

Université de Montréal

The self and its complicated relationship with writing in *The Diary*

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Résumé

Ma mémoire présente ma nouvelle «The Diary». J'explore les conflits psychologiques qui surgissent chez une personne lorsqu'il n'est pas à l'aise avec sa façon de penser et d'agir. Mon histoire représente le complexe d'infériorité de Shadi, sa culpabilité et sa conscience. Sa sœur jumelle, Shadia, est le soi de l'écrivain, Shadi. Il se cherche en elle depuis son enfance. Shadi devient un escroc pour explorer des thèmes pour sa nouvelle pièce de théâtre. L'ego de Shadi est une résultante du patriarcat. Dans l'analyse de «The Diary», mon approche est principalement psychanalytique. J'utilise *The Mad Woman in the Attic* par Sandra Gilbert et Susan Gubar pour soutenir le thème principal de mon histoire. Shadi emprisonne sa sœur Shadia dans ses écrits car il veut se battre contre son complexe d'infériorité provenant de l'intelligence de sa sœur jumelle. Shadia sort du texte de l'écrivain pour parler à l'auteur. Les travaux de Sigmund Freud contribuent à expliquer la démence de Shadi. La soeur est la partie inconsciente de l'esprit de Shadi. Elle est son super-ego alors qu'elle est sa conscience. J'utilise aussi *Madness and Modernism* de Louis A. Sass pour la étudier la démence de mon protagoniste, Shadi. Simone de Beauvoir déclare que la femme est considérée comme l'autre. J'utilise l'autre en psychose comme un concept positif bien qu'il invoque des sentiments de terreur. *The Anxiety of Influence* de Harold Bloom m'aide à décrire la rébellion de mon protagoniste masculin contre ses précurseurs. «The Laugh of Medusa» d'Hélène Cixous explique l'importance de l'écriture féminine dans les poèmes de Shadi qui les écrits dans un état de démence.

Mots-clés: Psychanalyse, La démence, L'art, Féminisme, le soi, L'écrit

Summary

My thesis presents my novella, *The Diary*. I explore psychological conflicts that arise in a person when he is not at ease with his way of thinking and acting. My plot depicts the main character Shadi's inferiority complex, his guilt and his conscience. The twin sister, Shadia, is the other or feminine self in which Shadi, the male writer, mirrors himself since his childhood. Shadi becomes a con man in order to explore themes for his plays through a fraudulent business plan in real life. Shadi's male ego is something constructed by patriarchy. My approach, in analyzing *The Diary*, is primarily psychoanalytical. I use *The Mad Woman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, to support my story's main theme. The male writer in my story imprisons his sister Shadia in his plays as he wants to fight his inferiority complex resulting from his twin sister's intelligence. Shadia steps out of the male writer's text to talk to the male author in a state of dissociation. Sigmund Freud's works contribute in explaining Shadi's madness. The female writer is the unconscious part of Shadi's mind. She is his *super-ego* as she is his conscience. I also use Louis A. Sass's *Madness and Modernism* to delve into my male protagonist's psychosis. Thus, I portray him as someone who seeks "a waking" (Sass 3) through the loss of reason. Simone de Beauvoir states that the woman is considered to be the *Other* in *The Second Sex*. I use the *Other* in psychosis as a positive concept although it invokes feelings of terror. Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* helps me to depict my male protagonist's rebellion against his precursors. Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of Medusa" explains the importance of *l'écriture féminine* in Shadi's poems written in a state of madness.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Madness, Art, Feminism, The self, Writing

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The Diary

Chapter 1

As the afternoon wore on, the hustle and bustle of the small town was winding down. I was glad that another hot and sticky day was coming to an end. Summer was always like that on the island of Mauritius. My taxi ride home was comfortable as a breezy warm wind dried my long black sweaty hair, and sticky shirt. The street lights were dim when I reached Highlands, my village. When the taxi stopped in the dirty narrow lane, I paid the driver, and exited the vehicle wearily. I was home. A normal person would be happy to be home, but not me. Who would be happy to enter a place that seemed lifeless, and stuffy at times, suffocating? Walking towards the house, I thought to myself that I should be grateful that I even had a home. I preferred to live in my own home rather than staying in Dad's house in Grand-Baie. Dad, who passed away five years ago, had been a successful businessman and he left me a generous inheritance. My twin sister Shadia lived with me, yet I was lonely, still unmarried at the age of twenty-seven.

There were only a few houses in my neighborhood and their lights were already off. My house, which was situated between Adil's and Raj's houses, was neither big nor small. Adil's home was an imposing two-storey house with a towering red open gable roof. The front of the house was impressive with its oversized entrance door adorned with a big French window and the driveway leading to his triple car garage. His posh house was the talk of the town. The villagers would always criticize its beauty out of pure jealousy. Raj had a smaller house than mine despite the fact that we both lived in a one-storey house. Both of us had flat roofs. I wanted to build a second storey but could not spend my dad's savings on luxuries as I was unemployed.

Raj had already painted his house in a light blue color. I decided I would paint mine when I got a job.

My phone vibrated and I checked the message. It said: "Dear Mr. XXXX, please be advised that the Accounting position you applied for has just been filled as the chosen candidate had, as required in the position, a minimum of 5 years' experience in the accounting field. We thank you for your interest in XXXX and wish you best of luck in your future endeavors." I should have lied that I have the experience required. Damn! It's time to go for my business plan that I've been working on for almost two months. I breathe heavily and feel beads of sweat forming on my forehead. I've had this sensation for the past couple of days on my way home. Why? Anxiety attack? Panic attack? My thoughts as usual shift to Shadia's voice saying: "You're home!"

Some boys stood near the streetlamp on the pavement. A beautiful girl rode her bicycle on the narrow street. Suddenly, she fell down and the boys teased by advising her to stay at home and cook. Why did girls try riding bicycles when they were not good at it? Silly. It started to rain. What the fuck! I should have brought my umbrella. I run toward my house, I am afraid of rain. It reminds me of cyclones and my childhood with my sister... I reach the front porch, I stop and sigh as I come to the realization that Shadia will be here to irritate me.

Tonight was different, I opened the door and noticed that she hadn't bothered turning on the lights. "Shadia! Where are you?" I yelled. She did not answer. She is such a pain. I hate being at home. My bedroom is a mess, dirty shirts are scattered all over the bed, stained curtains hang on their rods, and the closet doors are open revealing a messy bundle of clothes. The place used to be so pristine. Now it looks like a pig sty and smells like one too – disgusting! I hammer on Shadia's door.

"Why is the room such a mess?" I yell.

"Oh my God, stop screaming! I'm not feeling well, ok?" she says.

"Well that's one helluva lame excuse, Shadia!" I can't help kicking a chair. Ouch! My toe.

"Look, I said I'm sorry, ok really sorry, now get over it!" she answered.

"No, *you* look, I'm the one who's out there looking for a job day in and day out, while you stay home doing nothing!" My toe is bleeding. "Great! That's all I needed!"

"You are totally useless, Shadia! Who will marry you?"

A brief silence ensues before she shouts, "I don't want to get married, Shadi!"

My toe bleeds as I limp toward the kitchen to let the tap water run over my wounded toe. I hear Shadia opening the door of her room. "I'm leaving this house soon," she says. The water from the tap continues to run. "You don't have to worry about me." I focus on the sound of the tap water. The basin is filling itself slowly. Running water has always given me the creeps. It reminds me of a game played with my sister during cyclones. Dad used to buy lovely red dresses for her whenever she passed her exams. I used to wear them, made up like her, when we stayed at home during cyclones. Mum laughed because I looked exactly like my twin sister. We played in our room with kitchen and household play sets and enjoyed the heavy rainfall from the window for the whole day. That was my favorite game. I felt as confident as Shadia. Once we played in the yard and I got drenched when it started to rain. My make up was running. My dad came out and laughed at me. I was ashamed.

"You ruined my life by forcing me leave school and calling me back from France when dad died. You'll see, just watch me!" Shadia yelled.

"Really? And where are you going to go? Eh? What are you going to do, Shadia?"

My nostrils flared and I stopped breathing for a moment. That was the first time Shadia had challenged me. Women were supposed to be submissive, but my sister is a rebel. Young women normally plan to get married at the age of twenty in this country, but Shadia is still unmarried at twenty-seven. She has wasted her time studying and has grown old. She's not like mom, a fine woman who would take care of the household chores. An excellent cook. Dad never complained. I still visit her tomb and talk to her. I'd tell her about Shadia's behavior. Dad loved Shadia too much. He preferred her over me because she was more intelligent. I hated that. I tell Shadia that women are weak

"I'm not weak, Shadi."

I was so engrossed in this exchange, that I didn't notice the water overflowing in the sink. I turned off the tap and limped to get the mop to clean up the mess. I took a deep breath. Shadia will do as I say. She is a nobody sitting idle at home for the whole day. Nobody spoiled her now. She had always been the center of attention. Stuff it. I limped through the other kitchen door to my room. I couldn't stand Shadia's voice. I pulled the bed sheet back and angrily plopped myself on the bed, unable to stop thinking how brilliant Shadia had been at school. All the teachers loved her and praised her especially for her writing skills, nobody paid any attention to me. I struggled to write while my twin sister grabbed all the prizes in the writing competitions. I always envied and wanted to be like her, an intelligent girl.

"I'll show you!" Shadia keeps shouting.

"Shut up!" I stick my fingers into my ears to block her relentless babble.

"I will become a writer, Shadi and that's a promise!"

Her voice echoed in my room the entire night, and I stuck my fingers deep in my ears to keep from shrieking. Raj's mother had been complaining about my hoarse voice, but it was Shadia who forced me to shout. His mother never blamed Shadia; the old witch heard only my voice. I was unable to sleep, the heat rose. Unbearable. I heard my sister's footsteps and soon the old fridge creaked. Perhaps she was making herself a snack from the fridge. Drawing up a chair, she was munching food noisily and drinking water. I pretended to be sleeping. Shadia was doing this out of spite, just to infuriate me. Keeping my mouth shut was the best way to avoid quarrels. I fell asleep.

I saw a grayish lizard moving on the ceiling when I opened my eyes. It ogled its prey, a moth resting nearby. Before it could reach its prey, another lizard appeared and both squeaked, ready to fight. I hate them: I sprang out of my bed, and rushed to the kitchen. Although, I had not eaten anything, I didn't feel hungry. I headed toward the hallway. Shadia's door was open, but she was not there. The blue round clock on the wall announced midnight. Where could she have gone at that this time of night? She was in the washroom. I came back to my room and found that the lizards had disappeared. I opened the drawer and grabbed my diary in which I had started to write my last play. The play was still incomplete... I sat on the chair and took up Shadia's dialogue.

Shadia was also the name of my play's heroine. She wanted to be a writer, but her father did not allow her to write. He wanted her to get married. Finally, I wrote.

Shadia (aside): He won't allow me to...to...write...they did not allow me to...I will have to listen to dad...

What the hell! That play was cursed. No flow of ideas. I had been trying to write it for one whole year. I tried again.

Shadia: I wasn't allowed to...writing was not meant...not allowed to...dad did not want me to...writing was not my thing...

I tore the pages out and threw the pen away. I was still unable to portray Shadia as a weak woman in my story. Dialogues were needed and I could not write even a single sentence properly. May be I didn't want Shadia's dad to love her and to let her write. This would give birth to a different story in which a daughter was not allowed to write like my sister. I had written so much about such women that I was unable to write on the same theme. I had writer's block. I knew that I needed a career break to find some kind of inspiration. I wanted stories from real life, I was fed up with stories portraying weak women. I needed a career break to earn money and to find new ideas to write my plays. I had to forget about my hatred for Shadia. I needed to meet people and work with them. They could inspire me to write my new play. I decided exactly what I should do.

Dad had been very successful as a car dealer importing second hand cars from Japan and repairing them in Mauritius. Mauritians love Japanese cars. I could start that business by using my dad's name. He had a good reputation, but it would take a lot of time and money to start everything all over again. On second thought, maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all as, let's face it, being a businessman is not in my blood. I've decided to start this business anyway, but in a different way.

I had researched extensively about a Ponzi Scheme. I had to persuade people to invest in my business plan by promising double returns to my financiers in five months' time. The minimum sum of one thousand rupees would be a reasonable amount as Mauritians do not like

expensive ventures and to top it off, the market was currently very competitive. One thousand rupees was fair. It was neither too little nor too much. I would use my father's name and tell my investors that my business plan was about importing Japanese cars and selling them in Mauritius. My investors would be told that I was using their money to buy those Japanese cars like my father. Their profit would be gleaned from the money earned by selling those cars here after repairing them.

Once the money started coming in, I would give the money received by recent investors to the older ones in order to keep my double indemnity going. Five months should be enough to attract more investors and double the amount of money for old investors. "Piece of cake, right?" I told myself. I knew that I needed more time to prepare my bogus scheme, it might even inspire me to write a play on a different topic. This time, I was going to write a story about a personal experience from real life. I had wasted too much writing about weak women in a male dominated society driven by my anger for Shadia. I want to set a new trend and stop following traditional male authors who focus on such plots. A real sensational story about a Ponzi Scheme could help me overcome my writer's block and focus on a different plot. My heart raced, I really needed to use the washroom, but Shadia might be there. Damn it! I went back to bed.

Dark clouds hung in the sky. A cyclone was probably looming, summer on the island of Mauritius were prone to it. I wandered lazily in such sultry weather. The waterfront of the city was meant for that. The kiosks, the ice-vendors, the blue and yellow restaurants attracted locals and tourists alike. I love the sea. Where else can an unemployed person go? I searched for a place to sit and write. It was impossible to write at home. I strolled toward a nearby bench where a heavy set man was perched. We looked at each other. He frowned when I removed my pen

and diary from my bag. People usually came to the waterfront to eat and to stroll down the boardwalk. Boating was also enjoyable. Facing the sea, I gathered my courage to put my pen to the paper. I tried to write it again.

Shadia: My hands were shaking...shaking...dad was against this...women cannot write...not write.

My hands were shaking. I could not write.

Waves crashed against the harbor as a strong wind began to blow. The ships were swaying in the crashing waves and my hands were shaking. A gust of wind caught the diary and threw it to the ground. My neighbor chuckled while I jumped off the bench to catch my diary. It was so stupid of me to be writing, I told myself. It was useless because I was just making a fool out of myself. Sitting by the sea could not help me write; I would never be able to write like this. I had to start my business! The smell of grilled meats was rising in the muggy air. Two old women sitting at the table behind me were stuffing their mouths with food. Their hunched backs did not prevent them from having fun in life. Lucky hags. The waterfront had been constructed for amusement in Mauritius, the paradise island. A paradise of fools. I was a bloody fool among fools.

Creativity is meant to be used in real life. How could fiction change one's life? I knew I would not be able to write the Shadia character. I was like an infertile woman desperate to have a child. My plays used to be my whole world and the characters in my script were my family. I had lost them all. The dramatist in me was dead. It was my fault that The Yaarana Drama Group, my group, could not perform in last year's Christmas Eve play. We had been performing for the last six years, but the company's director fired me. What a creep! But my friends stayed in touch with me, they trusted me and wanted me to write again. I wish I could.

A flock of birds was chirping as it flew crazily in the wind gusts past the ships. The deep blue sea ended at the horizon. Two men belched silently while cracking jokes. Their wives packed the rest of the food in a big plastic food container and handed two cans of beer to them. The boats reeled as gusts of wind crossed the sea again; the wind moved toward us. Then the current of air hung perfectly still over the mass of water below it. It froze, but soon poured over the waterfront. The cool breeze refreshed my mind. I thought about the Ponzi scheme and visualized how it could work. Thus, I started preparing the script for my new play: The Ponzi Scheme.

My eyes closed and I dreamed the story that would make my fraudulent business work. I decided to contact the Yaarana Drama Group to act in a new play I am preparing from a real life situation. Great. This was a way to fight my writer's block and create new possibilities. I prepared the story mentally for the time being. I needed new characters and themes for my plot. Topics on weak women were no longer my cup of tea.

The exhaust from the buses and smoke from the factories muffled the city. The traffic lights were barely visible, so were the city dwellers. The sun was smiling weakly in a gray sky as it was going to rain; soon it began. Drip...Drip... One drop fell on me and then two drops fell. It didn't take long for it to begin raining cats and dogs. I was drenched, but kept walking. The drops of water were so gigantic that I began to panic. I could count each drop falling on me: one, two, three, four... My insecurity increased. The rain reminded me of my indoor game played during my childhood. The drops of rain fell on the windows of our room; Shadia and I watched. I wore her red dress happily. Then, I saw the rain had washed away my make up.

Rodrigues had said to meet him near the bus stop. Where was he? Well, I guess he hadn't dropped his habit of turning up late. I kept looking for him while fighting a painful feeling of being less than Shadia. "Oops!" I stepped on a woman's toe. Everything was so blurry.

"Sorry about that!" I exclaimed.

"Just watch your step, will ya!" she stormed.

She scurried to get away from the rain and her umbrella fell down. I ran to help, but she caught her umbrella before I could get hold of it. She frowned and stamped her left foot in the water. I stamped in a similar fashion as a child.

Someone honked. I turned back to see who it was and saw Rodrigues in the car. He raised his hand from the window and I hurried to the sidewalk where he had stopped.

"Come on! Hurry up!" yelled Rodrigues.

"You're the one who's late!"

Our voices had to pierce the rain's sound. It continued to pour. As he was driving through the dense traffic of the crazy city, I told my friend about my plan. The downpour finally stopped. "That's good news Shadi!" grinned Rodrigues. The car stopped in the parking lot of our favorite restaurant, on the city's outskirts, far from the crowds. I liked the *rougaille*, a chicken dish cooked in tomato sauce, by the chef here. It was delicious.

I looked at the mountains and the sugarcane fields surrounding the building. I loved sugarcane fields which became rare because of industrialization. Artists needed such places to discuss about art. I hated restaurants packed with families gossiping about their neighbors. I hated women talking about shopping centers even more. This restaurant was cozy, with a few tables and chairs. It was well lit with soft music. The waiters, dressed in white uniforms, would welcome us with their warm smiles. People did not discuss nonsense here.

Rodrigues had been a good friend for five years and was with me in the Yaarana Drama Group. When I had lost my post as a dramatist, he was by my side. We often sat and talked in this restaurant.

"Have you been able to write a new script?" asked Rodrigues.

"No, but I have an awesome idea to make money," I announced. I had my coffee. "I have a story."

Rodrigues looked quite confused. He scratched his beard and then frowned holding a steaming cup of coffee in his slim hands.

"It's about a business plan in which I'm acting as a businessman who is looking for investors."

My buddy was struggling to understand my train of thought. I explained my Ponzi Scheme in detail to him.

"It's about finding investors and making them believe that they'll make a profit by investing at least one thousand rupees in a business plan," I explained.

Investors would be told that their money would be used to buy cars from Japan. I wanted to use the name of my father's company for this business as it would be beneficial. We could also convince an established businessman to invest; consequently, other people would believe in the project. Once the investors joined, the money of new financiers would be used to satisfy old ones. This would generate money that we could use to make a living.

"I'll be explaining this to Dilip, Lynn and Sameer too," I said.

"But that's swindling!" uttered Rodrigues in disbelief.

I smiled wickedly and Rodrigues understood that I had changed as I was not talking like the honest hardworking writer I once was.

"Drop dead, I'm out!" he snapped, banging the table.

I continued to have my coffee with a fake confidence accompanied by deadly silence.

"We could be caught," whispered Rodrigues.

"All of us will flee to another country before we are caught. I don't care," I said.

We could use Lynn's garage as the site to repair the Japanese cars. Lynn knew how to repair cars, he worked in his dad's garage.

"All of you are almost starving due to my writer's block. You're doing jobs that you hate."

My friends had very few skills. My business plan could help to bring both money and maybe ideas for plays in the future. Plus, I could stop using my hatred for Shadia as the main theme of my plots. I wanted to forget about her and develop my own thinking and writing skills through this fake project. Rodrigues did not accept my proposal, but I knew that he was craving to act in my new play on the Ponzi Scheme like my other friends. After all, the theatre was in our blood. The waitress approached and gave me the bill. I wore an empty smile.

"Let me pay it," said Rodrigues.

"I don't want your sympathy, buddy!" I announced.

I snatched the bill from him. My business was going to mushroom all over the island. I was convinced that I would become wealthy in no time and start writing again.

Chapter 2

The sun's rays filtered through the curtains and bathed my bed. The rays were filling the whole room gradually. Light was leaving its prints on my wardrobe, table, chair, bed and on all the objects present in the area. My eyes were inspecting the bright spots upon the dark surfaces

of things as I dissected the contrasting effects of light and shade. I'd fought Shadia, as usual, the night before. It was nerve-wracking to keep fighting with her, but I was happy that she was not used to getting up early in the morning. She was just an irritating voice from the other room.

I stood up and headed toward the bathroom to brush my teeth. As I stepped into the kitchen to have a cup of tea, I saw Shadia sitting there in her red dress. My sister was dark-haired, slim and tall. How the devil? She had a dreadful glitter in her black protruding round eyes. "Good morning bro!" she said. Unbelievable. She was all smiles; I hated that. I hated her voice. How could I bear her presence? My twin sister was my shadow, my carbon copy. She was fed up with the hide and seek. We had to confront each other face to face.

"I said good morning," she smiled.

"Kiss my ass!" I retorted.

Her eyes sparkled, she enjoyed irritating me. My forehead moistened. "Do you have another interview today?" she asked casually. The aroma of the tea rose in the kitchen. "Would you like to have tea?" I took a deep breath. Shadia was my twin sister and I had to be nice to her. I took the cup of tea and had a sip while her gaze deciphered my thoughts. I rolled up my sleeves, the heat was stifling.

She buttered the toast and gave it to me. I ate it and continued to drink my tea. As soon as I finished my breakfast, I went to my room. After putting all my papers in a suitcase, I locked everything in my wardrobe. I had somehow to get to know Rony, a successful dealer in household electric appliances, who could be my prospective financier.

I went in the kitchen. "Don't wait up for me tonight, I'll be late," I announced clearing my throat. "You can put my food in the fridge and go to bed." She sounded obedient, but was

surely up to something. I'm the control freak of her life now as she did not have mum and dad to spare her.

Shadia was likely surprised to see me leaving the house in sportswear, but did not utter a word. When I got into the car, I felt someone's strong presence in the backseat. In the blink of an eye, I gasped and turned around to catch her. Nobody was there. Shadia was driving me crazy. She was in my mind just like she used to be when I was a child. I won't let her make me feel inferior to her now.

I started my engine and saw Adil's mum staring at me from her yard. She knew whenever I left home. She had nothing else to do. Oh yes, she also washed clothes on the big square shaped stone near the tap in her yard as she hated using washing machines. And she was the only person who was so worried about my marriage. People questioned you when you were not married at the age of twenty-seven. She smiled at me and I smiled back. Old witch. I left before she could come to talk to me.

.....

Rony, my businessman, was jogging. I was behind him, tired from following him. I jogged for about an hour in the park, but Rony did not notice me. We met once backstage when I used to write for the Yaarana Drama Group. He seemed so impressed by my script. I had to impress him once more at any cost.

For four months I researched on this well respected businessman. Sameer and Dilip also gathered information on him. He had been a fan of the Yaarana Drama Group, I used to see him at the theatre on a regular basis watching our performances. His father had handed over his business to him before dying. Lucky devil! Rony did not have to work like I do to earn money. Why do I always have to work so hard? I was jealous of Shadia's intelligence in my childhood

and now I was jealous of this rich guy, Rony. One of the ex-actors in the Yaarana Drama Group, Lynn, bought the magazine, Adonis, which contained an article on Rony's personal life. The interview made people envy him, he was the talk of the island. He led a luxurious life. The magazine had mentioned that he had the habit of jogging in Jason Park. I just hoped that he had not forgotten me.

I continued to run. Rodrigues appeared just as I was about to give up. He jogged for some time in front of Rony who was panting. Then, my partner pretended to pass out. Rony hastened toward Rodrigues, almost spraining his foot. But he extended a helping hand to the weak young man. "Are you alright?" asked Rony holding Rodrigues's hand. As my friend opened his eyes, he pretended to be feeling dizzy.

"I'm okay," muttered Rodrigues. "Please help me to get to the bench." Rony took Rodrigues by the arm and helped him move to the nearby bench. Sighing, my partner thanked him. I hurried to ask what the matter was. People were watching, but nobody offered help. Some even refused to move from their bench. Useless bunch. They did not want to leave the shades of the coconut trees. I touched Rodrigues's forehead. He breathed heavily. Removing the bottle cap, I sprinkled some water on him and washed his face. Rodrigues pretended to be feeling better and asked for water to drink. My bottle was already empty, Rony ran toward his luxurious and posh car.

Rodrigues and I looked at each other, repressing a grin. We were successful in fooling Rony. The first step taken to befriend the rich guy had succeeded. We had decided to grab his attention in that particular way because someone as intelligent as Rony would not buy my scheme. Only friendship would sow the seed of trust in him. He came back with a bottle of mineral water. "Here you are," he said. He opened the bottle and handed it to Rodrigues. As

Rodrigues drank the water, we had a friendly conversation. I introduced myself to Rony. "I know you, you're the playwright of Yaarana Drama Group, right," said Rony.

I nodded and smiled. *Finally*. We continued to chat. "By the way, why didn't your drama group perform last year?" he asked. I told him about my writer's block to get his sympathy. He sighed. "I've started a new business and I'm presently working with my old colleagues from my drama group," I added. I began elaborating. He smiled, but kept asking questions. I mentioned that my financiers would get back twice their investment in five months' time. The investment required a minimum amount of one thousand rupees.

"And how?" Rony teased.

"Well," I smiled. "I can tell you about it only if you're willing to invest in my business."

Rony laughed. His driver came running with his phone. The businessman stepped under the shade of the nearby tree to talk on his phone. He came back to tell us that he had to leave.

"I can drop you home," said Rony to Rodrigues.

"My brother is coming to fetch me," answered Rodrigues politely.

He gave Rony a reassuring smile. "Shadi, my friend, is staying with me anyway," added Rodrigues. We shook hands.

"See you around soon," said Rony and he left the park.

"You're still such a good actor Rodrigues!" I chuckled.

I loved that the Yaarana Drama Group was performing one of my scripts. The only difference was that the story was in my mind, not on paper. Rodrigues was interested in my proposal. He was moved that both of us had been unemployed for too long. Sameer, Dilip and Lynn had also accepted to be part of the plot for the same reason. My friends knew that it was difficult to earn an honest living. We had all invested our savings in this business to make it

work. They helped me to rent Dad's old office space and we registered our company officially. All the documents were prepared to present the company as a legal body functioning in the interest of its investors because government officers could come to check our office and our legal documents.

Creativity was all about making people believe in your story. I closed my eyes to see fiction and reality mingling. As a playwright, I was using my mental script in a real life situation. Rodrigues, Lynn, Dilip and Sameer were still acting in a play. We needed to convince Rony by making him believe in our story. All writers duped people by selling fiction. The Yaarana Drama Group was selling fiction to Rony.

I could imagine how I would write this scene in my play. A con man fooling a young businessman in this way. The audience would surely laugh. Good. This was comedy for them. This story would surely help me write my new script soon.

.....

I was in Rodrigues's car. Dilip, Lynn and Sameer were in the backseat. Sameer had a good-looking fair complexion but was flabby. Lynn was quite fit, but Dilip was the tall, dark and handsome guy that most of the girls loved. We were out for a long drive for the first time in quite a while. Roads were congested during the day, but at night there were no traffic jams. My friends and I were free to enjoy the city of Port-Louis. My friends were happy now. My project would allow them to use their skills in fooling Rony and other investors. I was enjoying the ride, but the warm wind from the city reminded me of Rayana. My girlfriend, Rayana, had left me because her parents never wanted an unemployed life partner for her. Most parents wanted their daughters to be married to a government employee or to someone who was well-off, whether or not the

girl was educated. Her fair complexion was considered to be her main asset. Rayana was marriage material for them. I missed her so much and yearned for her company.

I contemplated the tall buildings. Foreign architects had designed most of them. Some monuments still reflected the rich and diverse colonial history of the city. The silvery buildings shimmered in the darkness of the night while the dull brown ones did not. Some old wooden houses, with shuttered windows and large porches, still reminded us of the past. But, most of the newer houses and commercial buildings were made from concrete. A few restaurants were still open and selling hot *haleem*. I loved that dish: a medley of wheat or barley, meat and sometimes lentils. "Mouthwatering," uttered Dilip. I saw a pretty young woman dressed in a red dress. She resembled Rayana. I loved red dresses and had bought several for Rayana.

"Hey look there, Shadi!" shouted Sameer from the backseat. He knew that I was staring at the red dress. "That woman is wearing your favorite color," said Sameer. For a moment it occurred to me that Shadia was standing there. In that red dress. No! I closed my eyes as I didn't want to think of her again.

"Shadi, do you still remember how you insisted on using red dresses when we performed as the female characters in your plays," added Lynn. I laughed nervously.

"Good old days," sighed Sameer.

I was preoccupied by that woman in the moving car. The car stopped with a screeching sound. "What happened, Rodrigues?" I asked. He laughed and pointed to my house.

"Well," replied Rodrigues, "we've reached at your place".

"Oh no! Not again!" I shouted. Rodrigues stared at me.

"What's wrong with you?" inquired Dilip.

Rodrigues patted my shoulder gently. I kept quiet for a moment, but I needed to talk. "Shadia is becoming a hard nut to crack," I said. I bit my tongue. He frowned. "Now, who is Shadia?" questioned Sameer. My friends did not know about her. I should have kept quiet. I sighed. "I will tell you about her later!" I mumbled. I moved out of the car while Rodrigues gaped. "Goodnight!" yelled my friends.

Raj, my neighbor, was about to enter his house when I reached mine. We waved at each other. I was surprised when I entered my home, the floor and the furniture were shining. My food was awaiting me in the fridge. Shadia was a good sister and a good woman. I smiled. When I reached my room, I saw her. Her back was leaned over writing something in my diary. I shook with rage but I closed my fists tightly behind my back. "What are you doing dear sis?" I asked, a fake smile on my face. My ears felt red hot.

"I'm writing!" she said, looking at me with bright eyes. The smile on her face was genuine.

"You must not write. It ruins lives, Shadia!" I retorted, adding, "I hate bitches!"

Then she was gone. But in my diary was written:

A woman burns like a candle

She cries to attract the moth

She melts but can burn

She made me sick. I took a shower, my thoughts racing. I was afraid again seeing water. I visualized little Shadi playing with his sister. It was raining outside and he was so happy, acting as the maid preparing food with his kitchen play set. The rain washed away his make-up. I left the bathroom.

Shadia was a good writer. I had never been able to win any writing competition at school because of her. Fortunately, dad sent her to study in France when she was eleven. My tutors helped me to improve my writing skills at the university of Mauritius and I enjoyed my career as a playwright, but Shadia was clearly back. The Ponzi scheme would help me write this time. I did not need some stupid woman to write like traditional writers anymore.

.....

I stepped into the restaurant near Jason's Park. Rony was there as expected, talking to someone and having a coffee. We had been meeting on a daily basis for three months now. Waving, I moved toward Rony as soon as he saw me. "Hey, what's up?" I asked with a sweet smile. We shook hands. I cracked as many jokes as possible to make Rony laugh. That was the perfect technique to befriend people. In the stories I used to write, the hero would always make the heroine laugh in order to seduce her. The rich guy listened to me attentively albeit chortling. I had to make things work as quickly as possible. We needed Rony's investment. My research suggested friendship is the highway to trust in the Ponzi Scheme.

"Hi!" shouted Rodrigues coming through the door. His eyes were glittering with happiness. Bastard! What a performance. I knew it; he was the best person to perform that particular role. He joined us without being invited and began to laugh louder than us while chatting. He was exaggerating now. Rony ordered more cups of coffee for us. We thanked him and tried to make our conversation appear as natural as possible. I was growing anxious. Where was Sameer? The music in the restaurant rose while I wore a forced smile. As soon as the waitress appeared with the coffee, I started drinking mine in order to hide my anxiety.

It was important for Sameer to show up at the right moment. Rodrigues and I were waiting for him. We were still chuckling when the man with Rony took leave. To my relief, I

saw Sameer entering the restaurant. I tried to hide my excitement. He approached me in immaculate white sportswear. He had helped me to edit my scripts for the last five years. I wanted him to play this part as nobody saw him on stage. "Hello, Mr. Shadi," he said. My eyes narrowed to wear a confused grin on my face. "I'm Sameer, the guy who invested in your business plan five months ago," he continued. Rony was paying close attention to what Sameer was saying. "I'm really grateful to you, Mr. Shadi," he stated with respect.

Sameer soon began to talk about the profit that he gained from his investment in my business. He hinted he would invest more. I told him to meet me at my office on the following day and we shook hands. Sameer left. Soft music played in the background. I smiled.

"Tell me about your business, Shadi," said Rony.

"Well, Rony, I use my investors' money to buy second hand cars from Japan," I answered. Rony raised his eyebrow while the waitress hovered around.

"And you get those cars repaired in Mauritius and sell them here," said Rony.

I nodded with a smile.

"Mr. Shama Jaan, my father, was famous for this business acumen," I added.

Rony's eyes widened with surprise.

"What! I knew him. He was my father's friend," declared Rony. I already knew that my dad was Rony's father's friend.

"I saw you around at parties when I was very young, Rony," I said.

"You're right man, I remember having seen you too now," declared Rony.

The plot was developing. I was impatient for the moment when Rony would open his wallet. I drank my coffee. Rony glanced at his watch. He had to leave. When the waitress came with the bill, I attempted to take it from her, but Rony snatched it and paid it.

“Happy to meet you after so long Shadi Jaan. I have to run now.”

He gave us his business card and told Rodrigues and I that we should meet him at his house. I could have jumped out of my pants. When he left, I shouted with excitement in unison with Rodrigues. We were becoming good friends... Everybody in the restaurant was glaring at us. We shut up and left as quickly as we could.

We were still enjoying our success when I saw Shadia. No! It was someone else. Why would she be here? She should be at home washing dishes. Loser. I heard her voice and a cold shudder ran down my spine. “You cheat!” I dismissed the thought. That was not Shadia, I reassured myself. She stayed at home now. Rodrigues snapped his fingers. I looked at him and did not know what to say. A woman was waiting for us to leave the packed parking lot so that she could park her car.

Chapter 3

The morning rays filled my room. I could feel and smell the steaming tea close to my face. "Good morning brother!" Shadia wore the bright red dress that I had bought for Dilip, who was supposed to act as the female character in my play. That dress fitted her perfectly and her face was gorgeous with make-up. I was lost in my own thoughts for some moments when my own image, a small boy wearing his sister's make-up and red dress, flashed in my mind. I had worn her bright red dress that time when the rain washed away my make-up. I felt uncomfortable and opened the window.

When dad sent Shadia to study in France at my uncle's place, I wore her red dresses and played alone in our room during cyclones. I missed her when I saw the rain drops on the

windows. But I was happy that she was not here to compete with me. She was too good, but now I'm the best.

"Here is your tea!" said Shadia. I had never seen her dressed like that before. She always dressed shabbily and her skin as so dull. I kept staring at her. She was sweeping the floor of my room and was happy. She was not wearing a long face. *How could she be happy?* I was quivering; her joy was alarming. Was she up to something?

"Why are you so happy today?" I asked, coughing uncomfortably. She could not be allowed to read my mind. "Is it your birthday?" I inquired. Oh! Actually, it was her birthday and mine too. Shadia giggled. I hit my forehead with my palm. How could I forget our birthday? "Happy birthday to you!" she said with a delightful smile. Then I saw a big birthday cake standing on the kitchen table. And brand new curtains had replaced the old ones. The pleasant aroma of the air freshener reached my nostrils. My mouth watered when I saw the dishes on the stove. My sister had planned a pleasant surprise for me. She was starting to be the kind of woman I wanted her to be. We walked together to the kitchen. "Now, cut the cake!" Shadia ordered.

While I cut the cake, a single tear drop rolled down my cheek. Then, I let the tears flow, I was missing my parents and the house in which I had lived during my childhood. Dad's books had inspired me to write; my imagination was the fruit of the story books he used to buy. Mum wanted me to be successful. She was so gorgeous. Shadia resembled her so much!

"What are you thinking about?" interrupted Shadia.

"I was thinking about mum and dad," I answered.

"They always wanted you ..." she cleared her throat for a while. She searched for the right words. "They always wanted you to become honest," she said finally. My cheeks became red hot. "What do you mean?" I asked, trying to stay calm. She moved toward the drawer and

removed a file which she threw on the table. The file contained details about Rony and my fake business plan. She raised her eyebrows and glared. "What are you up to, Shadi?" I could not look into her eyes. My heart skipped a beat. Breathing heavily, I moved toward the tap as only a glass of water could help. How had she discovered my secret? I drank the water. The dripping water was the only noise to break the silence. I flinched on seeing the drops of water and Shadia turned the tap off properly. I avoided her gaze. "Why are you doing this?" she demanded.

I stammered when I tried to answer. To stop my remorse from manifesting further, I threw the glass on the floor; it broke and scattered all over the kitchen. After a long menacing silence, her voice started lecturing on art. "Art cannot be used to cheat people!" What nonsense. Honesty could not give a person his daily bread. It was more important to survive than to stick to principles which would not give me money to fulfill my needs. I needed money rather than stupid principles in my life.

"Shut up! I'll slap you again!" I yelled.

"Dad was an artist just like you, Shadi," said Shadia.

"He was only a businessman," I said.

"Dad used his art honestly as a businessman to succeed," added Shadia.

"I don't care," I said.

"Dad was an honest businessman dealing with Japanese cars. He never lied to people to carry out his trade because he wanted people to respect him," said Shadia.

"I'm no businessman, I'm not talented like dad and I'm doing this only to write my script," I snapped.

“Dad was a hard worker, but you believe in cheating to earn money. Why don’t you borrow money from the bank and import the cars to get them repaired in Mauritius like dad?” she asked.

“Going to the bank means mortgaging my property. I don’t want this.” I replied.

It started to rain outside.

“I won’t do this because my business is no real business. There’s no money back guarantee in it and most of the investors won’t have their money back if we declare that we are bankrupt or flee to another country,” I added.

The raindrops made me more nervous. I took the file and started reading every minute detail. I had noted down my father’s old business strategies, his friends’ names, the name of his old Japanese car dealers to carry out the Ponzi scheme and details about Rony in my file. Lynn was ready to pose his father’s garage as the site for car reparation. He had worked as a car mechanic on a part-time basis with his father in the past years and knew how to talk to our investors regarding this matter.

"You cannot use your art to become a swindler!" she shouted. Tears welled up in her eyes. “Use your art in a constructive way, Shadi.” My sister wanted me to be an honest writer. Someone who could earn a living with candor she insisted, while thunder was roaring. I went to the window. Summer. Heavy showers with thunder and lightning. Adil’s wife was putting her child’s bicycle inside the garage to protect it from the rain. Her green *churidar* was soaked. Her pretty outfit appeared dull.

I was hyperventilating thinking about little Shadi standing in a soaked red dress. Dad had laughed and told me that I could never be like Shadia, his daughter. As I could not stand the sound made by the water, I closed the window. Shadia was responsible for my misery. She was

always the best, but that was history; Shadia was a nobody. I could not let her destroy me again. I knew that I was better than her.

When I turned back, Shadia was not there. She had probably gone to her room, her favorite place. My sister liked to stay there. The thunder continued to crack. It was not a good sign. I should not have kept my project file in that drawer. Shit! How did Shadia find them? I started walking aimlessly in my house. Information about my business plan was not supposed to be divulged; that was dangerous.

I continued to walk like a captive in the kitchen. The birthday cake was irresistible, but Shadia would not come to eat it with me. I knew her. I removed the cherry from the top of the cake. Delicious. As I was tasting the cream with my finger, I convinced myself that Shadia would not tell anyone about my endeavor. The cream melted in my mouth. A woman could not be a hurdle; nothing was going to stop me. Everything was working perfectly with my scheme. I needed to venture into my Ponzi Scheme as this would help me write a new play soon.

.....

We were waiting for Rony in my office. He was always so busy, but I needed him. I yawned several times, Rodrigues was cleaning the desk. We had arranged for a few chairs and a big office desk. There was a small set of brown sofas in one corner of the office. Lynn added modern contemporary office furniture to store our files and papers. That was all we could afford.

I had met Rony as a friend several times during the last five months. Dilip, Lynn, Rodrigues and Sameer had helped me to maintain dad's old office. My father's old Japanese dealers had signed the contract to provide me with cars when needed, but who was going to buy cars? The fake papers were just a deceitful way to lure people and make them invest in my business. I had even joined Rony's fitness club to run into him more often and win over his trust.

When I asked him to be my investor, he wanted to meet me in my office. Sucker of a businessman.

When Rony arrived, I welcomed him with a fake smile. It was so boring to act as a businessman. “Looks nice,” said Rony. I continued to smile and adjusted my tie to my collar. I could not understand how people like Rony wore this for the whole day. I hated formal outfits and did not like going to official parties at dad’s office when I was younger. I hated ties I told myself and tried to look happy.

“My father had told me about the increasing demand of Japanese cars in Mauritius,” said Rony. That was a good sign and meant that he would be interested in investing. I told Rodrigues to make a cup of tea for Rony.

“May I have a look at your legal papers and mission statement?” asked Rony.

“Of course,” I said.

I had all of them prepared and ready in a blue file. I gave it to Rony. Rodrigues brought tea from the small kitchen attached to our office. We drank our coffee while my guest read the file. Lynn had invited Rony to visit his father’s garage to assure him that we carried out the cars’ repairs here onsite. I was eager to get my hands on that handsome sum of money, but I was worried. I had promised Rony to double his money in five months and proposed to give him a fifty percent partnership as soon as my business was thriving, but the businessman needed time to think about it. Rony raised his eyebrow and my heart raced. What if he found something wrong in the papers? I knew that my friends and I had studied my dad’s papers for his ex-company so well. We had taken advice from dad’s friends who had worked for a long time with him. As far as our company’s legal documents were concerned, it was a perfect plan.

“Looks okay, but why do you want investors to invest only small amounts of money?” asked Rony.

“I can’t take big risks although my dad’s friends are supporting me to make my business successful,” I answered.

“Why not take a loan from the bank?” he asked.

“My dad left a handsome sum of money for me to carry out this business. I prefer to give the profit made by selling these cars to my investors rather than paying high rate interests to banks,” I replied.

“That’s good,” he said.

I heaved and handed the contracts designed for our investors to him. He spent some minutes analyzing it.

“Do you need many investors right now?” he asked.

“Only a few for the time being as I need to see how it works first,” I replied.

“Why do you want me in?” he questioned.

“I need you because you know so much about business and I’m a novice,” I said.

“I was also a novice like you a few years back and I’m happy that you’re showing interest in your dad’s business just like me,” said Rony.

Rony smiled. He wanted me to take him to the garage where we would repair the Japanese cars. We left the office with Lynn. Rony gave us a lift in his car. The garage displayed the old equipment belonging to Lynn’s father who was too old to continue working here as a car mechanic. Lynn had also managed to show three Japanese cars onsite.

“Who will repair the cars?” asked Rony.

“I’ve worked with my dad for several years in this garage. I can handle this with the help of some friends,” replied Lynn.

Rony inspected the place and concluded that we were quite prepared for our new business.

“What I like the best is that you’re not overly ambitious, Shadi,” said Rony.

I smiled. If only he knew.

.....

It was hot despite the fact that the air conditioner was on. I stood up and moved near the window. It was raining outside. Torrential rains. My childhood with Shadia. A bad memory. I returned back to my seat. I concentrated on my plan. Rony was wealthy and I was going to be as wealthy as him.

"Mr. Rony is ready to meet you now," announced the smiling secretary.

“Thank you very much," I said.

I stood up, adjusting my tie to my collar to hide my nervousness. It was time to make money. Nothing was going to prevent me from becoming rich. I entered Rony's office with confidence. A handsome Rony in a close-fitting gray coat and trousers was standing near the door. A coat in this heat? This was how businessmen were supposed to be dressed. Formality. His curly black hair adorned his fair chubby face. He welcomed me with a broad smile. "So how are you doing, Shadi?" he asked. I smiled affectionately. The office was carpeted and brown curtains hung on its windows. His large desk displayed several paper clips, a desk lamp, a pen holder and several stacks of neatly arranged papers. Some expensive paintings adorned the walls and a plush armchair could be seen in the corner. Rony took his agenda and wrote something in it.

"I've been thinking about your project," said Rony. The reassuring smile remained on my face for a long time, but my treacherous heart was throbbing in my chest. I was making a fool out of Rony. It was to make someone believe in fiction. I was not misleading, just giving birth to a piece of art. My project was a play written for a real life situation. Something being performed in reality.

"I'll invest a small amount of money in your business plan for the time being. If you're able to double this amount in five months' time, I'll invest more," he said. I smiled weakly, I had expected to get more. Bloody cheapskate! "Let me sign the contract," he declared. As he signed the paper, I told myself better luck next time. I did not need much money from him, for the time being anyway. I needed his name to convince other investors. "Thank you, Rony!" We firmly shook hands and sealed the deal. I was both the playwright and the director of the play. I had not smiled heartily for months. Now I did.

"Art can't be used to cheat people!" I heard Shadia saying. Hell. "Are you alright, Shadi?" asked Rony, unable to figure out what was happening. I pretended to be feeling a bit unwell because of the heat and asked for a glass of water. We had a friendly conversation while I drank the water. I could still hear Shadia's voice echoing. I hurried to leave. "Art cannot be used to cheat people!" I could still hear her while sitting alone in the coffee shop near Rony's office.

I closed my eyes and saw myself and Shadia sitting in our class. She was so happy as the teacher praised her, but I was so unable to finish my composition. How could she be smarter than me? I was her twin after all. It wasn't fair.

My eyes opened and all those images from my childhood disappeared. Get lost Shadia, get lost!

.....

We were both sitting in our favorite restaurant celebrating our success. Our scheme was proving successful and we had some money. We could now attract more financiers by telling them about Rony's investment in our company. Although this single "play" would make me rich in just a few months, I was worried.

"I wanted to talk to you Rodrigues," I said. He continued to search for something on his mobile's screen. "Go ahead, is it about something serious?" asked Rodrigues. He tapped on his screen. "Actually, I.I.." I stammered. Suddenly, I noticed a mosquito on the table. I started focusing on every part of the creature. Summer's curse. The heat made them crawl everywhere. It was talking to me in Shadia's voice. "What's happening to you?" asked Rodrigues. My tall and skinny friend was worried. The mosquito had disappeared from the table. "I'm okay," I said. Could I tell him about her? I was confused.

"I want to tell you about my sister, Shadia." I was finally able to say it. The muscles in my neck relaxed. Then I was anxious again as the mosquito landed on my cup. Disgusting. Wanting to get rid of the ugly insect, I moved my cup to frighten it. Oops! My tea fell on Rodrigues's white shirt. My! "Your sister has returned back to Mauritius from France!" cried Rodrigues trying to clean the stains of tea on his sleeves. He thought that she was still studying in Paris. Rodrigues and I had not met at my house since I stopped writing plays. We met only in our favorite restaurant.

"I'm happy that your sister is back. You need moral support," said Rodrigues. He continued to sip his coffee while watching the woman sitting near us. His eyes were busy watching the freckles on her fair skin. "She's hot!" exclaimed Rodrigues. I looked at her. She was indeed very sexy, a pretty woman in a blue dress and a hat hiding her face. Rodrigues was only interested in the freckles on her arms. "Oh no!" exclaimed Rodrigues with despair. A guy

now joined her. He kissed her. We laughed together. I really liked being with Rodrigues. I had forgotten how to be happy in my personal life. The joy on my face faded soon enough though. We stared at each other. I wanted to tell him everything about Shadia.

"Shadia does not want me to go ahead with my project," I whispered. The woman's eyes were watching me behind her hat. Who was she? Shadia? Impossible.

"You need to explain to her how important this business plan is for you," advised Rodrigues.

"I'm trying but she wants me to write again," I explained. Before Rodrigues and I could talk more, the fair woman and her boyfriend stood up. They were about to leave. Rodrigues watched her desperately as they stepped out of the restaurant. "That's called bad luck!" he groaned. I chuckled. I started thinking about Shadia. I could hear her voice again. "You can't use your art to become a swindler!" What would she be up to now? It gave me a headache not to stop thinking about her. What could I do? Revealing too much about her meant inviting trouble.

.....

Shadia was sitting with the diary. She thought she was a better writer than me. Stupid cow. I had come home very late, not to see her face and listen to her stupid lectures. My absence was increasing her agitation. So what if I left her alone? She had left me too to go to France. Dad did not choose me because he considered her to be smarter than me.

Shadia stood up and moved toward the kitchen. There was a cold cup of tea on the table. I hated cold tea but my sister liked to have it that way. She drank it and returned back to my room. She seized the pen I did not want her to touch. "I will write more often now!" she announced.

Language is a prison house

Captivating

Torturing

Coercing the self

To be reborn

My sister knew that practice made perfect. Kissing the pen, she touched the diary as if she loved it more than anything in the world. She observed her written words happy to be writing again. She wrote after so long. Household chores were boring. Staying home in Mauritius made her forget her good old days at the university in France where she wrote poems all the time.

Shadia wanted to write like me. Holding the pen was pleasurable. A cry of joy was heard as she rolled on the chair in front of the desk. She was playing with words. Raising both her arms in the air, she shouted like a kid. She felt victorious. I could not write, but she was writing.

She looked at the diary again and caressed it with fondness. A wicked smile lit up on her face as she wrote another poem.

The pen

Controls

And teaches

To read oneself

Her aim was to imprison me in her words as I had imprisoned her. That was the best way to seek revenge. She could do that by writing poems just like me writing plays to demean her.

Chapter 4

“Let me be the judge of that!” That phrase was becoming my favorite line in our argument over Rony. Shadia was becoming impetuous. It made me nauseous, I hated her preaching. That

was her sole pastime. "You cannot do this!" she dared to shout. I focused on my breakfast. According to her, there was no shortcut to success. An artist could not use his creative abilities to dupe.

Duping was what I had always done. Fiction could only trick people into believing the writer. I thought about the spectators' emotions at the theatre. They laughed and wept. My business had been selling deceit. That was what I was doing to Rony. I convinced myself anew that there was no harm in making the investor believe that I had a real business plan which would allow him to gain profit. My business was as false as fiction. Rodrigues and the other members of the Yaarana Drama Group were doing a good job. They were encouraging young men and women in Mauritius to invest in my business. I used to tell Rony about my progress and he smiled and congratulated us every time. What a fool! He did not know that we were using his name to get more and more investors from all over the island.

Something was burning on the stove. Shadia ran to take away the cooking pot. She put the utensils in the sink and opened the tap to let the water run over it. Quarrels in the kitchen normally led to burnt food.

"Don't use Rony," she said hesitantly.

"I don't give a damn!" I stated firmly.

"If you don't listen to me you'll land in a soup again," she warned.

"Oh! Not again!" I shouted. I was worried as I knew what she meant.

"I warned you, but you wrote that letter to the jury of the National Writing Festival," she said. My throat dried up. "You wrote to tell them that your pseudonym was *Shadia*," she continued. I listened to her quietly. "You wanted people to believe that my plays were written by you, Shadi." I felt so guilty as I remembered how I had cheated on Shadia when I was nine

years old. We were writing for the National Writing Festival; I knew that she was better than me. I had written that letter to the jury board to pretend to be the author of Shadia's story.

"I warned you not to cheat. When they learned the truth, they rejected your story and I won," she announced proudly.

"I'm not a nine- year-old boy now, and I know how to take care of myself," I snapped.

She looked at me desperately and then continued to cook and clean. I took my bath and dressed up in a suit to attend a meeting with Rony. I knew that she would rush to the desk. She was eager to write in the diary.

Words are illusionists

Turning topsy- turvy

Fighting

To depict

Conscience

Writing in the diary became her hobby as she had no other friend except my miserable diary. She only talked to it. It listened to her, she believed.

.....

Shadia hastened to open the door. I knew I had invited Rony, but I had to meet Rodrigues. We had an urgent meeting with some investors in our office. So, I had not locked the door on that day.

"Hello, I'm Shadi's friend," said Rony.

Her simple red dress and her pony tail, almost touching her shoulder, made her look innocent. She was prettier without any make-up, but Rony was thoughtful.

"Shadi must be on his way home. Please come in," said Shadia.

Rony was surprised to see the plainness of my house. One simple set of blue sofas and an old TV set standing on its miserable stand. Only the expensive tiles decorating the floor and the imported brown curtains added a touch of class. The book shelf filled with rare books on art and drama drew his attention to the fact that I was a former writer. My living room was too modest for the son of Mr. Shama Jaan, a rich businessman. “Sit down, please,” offered Shadia. Rony continued to take in my house as he sat on the sofa. Only two rooms, a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom and a toilet. He was in a pensive mood. “Would you like some tea,” asked Shadia. His eyes rested on her for a few seconds. “Well, umm, okay,” he replied. Shadia went to the kitchen while he continued to study my home.

My sister came back with a tray containing a hot cup of tea and some biscuits. “My goodness, I forgot to tell you that I don’t take sugar,” said Rony after taking a sip of tea. Shadia almost jumped out of her seat. “It’s okay,” he uttered. She tried to sit comfortably. “Well, what’s your name?” he asked. Her heart throbbed. “My name is Shadia Jaan.” Rony smiled and she smiled back. “So, you know how to smile, Shadia,” joked Rony. That made her laugh. “You can even laugh, amazing,” he declared. They talked about himself, his business and his family. As time passed, Shadia became friendly with him. She found him smart, handsome and kind. She began to talk about herself. “I lived in France for several years,” she said. Rony’s eyes widened. “Oh, that’s great,” he said. He continued to drink his tea. “My uncle lives in Paris,” added Rony.

Shadia did not want to talk too much about her life in France. She preferred to focus on Rony. “Did your dad know mine?” she asked. Rony told her about his father’s friendship with our Dad. He explained how they spent hours talking to each other when they met at parties. His father was a well-known dealer in household electrical appliances and our dad was famous for trading Japanese cars. “I miss my dad so much. I was so lonely in his house at Grand-Baie, so I

came to live here with my brother,” she said. Her eyes moistened with tears, but she held them back. Our guest felt sorry for Shadia. “Shadi told me that you love going to the theatre,” she said. Rony nodded. “I never missed your brother’s plays,” he replied. Then, he told her how he enjoyed those plays. My sister kept listening. “What do you do in life, Shadia?” asked Rony. That question made her lips quiver. “I also like to write,” she answered. Rony was impressed. That was the trick. She knew that he liked writers. She had read everything about Rony in my file showing our research to carry out the Ponzi Scheme.

“You’re a carbon copy of your brother,” said Rony. She was afraid on hearing him say that. My sister’s plan was to befriend Rony and use him against me. “Returning to Mauritius after so many years, I don’t have many friends here now,” pretended Shadia. They stared at each other. “Can we be friends?” she asked. Rony was dumbfounded and could not answer immediately, although that was what he wanted too. “Why not,” he replied finally. Shadia almost jumped with joy. She beamed and gazed at Rony. Her own way of seducing him. He was only a means to her end; her aim was to ruin my plans and make hers work.

They kept talking till they realized that I had not shown up. “Where is Shadi?” asked Rony, finally. Shadia was uncomfortable. “I’m sorry, I don’t really know,” she said. Rony called my phone. The mobile phone rang in my room. Shadia’s ears became red hot and she rushed to my room to find it ringing there. She came back to the living room and told Rony that I had forgotten my mobile phone at home. Rony sighed.

“How can a businessman even do that? I can’t spend a minute without my phone.”

Shadia was speechless. Rony decided to leave.

“It was nice meeting you, Rony,” said Shadia. She shook hands with him.

“Can I call you if I need to talk to a friend?” asked Shadia.

Rony smiled and took out his business card to hand it to her. “That’s my number, you can call me anytime.” Taking the piece of paper from him, she thanked him. “We are friends now,” declared Rony. As soon as Rony left, Shadia went to my room. She removed the diary from the drawer and wrote.

A trickster

Hiding remorse

Defeating himself

To let

His conscience rebel

She analyzed Rony’s business card. Her finger was pointing to his phone number written on it.

“I’m looking forward to meeting you again,” said Shadia, smiling.

.....

“You went to Rony’s office yesterday?” I asked while buttering my toast. Shadia continued to drink her tea silently. Then, she stood up and moved toward the refrigerator to remove the jam jar from it. “Why did you meet him?” I questioned. We held our breaths.

“What the hell are you up to, Shadia?” I banged the table.

“I like him,” she dared to reply. Her closed fist rested on the table.

“You’ve met him only twice, sis,” I said.

I was worried about people. I still remembered the reaction of Adil’s mum when she saw Rayana coming to my house. One day she asked me about our relationship and was quite shocked to hear that I was not engaged to Rayana. Shadia was not supposed to meet Rony as he was only an acquaintance. A woman needed time before befriending a man in our society. A young woman could not rush in such matters.

“But I need to meet him in order to know him,” she insisted.

My teeth clenched but I tried hard to appease my anger. It was not easy to convince her, but I had to try.

“Women from respectable families do not chase men. You should wait for Rony to do that,” I said.

“Things have changed now,” she retaliated.

This was surely the influence of her European lifestyle in France.

“You’re in Mauritius now and here people will laugh at us if they come to know about this,” I said.

“I don’t care,” she said.

She moved to the sink and washed all the dishes. I explained to her how people gossiped about me in Highlands when I spent time with Rayana.

“I won’t let you do this,” I warned.

She shrugged. I grabbed her hand to gain her attention. Then, I twisted it. “Stop it!” She shouted. It was held so firmly that she winced. “You can’t stop me now, Shadi. Rony likes me too.” She was confident. The smile on her face defeated me and I let go of her hand. “We have a date soon and if I miss that he’ll surely come here,” she said. My heart throbbed. I was speechless, but I would deal with her. I could not stop her from meeting Rony as that would only make things worse. Rony liked her and I needed Rony.

.....

“It was love at first sight for me,” declared Rony. It was a fine Saturday afternoon and they were sitting in the restaurant’s patio by the sea. The clean beach and the warm blue sea was perfect for romance. Shadia was wearing a red knee-length skirt and a white blouse. Rony was

looking different in a pair of faded jeans and a T-shirt. Many tourists were relaxing on their beach chairs with large straw hats covering their faces. Others were shouting while playing beach volleyball. Some people preferred to have snacks and beverages under the shade of the kiosks. “I felt the same way, Rony,” said Shadia. He smiled.

They stared at each other and then laughed heartily. Rony caressed her cheek. She quivered and lowered her eyes. They went for a stroll on the beach. Both watched the waves silently with their shoes in their hands. “I’m lucky to have met your brother,” said Rony. Her heart raced. “Why?” she asked. The waves rushed to the seashore. Both of them were thrilled as the sea water touched their naked feet. They laughed and Rony held Shadia’s face. “I’ve met you because of your brother, Shadia.” A warm wind blew her hair. “You look so beautiful when your hair is loose,” he whispered. She blushed.

A group of people waved at them from the passing boat. “Would you like to go boating?” asked Rony. Everybody was having fun. “I would like to, but I have to get back home,” answered Shadia. Rony offered to drive her back home. They talked about their hobbies and ambitions in the car. Shadia was so happy with him, but as she approached her house, she grew anxious. It was such a pain to return home. I was waiting for her and my sister hated that.

The car stopped and she stepped out of it. Raj was standing in his yard. Raj’s eyes dilated on seeing Shadia. “Who’s this?” asked Rony. Our neighbor continued to stare at Shadia. He was curious as he had not seen my sister before. “He’s our neighbor,” answered my sister. She thanked Rony for the lovely afternoon and dashed to the door. “I’ll call you!” he shouted. Shadia blew him a kiss and went inside very much aware of Raj’s staring. My sister was going out with Rony now and that was alarming.

Chapter 5

Two months had passed, Shadia's relationship with Rony was blossoming. I watched her helplessly. She was glowing and was more cheerful. Her hairstyle changed and she wore more make up. Hours were spent in her room. I hardly saw her. But most of the time, and the food prepared by her tasted better. I was fuming, but had to tolerate things. Hurting Shadia meant inciting Rony's anger. He talked to me about her when we met. Pretending to be happy for them, I would smile and listen to him. They liked spending time together at the beach once a week. On the other days, they talked to each other on the phone. Fortunately, Rony was too busy to meet her often.

I envied her happiness. I hated Shadia even more when she wore that red dress. It reminded me of my own failure to be like her in my childhood when I wore her red dress on that fateful rainy day. I also regretted the fact that my play's female character was unable to wear it on stage as I was still suffering from writer's block. Raj, my neighbor, was inquisitive about Shadia. One day, I told him about my sister who had come to stay with me. People were so nosy in Highlands. Why couldn't he mind his own business? That did not bother me much. The only fear I had was that Shadia might tell Rony about my fake business. She had not told him anything against me so far. My positive attitude toward her was working. Shadia was a changed person; she had forgotten about her resentment of me. Rony's love meant everything to her. She could not tell Rony that her brother was a fraud as that would create a problem in her relationship too. He might not like to be with a swindler's sister. Now I understood why Shadia had not talked to her lover about me.

Rodrigues, Sameer, Dilip and Lynn were happy with the progress of our business. More Mauritians liked our proposal and had invested in our scheme. I did not tell Rodrigues and my

other friends about Shadia's relationship with Rony as that would distract them. My objective was to attract as many investors as possible. I was ready to double Rony's investment. I would give him the money invested by my recent investors. That would encourage him to provide more money. People financed me more than I had expected. My friends and I were engrossed in this swindling scheme. I enjoyed my creativity in fooling people, I could not foresee that Shadia was about to spoil everything...

.....

Shadia and Rony watched the horizon. The blue sea was soothing. Waves crashed against the shore. Rony looked at Shadia and smiled affectionately. He held her hand. That was the moment she was waiting for. He bent on her and stroke her cheeks. "I love you so much," he whispered. As he gave her a passionate kiss, Shadia slapped him.

Rony was dumbstruck. Silence prevailed. He could not understand why Shadia had reacted in this way. "What's wrong with you, Shaaaaadia?" he stammered. She glared. A few people had gathered around them. It was embarrassing, but my sister wanted only that. The perfect place to humiliate her lover. He took her by the arm.

"We need to talk," he said in anger.

"Leave me," she retorted.

He let go of her arm. As she moved away from him, Rony followed her. "Why did you do that," demanded Rony under the shade of the kiosk. More waves crashed against the shore. People lost interest in them. Lovers' tiff. They moved away.

"I don't love you, Rony!"

He blushed. Rage and grief made him shake. He grabbed her shoulders violently. Shadia shuddered. "Why did you do that to me? I need an explanation," he commanded. Despite being

scared, she looked into his eyes. That was enough to kill her. “I was just pretending to be in love with you,” she explained. He pressed his hands harder against her shoulders, unaware that she was wincing. “My brother Shadi was using me to make you invest more money in his business plan,” she continued. Rony’s arms dropped and he stepped back. He sat on the bench wearing an expressionless face. Shadia watched him remorsefully. His head dropped backwards and his eyes were closed. It was difficult to meditate on the whole matter. “Shadi’s a swindler. He is just using your name and dad’s name to carry out his bogus business plan,” said Shadia. Rony’s face flinched even more. “Oh! I see,” he said smiling weakly. He closed his eyes again to hold back his tears. “Why me?” he asked. She could not answer him.

My sister treaded toward our house bowing her head down with shame and misery. She turned back and saw Rony watching her desperately from his car. That was the last time she saw him. As soon as Shadia entered the house, she hastened toward her room.

.....

My meeting with Rony ended. I was so furious that I wanted to shoot Shadia. When I reached home, my sister was sitting quietly in my room, leafing through the diary. “What the fuck!” My voice cracked. Her head turned toward me, but she was calm and fearless. “I’ll kill you for what you told Rony yesterday.” I took the diary to tear it, but something struck me in it. I read the poems.

“Who has written this, Shadia?” I asked in disbelief. Sitting on the bed, I analyzed the writing. As I turned the pages, I read more poems. Every poem was written in my own handwriting. How was that possible? I had not written them. “Now, what is this?” I inquired. She was quiet. Then, we were standing in front of the mirror. I saw my reflection in the looking glass, but not Shadia’s. My heart rushed and I was sweating.

“There’s no one except you in this room, Shadi,” she said.

I sat on the bed pulling my hair with both my hands. Yes, she was right. I was in the other room where the wardrobe lay open. It was filled with cosmetics, jewelries, high-heeled shoes, push-up bras and ladies’ costumes. There were also so many wigs here. Everything had been used by Lynn and Dilip; they needed it while performing women’s roles in my plays. I had observed my make-up artists so closely and had always made up like Shadia in my childhood. I knew how to do it and had used these things easily. The wig was not needed though as I had long hair.

“Rony is very angry. He’s going to tell the police about my business if I don’t return his money and that of the other investors as soon as possible,” I told the imaginary Shadia.

“That’s all you wanted,” she said.

She was right. That’s all I wanted indeed. I took the diary and wrote.

It was closed

And I knocked

It opened

Showing my reflection

It was a mirror..

The male writer's conflicts in *The Diary*

In my novella, *The Diary*, Shadi is unaware that his sister is indeed his ideal. He writes most of his plays trying to demean her in them and presents weak women to convince himself that he is better than her. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write, in *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, that male thinkers of the nineteenth century mostly believe that male sexuality was “integrally associated with the assertive presence of literary power” and female sexuality was “associated with the absence of such power” (8). By not allowing Shadia to write in his play, Shadi follows this same trend in order to prevent his sister from asserting literary power. He is a follower of “the patriarchal notion that the writer ‘fathers’ his text just like God fathered the world” (Gilbert and Gubar 4). In this measure, the writer, in my story, assumes writing to be his property just like he takes the women in his plays to be his property by imprisoning them there. He becomes a ventriloquist, but remains dependent on women in order to author his stories. Gilbert and Gubar write about Gerard Manley Hopkins’s idea that the “pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis” (4). Shadi’s pen becomes the penis so as to control a woman’s destiny in his writing. Shadi observes Shadia in his texts while he tries to imprison her in them. His text is the jail in which he imprisons Shadia just like patriarchy forces women to accept male authority.

Shadi’s writer’s block makes him feel helpless because he loses a sense of control over his imagination: “then a man who loses or abuses such power becomes like a eunuch” (Gilbert and Gubar 10). In this measure, he loses his power to turn his sister, Shadia, into a cypher by representing her as a female character in his text. According to Gilbert and Gubar, “Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women, before women can even attempt that pen which is so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which, defining

them as ‘Cyphers’, deny the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority” (13). Shadi’s attempt to make women become cyphers fail when he suffers from writer’s block. He begins to observe his female character’s pain in himself instead of observing it in her in his play. According to Sigmund Freud, in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works* (1933)¹, “the observing agency from the rest of the ego might be a regular feature of the ego’s structure” (58). Shadi unconsciously begins to question whether “the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis” (Gilbert and Gubar 6). He strives to find a language that can free him from his male precursors’ conventional language. He feels he can do it by not writing about weak women and writing about fooling a man in a Ponzi Scheme, but here also he follows the same trend. He wants to imprison a man in his story this time.

The male author’s craving to be original in his creativity can be explained by Bloom’s postulation that “the dynamics of literary history arise from the artist’s ‘anxiety of influence’” (Gilbert and Gubar 46). The author unconsciously fears “that he is not his own creator and that the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings” (Gilbert and Gubar 46). Shadi suffers from the writer’s block as he feels he cannot write about something original. His relationship to previous authors as an artist in a patriarchal society is “the relationship of father and son” (Gilbert and Gubar 46). He can become a poet only by “invalidating his poetic father” (Gilbert and Gubar 46). Bloom’s “literary Oedipal struggle” (Gilbert and Gubar 46) is seen in the playwright who cannot write something original.

¹ Freud states that the id, the super-ego and the ego are “three different realms, regions, provinces, into which we divide an individual’s mental apparatus” (1933: 71). Thus, Shadi’s mental illness follows Freud’s concept about the mind, a mental apparatus which has different compartments. These compartments define the different selves within my story’s hero.

He presents a female character, Shadia, who is oppressed and not allowed to write in order to subconsciously re-enact patriarchy's sway. Consequently, he faces a writer's block and needs the woman from his own writing to help him fight the writer's block that emerges from his inner literary Oedipal struggle. This is so because only a woman can help him get rid of his male precursors. This woman is his part of him, but he is not conscious of it.

By following the patriarchal trends in writing, Shadi attempts to write about a woman who is not allowed to be the master of her own destiny. Shadi writes plays mostly to earn a living. He commercializes his art and his frame of reference is that of traditional male writers. His drama group also consists mostly of men who help him in fooling people later to get money for their fake business plan. Bloom also discusses the reliance of poems upon "aphorism, apothegm, and a quite personal (though thoroughly traditional) mythic pattern" (13) in his introduction. By following trends set by traditional authors, Shadi faces the problem of reliance upon "aphorism"² (Bloom 13). Shadi presents a weak woman through his Shadia archetype in order to re-create a male dominated society in his play. He does not choose a story to empower women. When he wishes to write on new themes through the Ponzi Scheme, he fails again because he plans to victimize a man, Rony, instead of a woman. Thus, his perception does not change. He relies on borrowed ideas as the Ponzi Scheme belongs to a male precursor, namely Charles Ponzi. He feels guilty and needs Shadia's help to find originality in his creativity. Shadi needs knowledge as a woman in order to fight a writing style acquired in a male dominated society. This helps him to question aphorism.

² "aphorism" is a brief methodical concept of a principle formulated by some ancient classical author

According to Freud, “The ego can take itself as an object, can treat itself like other objects, can observe itself, criticize itself and do heavens knows what with itself” (1933: 57). Shadi’s ego undergoes such a state when it feels guilty in my story, *The Diary*. It becomes split to analyze itself in a state of dissociation. By becoming Shadia, it criticizes itself and treats itself as the object of his own desire. Since childhood, Shadi has always desired to be an intelligent writer like his sister Shadia. Dressing like her when he was a boy, shows his desire to become like her. Thus, a woman, considered as the Other by a male dominated society, is the object of the male author’s desire in my story. He sees in her the qualities that he lacks intellectually and morally. Shadi finds his sister better than himself as a writer and wants to be like her. He finds an envied artist in her. His ego splits when he becomes a con artist; he finds within himself both an artist and a con artist. He develops two selves. Freud states that “the ego can be split; it splits itself during a number of its functions-temporarily at least” (1933: 57). The state of dissociation manifests Shadi’s split selves. He needs to deal with both selves in different situations to manifest both of them. He wants to be honest and at the same needs to earn money through his fraudulent business.

The honest artist manifests himself when Shadi hallucinates by seeing Shadia, his ideal. Freud compares a mental patient to a crystal (1933: 58). According to him, “If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes along its lines of cleavage into fragments where boundaries though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal’s structure” (1933: 58). Shadi resembles the Freudian crystal ball. Shadia is a part of him as she lies within the con artist yearning to be freed. The honest artist is Shadi’s inside which struggles: “They have turned away from external reality, but for that very reason they know more about internal, psychical reality and can reveal a number of things to us that would otherwise be

inaccessible to us” (Freud 1933: 58). Shadi’s guilty conscience is his inside and the con artist is the outside. Dissociation allows him to listen to the other self lying inside himself. His insanity points to Freud’s “reverential awe” (1933: 58). Shadia is Shadi’s conscience observing him. Freud explains this as some people suffer from “delusions of being observed (1933: 58) and “perpetually, and down to their most intimate actions, they are being molested by the observation of unknown powers-presumably persons” (1933: 58).

By writing as a woman, during periods of dissociation, Shadi dares to contradict traditional male authors. These precursors are like God in *Paradise Lost*³. Bloom analyses Satan’s dilemma as “an allegory of the dilemma of the modern poet” (20). Shadi, is a modern poet who becomes fallen just like Bloom’s Satan: “Satan has his sin” (20). The young writer rebels like Satan by giving Shadia the pen to write his destiny. He follows whatever she writes and loses his male ego and also rejects the authority of his Godlike precursors. The state of dissociation is like Satan’s state of falling. Bloom describes it as “Poetry begins with our awareness, not of a Fall, but that we are falling” (20). But the idea of becoming fallen is not bad for the poet as “in this bad, he finds his good; he chooses the heroic, to know damnation and to explore the limits of the possible within it” (Bloom 21). Thus, Shadi acquires a new knowledge by writing poems as a woman who brings awareness of that state or insight into it. He understands women by becoming a woman who is also a rebel like Satan. Shadia dares to touch the metaphorical penis, the pen, in order to write. Therefore, the male writer Shadi, writes as a

³ Bloom also describes *Paradise Lost* as the depiction of Satan as “the modern poet, while God is his dead but still embarrassing potent and present ancestor, or rather, ancestral poet” (20). In *The Diary*, patriarchy is like the ancestral poet who keeps reminding Shadi about his male ego. When Shadi begins writing as Shadia, he becomes like Satan, the rebel.

woman to fight patriarchal authority. This helps him to pave his way to an innovative writing trend.

The young dramatist, Shadi, begins his career “as prospective Adam, not as retrospective Satans” (Bloom 24). He needs to become Satan in order to unlearn the rules of creative writing from old male writers as Adam only obeys rules set by the authority. By moving towards self-realization or “solipcism” (Bloom 25), the poet shows belief in Kierkegaard’s maxim: “He who is willing to work gives birth to his own father” (in Bloom 26). And giving birth to the father is only possible by becoming a woman. Shadi discovers his other self in Shadia, a woman. This is so because he attempts to re-establish his connection with the *chora*, which refers to “Winnicott’s idea of ‘holding’: mother and child are in a permanent stricture in which one holds the other,” according to Julia Kristeva in “A Question of Subjectivity-an interview” (Rice and Waugh 134). Kristeva suggests that the semiotic is related to the *chora*: “I am searching for the inscriptions in language of the archaic contact with the maternal body which has been forgotten” (Rice and Waugh 135). The poems written by Shadi as Shadia are the writer’s return to Kristeva’s semiotic which “takes us back to the pre-linguistic states of childhood where the child babbles the sounds s/he hears” (Rice and Waugh 133).

The male author’s return to the maternal language frees him from the imprisonment in the Oedipus complex. Kristeva states that “It is only after the mirror phase or the experience of castration in the Oedipus complex that the individual becomes subjectively capable of taking on the signs of language” (Rice and Waugh 133). Shadi needs an original style of writing and for that, he has to go back to the semiotic state. He realizes that using prose in his dramas is only an objective form of writing borrowed from his precursors. The semiotic state is “a state of disintegration in which patterns appear but which do not have any stable identity: they are blurred

and fluctuating” (Rice and Waugh 133). Thus, poetry allows Shadi to reconstruct his writing style in the fluctuating form of free verses. He becomes split because “a ‘fixed identity’; it’s perhaps a fiction, an illusion,” according to Kristeva (Rice and Waugh 133). Without fixity, Shadi is able to undergo a process through which he re-constructs his language and his sense self by becoming his sister, Shadia. By choosing to write poems, Shadi chooses the mother’s language and gives more importance to women by identifying himself with her. Thus, the male author does not make his father or precursor the object of his choice, instead he chooses the sister.

By facing the anxiety of influence, Shadi dreams “the dream of Otherness that all poets must dream” (Bloom 34). He prefers his other to be the subordinate figure in patriarchy, the woman, rather than any male figure. This is the case because he wants to rebel. He gets access to emotions by writing poetry instead of plays. According to Bloom, “Poetry may or may not work out its own salvation in a man, but it comes only to those in dire imaginative need of it, though it may come then as terror” (35). Shadia comes to save the writer in a state of psychosis, which is terrifying indeed. She comes as the Sphinx mentioned by Bloom: “but the Sphinx (whose works are mighty) must be a female (or at least a female male)” (36). Thus, Shadi relies on this self, which is his conscience, Shadia. The “Sphinx riddles and strangles” (Bloom 36) and yet “the unriddler is in every strong poet when he sets out upon his quest” (Bloom 36). Shadi’s mental state makes him think that his twin sister is strangling him in her writing. She is also riddling in her hermetic poems. However, the fact remains that he is himself writing in a state of madness to become a different writer. He identifies himself with the Sphinx to experience a change. This helps him to revise his old style of writing and fight his writer’s block.

According to Freud, identification is “the assimilation of one ego to another one, as a result of which the first ego behaves like the second in certain respects, imitates it and in a sense takes it up into himself” (1933: 62). Shadi assimilates his twin sister’s ego during his childhood by trying to dress up like her in order to become like her. According to Freud, in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), “The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface” (11). Shadi sees himself in his sister. Even when he tries to demean her intellect by consciously insulting her with degrading language and offensive behavior, his hatred reveals his inferiority complex and his attachment to her. He becomes Shadia, his object of desire, as he loses her when she starts studying in France: “If one has lost an object or has been obliged to give it up, one often compensates oneself by identifying oneself with it” (Freud 1933: 62). Shadia is the Sphinx because she is also the *super-ego*. Freud explains that “The super-ego applies the strictest moral standard to the helpless ego which is at its mercy; in general, it represents the claims of morality” (1933: 60). Shadia is terrifying as the super-ego and the Sphinx, but she saves Shadi from borrowing his precursors’ style. She also prevents him from becoming a criminal.

Lin Fraser, in “Depth Psychotherapy with Transgender People”, writes that it is important to explore the area of “how representations of the self and others learned in childhood create both distortions and healthy relationships” (128). Childhood is very crucial in developing the ego and feelings. In *The Diary*, Shadi’s writing and personality are influenced by Shadia when he tries to dress up like her as a child. Shadia is not only the superego, but also the mirror in which he identifies himself for the first time. When Shadi dresses like his sister, it is indeed an act of mirroring and becoming a dualist. Bloom states that “No modern poet is unitary, whatever his stated beliefs, Modern poets are necessarily miserable dualists” (35). His sister writes better

than him. Thus, Shadi chooses her to see himself in her. According to Fraser, “A separate identity is also constructed in the actual mirror, when we see ourselves”(130). When Shadi dresses like Shadia, he constructs that separate identity as he wants to see himself like her. Thus, Shadia becomes his mirror. He sees this separate identity in a state of dissociation and it tells him to stop his fraudulent business. This separate identity also teaches him to write as his sister and believe in her values. Shadi’s separate identities are somehow connected with his artistic pursuit. As a con artist he is searching for a new theme to write his play, and, as Shadia, he is learning to develop a new style by writing poems.

Shadia is Shadi’s unconscious or repressed self. Freud explains that “The state in which the ideas existed before being made conscious is called by us repression, and we assert that the force which instituted the repression and maintains it is perceived as resistance” (1923: 3). The male author has believed in his sister’s virtues and intellectual capabilities since childhood, but he represses them and develops male chauvinistic behavior as a playwright by writing only about oppressed women in demeaning ways. He finds Shadia to be the Other because his conscious state makes him believe that a man is stronger than a woman. He is determined to carry out a fraudulent business plan. Meanwhile, he is unaware that his conscience does not accept his decision. When Shadi sees the sister in his hallucinations and starts dressing like her, it embodies Freud’s statement that we have a kind of unconscious that “is repressed and which is not, in itself and without much ado, capable of becoming conscious” (1923: 4). According to Fraser, “Issues that emerge in psychotherapy with transgender people are the same ones that emerge for anyone else, issues of self and self-in-relation” (127). Shadi is the “self-in relation” (Fraser 127) and Shadia is his “self” (127). Shadi’s conscious and unconscious states cause his psychic dilemma.

Shadi's male ego and his female self as Shadia are both parts of him. Shadi believes in the morality that his sister has, thus, he becomes feminine. The fact remains that he does not want to be a con man, but he is not conscious of that. Freud states: "a consciousness of which one knows nothing seems to me a good deal more absurd than something mental that is unconscious" (1923: 5). Thus, Shadi's male ego, leading him to become a con artist, is absurd as this state of consciousness does not know about his female self dwelling in a state of dissociation. In Shadi's case, his male ego forces him to behave like a male chauvinist who hates his sister and denies her teachings on morality. By becoming Shadia in his unconscious state of mind, he challenges the norms and sets out to tell Rony that he is a con man. Shadi's male ego is attached to the conscious mind and his female self is his unconscious mind. Freud states that "We have come upon something in the ego itself which is also unconscious, which behaves exactly like the repressed-that is, which produces powerful effects without itself being conscious (1923:6). Thus, the male and the female self are both part of Shadi's ego. They are his different selves and identities and both belong to him. Even if Shadi finds the female self in a state of dissociation, it cannot be labelled as being absurd.

In *Collected Papers, Vol. 4 (1908)*, Freud writes that "The motive force of phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correlation of unsatisfying reality" (423). A fantasist traces the roots of his "imaginative activity" in childhood (Freud 1908: 421). According to him, "every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him" (Freud 1908: 421). Shadi uses his creativity in making his fake business plan work just like Freud's vision of a child at play. This is his fantasy because he is manifesting his power as a writer despite his writer's block. Unable to write on paper, he writes his play in his mind and enacts it in a real life situation. Thus, his play is his

business scheme and in performing his story with the help of actors in the Yaarana Drama Group, the playwright becomes like the child who “creates a world of his own” (Freud 1908: 421). The dramatist also “rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him” (Freud 1908: 421). Instead of performing on stage, his drama group performs in real life. Shadi’s fantasy is a way to let writing regulate his own life and that of others too. In this measure, the male writer’s conscious self is absurd. His unconscious state helps him to understand what he really wants.

Shadi is emotionally attached to his effort to make his story work, but he does not separate fiction from reality. He is not like the child who “creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously- that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion-while separating it sharply from reality” (Freud 1908: 421). For Shadi, swindling is the manifestation of his art . This is why Shadi takes his art “very seriously” (Freud 1908: 421). Contrary to Freud’s belief that “The unreality of the writer’s imaginative world, however, has very important consequences for the technique of his art” (1908: 421), Shadi’s technique is to let fiction be conflated with reality. Unlike Freud’s statement that “many things which, if they were real, could give no enjoyment” (1908: 421) the young artist finds that creativity is useless if it cannot be used in real life. Thus, he creates his enjoyment in making fiction function in reality. This situation is one wherein the adult finds himself “in a mental situation which once more undoes the contrast between play and reality” (Freud 1908: 421). In this measure, Shadi looks “back on the intense seriousness with which he once carried games in childhood” (Freud 108: 422). He overcomes his writer’s block and carves a profession for himself through fantasy.

Shadi is ashamed to reveal his fantasy on the con to his friend Rodrigues in his real life, but he reveals his fantasy to his readers as the narrator of *The Diary*. He talks about it as his business plan to his friend, but he presents his fantasy to his readers by stating that fiction is

mingling with reality as his mental script works. Freud states that “Such phantasies, when we learn them, repel us or at least leave us cold” (1908: 427). Thus, Shadi does not let Rodrigues learn about his business plan as being a fantasy. However, when a creative writer tells his readers about his fantasy, “We experience a great pleasure” (Freud 1908: 428). Shadi, the con artist, creates his story to show his readers how he makes fantasy work as a business. Thus, the Yaarana Drama Group, Rony, Shadi and even Shadia act as characters in the story created by the dramatist. Rony and Shadi’s friends take the writer’s con to be a real business. Even Shadia cooperates in making readers believe in Shadi’s commerce by working against him and warning Rony about its dangers. Rony, Shadia, Rodrigues and the others do not doubt it by unmasking it as the fantasy of the madman, Shadi. This is so because “The writer softens the character of his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal—that is, aesthetic—yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his phantasies” (Freud 1908: 428).

Shadi’s fantasy to try the fake business plan is only a way to prove that the pen, the metaphorical penis, belongs to him despite the writer’s block. However, he remains unaware that his female self will not let him control Rony’s life. The male writer does not accept the principles of his ego ideal, Shadia. He refuses her morality of the *super-ego* and prefers to listen to his *id*, the con artist leading him to carry out the Ponzi Scheme. Freud writes that “If phantasies become over-luxuriant and over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis” (1908: 424). When Shadi starts his research on the Ponzi Scheme to feed his phantasy, he connects to his super-ego in a state of madness. This is so because “the super-ego is always close to the id” (Freud 1923: 26). The con artist’s guilt gives him access to his unconscious super-ego and ego ideal. The guilt is “based on the tension between the

ego and the ego ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency” (Freud 1923: 26). Psychosis allows the male chauvinist to accept his super-ego’s orders: “here the ego ventures no objection; it admits its guilt” (Freud 1923:28). Thus, Shadi accepts his guilt at the end of the story.

The female writer’s ideals help the male writer to establish himself as an honest artist by denouncing the con artist in him. The con artist is Shadi’s male ego who wants to prove himself that he can create stories for real life situations. Thus, the con artist is not his real self as he feels guilty for being a con man. The con artist within Shadi is only a representation of his self, a public identity. Linda Martin Alcoff, In *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, highlights this process as “Our sense of ourselves, our capacities and aspirations, is made possible by our public identity” (336). Shadi’s public identity as a man forces him to prove himself to be good as an author. He has to show his authority by imprisoning Shadia and Rony in his creativity to fit into the image given to men in a male dominated society. However, the fact is that the male author believes in his sister’s ideals. Alcoff states that “One might think of identity as one’s public self, based on publicly recognized categories, and of subjectivity as one’s lived self, or true self, or thinking self, etc” (footnote 321). Shadi’s private self follows a woman’s ideal as his thinking self believes in Shadia’s principles.

The state of madness opens the doors to Shadi’s female other self. It becomes a means to attain a greater sense of autonomy through the Other. According to Elaine Showalter, in *The Female Malady*, contemporary feminist philosophers, literary critics and social theorists “have shown how women, within our dualistic systems of language and representation, are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated

on the side of reason, discourse, culture and mind” (3-4). In *The Diary*, madness is positive in the measure that the female malady and the manifestation of the self in the Other allow Shadi to follow his feminine self. Julia Kristeva states, in *Approaching Abjection, Powers of Horror (1982)*, that the abject is what “does not respect borders, positions, rules” (1982: 3). Shadi benefits from abjection in madness by rejecting his male ego and accepting the “irrationality, silence, nature and body” (Showalter 3-4) in women, the Other. He forgets about strictures telling him to follow patriarchy’s rules about following reason. Abjection becomes the state of *jouissance* which Kristeva defines as “bursting with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other” (1982:6). Shadi fulfills his desire to be like the sister and recreate her just like he tried to dress up like her in his childhood.

The con artist becomes a woman in madness to fight his male ego. Alcoff states that “The excess that escapes all representation is thought to be one’s real self, one’s capacity to negate, and the seat of a purposeful action and choice” (332). Thus, Shadi’s conscience chooses subjectivity through psychosis. Shadi only pretends to be a con artist bent on proving his intellectual superiority. His conscience believes in Shadia, his alter ego, and is attracted to her honesty. He manifests his Being through abjection: “Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be” (Kristeva 1982:7). Shadi needs Shadia to manifest his Being. Alcoff argues that “My public identity and my lived self may be at some significant odds from each other” (336). In the male author’s case, this is true as he is not at ease with his identity producing his male ego and does not want to follow it blindly. My story depicts madness as a means to reject established beliefs in order to explore subjectivity. Shadi wants

to choose something beyond the rules set for men by patriarchy. He wants to follow the principles of his sister as a writer.

Writing as the Language of the mad artist

Shadi's writing in his diary can be explained by Louis A. Sass's explanation on visual art in the 1940s and later. He explains, in *Madness and Modernism*⁴, that: "Greenberg described the loss of faith or interest in representing the three-dimensional world that occurred in the development of painting, and the growing preference for reflexively manifesting painting's own distinctive medium, the flat canvas" (Sass 170). The female author uses a writing of her own, without influence, as she follows Shadi's rebellion against his precursors (as discussed in the previous section). Thus, the technique she uses is that of "subjectivization of reality" (Sass 171). According to Sass, the "flat, formalist painting is a kind of symbol of mind, conceived of as a self-sufficient and reflexive entity" (171). As a woman, Shadi, the playwright, is writing for his own mind and not for an audience. He is writing his mind in order to read it himself; he tries to see his feminine true self by rejecting his male public identity meant for the society, an audience. Shadia's poems are Shadi's "reflexive entity" (Sass 171). The poems in the diary reflect both Shadia's superiority over Shadi and her power to write as a woman. This power is achieved as a result of the male writer's inability to write after suffering from writer's block.

According to Sass, writing is a "distinct combination of superiority and impotence" (171). To better understand Shadi's act of writing by becoming Shadia, Sass's example of a

⁴ I use Sass's explanation on writing in order to present Shadi as a person resembling the schizophrenic in the measure that he has split minds and selves. Shadi's illness is not necessarily schizophrenia in the literal sense. My intention is to depict him as someone who is able to analyze his identity and his subjectivity in insanity. He studies his two selves through his poems in order to achieve self-realization. Or as Sass states: "to know my own self is, inevitably, to multiply or fractionate myself; it is to create a division between my knowing consciousness and my existence as a perceivable individual who interacts with others or subsists a body of flesh and blood" (75)

Mexican writer, Salvador Elizondo, helps to clarify the situation of cognitive split. Elizondo explains his writing as an act of self-observation: "I write. I write that I am writing. Mentally, I see myself writing that I am writing" (Sass 172). Insanity allows Shadi to be split in mind. He becomes both the observer and the observed. Like Elizondo, Shadi observes himself writing as Shadia while the latter is the observed. Thus, he is both the observer and the observed. In this way there is a reversal of situation. The male writer observes the effects of writing on himself through insanity just like Shadia observes him doing it to demean her in his plays. Thus, writing is both "superiority and impotence" (Sass 171). As a man, Shadi feels superiority in imprisoning Shadia in his text. However, his madness makes him helpless when he observes himself writing as a woman. The male writer is too involved in his writing and cannot see oppression taking place there. He needs to see it in insanity through the eyes of the female writer. The woman, as the Other in him, depicts his male ego in her writing.

Shadi has to access his own thoughts in Shadia's writing as he cannot think as a single thinker. He oscillates between the principles of the con artist and that of the artist. Shadi's writing as a woman follows Elizondo's piece or writing: "both kinds of disturbances of distance: and increase of distance from any potential real-world subject matter, along with a loss of distance from the medium of creation, the writer's own thought process and the act of writing itself" (Sass 172). Madness becomes a means for Shadi to rejuvenate his art of writing. Shadia's poems in the diary allow Shadi to witness his "own thought process" in his own "act of writing" (Sass 172). Nietzsche's dilemma in his portrait of "The Last Philosopher" underlines this process as "Nothing speaks to him any more-except his own speech" (Sass 173). Shadia's poems are the speech of Shadi's own conscience. The words speak to him and make him do whatever they want as "his speech can speak with a measure

of philosophical assurance” (Sass 173) in the form of poems. He listens to his conscience’s speech when he reads his own poems as a reader.

Splitting is also important because he “is a person undermined from within: confounded by ambiguity and paralyzed by indecision, he finds himself shuttered inside his own self-consciousness and devoid of all belief in a communicable world” (Sass 173). As Shadia, the writer tells himself that it is wrong to fool people. But as Shadi, he cannot stop himself from attempting to manipulate others. According to Sass, “in reality, more than a few modern poets and other writers have felt unable to master language” (185). Sass writes further that many writers believed that “the poet must cede initiative to words and accordingly, “the true master of language is one who knows precisely how to enslave himself to it” (185). Shadi’s madness brings a reversal in his master slave relationship with writing. Madness makes him understand language better as he becomes slave to it by doing everything that Shadia, his split personality or self, writes in the diary. As a playwright he masters language by writing plays about fictitious characters. By becoming slave to language, he develops a higher skill and he listens to his conscience. This is so because “inner speech” is “felt to be more authentic than conventional language” (Sass 184).

The reflection model of James Blachowicz, in “The Dialogue of the Soul with Itself”, presents inner speech as “the manifestation of reflection”; it is “the act by which I am able to think about some content within my consciousness” (Gallagher and Shear 178). By deciding to become a con-artist, Shadi does not really listen to his conscience which is truthful. Shadia is the partner who voices out the content deep within the consciousness of Shadi. According to Blachowicz, the original level of belief in principles is “merely ‘lived’ and relatively unexamined”, but “the higher level is evaluative and critical” (Gallagher and Shear 178).

Before experiencing writer's block, the playwright was only living as a writer without really examining the importance of writing in his life and his beliefs in art. Now that he begins to use his art to fool people, his inner speech in Shadia's poems starts to evaluate and criticize him. Insanity is in Shadi's case a way to criticize his own actions as a con artist and a male chauvinist. His aim is to write as a critique whereby he observes himself. As a sane writer he is not able to do that, he just writes and the audience is his critic. Madness allows him to reflect on himself as a critic. He listens to the "deep content within" (Gallagher and Shear 178) his consciousness through such a writing.

Shadi's madness presents his own inner speech as being Shadia's writing. Thus, the poems seem to be the conversation between the woman, Shadia and Shadi, the con artist. But according to Blachowicz, in such a state, "'conversational' duality is more apparent than real" (Gallagher and Shear 178). Thus, there is no duality in Shadi's madness as his conscience is talking to himself. Both the con artist and the honest artist within Shadi want to be given the power to write. Shadi and Shadia are two speakers who belong to the same person. In this measure, Blachowicz's reflection fits into the case of the hero's state of mind: "reflection 'doubled' – like having a single person arbitrate a dispute between two other parties" (Gallagher and Shear 179). Sass also highlights that "The arbitrator (or the designer) may well engage in a self-dialogue in this negotiation but, while there are two interests, there is ultimately one voice and one agent" (179). Shadia's voice is heard as Shadi's conscience, but he does not want to listen to it. He listens to this "one voice" (Sass 179) only in the form of writing because both Shadi and Shadia are related by writing. Shadi becomes Shadia to write his inner speech in the form of poems. He does whatever he writes in order to stop behaving in what existentialists might refer to as "bad faith".

Proposals are also part of Blachowicz's reflection model. One proposes things to oneself because "proposing has information that is different from the party doing the 'disposing' or criticizing" (Gallagher and Shear 179). Writing the poems in the diary is a proposal. As Shadia, Shadi proposes things to himself as a different artist. In this way, he follows what is being proposed in the form of poems. Writing overpowers by stopping the rivalry between the twins as Shadia stops taking his sister as the Other and becomes her to meet Rony. Blachowicz argues that "inner speech is a genuine dialogue, not a monologue", yet "neither partner is a full-time subordinate of the other" (Gallagher and Shear 177). Thence, writing as a madman by using his inner speech makes Shadi understand that his sister is his ego ideal. He does not hate her as he believes in her. In this measure, inner speech, in the form of poems, reveals to Shadi that the woman is not his enemy but is a part of his self whom he loves and believes in. Hence, I agree with Blachowicz when he changes his statement and admits that inner speech is dialogue but at the same time "inner speech is monologue, not dialogue" (Gallagher and Shear 178).

The act of writing produces in this case a "higher-level reflecting self" (Gallagher and Shear 178) in the critic who "would probably take the criticized material to be 'available' to reflection without having to bring in any secondary agent who proposes this material to the critic" (179). Shadi is unable to convince himself by hearing the voices of his conscience in Shadia. The woman's poems remove his male ego that separates them. He becomes his thinking self as a woman by writing poetry for himself. Then only, Shadi becomes the critic who accepts the proposed material, Shadia's poems. By embodying the woman in dissociative personality disorder, he assumes that there is no secondary agent who has written the proposal in his diary. He is the one who has been doing it and there is no fissure separating

his two selves. Blachowicz's reflection model presents inner speech as "the manifestation of reflection"; it is "the act by which I am able to think about some content within my consciousness" (Gallagher and Shear 178). Writing in this way connects him to the other self that the con artist possesses. He innovates new forms of writing and thinking.

Sass claims that "In recent years there has been a growing consensus that the distinctiveness of schizophrenic language is to be sought in qualities of another kind: in styles of speaking and interpreting language, and ways in which language ties in with its practical and interpersonal contexts" (176). He categorizes the language of the schizophrenics as "desocialization," "autonomization" and "impoverishment" (Sass 176). These three characteristics tend to "contribute to the unconventionality and incomprehensibility of schizophrenic language" (176) and are "related to the reflexivity or inwardness" (Sass 176). Shadia's poems contain the three traits of the schizophrenic's language. The poetic form of writing fits into the desocialization category as it sounds "telegraphic, as if a great deal of meaning were being condensed into words or phrases that remain obscure because the speaker does not provide the background information and sense of context the listener needs to understand" (Sass 177). The use of verses, in the poem of *The Diary*, condenses the young woman's meaning in her writing:

A woman burns like a candle

To guide others in her light

The category named Autonomization signals "tendencies for language to lose its transparent and subordinate status, to shed its function as a communicative tool and to emerge instead as an independent focus of attention or autonomous source of control over speech

and understanding” (Sass 178). *The Diary*’s poem loses its transparency and cannot be taken as a communicative tool:

Language is a prison house

Captivating

It is difficult to understand why language is a prison house. Shadi imprisons Shadia in it and then himself in a state of madness. Readers do not understand the aim of doing this when the poem is written in the story. The words emerge indeed “as an independent focus of attention or autonomous source of control over speech and understanding” (Sass 178). The poem describes Shadi’s other self wishing to stick to writing in order to become his ego ideal, Shadia. But the poem remains opaque as it does not depict its essence and themes clearly. Thus, the writing of the madman is hermetic.

Impoverishment of speech, in Sass’s third category takes place when the young playwright is unable to write his play. He cannot write the dialogues to describe his female character Shadia’s trauma in his story. Shadia’s fragmented speech, “*I was not allowed to...writing was not meant.. not allowed to ... they did not want me to..*” denotes Shadi’s own writer’s block. It depicts Patriarchy not allowing the woman to speak. Sass explains this as “The first of these is poverty of speech, which refers to a simple restriction in the amount of spontaneous speech- as when patients become extremely laconic or even mute” (180). This impoverishment is also present in his poems. It is “called poverty of content of speech, and refers to utterances that are adequate in amount, in sheer number of words emitted, yet that seem to convey little information because the language is vague, often overabstract or overconcrete, repetitive” (Sass 180). It also sounds like “empty philosophizing” (Sass 180) to listeners who know that Shadia is helpless:

Turning topsy-turvy

Fighting

Writing is confusing in *The Diary* because Shadi's ego has to disappear. He will do only what writing tells him to do in order to reach a higher level of reflection. According to Sass, schizophrenics find their own words as "opaque and ambiguous" (179). He also adds that "Such persons seem prone to a form of disengagement in which they experience their own speech or writing as some kind of alien substance rather than as a medium they inhabit and imbue with meaning" (Sass 179). Shadi's own experience with writing in his madness is like that. He wants to let writing and letters decide his fate. Witnessing Shadia write in his dual state of mind is similar to the condition of Sass's patient who "cannot distinguish between writing as an author and the mere act of creating letters" (179). As Shadia, the old author in Shadi dies. As a woman, he is busy "creating letters" only. By creating letters, he recreates his destiny.

Writing as a woman

Shadia, in *The Diary*, challenges that “the author/father is owner of his text and of his reader’s attention” (Gilbert and Guber 7). She refuses the male author as “owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events-those brain-children- he has both incarnated in black and white” (Gilbert and Guber 7). Accepting to become the author’s property, is becoming the subordinate. According to Gilbert and Guber, “The fixity of ‘life’ in art and the fluidity of ‘life’ in nature are incompatible” (14). Male authors find their mastery in art by showing that the pen can kill like the sword (Gilbert and Guber 12). Thus, Shadi kills the female author in his attempt to assume his male authority. Shadia steps in her brother’s life to teach him how to achieve fluidity of life in art through the *chora*, “the permanent stricture” (Rice and Waugh 134) in which the mother and the child hold each other. According to Kristeva, “every type of creation, even if it’s scientific, is due to this possibility of opening norms, towards pleasure, which refers to an archaic experience with a maternal pre-object” (Rice and Waugh 134). The male author assumes authority by putting an end to flow of life in his written texts whereas feminists like Kristeva claim creation to be “opening norms” (Rice and Waugh 134).

The male author tries to assume his power by depicting Shadia as a weak woman in his plays. According to Simone De Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, a woman is “nothing other than what man decides” (26). This is so because men give themselves more importance in this way. Shadi feeds his male ego in writing about weak women in his texts, but his other self is feminine as he wants to be like his sister. Beauvoir states that the woman “is

determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her” (26). In *The Diary*, Shadia teaches Shadi to believe in the intellectual qualities of women. She writes her brother’s destiny in a state of psychosis to let him define himself in relation to her beliefs. She snatches the pen from the male writer by stepping out of his text, a prison house for her. In this measure, Shadia proves that it is wrong to believe that the man “is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (Beauvoir 26). Shadia is able to refuse to be the Other and “Refusing to be the Other” means “refusing complicity with man” (Beauvoir 30). Thus, she rebels and does not allow Shadi to stop her from imprisoning her in his text and in his house.

The twin sister in *The Diary* steps out of the male author’s text to teach the brother that a woman is not weak. She is possessed by Shadi as a female character, but finally possesses him to remind him that “Eve is given to Adam for him to accomplish his transcendence in her” (Beauvoir 217). Shadi wants to demean his sister Shadia by presenting her as a weak woman in his play. His act reflects Beauvoir’s statement: “men have always considered woman precisely as the immanence of the given; if she produces harvests and children, it is not because she wills it; she is not the subject, transcendence, or creative power, but an object charged with fluids” (217). Thus, he fights his inferiority complex by showing that he can oppress his sister in his writing. In doing this, Shadi shows his dependence on his sister and depicts her importance in his life. He needs the assurance that his sister is his possession: “A man cannot verify his fatherhood by either sense or reason, after all; that his child is his is in a sense a tale he tells himself to explain the infant’s existence” (Gilbert and Gubar 5). Shadia talks to Shadi to show him that she is his ego ideal. Finally, Shadi becomes Shadia to listen to his conscience. In this measure, his mental illness allows him to manifest his subjectivity as a woman.

Shadia gets the upper hand on Shadi by becoming the *super-ego*. Beauvoir states that “the role of dress is both to link the body more closely to and to wrest it away from nature, to give a necessary set artifice to palpitating life” (212). By becoming the super-ego, Shadia treats Shadi in the same way as men treat women. It is Shadi who wears the dress and is made to follow whatever the woman writes in the poems. Beauvoir also writes that the woman “painted her mouth and cheeks to acquire a mask’s immobile solidity; her gaze was imprisoned in the thickness of kohl and mascara” (212). Shadia’s writing forces Shadi to wear that same make up and step out of the house to meet Rony. The woman becomes Shadi’s other self controlling the male chauvinist who tries to control her and imprison her in his writing and his house. Shadia uses the rules of the super ego, normally constructed by patriarchy in most societies, to make a man become the subordinate. Shadi is not allowed to follow his male self who likes fooling people as a con man. His sister controls him and makes him follow whatever she sets as rules and principles. Thus, Shadia fights patriarchy and overpowers Shadi as his super ego.

Shadia redefines herself as a strong woman who can assume her authority as the super-ego. She becomes the embodiment of Shadi’s ideal: “so the female writer’s battle for self-creation involves her in a revisionary process. Her battle, however, is not against her (male) precursor’s reading of the world but against his reading of her. In order to define herself as an author she must redefine the terms of her socialization” (Gilbert and Guber 49). Thus, Shadia becomes the super ego to redefine her role in the society. She needs to overpower to hold the pen and write this new destiny. Showalter explains, in *The Female Malady*, that “The madwoman is the author’s double, the incarnation of her own anxiety and rage” (4). Shadia proves her strength by overtaking the writer’s ability to write and develops

it further into a creative power that controls his life. This results into the betterment of Shadi, who no longer wants to be a con artist. Here, the female writer wants authority to write but she does not want to use it to the detriment of others. She also feels that it is important to challenge the male writer himself in order to rejuvenate his creativity. Shadia robs the male author of his satisfaction: “Males have always and everywhere paraded their satisfaction of feeling they are kings of creation” (Beauvoir 31).

Shadia is confined both in Shadi’s writing and in his house as his twin sister. Her rebellion lies in the fact that she is detained by a man. According to Showalter, Florence Nightingale finds “the confinement of women in the family” similar “to the circumstances of the lunatic in the asylum” (62). In her personal autobiographical note, Nightingale describes herself as a monster: “In Nightingale’s case, as in so many lives described in women’s literature and memoirs, the image of monstrosity was related to anger and discontent and to the necessity of concealing her drives for independence, work and power” (Showalter 62). Shadi’s twin sister and his female character face the same problem. The diary, in which Shadia is domesticated by Shadi, gives Shadia the chance to manifest the monster in her. By writing she is able to reverse her role and this time she confines the male writer in her writing. Writing poetry is a therapy to belch out Shadia’s frustration and to fight Shadi’s writer’s block just like writing the story of the Trojan princess Cassandra helps Nightingale “to break free” (Showalter 65). Writing against Shadi in the diary helps her to free herself from confinement. Shadia embodies Shadi and is able to get out of the house. Thus, she achieves her freedom.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, women must somehow “transcend the extreme images of ‘angel’ and ‘monster’ which male authors have generated for her” (17). Thus, they “must kill

the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been ‘killed’ into art” (Gilbert and Gubar 17), Shadia starts by killing the image of the angel first as she looks on the other side of the looking glass, “the mirror/text” (Gilbert and Guber 16). When she does that, she is “the speaker of the ‘The Other Side of a Mirror’ who looks ‘into her glass’ to see a madwoman (Gilbert and Guber 77). The madwoman is “the monster that she fears she really is rather than the angel she has pretended to be” (Gilbert and Guber 77). Shadia’s monstrosity lies in the fact that she dares to fight patriarchy. In *Art and Anger*, Jane Marcus states Woolf’s opinion: “Like Kafka she felt that writing was a conspiracy against the state, an act of aggression against the powerful, the willful breaking of the treaty of silence the oppressed had made with their masters to ensure survival” (73). As the super-ego, Shadia has to take the lead in order to make the male writer realize that he has been wrong in imprisoning her in his text. She also has to teach him as his own conscience that the con artist is his *id*.

The negative image of the monster helps Shadia to construct her identity as an author. Her anger turns her into a monster because patriarchy finds that “In the mouths of women, vocabulary loses meaning, sentences dissolve, literary messages are distorted or destroyed” (Gilbert and Gubar 31). But anger and rebellion are important in woman’s art. Patricia Meyer Spacks states in *The Female Imagination* that “Anger must have been a source of creative energy” (11) for various women writers. Despite the fact that Woolf “apologizes for feminine anger, which she believes is an emblem of feminine limitation” (Spacks 11), it is important for Shadia and Shadi to look into the looking glass (image) provided by men in order to get rid of it. This is so because Shadia is using Shadi’s technique to show him his own face in the looking glass. The super-ego highlights Shadi’s inferiority complex in oppressing Shadia. The woman writer acts as a “‘delicious’ enlargement of the male ego” (Spacks 13) as Shadi captivates himself

in his writing as a woman. But, as underlined by Spacks, Shadia is aware of “the ironies of such a role” (13). Her motive in enslaving her twin brother in the looking glass is only to make him conscious of this “insanely egotistic” (Spacks 13) act. By writing the poems in the diary, the woman frees herself and Rony.

Shadia is also an angel who wants to guide Shadi with a monster’s anger. It was important for women writing in the nineteenth to produce women with dualistic traits; they are both the monster and the angel. Gilbert and Gubar state that “so important is this female schizophrenia of authorship” (78) because the “female literary tradition we have been defining participates on all levels in the same duality or duplicity that necessitates the generation of such doubles as monster characters who shadow angelic authors” (79-80). By following this tradition, Shadia adopts Woolf’s strategy to have “a sisterhood of philosophical inquiry” that “might be as necessary to women as male secret societies or brotherhoods to men” (Marcus 74). In this measure, she conforms to the images of the angel and monster in male texts; however, she does it to comply with her circle of sisterhood. Her writing is Shadi’s own revolt against his male precursors. In this measure, Shadia introduces Shadi to female writing. She makes him understand the style of women writing in his state of madness. Thence, Shadi gets rid of patriarchal writers and gets in touch with female philosophies by writing as a woman.

It is also important for Shadia to get rid of the looking glass and her ancestresses in order to achieve transcendence. According to Marcus, Woolf “characterizes women’s protection as liberation from the ego” (81). The ego is “the enemy; even in herself, where she fought fiercely to control it, she saw the ego as male, aggressive, and domineering” (Marcus 81). In keeping the images of the angel and the monster, woman will not be able eliminate the male ego in the male author, Shadi. She cannot continue to look in the looking glass to show the male writer that he

has been right in shaping her identities. Gilbert and Gubar write that women writers have to “set the crystal surface free” by shattering “the mirror that has so long reflected what every woman was supposed to be” (76). To guide Shadi and set herself free, the female author has to follow the methods of “assaulting, revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature” (Gilbert and Gubar 76). But, it is of utmost importance to eliminate both male and female precursors. For that, Shadia has to get rid of her own ancestresses who also create the anxiety of influence as it develops the “Electra complex” (Gilbert and Gubar 48). To engage in her “efforts of self-creation” and to let Shadi also create for himself, the anxiety of influence has to be eliminated in both the male and female author.

The influence of ancestresses is important for Shadia, but she has to recreate her own writing. Gilbert and Gubar write a lot about the importance for the woman artist to return to the cave which is “as Freud pointed out—a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure” (93). According to them, “the womb-shaped cave is also the place of female power, the umbilicus mundi, one of the great antechambers of the mysteries of transformation” (96). Shadia feels it necessary to go back to the what Simone de Beauvoir calls “maternal shadows” (Gilbert and Gubar 95) so that Shadi can experience freedom from patriarchy and find his way to the *chora*. But Spacks writes that Isadora Duncan sees “Art and motherhood” as “alike metaphors for power” (161). Thus, Shadia can develop ego like Shadi if she sticks to the maternal body for too long. As a writer Shadia needs to manifest her image as the angel and the monster as “the cave is a female space,” but her aim is not to become a slave to it. Once inspired she has to, as claimed by Adrienne Rich, “revitalize the darkness, to retrieve what has been lost, to regenerate, reconceive, and give birth” (Gilbert and Gubar 99). Shadia needs to free herself from the maternal body in order to avoid the mother’s authority over her. It is vital for her to cling to her freedom as a writer.

To have the right of self-creation, Shadia writes to rebel against Shadi's restrictions imposed on her in his writing. She steals the pen from him to assume her authority. Meanwhile she also allows Shadi to rebel against his precursors. Marcus writes that Woolf felt the same way as Kafka while rebelling against authority: "Kafka regarded words as stolen property; he strove for perfection in prose style in German, as Woolf did in English, to lessen the anxiety of being found out" (75). Patriarchy represents authority. Any kind of authority stands for hurdles in the way of both male and female authors. Shadia follows Woolf in the measure that she wants the writer's "egotism and individuality, the swords and shields of the hated 'I, I, I'" to be "abandoned outside the doors of her fiction" (Marcus 82). Through her, Shadi understands women and gets rid of his male ego. Woolf sees the poet as "the legislator of morality, his authority is derived not from his individual talent but from his expression of collective consciousness" (Marcus 82). Thus, Shadia wants Shadi to realize his mistakes in capturing her and Rony to write plays. Marcus also defines Woolf's concept on this issue as "She wants to close the gap, to fill the abyss which separates the players from the audience, art from life" (83). Shadi must respect the male and female characters of his stories and understand their suffering.

Shadia also teaches Shadi to use *l'écriture féminine* by writing poems. This allows Shadi to write his self which he finds in a woman, his ego ideal. According to Helene Cixous, in "The Laugh of the Medusa", "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" (875). Writing with the body is refusing to accept the pen as the penis. Using *L'écriture féminine* means connecting to the *chora* and deconstructing the male language described as the symbolic by Kristeva (Rice and Waugh 133). Seda Peksen states that it is important to step "outside the realm of language" ("Feminine Writing as an Alternative to the Patriarchal Language", 1) in order to

re-create a language that is free from male authority. According to Peksen the *chora* “is a place of rhythm and movement” (5). Thus, Shadia’s poems allow Shadia to take back her body from the Shadi’s written plays and allow Shadi to rebel against his precursor’s symbolic language. Poetry gives Roma and Shadi the chance to fight culture’s oppression, representation. Both attain subjectivity: “But only the poets- not the novelists, allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious” (Cixous 879- 880).

The aim of *l’écriture féminine* is to get rid of binary oppositions present through gender in language. Peksen writes that one of the basic aims of feminine writing “is to deconstruct the patriarchal ways of conceiving the world” (9). Thus, “women have to get rid of binary oppositions in language” (Peksen 9). In becoming Shadia, Shadi experiences his female self. He becomes someone possessing both the female and male selves: “Therefore, feminine writing should be bisexual so that it will be decentered in terms of sex” (Peksen 9). Shadia does not make of writing a means to her end as she does not use her writing to seek her revenge and freedom only. Her objective is to introduce *l’écriture féminine* to make the male writer respect women. Cixous highlights this belief as: “To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live” (883). The female writer wants Shadi to be a complete whole by mending the fissure between his male identity and his female self. The patriarchal language can only set a scenario consisting of the oppressor and the oppressed. Spacks states that Virginia Woolf finds writing to be “androgynous” as “women must cultivate their masculine side and men their feminine” (12). Madness allows Shadia to use the *semiotic* present in poetry to do so.

At the end of my story, the male writer is a transformed person. He uses the language of his own desire which is that of his sister Shadia whom he conceives as an ego ideal. In this

measure Shadi finds a different self in insanity. The poem written by him when he becomes sane reflects his freedom from patriarchal language: “one of the primary aims of feminine writing is to deconstruct the patriarchal ways of conceiving the world” (Peksen 9). Thus, “There is no position of mastery in *l’écriture féminine*” (Peksen 9) as Shadi realizes that he does not have to demean Shadia in his writing and prove that he is better than her. He writes for the sake of art and not to compete with the woman or demean her. Shadi achieves Cixous’s aim in using *l’écriture féminine*: “Beauty will no longer be forbidden” (876). Alcoff mentions that “Western common sense has it that we have more individual control over our subjectivity than we have over our public identity, especially if the former is thought to be “internal” and the latter “external” (336). Shadi’s altered consciousness teaches him to control his subjectivity without being enslaved to his identity as a male. In this measure, his creativity attains freedom of expression without dependence on the *symbolic*.

The woman finds the true meaning of gender by fighting oppression in my story and gives the man the opportunity to experience this too. Butler highlights, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, that the society’s attempt to define gender as “men” and “women” is a tendency “to subordinate the notion of gender under that of identity and to lead the conclusion that a person is a gender and is one in virtue of his or her sex” (21-22). Shadia finds freedom by getting rid of subordination in the binary structure of the cultural construction of gender. She finds her own definition of being a woman. As she shows that a woman is not weak, she defies the cultural gender imposed on her. She teaches Shadi that a man does not need to oppress in order to be a man. He accepts her as his ego ideal to question his cultural gender and give a new meaning to gender. Shadia’s aim is only to eliminate subordination in gender. She does not want to oppress: “The effort to identify the enemy as

singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms” (Butler 13). Shadia’s aim is not to have the upper hand although she is in a position of mastery during Shadi’s psychosis. She does not attempt to mark the male gender like patriarchs who define “women in terms of their sex” and “extoll men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood” (Butler 9).

Shadia is Shadi’s secret self. She is his companion when he is lonely. *The Diary* depicts her as the male writer’s unconscious mind. Shadi becomes split to allow his conscious mind converse with his other self in order to understand himself better. The twin sister gives her brother the opportunity to talk to the Shadia character created in his story. He understands his own creation by becoming her in a state of dissociation. In this measure, a communion takes place between the writer and his writing. Shadia allows Shadi to revise his writing and discover a new style of writing through poems. Poetry teaches the male chauvinist that the pen is not the penis and must not be used to imprison people in a text. The pen is also not a slave to the *chora*. It is a tool that gives the writer the right to write freely. Writing is neutral and cannot be defined by the gender of the author.

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