



Confined to a Flux

(Book Review: Siddhartha Gigoo, *Love in the Time of Quarantine*)

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An intrinsic play of myriad ideas, a romance with off-the-shelf words and a telling of so much more than a tale in and of uncertain times...it is *Love in the Time of Quarantine* by Siddhartha Gigoo. He pens a narrative framed in the initial 30 days of our nation's first of its kind lockdown calendar during pandemic, beginning March 22, 2020. What instantaneously strikes you about the narrative is its very idiosyncratic structure, with edges both frayed and enigmatic. There are seemingly two interspersed chronicles — “the lives of two lovers and a homeless family”—playing out during the quarantine period, courtesy what Gigoo calls “spikey ball-shaped, gorgeous looking, infinitesimal virus with a name befitting a royal” (9). While the former reads as a dialogue between Day and Night, the latter makes up a life's discourse among the caught-up parents and their child, clueless about the complexities of life under trying circumstances.

In an odd way, it is curative, as both offer much-captivating, different nuances of love while drawing your attention to the little kinks and creases of human reflexes and predicaments. The author, as also in his earlier writings, brings a fresh sensibility to the idea of love through a fantastical blend of disclosure and disguise, brilliantly juxtaposed in an unbelievably concise span of 57 pages. It shall rivet your attention, amplify your sympathies and provide a more heterogeneous way of engaging with the world as well as contemplating our place in it.

More than offering a meaning, *Love in the Time of Quarantine* is an engrossing read which impacts its readers with its somber intensity. In fact, the Prologue sets the tone playfully and yet pertinently and profoundly, evading any connotation. It rather produces an image of “pure affect”: “We won't get a second chance at this. It is now or never...I



shall count to 10 in my mind...it will be a heart-to-heart whisper...There must be no words between us...And then when you begin counting backwards... we will love what can't be loved" (10). The reader is instantaneously drawn.

Love in the Time of Quarantine does not fit a conventional mould of a genre, and hence it demands a "nomad thought", compelling you to break away from the territories of identity, representation, or denotation. To put it in Gilles Deleuze's model of a "machine", which is composed of assemblages of intensities and effects that cannot be pinned down to a single interpretation, this literary text doesn't necessarily offer a message, but holds the power to take the reader away from "the coded message of language" (Colebrook 115). Thus, the "deterritorialization", to use Deleuzian term, of language, or the text, takes the reader into the unusual realms of expression while escaping representation or the act of paraphrasing.

Day 3, March 24, 2020

Day: you evicted me from your memory at last.

Night: you banished me from your dream at last. (Gigoo 14)

Day 7, March 28, 2020

Day: you didn't spare even a single memory at last.

Night: i learnt to be still at last. (Gigoo 20)

Day 25, April 15, 2020

Day: my past collapsed into your present at last.

Night: the belief—that you are mine and I am yours forever—crumbled at last. (Gigoo 47)



Rather than being just a mirror, the writing takes you on a different plane. There are many intriguing and consuming journeys or perhaps fervent pursuits, adroitly sprawled out but in stringent brevity. The ambiguity is rendered as an experience in itself. In fact, Gigoo's art of fiction relates to Deleuze's critique of conventional mimesis and it, on the contrary, creates an aesthetic that is no longer confined to the subject and the object of the book. Rather not only "there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements, deterritorialization and destratification" (Deleuze and Guattari 2).

The "Day" and "Night" are perhaps the conscious and the subconscious, the formal and the fact, the passion and the disillusion, the mannerly and the unfiltered or may be the other and the self. But then as day and night fade and fuse into each other at dawn and dusk, all binaries blur as well in the flux of time. And that is what happens between the lines and words. Time appears to be the motif—"past", "present", "dreams", "forever", "memory", "remember", "forget", "infinity", the count till 10 and reverse and then each thought ending with "at last". But time isn't linear, in Bergsonian terms, it is no longer horizontal lines of succession, not just chronological order; instead, the "being of becoming is the pure form of time", directly in consonance with the non-linear mood and flow of the narrative.

The same motif of time could be traced in the story of the family where strict datelines are marking the action and yet no specific indicators of time are available as we read—"something good is about to happen", "hurry, or else we will be left to die"; "no time left"; "going to a 'new' home"; "we will be given some more tomorrow"; "go back to your homes"; "want to go back to the house". There seems to be an oscillation of past and present, or as Deleuze argues, the past having an effect in the unfolding of the present which occurs through this idea of "home". The family loses hope each time it finds some, yet there is a definitive streak of ensured survival and of sustained love.



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From another perspective, the Day-Night forms the mindscape— the thought and theme somehow being analogous to the conversation among the family—where the Day and the Night are deconstructing each other, and undoing the work of the other.

The Expulsion: ... ‘it is time to go back to our old home, darling’... (Gigoo 49)

Day 27, April 17, 2020

Day: ‘the dream came true in a dream at last.’

Night: ‘I am back where I belong at last.’ (Gigoo 50)

But it is in the Afterword, I believe, that the two narratives come merge and fade into one another completely, as Gigoo writes: “we are all refugees except that some of us are never home” (56). For there is no finality, the End keeps evading, there is only the horizon.

Love in the Time of Quarantine, through its offering of a time frame of 30 days, brings forth the idea that time is a nexus of lines, flows, segmentations and plateau, it is not merely a subjective experience, nor an objective or a quantitative measurement of movement. It indeed expresses the cartography of forms, life, regimes and assemblages. Gigoo seems to prefer the existential aspect of writing, which itself “is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed” (Deleuze 225).

Works Cited

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