

Subversive Others; Sexuality, Ethnicity, And Violence in Five Sri Lankan Novels in English

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(Hetero)Sexuality seems to play a highly important role in Sri Lankan society, but it is a topic that is deliberately avoided in discussions that take place within “polite circles”. It is for the most part invisible or made to be seen as non-existent by a “norm-governed” society, which considers heterosexuality to be the “ideal” form of sexuality. In terms of ethnicity, again the impact of the ideologies of the dominant ethnic groups on other ethnicities of the country is substantial. In the process of taking measures to make Sri Lanka an essentially “Sinhala-Buddhist” country, other ethnic groups have been pushed to the margins. Today, these “ethnic and sexual others” are engaged in a constant battle of searching for an accepted identity within Sri Lanka. Some of the Sri Lankan writers in English have endeavoured to form a space within their work in order to express the “undiscussed” theme of sexuality, including those sexualities that are considered “heretical”. *The Moon in the Water* by Ameena Hussein, *Giraya* by Punyakante Wijenaikē, *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai, *The Jam Fruit Tree* by Carl Muller, and *Servants: A Cycle* by Rajiva Wijesinha, which provide the basis for this study, are some of the Sri Lankan English novels that foreground “invisible spaces” such as sexuality. However, they are not confined to the theme of sexuality but illuminate the themes of ethnicity and violence as well. The boldness and honesty with which the authors address these issues on gender and sexuality have decidedly created a sense of awareness among the readership, as they attempt to create a space for those who are in the periphery, while providing an insight into the possible outcomes the “subversive other” would be subjected to. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the ways in which such forms of violence are created, to show how these selected novels address the issues of sexuality, ethnicity, and violence and how transgressive sexualities and ethnic minorities threaten normative society and the status quo of the dominant groups.

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