



Beyond Exoticism: The Gunsekera Complex in Sri Lankan Migrant Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The article draws on a dubious cultural practice by a group of Sri Lankan migrant/diasporic writers in naming local characters using unrealistic and unlikely names. Through representational examples drawn from the fiction of Su Dharmapala (*Saree*), Romesh Gunasekera (*Reef*, *Heaven's Edge* and *Suncatcher*), Michael Ondaatje (*Anil's Ghost*), and Roma Tearne (*Mosquito*) the article establishes this malpractice to be a failure in cultural representation within the migrant/diasporic tradition. In responding to such authorship the article calls for a rigorous discussion that extends beyond the "exoticism debate": a conversation that, among others, has been developed by Graham Huggan, Elleke Boehmer, Benita Parry. In the course, the paper examines the position of migrant/diasporic writers within the global capitalist market of transnational publication and the place of the global and local (Sri Lankan) academy to collaboratively develop a critique that challenges dubious cultural representation. The discussion concludes that cultural representation comes with a responsibility and that conscious mis-directions need to be academically critiqued; and that the global and local knowledge centres need to think anew in working towards such an end.

KEYWORDS

Sri Lankan Literature, Global South Writing, Literary Exoticism, Gunsekera Complex

This article attempts to magnify a dubious cultural practice, now of several decades, among a group of migrant/diasporic Sri Lankan English fiction writers where they use proper names that are on the whole alien and unlike names found and used in the country on Sri Lankan characters they create. These names often appear to be either misplaced or to have resulted from cultural misappropriation while, to a resident Sri Lankan audience they read as absurd and humorous. To the unaccustomed eye – including a reader in the global audience who is distant to the semantics and naming practices in Sri Lanka – these names may appear as mundane “Sri Lankan names”. While, on one hand, scholarship has established migrant/diasporic writers’ attempts to exoticize their home cultures, as I will explain in this article, the names some migrant/diasporic Sri Lankan writers use on characters call for a critique that reaches beyond the exoticism debate: one that invites a fundamental engagement with the conversation of responsibility in cultural representation and, in turn, the role of informed criticism drawing on the combined resources of the global and regional (in this case, the Sri Lankan) academies. The questionable use of names on characters is a symptom of a larger issue of cultural misappropriation. This article proposes to invite scholarship on Sri Lankan English writing to revise its own critical and academic commitments in assessing migrant/diasporic framings of local culture. I am also conscious that some of the pathologies focused on in this discussion are not endemic to Sri Lankan migrant/diasporic English writing, but are shared with literatures of other cultures. Therefore, where deemed resonant and applicable, this discussion can be incorporated with and imported to other comparable domains.

The Sri Lankan English canon has a history that runs as far back as the nineteenth century which, over the past seven decades, has emerged as a “new literary” tradition of the post-second world war universe. Its roots sprung as an outcome of British imperialism on the island from 1815 to 1948. Genres such as poetry, the proto-novel, short stories and plays emerged through the nineteenth century. In the contemporary sense, its first work of fiction is traced to 1917 when Lucien de Zilwa published *The Dice of the Gods* (de Silva; Goonetilleke 240). While post-independence (post-1948) nationalism brought on a resurgence of native Sinhalese cultural interest (especially in Sri Lanka’s “southern” literary discourses) English language creativity persisted and, between the 1950s and 1990s, expanded as a literature which engaged with – and often challenged – the changing sociopolitical and economic tides of the new country (Halpe). With the onset of globalization in the early-1990s, a decisive split appeared in the Sri Lankan English canon as a migrant/diasporic branch of Sri Lankan roots gradually emerged and eventually took over local representation in the global world. Over the next three decades, the expansion of the migrant/diasporic writer space effectively pushed its home-based resident counterpart to the obscurity of the margins. Migrant/diasporic writers being published in the

global north were often equipped with opportunities, media visibility, market reach, and other resources of multinational publication that were not available for the resident writer. The race was an unequal one, and so were its outcomes.

However, the migrant/diasporic text often demonstrated cultural and socio-political abnormalities, dissonances and hiatuses which drew criticism from resident writers, academics, and critics. The stemming point of criticism was that certain cultural representations by the migrant/diasporic writer did not resonate with the Sri Lankan experience that was accessed, felt, and seen “at home.” While the global academy has complicated and attempted to nuance the migrant person over several decades of theory and scholarship, the resident critic continued to engage in the defense of a fundamental premise: that it had opposition to concede with the complex migrant subjectivity as explained by the global theorist, but that it didn’t explain the exoticism and dehistoricized cultural misrepresentation that continued through migrant/diasporic writing. To the present time, this situation remains a central debate in Sri Lankan classrooms as a conversation that inspires several university-level dissertations every year. However, the peripheral position of Sri Lanka’s academy in the global academic map has prevented this scholarship from being effectively circulated or in being taken too seriously. Sri Lankan academic critics such as Thiru Kandiah and Walter Perera who have numerous published calling attention to the spatiotemporal alienation of the migrant/diasporic writer and the abnormalities in migrant textual framings of local culture have been neutralized as regressive “nativist critics” by scholarship produced in the global north (Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka*). Salgado asserts that “the nativist approach [was] a direct by-product of the nationalist impulse for cultural reclamation” (Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka* 34), even though critics like Kandiah and Perera can hardly be called “nationalists” or advocates of “cultural reclamation” as those terms are situational in Sri Lanka.

In spite of obvious demonstrations of spatiotemporal alienation to Sri Lankan culture in its “living and breathing” form, the global academy has prioritized the migrant/diasporic writer as the flag-bearer for Sri Lankan writing. This preference seems largely to be based on convenience and – in an age otherwise globalized – the global academy’s lethargy to familiarize itself with Sri Lankan English writing produced by its resident canon. This fact is indirectly let out in research that flags the unavailability of resident literature outside the country (Ranasinha 35-36). But – despite its resourcefulness and superior technology – the northern academic critic has not imagined this “problem” as a solvable one at their end: where it reaches out to explore the resident canon for the benefit of a comparative academic tradition that mediates between the centre(s) and the margin(s).

In this essay, for purposes of reference, I allude to the Sri Lankan migrant/diasporic

writers' naming of characters that are culturally dissonant and alien as the Gunesequera Complex. Situated as a pathology of a kind, the Gunesequera Complex has been named after British-resident migrant Sri Lankan writer Romesh Gunesequera, in whose novels the questionable practice is widespread. Sri Lankan authors of the global industry, as Elleke Boehmer suggests, who often "use their hybridity and alienation as a marketable 'aesthetic device'" (Boehmer239), demonstrate this complex in their work. The Gunesequera Complex is introduced and outlined through four representative examples in the section to follow. These four examples are by no means exhaustive, but merely indicative, and are chosen from the work of writers who are either literary icons or are frequently active. Alex Tickell's observation of a brand of literature that "not only dramatizes the contexts of its production but also anticipates the circumstances of its consumption" (Tickell 6) is important to understand and frame the premise where the Gunesequera Complex frequently takes place: in a class of writers considered as those who "implicitly offer themselves to a western readership" as a "guide and translator" of customs of their non-cosmopolitan home countries in global peripheries (Lau, "Re-Orientalism" 585), or alternatively, as cultural translators (Ranasinha 34). The degree of misappropriation and absurdity behind the Gunesequera Complex, at best, instructs the unaccustomed reader and unsuspecting critic to choose one's guide and translator with greater alertness.

In order to situate the Gunesequera Complex, I draw on examples from the work of Roma Tearne, Romesh Gunesequera, Su Dharmapala, and Michael Ondaatje. All four writers have either lived in Sri Lanka in the past or connect with it through family or heritage. They have migrated young, established their lives in metropolitan centres, and turned to their land of heritage as a site for creative writing. Tearne, born in 1954, had left Sri Lanka for Britain at the age of ten. Her series of novels partly or fully set in Sri Lanka published between 2007 and 2010 include *Mosquito*, *Bone China*, *Brixton Beach*, and *The Swimmer*. Similarly, Gunesequera, too, has been living in Britain since the 1970s, having left Sri Lanka as an adolescent. Prior to his settling in Britain, Gunesequera had also lived in the Philippines. Most of his major work – such as *Monkfish Moon*, *Reef*, *Heaven's Edge*, *Noontide Toll*, and *Suncatcher* – draw or reflect on Sri Lanka as a broken land devastated by political upheaval. Ondaatje, who was born in 1943, had left Sri Lanka as an adolescent, lived in Britain for four years and moved on to Canada at the age of eighteen, where all his major works were published. Three of Ondaatje's novels – *Running in the Family*, *Anil's Ghost*, and *Cat's Table* – centrally draw on Sri Lanka. Of Sri Lankan lineage, Australian-resident Su Dharmapala was born in Singapore and had lived in Sri Lanka: an experience which seems to inspire sections of her novel *Saree* set in the northern Colombo suburb of Kotahena, the coastal town of Panadura, and the central hill country town of Bandarawela.

Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* follows the story of an expatriate Sri Lankan woman

named Anil Tissera who, as a forensic specialist representing an international organization, returns to the country of her birth to carry out examinations on skeletal remains of those killed and disappeared by the military. The story is presumably set in the early-1990s: in the period immediately after the political emergency of 1987-90. The proper name of this female protagonist, however, is a male name in both its Sri Lankan and wider South Asian usage. While Anila is its corresponding female form, Anil— as found in the name of Anil Moonesinghe, the former speaker of the Sri Lankan parliament, and Anil Kumble, the former Indian cricketer — is categorically a male referent. Unlike a name such as Chapa, Deepthi, Dimuthu, Kumudu, and Sahan, nor is Anil, as a name, gender-neutral. Therefore, Ondaatje's purpose of naming a female character in a male name is baffling while its effect is rather quixotic. The widespread violence in the prevailing political climate is characterized by killings and disappearances to which *Anil's Ghost* draws attention. Among the victims is a working class woman referred to as Sirissa (Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost* 167-171), which doesn't register as a proper Sri Lankan name. Any one of Sriya/Siriya, Srimala/Sirimala, and Sheersha can be identified as proper names. Ondaatje's odd choice of coining a name like Sirissa for a rural, working class woman requires examination as elsewhere he uses realistic names in a list of disappeared men (37),¹ which Ondaatje claims was partly inspired by Amnesty International reports (306).

In Roma Tearne's *Mosquito*, the issue with names appears in relation to both primary and secondary characters, including that of the male caretaker Sugi and Jim Mendis. Set in the mid-1990s, the novel follows the relationship of an elderly writer who returns to Sri Lanka after many years in Europe and a local teenage girl who falls in love with him. Tearne names the main female character Nulani Mendis. In Sri Lanka, while names such as Nilani, Nalini and Nelani are prevalent— if there is such a name at all — Nulani is a rare name. However, it has to be admitted that the name Nulani retains a distinct “local flavor”: a flavour different from the name given to Nulani's selfish and uncaring brother, Jim Mendis. For a southern Sinhalese male born in the 1980s, the name Jim is both out of place and out of generation. To find siblings in a family who bear such contrasting names — as Nulani and Jim — is even more unlikely for that generation. The name Sugi is equally alien and rootless to the rural Sri Lankan culture from which the character of the faithful man servant and caretaker originates. At best, Sugi can be assumed to be a shortened name of familiarity. But, this is neither established nor explained in the story, while even those who are not familiar with him, refer to Sugi by that name.

Similarly, in Su Dharmapala's *Saree*, a study of the main character Nila's immediate associates demonstrates the writer's subscription to the Gunsekera Complex. Nila's father, for

¹ This list consists of ten names — mainly of youth between ages 16 and 23 — which correspond with some names in a group of 48 youth and men disappeared in Embilipitiya, Sri Lanka, in the 1988-90 period.

instance, is named as Mervan Mendis. While both Mervin and Mervyn are common names in Sri Lanka, “Mervan” is quite clearly an aberration. To Nila’s brother Dharmapala gives the first name of Herath; a name which is a common surname among the Sinhalese, but hardly ever used as a first name as in the case of Nila (or their other sibling’s name, Rupani). Its unlikelihood gives the name Herath Mendis a certain absurd comic effect. Another similar instance can be found with the name Gunawardena Edirasinghe (sic)². Like Herath Mendis, Gunawardena Edirasinghe (sic) are two common surnames. A Burgher woman who is supportive of Nilais introduced as Helma Vasha, a name that doesn’t resonate with the Sri Lankan Burgher community.

Romesh Gunasekera’s fiction, as mentioned before, displays the Gunasekera Complex quite consistently over the writer’s career of three decades. Its most recent addition is found in *Suncatcher* published in 2019: a story set in mid-1960s Colombo in which Gunasekera names the adolescent middle class Sinhalese protagonist as Kairo. This name is both unrealistic and out of place for the setting. Kairo’s story is set in a Sri Lanka in transition, threatened by negative social and political change, which is a common theme in Gunasekera’s fiction at large. Political turbulence and social breakdown is at the foreground of Gunasekera’s *Reef* – a novel noted for “dehistoricized exoticism” (Jayasuriya quoted in de Mel 3) – where a servant boy from a remote Sri Lankan village is re-baptized by his master in the unlikely name of Triton. In *Heaven’s Edge*, which is set in an environmentally-devastated island run by a repressive regime which critics identify to be based on a Sri Lankan imaginary (Lauret-Taft 47; Ranasinha 34), Gunasekera names the story’s exotic main female character as Uva. In Sri Lanka, Uva is not a woman’s name, but the 8500 square kilometer territorial region of a province in the south-eastern interior.

Taken as a symptom, the Gunasekera Complex having not been noted or sufficiently questioned in global academia is a question in itself. While, on one hand, as these misrepresentations receive the accommodating nod of an oblivious, careless, or unconcerned global academy, on the other hand, what is received and interpreted in the metropolitan literary academia as Sri Lankan culture itself is placed under suspicion. The ignorance over the names I have highlighted – to use a Sri Lankan expression – can be likened to consuming rice with stones left over by defective pre-preparatory straining, which is readily accepted as part of the recipe. In the postcolonial tradition, a body of critics – among them Huggan, Boehmer, Brennan, and Lau – has drawn attention to numerous aspects of contemporary migrant/diasporic writing that are shaped by and, in turn, respond to market demands of global capitalism: a trajectory which Huggan frames as a “marketing of the margins” (Huggan). In proposing a response to the Gunasekera Complex which I primarily identify as a case of dishonest cultural representation and

² In its more commonly used Sinhalese form - Edirisinghe, not Edirasinghe.

brokerage of poor taste, I wish to draw on the conversation on the global literary industry as a space of/for third world exoticism: a space in which the migrant/diasporic writers that come under the present reading are implicated.

Migrant/diasporic writers, at one level, have periodically been identified as creators of cultural otherness in the metropolitan global north. Each writer has a production task in a continuing chain of production-distribution-reception. As agents, they self-locate within a network which includes transnational publishers, media, critics, and academics: an interconnected “collaborative industry” within a shared economy (Brennan qtd. in Huggan 12). In this set up, migrant/diasporic writers have been noted to create cultural difference as “an exotic commodity” used to transport “palatable versions of cultural otherness” to a predominantly “western” readership (Huggan 12). Anthony Appiah identifies them as a “comprador intelligentsia” who “mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery” (qtd. In Huggan 24). Distinguishing such production further, Huggan notes that such representation “tends to pander to neo-imperialist and late-capitalist commodification and aestheticization of cultural difference” (Huggan 6-7). In characterizing Sri Lankan diasporic writers, Lisa Lau identifies “relatively privileged backgrounds” in which the writers were “already relatively westernised even before migration” (Lau, “The Sinhalese Diaspora” 49). Demonstrating “considerable powers of choice and mobility,” to Lau these writers were “remarkably free in action and agency” (49).³ Lau’s assessment indicates that the Sri Lankan English diasporic writer enjoys reasonable agency and free choice within her/his enterprise. It entails that she/he has the social and intellectual capital to work as an autonomous agent and if, indeed, they are transmitters of culture, the writers have a capacity to choose between cultural translation and brokerage.

As a common preoccupation, the Sri Lankan migrant/diasporic writer is noted to work on “nostalgia,” a “sense of loss” and a “depiction of lost idylls” which he/she often regrets, and longs for “a lost innocence” and a “golden era past”(Lau, “The Sinhalese Diaspora” 51). Huggan understands the literary practice perpetuated by this class of writers in a threefold distribution: as “mystification” (of the culture under representation), “imagined access to the cultural other,” and the reification of persons, communities, and places within a culture as “exchangeable aesthetic objects” (Huggan 19). As Dimuthu Dharmapala asserts, narratives by such writers, with stories that are “unduly embellished” and “often painfully distorted,” can be “detrimental when applied to actual political events or nuanced aspects of local culture”(42). The act of writing the margins, as an economic exchange, implies mobility and acceptance to diasporic writers within their

³ While Lau’s assessment is applicable overall to Sri Lankan diasporic writers composing in English, this must not be too readily applied to those writing in Sinhalese and Tamil.

metropolitan playing fields. The writer, in his/her role as a “translator of [their home] customs” is seen to court credibility as having “authentic accounts to impart” to a “western readership” (Lau, “Re-Orientalism” 585). To map such writers as a category, Lau introduces the term “Diasporic Oriental”: a classification in which migrant/diasporic writers who demonstrate the Gunesekara Complex, too, can be located.

Navigating against making generalizations, Tasneem Perry – whose research involves resident Sri Lankan writers including David Blacker, Nihal de Silva, and Vivimarie Vanderpoorten– asserts that “resident writers are more likely to be able to capture the various permutations of identities” as they are “negotiated in a day-to-day sense” (10). Novelist and critic Minoli Salgado further acknowledges this distinction when she claims “the mediation of different cultures and readerships in the reach for an audience” to be “one of the toughest things for postcolonial writers” (Salgado, “Autobiographies” 56). The difficulty of this task, however, must not permit a writer to commit cultural vandalism. How difficult is it for a writer to negotiate between his migrant status and the culture brought under his creative project as not to identify a gendered proper name, or one that is unrealistic in a Sri Lankan context? While theorizations should be meaningfully used as frameworks to understand subjectivities and subject positions, they should not be used to bail out a writer – in a manner of speaking – who cannot get a name right. Before I address the problem of the Gunesekera Complex and direct the discussion towards possible counter-measures, it is necessary to address a gaping intellectual cavity brought on by the mutual alienation between the global and Sri Lankan literary academies during the age of globalization which, in turn, has resulted in a disconnect between global knowledge and local claims regarding Sri Lankan English creativity: a pitfall from which dishonest cultural brokerage often benefits.

Till about the mid-1990s, the leading authority over Sri Lankan English writing was based in local universities and their Departments of English. Scholars of the field, among others, like D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Ashley Halpé, Thiru Kandiah and Walter Perera (names that commonly appear in critical literature, anthologies, and editions) were “locally-bred” intellectuals. In the 1990s and 2000s, as a parallel trajectory to the centralization of the migrant/diasporic writer’s flag-bearer role in Sri Lankan English writing, the academic authority over English literature produced in the country, too, began to gravitate to the global north. It was an inevitable outcome. It reflected how global capitalism operated and of its knowledge production – a key, integral cogwheel of the capitalist system – as a hierarchical and cosmopolitan prerogative. In addition, increased migration of intellectuals and top-qualifying students over the past three decades has negatively impacted the Sri Lankan university. As mentioned at the outset of this article, northern critics such as Salgado popularized the term “nativist critic” (Lau, “The

Sinhalese Diaspora” 55) to profile leading postcolonial academic-critics of the country and, by implication, to morally justify the northern “take over” of the critical industry. Despite superior visibility, publicity, and mileage, the universities of the global north remain distant to the subtleties and day-to-day intricacies of the socio-political and cultural discourses in Sri Lanka. At one level, its spatiotemporal disconnect is comparable to that of migrant/diasporic writers to whom Sri Lanka is always already a far off place. This unbridgeable distance has resulted in an acute dilemma where, on one hand, the most widely circulated academic material on Sri Lankan English writing is produced in a centre that has limited access to the cultural spring well which – in order to do its job– it is supposed to be erudite in. On the other hand, this same academy has spearheaded theoretical discussion that has endorsed the migrant/diasporic tradition whose validity (as cultural translators, not as brokers) the global academy is not fully equipped to assess. In terms of meaningful collaborative action, the exchange between leading northern knowledge hubs and their Sri Lankan counterparts, at best, remain superficial. Whether they satisfy the requirements of a mutually-beneficial, academically-rigorous equal partnership is a debate I wish to leave open.

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However, being an implicated player of the “collaborative industry” (Brennan’s term) that makes the global literature business has prevented the northern critic from raising questions that can be more decisively articulated from the outside. Blind spots can be seen even in the best of the global critics. As recently as 2016, Lau claims Sri Lankan English writers are “mostly educated in the West” and that “many also live in the West” (Lau, “The Sinhalese Diaspora” 48). This is a misleading claim borne by Lau’s lack of access to the locally-produced work by resident Sri Lankan English writers. In another instance, Lau attempts to classify Sri Lankan diasporic writing along categorical ethnic lines: as Sinhalese and Tamil. This is a conceptually problematic maneuver and even a “re-colonialist” approach that enforces in the diasporic space ethnic categories introduced to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century by British colonialism. From a futuristic perspective, the global and Sri Lankan academies need to bridge the distance between their scholarly practices and search for meaningful collaboration. Collaborative work that transcends the occasional edited anthology where both Sri Lankan and global academics hold forth individually can stimulate the cultural and intellectual integrity of “writing Sri Lanka.” It, in turn, will pave way for Sri Lankan literature in English, as Salgado hopes, to be “read for its internationalism...as well as its cultural specificity” (qtd. in O’Loughlin 173).

As a concluding movement to this article, I return to the Gunesekera Complex in the light of the migrant/diasporic writer’s role of cultural translation. From the point of craftsmanship, any narrated story fundamentally involves character, place and time, and a plot. What, in a manner of speaking, does it signify for a writer to “get a name wrong”: to be a vehicle of the Gunesekera

Complex at the expense of the cultural ignorance of an audience? At yet another level, what are the moral implications of cultural vandalism where characters built in a way to represent a people, a place, and a history are purposefully cast to mislead? This calls for an extension of the present discussion to seek answers by questioning the responsibility of a writer in cultural representation. This conversation has to emerge from the fundamental premise that cultural representation is a sensitive undertaking (that requires responsibility) which calls for empathy and integrity; that the representation of a people and their socio-political and cultural whole requires in depth research, the patience of familiarity, and an objectivity that self-prompts to spot one's own error. The academic critic – both globally and locally – needs to be strong and equipped to defend society by calling narrative malpractices to task, and in challenging writers who engage in fraudulent brokerage.

The character names I have problematized in this article have resulted from conscious choices made by each writer after having deliberated at length before selecting one name over another. But, the superficiality and naivety that seems to accompany their task appears to take away from the intended seriousness of the representation: a fact that immediately registers with a resident reader immersed in the culture being mimicked. In his critique of Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef* and Karen Roberts' *The Lament of the Dhobi Woman*, Walter Perera uses the term "naïve exoticism" (Perera, "Portrayals" 33) to identify the writers' contrived and overwritten simplifications of native culture. Perera implies that certain writers of the migrant/diasporic condition are unable "to delve deeply into the complexities of the indigent characters or their background" and "deal in 'currency values'" (33). The writers I have drawn on demonstrate no reason to be treated lightly for the absurdities they peddle with all seriousness. The end of their enterprise benefits neither writer nor reader. Resulting in cultural vandalism, it distorts the intended projection of the identity of a people. It is an exercise long overdue, but it is about time one turned around to leave. In terms of brokerage, dishonest dealers exploit the ignorance and nonchalance of unsuspecting customers to trade faulty produce, defective vehicles, and real estate with disputes. But, it is for the customer to see wisdom and check for trails of cheap oil, or other foreign sounds.

In activating counter-measures, rather than caving into the pressures of accepting global literature and theorizations of the global academy at face value, the Sri Lankan academy has to relentlessly exercise probing critiques that engage its northern counterparts in a productive exchange. Possessing superior resources and access to technology, the northern academy's lack of thoroughness in being aware of finer aspects of cultures in countries like Sri Lanka – as explained in the article – must be contested. The benchmarks it suggests have to be re-examined, challenged for verification, and vetted through a rigorous practice. The most strenuous challenge

lies in identifying and pushing back the northern academy's self-imposed gatekeeping role of Sri Lankan/regional culture: an activism that requires new frameworks produced in Sri Lanka, and used against the intricately hierarchical comprador capitalist network of global commerce. This requires, fundamentally, an understanding of how global capitalism operates within transnational publication and the academy as a field, and the de-fetishism of cosmopolitan writing as a vanguard of the global south. The limitation of writers who trivialize, exoticize and misrepresent culture to support the demands of the market or who, as vehicles of the Gunsekera complex, render cultural expression quixotic and absurd have to be unmasked and questioned as standard critical practice. For the Sri Lankan/regional critic, the challenge from the globalized age is to resist the temptation to be implicated within the global order and to produce counter-frames that will de-centralize and southernize the global literary paradigm.

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BIO

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