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**Tyler Mills, *Tongue Lyre*. Southern Illinois University Press, USA, 2015.
69 pp. ISBN: 9780809332229**

Review by Dr Ajit Kumar

Tyler Mills' debut book *Tongue Lyre* is about the myths and memories associated to the human life. The narrative and progressive aesthetics of human world take the reader to the level of familiar human set up mixed up with the linguistic and artistic capabilities of the poet. Descriptive and referential approach of the poet is reflected in all 45 poems of Mills. The poet mixes the zeugma of present and past together that compels the reader to be attentive towards each and every aspect of the poem. She discusses the vivid imaginative. The logical presentation of human souls makes the reader so allusive towards the reality of this universe. The poet takes us to a journey of the ancient values to the contemporary features of human world.

The musical plethora which begins with the poem, "Tongue" lasts till the last poem "Coda." In fact, Tyler Mills' all poems are large not only in size but meaning too. The musical words about myths and love affairs keep on echoing in the ears and moving in front of the eyes of the reader. She provides sounds to the muted:

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Two girls are chasing each other
Around their mother's legs and tumble into
Ribs of light folded within a blanket.
Through the window's fluorescence. (*Tongue Lyre* 22)

The poet takes us to the reality of hustle –bustle of human life. Indeed, this is a collection of philosophical, creative, thoughtful and intuitive poems. Mills' poems exhibit a poetic mind for profound ideas which has created a new sensitivity. She shows her concern for the mankind. She says, "So in your car the steering wheel feels like bones. So when you lie flat on your bed you are a body. You think about death" (*Tongue Lyre* 19). In this collection, reader can easily find a balance of emotional turbulence, irony, social scenario and other human aspects which she draws throughout the poems.

Mills' debut anthology is a wonderful collection of mystic and echoing poems which are filled with varied poetic explorations having insightful and unveiling truth through the poetic talent of the poet. The book contains her reflective broodings over myriads of issues ranging the quest to explore the intricacies of life. With the help of the various myths, the poet wants to say about contemporary situations. Her style of writing incorporates between imagery and words, concrete and abstract, shaped and unshaped realities of life, certainty and uncertainty, fusion and confusion, a unique blending and invisibly and visible truths, in fact, a blending of thoughtful elegant philosophical ideas about the different events and values of life. She uses concrete and insightful ideas to exhibit the existence of subtlety and abstraction. The poet makes to look inward of one's own for the introspection.

Orhan Pamuk, *A Strangeness in My Mind* tr. by Ekin Oklap. Gurgaon: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2015, 599 pp. ISBN 9780670085583.

Review by Preetinicha B. Prodhani
Women's College, Shillong

Last year (2015), on a certain day, I was just browsing through the site on Orhan Pamuk when I came across a very good news. Pamuk's new book *A Strangeness in My Mind* was in the market. Of course, like the other novels of Pamuk, the 2006

Nobel Laureate in literature, this one, too, is written in Turkish as *Kafafmda Bir Tuhaflik* (2013). So I had to wait till the English translation came out. The translation by Ekin Oklap in 2015 seems to be a quite authentic version of the real. Though I can't read Turkish I could make this observation because the book takes the reader on a beautiful journey across Turkey, especially Istanbul of Pamuk's perception. I have been reading it for almost ten days; slowly, rejoicing each of its parts, just like sipping my evening tea. When I was off to work I used to long so much to return home, to the pages where I had another world waiting for me. The deep melancholy that most of Pamuk's earlier novels leave on the readers is somehow sweetened in this novel through the relaxed reflections of Mevlut Karataş. Though the protagonist, Mevlut loses a lot including his beloved wife, Rayiha, yet he makes the reader feel a sense of tranquillity while going through his story, which makes the novel distinctively different from the other novels of Pamuk.

The story encompasses many years of the Istanbul experiences (from 1969-2012) of the protagonist and his associates. It is primarily viewed from Mevlut's eyes. Though first person narration is used to present different views of the other major characters, most of the narration is presented through Mevlut's as well as the third person narrator's points of view. However, even the third person narrator, up to an extent, seems to be an extension of Mevlut's internal eye, though at times he narrates the external space and extraneous incidents. The narration is quite simple as well synchronic, unlike that of Pamuk's *The Black Book* (2006), in which one story unfolds from the inside of another story, only partially; yet releasing another half-revealed story. It starts at a certain dramatic point of the protagonist's life in 1982, and then it jumps over twenty five years forward in the very next chapter. The story then moves back to his childhood and continues, surpassing the crucial point where it has started. Besides the tale, the narration devotes a large space to the emotional and spiritual reflections of the protagonist. His life in Istanbul seems to be a journey towards self discovery as well as the discovery of the movements of the pulses of the city. Mevlut grows as the city grows and changes continually.

Mevlut, a boza vendor, comes from a village in Turkey to the city of Istanbul after completing his primary school. In his teenage he attends the Atatürk Boys' Secondary School at day time and accompanies his father to sell yogurt and boza in the afternoon. At the age of twenty one he falls in love with a pair of beautiful eyes belonging to his cousin's wife's younger sister, writes letters to her, praising her marvellous eyes for three years, but finally ends up running away with her elder sister, Rayiha because he confuses their names. However, he weds Rayiha and on the wedding party does not even recognise Samiha, the real owner of the

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eyes and the letters. Throughout his life for forty years in Istanbul Mevlut keeps changing his day time professions following frequent mishaps that would take place. What remains constant are his evening ventures of selling boza, a traditional Turkish drink and his peerless love for his wife, Rayiha even after her death and his eventual marriage with Samiha.

The city of Istanbul with its ever changing shape (one of Orhan Pamuk's recurring imageries) reappears in this novel. The tale of the city's physical transformations coincides with Mevlut's coming to Istanbul when his father Mustafa takes him to the top of the Kültepe hill to get a view of the surrounding landscape. What Mevlut sees from that vantage is a partial view of the slum areas of Istanbul's outskirts which were "rapidly taking over the surrounding hills (Duttepe, Kuştepe, Esentepe, Gültepe, Harmantepe, Seyrantepe, Oktepe, et cetera), the city's biggest cemetery (Zincirlikuyu), factories of all shapes and sizes, garages, workshops, depots, medicine and light bulb manufacturers, and in the distance the ghostly silhouette of the city itself" (50). Mevlut's career as a boza seller gives him the opportunity to get the close up view of Istanbul's mixed neighbourhoods with motley of people living myriad lives and carrying varieties of opinions. His encounters with these people, be it the 'Holy Guide' or the kind lady at Feriköy, makes him invariably learn something new. The city that was changing rapidly with the serial demolitions and reconstructions gives him a lot, still takes away another lot, his wife, his gecekondü house, his comfort as a boza seller and finally the face of the city as he remembered as a young man.

Fifty five years old Mevlut finds his extended family living in a twelve storied apartment, all separately, all happy for being detached, except for himself, his much aged uncle, Hasan and aunt, Safiye who pines for their lost home with gardens, trees and birds. The old aunt regrets the selling of their four storied house in Duttepe for buying the new apartments:

Well, we've got no plums and no mulberries; no chicks or hens; no soil and no garden. We can't live without our leaves and bugs and grass, my child. That's why your uncle Hasan has fallen ill. (567)

Looking at the city from the same position after forty years, i.e., through the window of the new apartment building built in Kültepe hills, Mevlut senses the difference of the physical self of the surrounding area:

...an ocean of apartment blocks of varying heights. The surrounding hills once marked by transmission towers, have now been submerged, lost beneath thousands of buildings, just as the old creeks that used to run through the city had been

forgotten along with their names, as far as they'd been asphalted over and covered in roads. (578)

However, the story does not end in a pessimistic tone. Mevlut accepts the city space as he meets it. His walking through the city makes him feel as if he is walking within his mind, the city being the twin self of his own consciousness. Always loving his space, his position as a boza seller and his emotional memories as a son, a husband and a father, Mevlut wants to tell Istanbul his 'public and private' views: "I have loved Rayiha more than anything in the world" (584). With this revelation he and his Istanbul become the exchangers of the topmost yet most predictable secret of his life, which both would whisper in each other's ears till they breathe life. The book refreshingly resonates the quintessential Pamuk where pathos and solace quietly meander leaving readers with deep reflections.

Milton Sarkar. *Englishness and Post-Imperial Space: The Poetry of Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016. x+172 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4438-8598-0

Review by Subashish Bhattacharjee
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The book examines the poetry of Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes with an attempt to leveraging the contemporary images employed by the two poets in their respective poems as a means of making sense of the abrupt 'post-imperial' state which they were thrust into. The end of the empire/Empire led to the subjection of the British mind to a sense of 'post-colonial' anxiety, a historical moment of rapid identity-formation which was essentially undone by the anxiety of the sudden transformation of the colonised. The Englishness conforming to the colonial and the newly post-colonial periods were radically different, shifting from a class egotistical optimism to a general sense of despair which found its literary outlets in the microcosmic. The 'angry young man' and the 'kitchen sink' became the microscopic elements that could highlight the contemporary situation more aptly than the wide landscapes of Dickens, Hardy, Tennyson, or even Lawrence. With the restriction of the map of the empire to certain geographical peripheries that at once denied the adage 'the sun never sets in Britannia', the consequent British reaction was in the lapse into a pre-catatonic fugue, laden with the precision of a depressive state of affairs. Englishness's innate superiority complex (or, superior

race-complex) had been severely bruised with the near defeat during the recently concluded World War II, and the loss of its flagship colonies delivered the final blows to the idea of nationhood that created the dominant idea of Englishness for the larger part of the first half of the twentieth century. Now, the sun did set on Britannia, and the sunset was the figurative symbol of the nation's containment within a specific geospatial area. The post-imperial/post-colonial moments for Englishness were overlapped with the residual effects of the War, leading to a redrafting of the English consciousness. Notably, it was the loss of the colonies in the Indian subcontinent that led to the greatest shift in the idea of Englishness from its post-imperial epoch.

The book is divided into four chapters—an extensive and exploratory Introduction, mapping the sociological background and the specifics of the two poets's Englishness, followed by two chapters dealing consecutively with Larkins's and Ted Hughes's responses to this new 'Post-Imperial Space', and , finally, a Conclusion that ably sums-up the thematic array of the book. The author has largely isolated the 'post-imperial' as a category that is both inclusive of and also excludes the theoretical appendage of postcolonialism.

Sarkar states in the Introduction: "Englishness has been evolving for centuries. Intricately connected with the values emanating from England as a geographical space and England as a socio-cultural space, Englishness as an abstract idea is intrinsic to the identity of a people who gradually become politically powerful, so much so that the sun never set on the British Empire" (2). The Introduction traces the historical background of the period stretching from the end of World War II to the loss of the empire, and concludes with an overview of the Movement poets and their position vis-à-vis the question of Englishness. An important aspect of the Introduction is that it truly serves as an introductory piece not only for the post-imperial context which the book prioritises, but also the contingent issues that were part of the discourse at the centre of Englishness in the post-War, post-imperial scenario.

The Introduction is followed by the chapter on Philip Larkin's response to the post-imperial space. Sarkar writes:

Larkin surveyed different aspects of the contemporary nation, and the resulting frustration and anger at the loss of energy and vigour were expressed in his poems. Larkin represented this England. He was aesthetic enough to sense that this was the only England available to him and her acutely felt the impact of the "rationed" life style [sic]." (29)

Following the extensive Introduction, and preceding the chapter on Ted Hughes,

what is immediately noticeable is that Sarkar's survey of Larkin's poetic Englishness is acute and comprehensive. In broad strokes, Sarkar also contends that "[a] sense of withdrawal from public and political engagement characterized British poetry in the immediate aftermath of World War II and Larkin's poetry was typical and influential in this respect" (32). The general attributes are discussed in depth and the specifics are hinted at with academic acuity, preparing the course for further and more engaged reading of Larkin's poetry. Sarkar concludes the chapter saying:

Much of the sense of loss has been internalized by Larkin [sic] characters as a result of which psychological "aberrations" in his characters range from sheer feeling of loneliness and alienation to the obsession with an overriding sense of darkness and death. (69)

On the question of Ted Hughes's response to the post-imperial space, Sarkar writes: "the poetry of Ted Hughes represents a challenge to the urbanised, industrial, post-War, post-imperial, denatured English society as well as culture by making, first, images and later, myths, that would reconnect the natural energies of man with those at work in the external natural world" (112). The chapter details the poetic oeuvre of Ted Hughes through the various implementations of images and symbols that the poet abounded in, even as it singularly traces how those images and symbols are essentially in pursuit of an Englishness. The chapter shows, as Sarkar intends, that unlike Larkin, Ted Hughes's Englishness was less specific, less trite even, if compared with a larger mass of poets. By encouraging a wider survey, Sarkar essentially brings to scrutiny the various objects of Ted Hughes's poetry and how they solidify under the thematic header of Englishness.

In his Conclusion, Milton begins by comparing the poetic position of the two poets with respect to the sociopolitical scenario: "They [Larkin and Hughes] looked at the reality from two different angles. Larkin ... went into different aspects of Englishness and demonstrated both the richness and national themes largely evident in the poetry of the 1920s and 1930s was countered by both Larkin and Hughes—although in different ways" (113). The Conclusion is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the poetic traits of the two poets that may be unified using the theme of Englishness. It is in continuing with the survey in the Introduction, which essentially presented the stage for the demonstration of Englishnesses of the two poets, and finally taking it to a more complete, and apt, conclusion for the theme.

While the premise of the book is fairly well-covered by the author, it allows

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for further exploration of the proposed theme. The systematic presentation of the post-imperial crisis in Englishness as projected in the poetic works of the two poets may lead a prospective reader to assume the validity of a comparative study to assess the impact of historical events on non-frameworked, but equally nationalistic, nationalisms such as ‘Germanness’ or ‘Frenchness’, that have often followed a similar trajectory to the Englishness that the book looks into. The idea of Englishness, despite the serious study of post-imperial space, remains a non-specific concept and context which allows for the thematic unification of several poems, setting the stage for an excellent introductory study, and also promising a far more engaged survey to follow.

The book is an interesting addition to the area of the study of literary Englishness, and especially one that assesses the poetic oeuvre of two poets who have been considered to be radically different in their approaches. Although the book signals the need for a more extensive survey, as has been stated earlier, it is, by no means, an incomplete survey. The book may well serve the purposes of the scholars across stages in the particulars of their research on the well-elaborated topic. By problematising the mutual spaces of cultural inquiry, Sarkar has presented the first conclusive survey of the two poets, and the jointly occupied coordinate of the nature of Englishness that each proposes in his respective poetry.

Alexander G. Weheliye. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 224 pp. 978-0-8223-5691-2.

Review by Justin Holliday,
Greenville Technical College

In *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, Alexander G. Weheliye explores what he refers to as “enfleshment,” the juridical and extra-juridical creation and acknowledgement of the flesh. Following Hortense Spillers, Weheliye claims that the instantiation of the flesh is anterior to the body and its legal attachments to personhood, showing that even though flesh is often bound within law, it often precedes or exceeds law. His project posits that Giorgio Agamben’s “bare life” and Michel Foucault’s “biopolitics” are insufficient theories that do not represent all human lives; therefore, he invokes the work of Spillers of Sylvia Wynter. Black feminist scholarship shows the

importance of considering the ways that specific populations—nonwhite, poor, incarcerated, and/or transgender, for example—lead lives often found missing or incomplete in the work of white scholars who may rely on a universalization of the human, regardless of racial or gender disparities both inside and outside the law. Weheliye provides a provocative argument against what he terms “a strong ‘anti-identity politics’ strain in the Anglo-American academy” (7). For Weheliye, black studies and particularly black feminism are necessary to examine the multiplicities of humanity as a sociopolitical construct so that race is not reduced to only a biological phenomenon, which has stymied philosophical inquires into the intersection of flesh, life, and politics.

Weheliye contends that Man, the homogenizing metonym often presented to refer to humanity as a whole, often remains synonymous with white, male, heterosexual, and masculine. Those who do not fit this label may risk being categorized not as human but rather as not-quite-human. To overcome such a limiting designation, he turns first to Wynter’s work on the “genres” of the human to expose the possibilities for other lives beyond the seemingly un-raced, ahistorical Man to exist. Her work, along with Spillers’s, demands recognition of the assemblages that reinforce certain tropes of those surround nonwhite and/or non-male populations so that the limiting construct of Man can be dismantled.

Specifically, Spillers’s invocation of the “pornotrope” posits the flesh, particularly black flesh, bound to desire and violence outside the law. Weheliye assesses the ways that slave owners mediated their sexual cravings for their slaves by looking at eroticized spectacles in films like *Sankofa* and *Mandingo*. Perhaps what attests to the strength the most is his envisioning of the transformative power of slave narratives. *Sankofa* illustrates a veritable metamorphosis of protagonist Mona the model into Shola the slave who receives a sexualized, brutalizing brand when she goes back in time.

Further, Weheliye shows that not only can the beating of Aunt Hester in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* be read as pornotropic, but also Douglass’s fight with Covey. Generally, this latter scene is read as simply Douglass’s transformation into manhood; however, as Weheliye deftly shows, not acknowledging the libidinal potential within the violence refuses a full accounting of flesh, an obfuscation of “the many ways that blackness...remains antithetical to the heteronormative” (96). To fight against racializing assemblages, then, Weheliye instructs that there must be a full accounting of all abuses of human beings, not to spectacularize one’s suffering, but rather to expose how those not always synonymous to a restrictive idea of Man have existed and are sometimes forced to exist in the inscriptive potentiality of their flesh outside the law.

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In order to fight against the power of racializing assemblages, Weheliye takes on the popular theories of bare life and biopolitics. According to Weheliye, both Agamben and Foucault fail to provide a full account of the workings of race and racism in their discourses. He accuses European philosophers like Agamben of raising the Holocaust and its sufferers, especially the Muselmann, to an impossible pedestal, which often supersedes acknowledgement of the injustices of slavery or colonialism. Later in the book, he finally explains that this monumentalizing of the Jews results from their attaining a “hyperhuman” status, yet he also claims that this status is also “where black people are consigned to either this realm or the domains of the not-quite-human” (97). Weheliye does not consider that the creation of Jews as “hyperhuman” results in part from a different racializing assemblage: the Jew as racialized Other. Although in some areas Jews have assimilated into whiteness, or perhaps a state of non-blackness, there remains a history of otherness, labeling them as not-quite-human, even nonhuman as in the concentration camps. This assemblage shows the failure of whiteness, which allows for the survivors to become monumentalized as more than human but not less than because they have survived a state of exception even after some of them could “cover,” or resist cultural determinations of the racial inscriptions of their flesh.

Weheliye shows no fear in making potential enemies. He points toward the gaps in Agamben and Foucault (along with Butler and Deleuze) to show that excluding race reifies racializing assemblages that block access to full juridical and extra-juridical humanity if someone does not belong to the all-too-often cited homogenized conception of Man. While his explanations occasionally could be more fleshed out, Weheliye effectively argues for the inclusion of black feminism and black studies in philosophy as a whole to begin the dismantling of universal, restrictive notions of the human.