] . . . nuptials . . . , though no one witsesse [s] it but the stars over Paris" (64). Noor, for the first time, takes action without family's approval. She flies for Paris without the knowledge of anyone in the Lizzie from Tangmere laden with admonitions, instructions and directions from the SOE. She tells herself she is no longer a trembling kind of woman and she claims her life and body as her own. This way, she succeeds in escaping patriarchal boundary. This escape leads Noor to her awesome confrontation with a form of colonialism, Nazism in France. When Noor returns to France after staying for a couple of years in London, she comes to know that many of her friends have already been married. For these girls marriage involves them as a tool to pass on male lineage from old generation to the new generation. Noor's remark about this is an example of how she hates patriarchal submissive practices. She comes to know that "few girls [have] ever met a man who can enlarge their soul, so they make do with a man who can enlarge their stomachs" (405). Her lover Armand is not that kind of man who treats women only as sex objects to satiate the basic carnal desires. Armand comes into her family "to free . . . [her] from fear, to teach . . . [her] laughter, generosity and kindness. Through his actions he [teaches]. . . [her] the principles: . . . [her] life is . . . [her] own, . . . [her] soul and . . . [her] body . . . [her] own" (114). Love for Armand is not a matter of possession. Armand knows that for Noor to marry a Jew in the face of Nazism will put her into trouble. Therefore, he advises her that ". . . this is no time to marry a Jew. There can no longer be any promises between . . . [them] . . . [She] must be free. Free to marry someone

else" (53). Armand makes Noor aware of the family coercion on her. Armand maintains "each of us has the right to live without fear. . . . [Her] uncle, . . . mother, . . . brother—they hold . . . [her] hostage but call it love" (113). These are the reasons why she chooses Armand as her spouse. She risks her life to meet Armand in France. But unfortunately, they cannot meet again after they are separated in France before Noor goes to London for safety. She regrets that she has lost Armand because of her Gandhian principles- "acquiescence and conciliation and non-aggression" (108).

Noor's involvement in resistance in France against Nazi occupation can be construed as her defiance at a macro-level against colonialism, an expansion of patriarchy across newly explored nations. Given that, Noor's actions in occupied France are her attempts to fight double colonization of women. Double colonization is "a form of subjugation experienced by women in colonized countries, who are on the receiving end both of colonial power in general and also of colonial and domestic PATRIARCHAL oppression" (Hawthorn 95). Noor is lost into the "night and fog" prison fighting suppression in all forms throughout life (Baldwin 35). Baldwin exalts the heroism of Noor at an epic scale. She is a martyr who spends all her life fighting Nazism. Noor tries to destabilize Nazism which was an attempt to coerce a highly pluralistic and over divided community into an ideologically unified frame, a party typically led by one man, the dictator. Baldwin, in *The Tiger Claw*, not only attacks Nazism but also all colonizers who have perpetrated torture, violence, inequality and exploitation indiscriminately on their subjects. Noor, the protagonist says, "No one is safer from powerful men anywhere" (Baldwin 53). Baldwin's scathing criticism of Winston Churchill's Rice Denial Policy in India is worth mentioning here. Although Noor is in service of British government working as a radio operator, she does not overlook the oppression of English men in India. There is no difference between

colonizers except for the degree of torture inflicted on the colonized. These lines contrast the degree of exploitation in the colonized countries. "German repression went beyond British disparagement and suppression of the indigenous India, or French disparagement of Muslim traditions" (111). Noor draws an analogy between her uncle's subordination of her, her captor Vogel's keeping her hostage and the colonized India in British Raj:

I recognize Vogel's "love" like uncle Tajuddin's. It is love of his own power, love of my dependence on his every whim. Out of "love" Vogel invokes German orders and says my bondage is for my "safe custody" just as Uncle Tajuddin once invoked custom and Quar'an for my "protection" as the British "defend" India, starving millions, while reciting odes to the white men's burden. (152)

Baldwin, in *The Tiger Claw* documents history of oppression both in the past and in the present. So it is the revisionist historicization from the perspective of subjugated-people; minority ethnic groups, women and the colonized. Baldwin further pinpoints:

. . . more than three million Indians-many Muslims . . . died of starvation in British India, thousands in the street of Calcutta, from deprivation far worse than any. . .witnessed . . . [in] the villages of France or Germany, many times worse than the privations in blitzed and bombed London. After the bombing of Chittagong and Calcutta, Churchill's "Rice Denial Policy" diverted rice from the people to war related industries; and in London, when only the tiny expatriate Indian community had protested and shouted "famine!" it was Churchill. .

.who refused to extend UNRRA'S war relief to His Majesty's brown subjects. (27)

Baldwin further clarifies the similarity of holocaust both in India and Europe in this way — "so Hitler caused the deaths of . . . millions by actions Churchill by inaction" (27).

Noor is the lover of freedom across the world. Her support for liberty crosses all the imagined boundaries—nation, ethnicity, religion, gender, and so on. She knows that it will risk her job in RAF if she expresses her alignment with the freedom fighters across the world. Nevertheless, she does not hesitate to do that in interviews. In an interview, Noor says it is "unconscionable that Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Nehru and thousands of others [a] re wasting away in gaol, held without trial for months now" (56). She further shows her tie with Indian nationalist movement saying that Indians should be armed for their own defence. "If allowed arms", Noor argues, "India would not have to pay the British government tons of rice and millions in sterling for its protection. India ha [ve] numerous brave men and women who. . . (can) defend its borders" (57). This argument of Noor would have sounded anachronistic and, therefore, absurd in the second world war because even in India there were some people who believed that Indians were incapable of self-governance and self-protection. Noor makes a dauntless statement—"everyone is capable of self governance . . . even Indians" (57).

### **Exposition of Male Violence in *The Tiger Claw***

Violence, according to Bulhan is:

not only an isolated physical act or a discrete random event. It is a relation, process and condition undermining, exploiting and curtailing the well-being of the victim. These violations are not just moral or

ethical but also physical, social and/or psychological. They involve demonstrable assault or injury and damage to the victim. Violence in any of the three domains—physical, social or psychological—has significant repercussions in the other two domains. (qtd in *Women's Lives* 224-25)

Bulhan further analyzes the violence as "any relation, process, or condition imposed by someone that injures the health and well-being of others" (225). Male violence lies at the structural level and it is played out by individuals who have learned their socially accepted roles. "Macro-level factors such as sexism, . . . racism, [lack of] economic opportunities, [meagre] working conditions, unemployment, poverty, loss of status and cultural roots that may accompany immigration" are associated with violence (225).

Noor is also a victim of violence both by family and Nazism. In family, especially, her uncle Tajuddin does every thing to subordinate and disempower her. Though he is not an apparent physical perpetrator of violence, he tortures her psychologically by not giving permission for Noor to go outside of house after the revelation that she is in love with Armand, by not allowing her to wear what she wants and by intimidating her to accept as her spouse who he has chosen. This psychological violence culminates in extreme physical as well as psychological torture in night and fog prison in Nazi occupied France and Nazi Germany. Here are some events of despotic violence on Noor. "Noor rolled onto her stomach, chained wrists before her, supported her weight on her elbows and knelt. Then shifted to extend the chain running between her wrists and ankles far enough for her to be seated. The clanking weight of the leg irons pulled her bare feet to the floor" (1).

"DECEMBER MOVED IN, taking up residence with Noor in her cell, and freezing the radiator.

Cold coiled in the bowl of her pelvis turning shiver to quake as she lay beneath her blanket on the cot" (1).

Noor sits "enchained, prisoner of the present looking back farther and farther, letting collage develop to story" (65).

"These manacles weigh heavy on . . . [her] wrists" (71).

"The guard plays with . . . [Noor]—she cheats . . . [her] of bread some days, brings it late on others. There is no complaint department [in Pforzeim prison]. . . [She is] a dervish living on bread and water" (173).

As we continue reading her situation in prison, we have more sympathy for her:

The dungeon has not even the straw mattress from my cell, and I had dozed off on the damp stone floor, by now I can sleep with insects crawling over me. This . . . [is] no night mare. My chains whipped my shins as I kicked and failed against a crawling thing. A rat gibbered and squeaked when my clog hit its side. (265)

The dark is the danger zone where distinctions fade to black and nothing has a name. Here, day and night, logic and clairvoyance, reason and madness, objectivity and subjectivity, dream and reality, positive and negative energies are one. Here, past and future become present, become visible. (266)

Here is another piece of writing by Noor that evokes pathos for her since she is a disappeared prisoner:

The war could be over but no one would know I am here. Vogel is not required to account for me. By Hitler's command, he doesn't have to keep any record of me and other Night and Fog prisoners. Armand, Mother, Dadijaan, Kabir, Zaib—no one will ever know I am here. I am just a combatant who has disappeared, an enemy forgotten in this stinking hole. Is the world destroyed and no voice but mine left in the universe? (369)

Noor is victimized by colonialism. Fannon notes in *The Wretched Of The Earth*, that "colonialism. . . is violence in its natural state" (quoted in *Women's Lives* 224). Baldwin's encoding of violence, both familial and imperial has a purpose to prove the absurdity of war and the insanity of its perpetrator. It is a backlash against the Eurocentric Metaphysics which places at the centre the view that man is a rational creature. From the feminist view point, it can be inferred from what Baldwin directly asserts that the perpetrators of Second World War are all men—Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill, Mussolini and so on. Baldwin also analyses the male representational politics in their discourses that operates through inclusion as well as exclusion depending on what benefits them. Their tactics of explaining Noor's courage in Second World War while at the same time leaving out some major integral tenets associated with it are of greater concerns to Baldwin. The narrator analyses the speeches given in the fiftieth anniversary of Dachau's liberation in relation to gender politics:

The ambassador of India . . . mention [s] his great pride that an Indian woman [Noor] had been of use to the French resistance, cementing "ancient ties" between their two countries, ties that went back to a French treaty with Noor's ancestor the great Tipu Sultan. He carefully

omits [s] mentioning Noor was a Muslim for she . . . [may] then inspire other Muslims fighting Hindu fascism resurging in India.

Then the British ambassador emphasize [s] his great pride that an Indian woman had worked loyally for the British. The phrase "example to Indian women" recurred. He ommit [s] that Madeleine [Noor]. . . was considered a British colonial at the time and over these fifty years inspired a few English women as well. (559)

### **Encoding of sexuality in *The Tiger Claw***

Many recent feminists have stressed the importance for women of reinscribing the body in their writings. Baldwin is among them who deals with women's sexuality in frankness in her writings. Patriarchal discourses treat women's body as shameful to be hidden. Noor, in her journal, writes her uncle's fears and restrictions had taught . . . [her] to think of . . . [her] body as a thing beneath . . . [her] clothes, an evil thing to be tamed but never claimed" (64). Women's sexuality is not a bad thing. She further notes, "Armand explored it for . . . [her], with . . . [her]. He played, read and described it to . . . [her] as if reading a sacred scroll" (64). Here, her body is equated with holy books like Bible, Quar'an, Gita etc. Eve Ensler in *The Vagina Monologues* notes that for many women, the word vagina is associated with shame, embarrassment, and silencing, even violation. She further says:

and as more women say the word, saying it becomes less of a big deal; it becomes part of our language, part of our lives. Our vaginas become integrated and respected and sacred. They become part of our bodies, connected to our minds, fueling our spirits. And the shame leaves and the violation stops. (qtd in *Women's Lives* 134)

In "women's sexuality", Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa Rey discuss sexuality further—"sexuality can be a source of power, affirmation, and self definition for women. Many women are exploring their sexuality claiming the right to sexual pleasure on their own terms, and challenging the limitations of conventional expressions of sexuality" (Kirk *Women's Lives* 138).

Audre Lorde discusses the power of erotic in the broadest way. She sees the erotic as their most profoundly creative source. She notes that women have been indoctrinated "to separate the erotic. . . from most vital areas of . . . lives other than sex" (qtd in *Women's Lives* 138).

By contrast, she continues it is "an assertion of the life force of women of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which . . . [they] are reclaiming in . . . [their] language, . . . [their] history, . . . [their] dancing, . . . [their] loving, . . . [their] work, . . . and [their] lives" (138). Lorde sees the distortion and suppression of the erotic as one of the ways in which women are oppressed and concludes "recognizing the power of erotic in our lives can give us energy to pursue genuine change within our world" (138).

The discussion of sexuality in Noor's writings is exemplified in this piece:

Armand's weight shifted above me and he said "I am outside and inside you at the same time". Then he kissed me, said how much he loved me. . . Joy and pain came together without distinction, joy in our inter-penetration so that active became passive, pain that could not bridge the barrier of his skin to know how he felt . . . (Baldwin 118)

### **Noor's Mimicry**

Noor is a very clever woman who does not hesitate to mimic feminine roles at times when they are beneficial to her. During her internment, her captor is Ernst

Vogel and Noor knows "to be shunned by Herr Vogel means dire consequences" as she is a night and fog prisoner in Drancy (311). Noor pretends to have an interest for Vogel. As a result of that, Vogel gives her pen and paper in the prison to write children's stories. Noor's pouting makes the Vogel order "soap, a toothbrush, a large ration of soap, toilet paper, even sanitary towels. . . and weekly changes of prison uniform, weekly exercise in the courtyard" (384). Noor uses every tactic to attract Vogel toward her so that she does not have to live in awful conditions in the prison. Noor describes further, in her letter to ma-petite, an imagined spirit of her dead child, "he. . . [sits] beside me on the cot, and I . . . [wonder] how he . . . [can] stand my odour. He put [s] his arm across my shoulders. I . . . [wish] my lice would crawl into his black uniform" (384). Noor plays a seductive role complimenting him that his "new uniform looks very smart" (384). Noor explains she can't say he looks smart, so she says the uniform looks smart. "He look [s] pleased" (384). Noor also tries to impress Vogel by reading children's stories to him. That works a lot. It saves her from being killed in gas chamber as an SOE agent working in France against Nazi occupation. Her pretence as a seductive woman is seen better in this conversation between her and her captor Vogel:

Herr Vogel ! I need a small favour.

prisoners do not receive favours, my princess. And prisoners captured in combat without insignia are entitled to no favours at all. You are an illegal combatant—an enemy soldier who does not follow the civilized rules of war, you should be shot ! shot immediately !. (465)

Noor "pout[s] for effect" (465).

The narrator describes "Vogel would expect any Eastern woman, even a princess, to be submissive as a Fantasy Odalisque. Let him think so while she

searched for a way to escape" (466). Noor's hands are unshackled and soon there is "dinner for two, with her captor" (467). In Pforzheim in Germany, Vogel has reserved a special cell for Noor "instead of sending . . . [her] to a camp" (487). Vogel comes to visit Noor in Pforzheim, Germany. Vogel's "hand move [s] towards. . . [Noor] like a serpent arcing on its tail, then hesitate[s], and f[alls]. Serpent hand, serpent guardian, serpent who must be propitiated, satiated with milk, stroked and delighted" (488). Noor, at that time, thinks she should "play a little part he wants . . . [her] to play . . . Play along just enough to be spared . . ." (488). By doing what Vogel wants her to do, she enjoys better conditions in the prison which is, otherwise, a dungeon for prisoners. Noor could have resisted Vogel's sexual advances toward her but she does not, although it is just the foreign to her very being not to resist. Rather she "wheedle [s], coax [es] and cajole [s]" (501).

### **Noor, An All-round Figure**

Noor does not fall victim to the motherhood as a virtue that remain in patriarchal domain. She is aware of her right as a woman to choose between pregnancy and abortion. She does not hesitate to have abortion when she thinks that it is not appropriate time for her to have a baby. "To bring. . . [the baby] to a world in which a woman must have permission before she may love—that was . . . a sin beyond any the prophet . . . had foreseen" (368). Noor does not choose pregnancy and motherhood because "the world is a barbaric place at present . . ." (424).

Noor is an advocate of love, peace and tolerance. She is in favor of multivocality, plurality and inclusivity. Single path solution is always alien to her. She loves Armand at a time when the Jewish are kept in prison like "poisoned rats" (87). Her responsibility, she thinks, is to "better the world" (175). Moreover, she is a story writer, a humanist in common parlance. Noor says none of us" have yet become

human for we are numb to pain that is not our own" (369). Noor is for integration, racial harmony, multiculturalism and heterogeneous society. She is against communalism, the politics of religious hatred. This hero with unfathomable courage celebrates "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics. . ." (Rushdie 394). Noor does not adopt the "ghetto mentality" (9). For her "to forget that there is a world beyond the community to which . . . [she] belong [s], [and] to define . . . [oneself] within narrowly defined cultural frontiers" is quite inhumane (19). She believes that "passivity always serves the interest of the status-quo" (97). Therefore, she wages war against patriarchal exploitation, Nazi cruelty and barbarity and colonizer's exploitation and suppression of benign native citizens. Her hope allows her to believe that "there has never in the history of the world been a dictatorship so overpowering that it become [s] impossible to fight against" (121). Therefore, she believes that "if one man Hitler can ruin the world, why is it inconceivable that one man or woman can save it ?" (Baldwin 269). Although she has a strong attachment with Islam, it does not mean that she is a fundamentalist. She maintains that everything, be it religion or be it politics, "must always be subject to questioning, deconstruction, even to declaration of their obsolescence" (Rushdie 45). Her definition of secularism is like that of Gandhi "which include [s] rather than exclude [s] all religions, . . . [sees] all religions as worthy of respect" (Baldwin 236). Her belief that "all religions are equal paths to a Universal God, like many roads to the Ka'aba" is worth our admiration for her (75). She does not hate Germans as humans but she hates "their rabid nationalism, their forcible occupation and rapacious plunder of other countries, their bombing of innocent people, their acts of barbaric cruelty" (204). She shuns Hitler as worshipper of death and thinks that "Hitler. . . [is] shaitan

in human form" (43). She hates her brother Kabir, mother and uncle Tajuddin because they are "*munafiqs*—hypocrites talking and preaching tolerance while acting from prejudice" (366). She is thoroughly conscious of how devastating it is to adopt the politics of hatred. She further continues that "if you speak of tolerance while planting a hedge between yourself and your neighbour, as my Uncle Tajuddin did, as many in France . . . [do], your hedge will one day be replaced by a fence, then a low wall, then a high wall and finally fortifications" creating ghettoization (121). Noor is a true preacher of peace, tolerance and love at a time when perverted politics of hatred is pervasive across the world.

To put my whole dissertation in a nutshell, the irony emerges in *The Tiger Claw* as Noor is engaged in a mission to underwrite the feminist agendas dismissing the dominant ideologies through her actions. The context is the Second World War Europe which is patriarchal in the extreme and when and where patriarchy has become the truth, the ethos of everyday life. There is this disjunction that generates irony which is political in nature. Such a talent as Noor's goes astray because of Hitler's megalomania.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

#### **Appropriation of Political Irony in *The Tiger Claw***

Irony, in this novel *The Tiger Claw*, emerges out of the discord between what we would expect to happen in the novel as an audience and what actually happens. For example, Noor, a subaltern woman in the face of Nazism fights heroically against male coercion and hegemony. This usage of irony is political in nature since it has got a political agenda i.e., to empower the feminist subaltern subjectivity so that the oppressive patriarchal ideology can fall apart giving rise to the new ethics that underwrites the feminist agenda. In this novel, Noor Inayat Khan, the second generation Indian Muslim immigrant fights heroically against Nazis in Nazi occupied France in a way that echoes the heroism of classical epic heroes who were only men. Her unwavering courage, cleverness, talent, intellect, vigor, rebellious nature, humanitarian beliefs and feminist consciousness do not appear to fit her time. Noor, who was born in the early twentieth century in France, acts as if she is the twenty-first century's radical feminist. Noor's unrelenting defiance against Nazism makes her struggle a struggle of an epic scale on the part of a woman. She rebels against all kinds of tyranny, be it male violence or hegemony, or be it delimiting family as the smallest unit of patriarchy, or be it Hitler's genocide of innocent people. Noor can not simply see it happen without any resistance. Baldwin's *The Tiger Claw* in this sense is a counter-discourse against patriarchal hegemony with the motive to bring to the fore the feminist ethics. It cancels out the naturalized female stereotypes, the fixed images or ideas about women that are not true. This novel subverts the stereotypes like passivity, instability, confinement, spirituality, materiality, irrationality and compliancy. Noor is very far from being true to the negative epithets like submissive,

weak, meek, stupid or spineless. She is a rebel against tyranny in all forms. She says, "I resist, therefore I am" (Baldwin 544). Noor's rebellion against patriarchy extends from her defiance of family as a minimal patriarchal unit to that of colonialism, the expansion of patriarchal rule in the world as society at large. Noor's view pertaining to the marriage as an institution is quite different and ultramodern. Marriage for her is not a means to prolong the family lineage of the husband. Rather, it is kind of agreement reached by both of the parties with an understanding of treating the other on an equal footing. Love also plays a vital role in it. In Noor's case, the sanction of institutions like church, mosque, temple and gurudwara matters very little in relation to marriage. Noor is the lover of freedom. Her support for liberty crosses all the imagined fences such as nation, ethnicity, gender, religion, and so on. For Noor, the sexuality of women is not a matter of shame. In her letter to ma-petite, the spirit of the child she has earlier conceived with Armand, she equates her body with a sacred scroll. Noor's cleverness is exemplified in her mimicking of feminine roles at times when they benefit her. She does not fall victim to the motherhood as a trope of virtue that remains in patriarchal domain. She is aware of her right as a woman to choose between pregnancy and abortion. She does not hesitate to have an abortion when she thinks it is not the right time for her to have a baby. Noor is in favor of integration, racial harmony, multiculturalism, plurality and heterogeneous society. Noor is the true preacher of peace, tolerance and love at a time when the politics of hatred permeates in the whole world. To conclude my whole dissertation, I would like to say that it is an irony that Noor sets out in the outside world with a mission to supplant the oppressive patriarchal hegemony with the feminist consciousness through her action in such a context in which patriarchal coercion and hegemony is on an extreme scale.

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