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Where the Postmodern Meets the Postcolonial: I. Allan
Sealy's Fiction after *The Trotter-nama*

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Abstract

Allan Sealy's first novel called *The Trotter-nama*, published in 1988, relocated the marginalized racially mixed Anglo-Indian community to the centre of narrative accounts of the British-Indian colonial encounter and the aftermath of independence from Empire. This novel was the subject of my research essay written in 2006 and provided the impetus for a further exploration of Sealy's successive fictional works: *Hero*, *The Everest Hotel*, *The Brainfever Bird*, and *Red*, which are examined in this thesis.

On reading these four novels, it became self-evident that Sealy could be considered a postmodern writer within a contemporary literary theoretical framework. His postmodern aesthetics are manifested through the novels' experimentalist narrative structures, which feature the production of multiple linguistic referentialities, a depthlessness of signification, and the relentless use of metafictional self-reflexive devices for interrogating the relationship between fiction and a supposed reality. Sealy exploits both Western and Indian intertexts in a bid to unravel Orientalist discourses about Eastern cultural and literary traditions. He positions subjectivity as fluid and unstable, as well as being linguistically and culturally constituted.

Sealy's postcolonial concerns in these four novels are not as immediately explicit as his use of postmodern tactics. This is in part because Sealy does not seem to endorse traditional ideas of what the term "postcolonialism" has come to signify. His uppermost preoccupation in the four novels is with multifaceted layers

of power that include but do not privilege colonial power. Postcolonial ideals of nationhood, independence, and democratic principles do not find any hegemonic fictional sanction. Instead, a number of power centres are scrutinized, including narrative and authorial omniscience, those dictating race, class, and gender oppression, and by implication the metanarratives of humanism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism themselves.

The productive outcome of this intersection of postmodern aesthetics with a redefined postcolonialism is an innovative synthesis of Western and Indian literary forms and cultural knowledge that represents both Indian and postcolonial fictional constructions.

Acknowledgements

The reading and research of Allan Sealy's first novel *The Trotter-nama* resonated at a very subjective level for me and inspired me to explore on a deeper level his subsequent novels. While a number of journal articles have been written on his first novel, I discovered during my literature search on these later novels, a real scarcity of secondary research material. So this thesis is breaking new ground on different levels.

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