

## Navigating Sri Lankan Identity in a State of Crisis: The Role of the Creative Imaginary

JESLYN SHARNITA AMARASEKERA  
*Department of English Studies,  
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities,  
Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Malaysia  
jeslynsa@tarc.edu.my*

SHANTHINI PILLAI  
*Center for Research in Language and Linguistics,  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia*

### ABSTRACT

*Sri Lanka is often thought of as a nation that has been in a constant state of crisis since the start of its civil war in 1983. However, with the passing of time and various government efforts, there have been attempts to heal the tears in the social fabric. Some of these attempts can be seen in the creation of the National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence, of 2017 as well as the establishment of the Office of National Unity and Reconciliation. While these have clear missions towards an inclusive Sri Lankan society, the reality of the state of affairs in Sri Lanka has revealed that there is an ongoing racial and cultural divide that continues to prevail within the nation. This paper intends to delve into how Sri Lankan transnational authors offer an alternative narrative towards achieving national reconciliation as their works of fiction navigate the various trajectories of Sri Lankan identity in an age of crisis. The discussion will focus specifically on Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Ameena Hussein's *The Moon in the Water* to uncover how their creative imaginary reveals the unraveling of the threads of cultural and religious interactions between various Sri Lankan characters of different ethnic backgrounds. The paper reveals that even though these two works of fiction address past violence and conflict, they ultimately show the strong possibilities of attaining the envisioned shared future as promised in the various government designed narratives.*

*Keywords: Sri Lanka, identity; national narrative; interethnic engagement; reconciliation*

### INTRODUCTION

National narratives are often seen as a pathway between the past and present, providing “(often canonized) stories about a nation’s origin and achievements, and the perceived characteristics of a national community, produced to make sense of past events and to create cohesion in the present with a view to the future” (in Grever & van der Vlies, 2017). While the historical accounts within historical texts provide an official account of a nation’s national narrative, oftentimes “governed by nations”, it is also important to note that such national narratives may impact young minds who are influenced by these narratives of the past, thus perpetuating stereotypes that may lead to wars, genocides and prejudices (Grever & van der Vlies, 2017). This means that the people tend to rely on national narratives which enable them to exist and contribute within a national space. When national narratives are influential, they ultimately contribute to the historical accounts; they colour the people’s sense of individual and communal contribution that may thus undervalue similar contributions of other ethnic communities. Simultaneously, these national narratives can also influence the way in which individuals interact within the national space. Homi Bhabha (1990)

expounds on the significance of the national space, drawing from Oakeshott's idea that the national space is "constituted from competing dispositions of human association as *societas* (the acknowledgement of moral rules and conventions of conduct) and *universitas* (the acknowledgement of common purpose and substantive end)". Bhabha also clarifies that the nation itself often wavers between these spaces of the private (*societas*) and public (*universitas*). Therefore, there is no denying the utmost importance placed on national narratives within a national space is that people should commit to further extending the common goal or purpose. While the official national narratives as prescribed within historical texts provide the accounts of the glory, power, losses and triumphs, creative fiction written from the perspective of the masses on the other hand, provides a more lived and personal experience of the same historical account. These interpretations of the past that exist within the quotidian spaces enable the people to provide their own national narratives, especially through the creative imaginary. It is crucial to note that while there are two dimensions of national narratives, the ones within the official spaces and the ones within the everyday spaces, this paper seeks to examine the national narratives written from the people's perspective, illustrating their own accounts through creative fiction within Sri Lanka, thus emphasising on the significance of the creative imaginary. It is through the descriptions, interactions and engagements of the characters within the creative imaginary of the Sri Lankan writers that we are able to witness how efforts are made to reconcile with the Sri Lankan identity, through the age of crisis. The idea of the creative imaginary can be drawn from Viktor Shklovsky's concept of art as technique, where poetry is perceived as a way of "thinking in images" (Newton, 1997). Shklovsky argues that poets are seen as artists who arrange images according to their own techniques. As such, the "artistry" attributed to a creative work "results from the way we perceive it" (3). With this in mind, it can be noted that creative writers who create their own artistic work, derived from their imagination can be also perceived as artists who can arrange the national narratives using their own techniques and images which give us an entirely different narrative, as opposed to the existing national narratives. As the creative imaginary is the main crux of this paper, it is necessary to understand how the writers such as Nayomi Munaweera in her novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (2012) and Ameena Hussein in her novel, *The Moon in the Water* (2017) are able to engage with the national space, thus forming their own accounts of the national narratives which are in contrast to the historical narratives presented. This paper demonstrates how the creative imaginary of Sri Lankan writers can present alternative national narratives as they draw on their own perceptions of Sri Lanka's traumatic past. In doing so, we argue that fiction such as these can run counter to the formal national narratives that have failed to heal the rifts of time and torment and navigate the Sri Lankan nation towards reconciliation if given due space.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

KM De Silva (2005) describes Sri Lanka or Ceylon as it was called during the rule of the British as home to the Sinhalese, the Tamils, both who had been living in Ceylon and those who were brought in by the British to work as well as other European ethnic groups who chose to reside there. Eventually, the British declared Ceylon as independent in 1948. In 1972, Ceylon, now known as the Republic of Sri Lanka was thrown into a political unrest which led to racial tensions, and ultimately turning Sri Lanka from a home for many to a site for a perpetuating civil war (Silva, 2005). Racial divide took prominence, as major ethnic groups were now torn further apart, as new rulers of the nation continued to exacerbate the situation by adopting the colonial "divide and rule"

policy. Eric A. Posner, Kathryn E. Spier and Adrian Vermeule (2010) define the concept of “divide and conquer” as a situation in which “a single actor exploits coordination problems among a group by making discriminatory offers or discriminatory threats” (2). With the perpetuating tensions within Sri Lanka, both the Sinhalese as well as the Sri Lankan Tamils along with other ethnic minorities could no longer view the island as a site that offers the same comfort and the lived experiences now bore trauma and agony. In his article, David Feith (2010) draws on the Tamil and Sinhala relationship in Sri Lanka. It has been discussed that the first wave of Tamils that arrived in Sri Lanka began in the Ancient Period where the people were brought in during the wars between the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Chola. The second wave of Tamils was then brought in by the British to work as laborers. Therefore, it would be wrong to say that there were no Tamils already residing in Sri Lanka at that time. However, the conflict began when the Sinhalese were made the majority and given priority by the Western forces invading the land at that time. There is no denying that the relationship between these two ethnic groups continued to deteriorate as the years went by. The needs and rights of the Tamils were often ignored which only led to the constant battle for a position in the nation. While the Tamils fought for a place in the nation, the Sinhalese majority fought to keep the Tamils as a minority. While the Sinhala language was recognized, the Tamil language was casted aside. The conflict escalated and eventually created a nation-state war that broke out between the Sinhalese and Tamils in 1983.

Nithyani Anandakugan (2020) discusses how prior to the culmination of the ethnic tensions, both ethnic groups were already divided in “somewhat separate spheres of the country: the Sinhalese in Southern, Western, and Central Sri Lanka, and the Tamils in the Northern and Eastern parts of the island”. As a result of the frustration and ongoing pursuit for control, the ruptures in the nation then led to a gruesome war which saw both ethnic groups persecuted and victimised. This situation marred the history of Sri Lanka for 26 years.

Nevertheless, after 26 agonising years, the civil war had been declared officially over by the Sri Lankan president in 2009 and efforts were put into place to rebuild and reconcile the nation from this excruciatingly traumatic past. Jaffna, in the northern part of Sri Lanka was reopened to the public, enabling reconciliation between the northern Tamil-majority state and the rest of Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Tamils who were still residing on the island were now able to work and travel without the fear of being scrutinised by the military officials. Yet, unfortunately, thirteen years after the civil war had ended, trauma and displacement still lingered in the lives of many of those affected.

At this point, it is imperative to engage with the social immediacy of the Sri Lankan civil war and its repercussions on its citizens in the present. The International Crisis Group (ICG) Project Director, Alan Keenan documented his visit to ex-combat zones in Sri Lanka in 2019, revealing a population struggling to cope with the after effects of the civil war.

Failed political reforms, inadequate economic development, heavy militarisation of the Tamil-majority north and government resistance to providing information on disappeared persons have further deepened many Tamils’ grievances. Their sense of betrayal, and the absence of spaces to work through the suffering experienced by Muslims and Sinhalese, too, threatens hopes of reconciliation – either between ethno-religious groups and the state or among the groups themselves – and risks further instability. For many Sri Lankans living in the bitterly contested north and east, the war has never quite ended. (ICG, 2019)

The idea of “failed political reforms” and “militarisation” extend the trauma felt collectively as well as individually within Sri Lanka. Despite having ended the civil war in 2009, the civilians are left to not only grapple with realities of “disappeared persons”, “Tamil grievances” “betrayal” as well as the “absence of spaces to work through the suffering”. What this reveals to

the world is, that regardless of any consolation offered, physical and psychological trauma is not something that fades away overnight. The collective trauma and individual psychic sense of loss remains as the nation is racially divided between the north and the east. The ICG report reveals that the war had not only affected those directly involved, but also those who were caught in the crossfire. Many families had been displaced and to this date, there are still family members waiting in hopes of finding the whereabouts of their loved ones (ICG,2019). These national narratives paint a macabre atmosphere which offers no form of solace as the nation attempts to reconcile with its gruesome past. What can also be noticed is the idea that in times of crisis, navigation attempts by the authorities have not only been slow and weak, but also failing in terms of its attempts to reconcile the people and the land, evidently depicted in the ICG Report.

The presidential elections in 2019 led to former Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, acquiring more control over the political affairs of the nation as President and Prime Minister. Simultaneously, this presidential election reignited the cultural and racial divide which flared over the history of the island. The Human Rights Watch (2020) reported that little effort had been put by the new Sri Lankan administration to ensure interethnic stability and peace. The report reveals the agonising unrest and turmoil which continues to engulf the nation:

In 2019, Sri Lanka suffered its worst communal violence since the end of the civil war. Islamist suicide bombers attacked churches and hotels in Colombo and other cities on Easter Sunday, April 21, killing over 250 people and injuring hundreds more. Anti-Muslim mobs, some linked to nationalist politicians and incited by extremist Buddhist monks, attacked Muslim property and vilified Muslims and foreign asylum seekers, putting them at risk of assault. The government imposed a state of emergency for four months. The authorities detained hundreds of people without charge under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, an abusive law that the government had committed to replacing. (HRW, 2020)

More draconian laws and enforcements have been introduced under the new administration, which indirectly hoist the flag of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism, undoubtedly igniting more civil unrest and discomfort amongst the minorities, namely the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sri Lankan Muslims. The racial divide between ethnic groups was extended when major news networks reported that the Sri Lankan ruling government had chosen to omit the Tamil language version of the national anthem during the Sri Lankan Independence Day celebrations in February 2020 (AlJazeera, 2020). By choosing to only sing the national anthem in Sinhala, the government had further widened the racial division that was sweeping across the nation. In doing so, the national narrative presented is only of one voice represented in the nation; the Sinhalese voice. This was further perpetuated by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa who, upon winning the elections in August 2020, accentuated a Sinhalese and Buddhist centric pledge to the nation and its people in his Parliament speech:

I have pledged to protect the unitary status of the country and to protect and nurture the Buddha Sasana during my tenure. Accordingly, I have set up an advisory council comprising leading Buddhist monks to seek advice on governance. I have also established a Presidential Task Force to protect places of archeological importance and to preserve our Buddhist heritage. While ensuring priority for Buddhism, it is now clear to the people that freedom of any citizen to practice the religion of his or her choice is better secured.

The emphasis on prioritising Buddhism sparked concerns for other ethnic minorities who fear that strong Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist sentiments may threaten the position of other minorities residing within the nation. On 22 October 2020, the Sri Lankan parliament had also passed the 20th Amendment (20A) to the Constitution, thus edging Sri Lanka closer to being an autocratic

nation rather than a democracy. This move effectively consolidated the absolute power the President has, both over the nation and on all the governing laws within the nation. The amendment, which drew strong protests from Tamil minority political parties, Buddhist monks of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party as well as Catholic bishops accentuated the constant rift residing over the nation. While one national narrative highlights Buddhist and Sinhalese nationalism, another narrative contradicts the former, emphasising on a collective disagreement echoed by the multiethnic society of Sri Lanka. When the governing laws no longer protect every citizen, they raise serious concerns central to established discourses on nationhood, nation-ness and national belonging, taking us back Benedict Anderson's (2006) dialectics of the "multiple significations" of nationality, nation-ness and nationalism. It is nation-ness especially that can lead to a strong sense of social cohesiveness, and it appears rather elusive in the Sri Lankan context. This also raises concerns over the sentiments of the people within the society.

Ambika Satkunanathan (2020) highlighted the recent pardoning of Sergeant Sunil Rathnayake who was initially sentenced to death in 2015 over the murder of eight internally displaced Tamil civilians. Rathnayake whose sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka was pardoned by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 26 March 2020. Satkunanathan noted that while the pardoning has been regarded by human rights activists as a violation, there has been little outcry from the public. The lack of outburst from the public suggests the ongoing discrimination minorities in Sri Lanka continue to face. She writes,

In Sri Lanka, the ability of a person to exercise their rights freely has been restricted during different periods in our history. One such right that has been subject to restrictions is the right to free speech. However, we have to acknowledge that even during repressive times, the ability to speak truth to power, the ability to criticise the decisions of the executive etc., which are all integral parts of exercising one's citizenship, have been experienced by different persons and groups differently, depending, once again, on their identity and privilege. (Satkunanathan, 2020)

Satkunanathan's thoughts are further echoed by Carey et al. (2022) who note that "in postwar societies dominated by a victorious group, street-level peace is limited to only parts of society" (23). The implication here is that ongoing discrimination continues to exist regardless of the narrative designed and constructed by the government. Their findings also further demonstrate concerns of political instability which resonates strongly among both Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups. It is also interesting to note that while the government continues to declare its efforts of maintaining national peace, the general public seem to have united regardless of race and religion to protest against more pressing issues such as the financial and political instability that has engulfed the nation in recent times. Recent turmoil within the country had led to reforms in the government, with general public resorting to protests and unfortunately, violence in an effort to channel their grievance. There was no denying that the people of various backgrounds were able to cast aside their differences for the greater good of the nation. This was evident in the United Nations Human Rights press release (10 May 2022) which indicated how UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet is of the strong opinion that,

The severe economic crisis has made daily life a struggle for most Sri Lankans. It has also highlighted grievances, which require national dialogue and deeper structural reforms...It has brought together people from various ethnicities and religions to demand greater transparency, accountability and participation in democratic life. (OHCHR, 2022)

While these national narratives provide a historical and reflective account of the trauma endured as a consequence of the civil war, the creative accounts of national narratives have also

been documented throughout the Sri Lankan literary corpus. Minoli Salgado in her book (2007) highlights how eight significant writers of Sri Lankan descent have produced works that address the notion of nation struggle while also challenging the conformity that is expected. She states that the works of Shyam Selvadurai and A. Sivanandan who are both of Tamil heritage reiterate the constant struggle characters have to undergo as they strive to seek their place within the nation. Simultaneously, Salgado also addressed the varying issues found in the works of writers such as Carl Mueller and Romesh Gunasekera. Novels such as Shyam Selvadurai's *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* (2007), Roma Tearne's *Brixton Beach* (2010) and Romesh Gunasekera's *Noontide Toll* (2014) address the more individual aspects of resistance towards societal expectations along with the idea of reconciliation with their homeland. Amarasekera and Pillai (2018) emphasise on the Sinhalese perspectives of trauma and reconciliation through the creative imaginary as revealed by six diasporic writers in their novels including Channa Wickremesekera's *Distant Warriors*, Chandani Lokuge's *Softly As I Leave You* and Randy Boyagoda's *Beggar's Feast*. Through the creative imaginary, readers are given insights into the "manifestations of Sri Lanka as a construction of a comforting home or a site for unhomeliness". Amarasekera and Pillai also further elaborate on how the Sinhalese perspectives reveal the projection of characters as either, syncretic or specular based on the creative imagination of the selected transnational writers.

While the creative imaginary offers more individual perspectives and hints of reconciliation, the state of affairs in Sri Lanka have revealed is that there is an ongoing racial and cultural divide that continues to prevail within the nation. This then leads to questions arising on the validity and significance of policies designed within the government for the sake of racial and cultural reconciliation; what purpose do policies such as the National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence serve and what impact, if at all, do they have on social cohesion?

## DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK

The discussion of this paper will be framed by key concepts derived from the National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence. The policy designed in May 2017, sought to develop initiatives for national reconciliation, given that the nation continues to struggle with its violent past. The policy emphasised on its commitment to "creating an inclusive society, a sense of belonging, and an environment conducive to the full realization of the potential of every Sri Lankan citizen". Among the main objectives of the policy were:

1. To function as a state policy on reconciliation and coexistence.
2. To provide direction to national reconciliation and coexistence by addressing past violence and conflict, and through envisioning of a shared future that fosters national unity and peaceful coexistence among all peoples and communities in the country.
3. To provide a guiding framework to all stakeholders working on reconciliation and coexistence in order to achieve coherence in peace and national unity initiatives

(2017)

On paper, this may seem to offer a sense of hope from the then government as it aimed at promoting national unity and co-existence within multicultural Sri Lanka. Yet, a closer glance at the policy albeit seeming to be a commendable effort, has proven to lack the delivery promised. The official website of the Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation which has not been

updated since 2017, further solidifies the idea that with the reign of the new President and his ruling government in 2022, national integration seems to have been sidelined.

While it can be argued that the violent affairs between varying races and cultures do not signify or represent the generic views of every ethnic group in Sri Lanka, there needs to be a flicker of hope. Though these national narratives paint a traumatic portrait forever tainted with the memories of ethnic tensions, are they truly what the nation represents? Have the policy makers in Sri Lanka sought out to realign national narratives with cultural integration and national unity or have their policies simply perpetuated the agony and despair soaked in every grain of the experience of the Sri Lankan civil war? The discussion will draw from this “state policy on reconciliation and coexistence” to demonstrate how the creative imaginary is able to provide a stronger narrative on reconciliation and coexistence as oppose merely stating its existence within national narratives. Additionally, the discussion will also draw from Homi Bhabha’s idea of the national space, *societas* that emphasises on moral rules and conventions of conduct and *universitas* that extends the common purpose and substantive end of characters.

While it appears that national narratives have not played a significant role, these concepts provide the idea that creative fiction can successfully intervene to show the pathways that can lead to reconciliation especially given the traumatic past ensured by the characters in a particular text.

The idea of a traumatic past and how it lingers within the minds of the Sri Lankans can be better defined through Robert Eaglestone’s notion of trauma:

Trauma means first a wound, then, after Freud, a psychic wound, and has since accumulated an array of meanings: the consequence of the destruction of a society (the collective trauma of the Holocaust, a paradigmatic example); an individual’s response to a terrible event; each human’s psychic sense of loss. The craft of fiction (invention, shaping, yet somehow revealing things of importance) and the wound (personal, psychic, social and collective) have been intertwined.

(Eaglestone, 2020, p. 287)

While Eaglestone draws his construct of trauma from the collective trauma endured by victims of the Holocaust, a similar idea is reflected in the historical past of Sri Lankans who have endured the civil war, and trauma in this paper is used in the context of the immediacy of the vicious destruction of the realities of war.

Also of significance is Eaglestone’s reference to the craft of fiction in shaping and revealing the depths of traumatic experience. It is precisely this aspect that we explore in the latter half of the discussion. Eagleton’s notion of the intertwining of the craft of fiction and personal as well as collective wounds (of war) is also explored through the role of memory, as discussed in Anita Harris Satkunanathan’s exploration of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s works. Satkunanathan (2018) writes on the function of memory upon second-generation diasporic writers who are able to convey the impact of postmemory based on the traumatic experiences of their ancestors. She draws from Marianne Hirsch (2012) who sees postmemory as memories that are more “directly connected to the past” and are able to “characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth” (188). The creative narratives created by Sri Lankan writers such as Munaweera and Hussein can then be interpreted as narratives that emphasise on the collective traumatic experiences of the past, based on the creative imagination of the second-generation writers.

Valančiūnas (2020) also examines the role of novels and films that function as “trauma narratives which insist on the haunting quality of war-related memories and experiences”, stating that such trauma continues to possess its subjects regardless of where they may be (3). The role of trauma is further explained by Ann Kaplan (2005) who emphasises on the collective trauma

ensured by a nation, making it difficult to be separated from the individuals themselves (19). What Kaplan means to say is that such trauma endured within a nation should not be treated as instances that are isolated, but rather as a combination of personal histories with regard to the trauma brought upon by a past experience. This concept of trauma is necessary to be explored within Munaweera and Hussein's novels as they provide further insights into the minds and makings of the characters who have endured their own experiences as part of the collective trauma that warped the memory of the past.

The emphasis on trauma endured by the characters within Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Ameena Hussein's *The Moon in the Water* will also highlight each writer's attempt at the amalgamation of various Sri Lankan perspectives of the civil war while striving also to shine a light on the spaces of cultural and religious engagements that clearly meet the objectives of the all but defunct National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence.

## NAVIGATING SRI LANKAN NATIONAL NARRATIVES THROUGH SRI LANKAN LITERATURE

As Sri Lankan female writers, both Nayomi Munaweera and Ameena Hussein have established themselves as significant contributors not only to the Sri Lankan literary corpus, but also to the South Asian literary corpus. Both writers are perceived as those who represent the "paradoxes of Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature as they address both the majority and the minority while also acknowledging ethnic identity politics (Jayasuriya and Halpe, 2012). Munaweera's imaginary, namely through the mirrored portrayal of Saraswathi, the Tamil girl enlisted by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and Yasodhra, the Sinhalese protagonist, provides the presentation of "a balanced perspective on Sri Lanka's polarized political identities at different stages of the war" (Heidemann, 2019). *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* is identified as a novel that provides a heavy emphasis on the lived experiences of the characters as they find themselves bound by the sea and the inhabitants of the island of Sri Lanka (Amarasekera and Pillai, 2016). Munaweera is seen as a writer who manages to capture the exact images that ties a person to their homeland, in this case, Sri Lanka. Similarly, Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee (2020) writes that Munaweera's writing also manages to capture the idea of home that emerges as "a space in which exile and belonging overlap for individuals who negotiate their distorted histories and realities amidst a civil war". What can be said is that Munaweera manages to present the idea of belonging through her characters and their varied interactions. On the other hand, *The Moon in the Water* by Ameena Hussein is seen as a novel that not only presents the feminist perspective of a Sri Lankan Muslim family, but can also be seen as a story that highlights "patriarchal interpretations of Islam in a country where Muslims are a minority" (Ranasinha, 2016). It is also important to note that little has been written to provide insight into how these novels present the notions of navigating the Sri Lankan identity through cultural integration and resistance of public national narratives.

What then are some of the ways in which national narratives are interwoven in the creative imaginary of Nayomi Munaweera and Ameena Hussein as they delve into the lives of characters whose lives are inextricably entwined with Sri Lanka? More significantly, how do they engage with the trauma of the civil war while never losing sight of the seedlings of hope for reconciliation that is simultaneously sown in the impoverished grounds of inter-ethnic engagement. A few pages into *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Munaweera uses the national symbol of the Sri Lankan flag to creatively foreground a micro narrative of the ethnic tension that will soon besiege the nation.



... the new nation's flag is poised a stylized lion, all curving flank and ornate muscle, long cruel sword gripped in its front paw... A green stripe represents that small and much-tossed Muslim population. An orange stripe represents the larger Tamil minority. But in the decades that are coming, race riots and discrimination will render the orange stripe inadequate. (Munaweera, 10)

Through her description of the Sri Lankan flag, Munaweera foreshadows the racial divide that will mar the symbol of a united nation. The description of the flag not only serves as a reminder of the fractioned positions each race holds, but also as a warning of what is to come. Contrary to the Sinhalese nationalism propagated by the ruling government, national narratives of the past reveal a time where nationalism was defined as one that revealed a sense of inclusion. Mark Ravinder Frost (2004) writes that there was a time when "Sinhalese and Tamil elites created a transethnic public discourse that has been labelled 'Ceylonese nationalism'..." (59). The term "Ceylonese nationalism" emerged in the early 1900s, but given the recent changes within Sri Lanka, this term has become overshadowed by more ethnic centred terms such as Sinhala nationalism and Buddhist nationalist. Despite the turmoil and divide represented, the flag also reminds readers that regardless of what political unrest may bring, Sri Lanka serves as a "shared home", one that is lived with people of different ethnicities and beliefs, creating the image of a colourful and vibrant home. Thus, Munaweera reminds readers of this "home" and its reflections through the shared lived experiences of the Sinhalese, Tamils, as well as Muslims that reside within the same locality. In doing so, Munaweera resists the ingrained idea represented within the *universitas* that there will always be a unifying factor that binds the people within a nation, regardless of how they have been portrayed within national narratives.

Here, the protagonist is Yasodhra who narrates the story of her parents' childhoods along with her own story. In a parallel storyline, Munaweera also introduces Saraswathi, a young girl in Jaffna who dreams of becoming a teacher, one who can break away from the clasps of poverty and misfortune. While both characters continue to live their lives separately, Munaweera conveys the idea that both characters undergo their own suffering and misery at the hands of others. For Yasodhra and her family, their collective trauma is caused by the ethnic war that tears them apart, forcing Yasodhra's family to migrate to America. For Saraswathi, her trauma lies in her shattered dreams of becoming a teacher and drastic changes in life when she is brutally raped by Sinhala soldiers, resulting in her joining the Tamil Tigers to save her family honour. Although Munaweera vividly portrays the morbid ethnic turmoil Sri Lanka is warped in, still, she manages to convey positive engagements between both Sinhalese and Tamil characters who ultimately paved their path towards reconciliation. From the beginning Munaweera presents the ethnic conflict in differing views, as Yasodhra reveals her father, Nishan's childhood through his memory of a conversation with Seeni Banda, a fisherman who tells him that the island is "ours, given to us from the Buddha's own hand long, long ago" before the Tamils had set foot in Sri Lanka (26). However, Munaweera reveals the conflicting views as Nishan's twin sister, Mala interjects by saying her teacher has taught them that "the Tamils have been here just as long as we have...no one really knows who came first" (26). The conflicting views from the beginning of the novel show that not every character deems the historical accounts of others as the defining truth. A young child such as Mala cannot comprehend the difference between her Sinhala self and the Tamil children she goes to school with. This idea is further demonstrated in 1958 when Nishan and Mala witness Sinhala men with machetes in their hands, barge into their train berth hunting for "Tamil devils" (28). The mob of men comes across a young Tamil schoolgirl who they have full intentions of harming, only to be halted by a petite schoolteacher who protects the girl by saying she has done nothing. The little girl is spared when the schoolteacher makes her recite the "*ithipiso gatha*", the

Buddhist verses, thus convincing the drunken mob of men that she is “a Sinhala girl. Only a little dark” (29). This act of bravery committed by the schoolteacher which remains etched in Nishan’s memory reiterates the idea that while others may seek to racially divide the people within the island, the lives of Sri Lankans will always be bound together through their lived experiences.

For the rest of his life, the cadence of this particular verse will cause my father’s bile to rise. It will conjure grasping fingers of guilt that wrap around his throat and make him remember Radhini in that dark compartment, the Tamil inflected undercurrents of her accent hidden by her years in Buddhist schools... (29)

Munaweera elaborates further on Sinhalese and Tamil relations when Yasodhra’s maternal grandmother rents out half of her ancestral house to a Tamil family when she faces financial difficulties. Despite her reservations and dissatisfaction over having to share her house with “These Tamils...named after Lord Shiva’s privates”, she eventually relents and accepts the three months’ rent that will sustain her family. By sharing her space with the Shivalingams, Yasodhra’s grandmother indirectly reiterates the idea that the land itself is shared with “statues of Ganesh and Shiva” and “Tamil and English books” (37). Her willingness to open her doors to the Shivalingams albeit her discomfort, paves a path towards her accepting that her home is also one that contains the sights, smells and experiences of the Tamil family.

This is the beginning of what we will come to call the Upstairs-Downstairs, Lingha-Singha wars. When Sylvia Sunethra calls Buddhist monks to the house, their monotone chant is interrupted by the voice of a Tamil film heroine winding seductively down the stairs. (38)

Munaweera also depicts the amalgamation of two cultures which coexist within the same space as the sights and sounds now not only include that of the Sinhalese culture, but also of the Tamil culture and social practices. It is important to note that Munaweera also presents the notion that two families of completely different circumstances, culture and beliefs, can coexist in a personal space, regardless of what political views and cultural perceptions within society may condone. This depiction evidently rejects the idea that racial divide and cultural divide cannot be reconciled, thus echoing Bhabha’s idea of national space as one that wavers between the *societas* and *universitas* (Bhabha, 1990). At the same time, Munaweera’s description also hints at the materialisation of “reconciliation and coexistence” as declared in the National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence.

Munaweera presents further insights into the notion of sharing personal space through the innocent romance between Visaka and Ravan, the youngest Shivalingam boy. Both children brought together by proximity, living in the same house, find comfort in sharing their dreams and secrets with one another. Visaka notes that “despite his foreignness in so many ways”, she is drawn to Ravan (40). Munaweera extends the symbolism of integration as Ravan leads Visaka into a secret room with blue walls hidden behind the jasmine bushes (42). Despite the enmity brewing in their nation and home, Ravan and Visaka are able to seek comfort in one another in this secret room, away from others. Nevertheless, although Ravan and Visaka are eventually married to partners their families have chosen for them, their lives are entwined as Visaka’s daughter and Ravan’s son are born at the same time. Munaweera weaves their lives together yet again, as Yasodhra and Shiva form a bond that accentuates their lived experiences within that Singha-Lingha house.

We are breastfed at the same time, our mothers nodding over our tiny heads, chatting in a mixture of Tamil, Sinhala and English that makes them laugh often...The strange timing of our birth allowing us entry into each other's families in the most intimate ways since the two women, previously rivals, now seek out the comfort in each other's company. (61)

The children who represent a new generation immediately form a bond, transcending the enmity and differences of their ancestors. At the same time, Visaka and Ravan's wife are bound together through the bond of motherhood, thus strengthening their relationship as they both raise their children within the same space. The notion of "home" is emphasised as these women not only share their space, but also their comfort and affections. The idea of coexistence is further expounded within the private shared space as contrasting languages become irrelevant because the women are able to converse and comprehend each other through the usage of their hybrid mixture of English, Tamil and Sinhala.

Even as the children grow up, Yasodhra and Shiva remain close, almost inseparable. Their innocence makes way for a stronger sense of togetherness, as they are unable to comprehend the glaring differences highlighted by others. Even when reprimanded by her grandmother, Yasodhra is unable to see how Shiva can be any different from her.

I: How? Different?

She: "Can't you see child? They're darker. They smell different. They just aren't like us. Her voice, cajoling. But I am already anxious to get back to the kingdom of our friendship... I say, "Anyway, he's not as dark as Mala Nanda, so that dark skinned thing can't be right." (73)

By acknowledging that her aunt who is Sinhalese seems to be darker than Shiva, Yasodhra inadvertently bridges the alleged gap that is supposed to alienate her from Shiva. Yet again, Munaweera is able to create the creative narrative of coexistence and reconciliation through the depiction of the young children. The character of the grandmother and her lack of explanation only fuels the child further as it shows that these differences only exist in the minds of those who simply prefer to retain the status quo. This is demonstrated later in the novel, when Yasodhra's grandmother herself is seen chasing away Sinhalese mobs who pound on her door in search of Tamils.

"What nonsense. This is a Sinhala household. Only I and my family are here. No bloody Tamils."

The men, shamed by the righteous old Sinhala lady, turn away. They will pursue their dark deeds in other more convivially acquiescent households. (82)

Yasodhra's grandmother's willingness to protect the Shivalingams reveals that though she may have personal prejudice towards their culture and beliefs, she does not believe in the idea of punishing them for the crimes of others. Her humanity and compassion are further revealed when she sends food to them each night, as they remain in hiding. What Munaweera reveals here is the true insight into how engagement is made within two separate ethnicities. This also symbolises the notion that the Shivalingams are part of their home and Yasodhra's family will protect them like their own, sharing a *collective space*.

Another demonstration of navigation of micro-national narratives is portrayed by Yasodhra's aunt, Mala Nanda who chooses to adopt a Tamil girl, Poornam and call her own. Mala Nanda first accepts the young girl when Poornam's mother leaves her at Mala Nanda's doorstep. Mala Nanda eventually adopts Poornam after she loses her husband and unborn child during a racial riot.

“She is my daughter, you know?” says Mala. “I adopted her. Put her through school. She teaches at the university now...a Professor of Mathematics. That girl always loved numbers.” There is heavy pride and possession in her voice. “People said I was mad to take in a Tamil child. They said she would murder me in my bed. But now they come with proposals for my girl...”  
(194)

By adopting Poornam, Mala manages to solidify her relationship, proving that race and religion becomes irrelevant where human ties are concerned. The pride in her voice reiterates the fact that despite being considered different by society, Poornam is a significant part of Mala’s life and family. While national policies are designed within the public spaces to emphasise on racial integration and reconciliation, the creative imaginary presents the private space as one that integrates and binds the two ethnic groups together.

Munaweera further illustrates resistance towards generic views of race and ethnicity when Shiva and Yasodhra abandon Sri Lanka in their adulthood and retreat to San Francisco.

Shiva and I, we fled that shattered country like tongue-tied, gaunt and broken ghosts.  
After the fires, after she was burned, all we wanted was each other. There was refuge in each other that could be found nowhere else. We had shared a childhood, a house, the murder of our most beloved. Together we formed a country, a kingdom.  
(214)

Accepting the fact that they could no longer save Sri Lanka, Shiva and Yasodhra are bound together by the grief and sorrow they feel. The term “refuge” is significant as their relationship becomes their beacon of hope in a time of utter despair. By accepting one another’s companionship, Shiva and Yasodhra created their own narrative based on the collective trauma they have shared, with their grief and suffering binding them together.

Yasodhra and Shiva also choose to name their child, Samudhra, the Sinhala and Sanskrit name for the ocean. In doing so, they symbolically bind their lives together not only to their cultures, but also to their homeland. The name itself paints a promise of reconciliation with their “shattered country”.

She is a child of peace, the many disparate parts of her experience knit together in jumbled but peaceable unity. The waves lick away her footsteps, the sand retaining no record of what came before her.  
(225)

Munaweera creates a potent reminder of how reconciliation amidst trauma can occur, as she describes Samudhra as a child of peace. In doing so, Munaweera paints a future where the next generation is not ethnically Sinhala or Tamil or Burgher or anything else, but rather a unified and hybrid community that serves as the bearer of peace, able to move away from the clutches of traumatic memories.

Like Munaweera, Ameena Hussein too delves into the varying relationships between her characters in *The Moon in the Water*. Hussein’s protagonist Khadeeja Rasheed is forced to return home to Colombo upon discovering that her father has passed away. Upon her arrival, she then uncovers family secrets that challenge and question her position within the Rasheed household. Khadeeja or Deej learns that she was adopted by her parents, RaushenGul and Rasheed. What Hussein does with this novel is akin to what Munaweera does, as Deej is adopted by RaushenGul who first sees her as a baby in a Catholic convent orphanage. From the very beginning, RaushenGul is seen as a character who resists the expected role of a Sri Lankan Muslim woman. Deej is taken home by RaushenGul, who in a flashback reveals that “this little girl...looked at her with big black eyes and smiled...and she felt she was destined for this child” (122). The very act of adopting a child who is not of the same faith or ethnicity palpably exposes the differing

idea RaushenGul projects towards the ideologies spread within the nation about varying ethnic groups. The message conveyed within the creative imaginary of Hussein here is an evident display of coexistence without the need of a governing policy.

RaushenGul's character is also portrayed as one that fails to relate to the growing ethnic differences within the nation. As a child, she finds comfort in the friendship of Nelum, her Sinhalese classmate with whom she bonded over the love of butterflies:

Each day Nelum would bring a different dead butterfly to be stroked and destroyed while RaushenGul in return, fed her delicacies cooked by her mother. *Muscat, Dodol, Sheenakka, Bowl* and *Dhoshi* were exchanged for Common Bushbrowns, Lemon Pansies and Lime Butterflies. 'Allah!' screeched her mother when she heard that her daughter had been feeding a little Sinhalese heathen child... (26)

RaushenGul is portrayed as a child who sees beyond race and religion, especially when she insists on negotiating with her parents, promising to complete "reciting the Quran this year if Nelum can be (her) friend" (26). Hussein creates RaushenGul's character as one who is able to navigate between the *societas* and *universitas*. The strong bond between RaushenGul and Nelum is further exemplified when RaushenGul chooses to accompany Nelum to the Buddhist temple to speak to a priest about her questions about life after the death of her husband.

She had never visited a Buddhist temple or Hindu kovil in her life...Despite her liberal outlook, religions other than her own did not impinge on her existence...No harm I suppose, she thought one quiet Sunday as she accompanied Nelum on a visit to the Kelaniya temple. (158)

The act of choosing to accompany her friend to a Buddhist temple clearly depicts the sense of resistance as RaushenGul chooses to ignore societal and religious expectations of maintaining distinctive boundaries where separate religions are concerned in Sri Lanka. Her syncretic perspective is further reinforced when she later points out to Nelum that the Buddhist notion of karma is similar to what is taught within Islam and Christianity.

Matthew says: 'Do not commit adultery but I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'  
How do you know these things, RaushenGul? Nelum asked in amazement.  
'Catholic school...'  
'And Islam?' Nelum queried.  
'*Niyath*, which translates as intention is everything,' replied RaushenGul. (159-60)

What RaushenGul manages to illustrate here is the idea that while every religion has their own set of ideologies, the fundamental concepts and beliefs remain the same. Likewise, while Sri Lanka may consist of a plethora of religions and cultures, the fundamental essence of their beliefs and traditions remains the same. In doing so, Hussein manages to remind readers that while national narratives may paint the idea that society cannot reconcile due to their differences, the creative imaginary is able to mend the broken ties through the reminder of their similarities.

Despite being surrounded by the love and affection she receives from her adopted family, Deej is then left feeling betrayed when she then learns that she was adopted. To make matters worse, she learns of a twin brother that she had no knowledge of. Upon meeting Arjuna Gunasekera, her twin brother who was adopted by a wealthy Sinhalese family, Deej becomes torn between accepting her adopted family and the secrets they kept which inadvertently hindered her from getting to know her twin. Nevertheless, Deej's insistence to get to know her brother displays the idea that relationships can transcend the boundaries made by society. Even if Deej was raised

by a Moor Muslim family, and Arjuna by a Sinhalese Buddhist family, their bond cannot be broken.

‘Did you never want to leave this country Arjuna?’

‘Why?’ he asked simply. ‘This is my country. Why should I leave it? Whatever happens to me here, whatever horrors, atrocities, deprivation of freedom, I do not for one second believe that I will leave my country.’

(107)

Deej then realises that though they may be bound by blood, both she and her brother have the collective experiences of being in their home country in a very different way. She reminds her brother of the differences that they have as he is “a Sinhalese” and he would have a vastly different perspective if he “were a Tamil or Muslim in Sri Lanka”. However, Arjuna reminds Deej that despite her ethnicity or religion, Sri Lanka is home. Deej then explains that she sees Sri Lanka as home when she misses “the burning heat and the sweat pouring down her back” during winter in Europe. She thinks of Sri Lanka through the simple experiences of “the hard monsoon rain” and “belching buses and crowded roads with undisciplined drivers honking”. Deej’s notion of belonging is further explored when she states that she used to wish she could live in a church as “churches are unlike mosques or temples, they are sombre and hollow and even if they are full of people, they never seem to lose their serenity” (109). The idea of viewing a church as a place of serenity exemplifies Deej’s position as a character who is able to challenge the typical public narratives of a Sri Lankan Muslim woman. The comfort she seems to receive in a church is something that Arjuna then echoes when he says he “rather like Hindu temples, they are always so full of life” (109). Through the creative imaginary, creates an image of irony as both her Muslim and Buddhist characters seem to find comfort in the places of worship belonging to those of other faiths. What this conversation is able to display is the idea that both characters are able to feel a sense of belonging in places that they may not truly relate to in terms of religion, but rather through spirituality. In doing so, Hussein manages to capture the idea that while both characters may face their own discrimination, be it for being a different race or of a different faith, they are still able to find a common ground where belonging to their nation is concerned.

Hussein further demonstrates the varying views of the Sinhalese as she reminds readers that while the nation today may be progressing forward as a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist state, not every Sinhalese shares the same sentiments. Arjuna points out that while he was raised as a Buddhist, he does not believe it to be something that is suited for everyone,

“Buddhism is actually a complicated and deep philosophy. It is not for everyone. It cannot be. You need to be on a higher spiritual level to even begin to understand Buddhism...How on earth can a country be a Buddhist country? Well actually it can but it will not be able to survive as part of the global system..”

(110-11)

In questioning the understanding of others where Buddhism is concerned, Arjuna elucidates on the fact that while the government may believe that it is crucial to ensure that Sri Lanka stays as a Buddhist country, this sentiment may not always seem to be a practical reasoning for others. As such, Arjuna becomes a representation of the Sinhalese people who albeit being perceived as the majority, they too feel a sense of discrimination and confinement due to the spreading ideologies thrust upon them.

Hussein presents the creative imaginary as one in which reality and fiction emerges as one unit when she writes of how the 2004 tsunami sweeps across the nation, causing long-lasting and collective traumatic memories for the people regardless of their ethnicity. Deej copes with the loss

of her twin, as he is swept away by the giant waves in Unawatuna. At the same time, the nation mourns the loss of thousands of Sri Lankans. One consolation that Hussein presents in the novel is the fact that despite the ongoing protests and civil unrest, the entire nation comes together to help families in need who have been torn apart by the tsunami.

The Tigers generally see Muslims, who make up about 7 percent of the population as siding with the government. But since the waves struck on Sunday...truckloads of food and clothing have been pouring into the Muslim division from Sinhalese and Tamil areas. The people hope...the tragedy will lead the country to unify. (193)

By revealing this sense of hope, Hussein reminds readers that despite the current state of affairs within the nation, the people of Sri Lanka will always unite where disaster strikes. Similar thoughts are echoed in reality as Sri Lankans, in 2022, regardless of race and religion took to the streets to protest against the ruling government in what was deemed the most “formidable protest in Sri Lankan history” (Chotiner, 2022). This also demonstrates how creative narratives illustrate the idea that regardless of the amendments made to the constitution or the varying changes in policies, the people have time and time again proven that they can set their differences aside, whenever there is a need. In doing this, Hussein manages to challenge and resist the perceptions of a divided nation.

The novel ends on a reconciliatory note, as RaushenGul presents a diamond clustered bracelet given to Khadeeja by her grandmother. Despite Deej’s protests, “It’s not right...this should not come to me...” (236), RaushenGul reminds her the regardless of what Deej may feel, she is a gift to her and the family,

When I brought you home as a little baby, your grandmother didn’t like you...One day when you were about two years old, I came home and found you seated next to her...learning to pray the Sura Fatiha. When I told my mother that I was pregnant for the first time, she was joyous but she also remembered you. *The child has brought the gift of pregnancy...Don’t you forget it!* (236)

The bracelet becomes a symbol of binding Deej to her family, the one she had always known to be hers, despite the sense of betrayal she had felt upon learning of her adoption. Here, Hussein manages to end her novel with the reminder that no matter how one may feel, family does not always have to come in the form of blood relations. In doing so, she yet again reminds readers that while national narratives project a racial divide that is tainted with the trauma and grief faced due to a civil and prejudice of today’s beliefs, the creative imaginary serves to protect the everyday relations that still exist within the nation.

## CONCLUSION

This paper sought out to uncover how the creative imaginary reveals the unraveling of the threads of cultural and religious interactions between various Sri Lankan characters of different ethnic backgrounds. While little effort has been made in terms of national integration, the creative imaginary of both Nayomi Munaweera and Ameena Hussein have created spaces within fiction where different identities are moulded and shaped based on their personal and collective experiences both inside and outside Sri Lanka. The exchanges that take place between spaces of cultural and religious within the Sri Lankan imaginary conclude that though these works may be fiction, they are able to paint a vivid and hopeful future for the ethnic groups of Sri Lanka. The

social relationships practiced by the characters, abandoning societal prejudice and hate offer a resistance towards what public national narratives have dictated. These characters are not only bound by the similarities they share, but also by the differences they are often reminded of. Such Sri Lankan writings are able to shatter the impression that regardless of the political turmoil and propaganda that may be spread, racial unity and peace amidst trauma can survive. In doing so, the works of writers such as Munaweera and Hussein are able to utilise the collective trauma that is endured by the people to be turned into memories that the creative imaginary translates into hope and reconciliation. Both works echo the core elements of the National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence Policy, with the emphasis on reconciliation and coexistence as they succeed at “creating an inclusive society, a sense of belonging, and an environment conducive to the full realization of the potential of every Sri Lankan citizen”, while navigating through the national space, both spaces of the private (*societas*) and public (*universitas*) created within the nation. Ultimately, the discussion reveals that the Sri Lankan identity is one that is not bound by national narratives of the past or policies of the present, but rather by the very elements of everyday experiences to enable them to coexist.

#### REFERENCES

- Anderson, Benedict. (2006). *Imagined Communities*. London, Verso.
- Amarasekera, Jeslyn. and Pillai, Shanthini. (2016). Bound by the Sea: Transnational Sri Lankan Writings and Reconciliation with the Homeland. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*®, 22(1).
- Amarasekera, Jeslyn and Pillai, Shanthini. *Sinhalese Perspectives in Transnational Sri Lankan Literature*. Bangi, UKM Press. 2018.
- Anandakugan, Nithyani, (2020). “The Sri Lankan Civil War and Its History, Revisited in 2020.” *The Harvard International Review*. <https://hir.harvard.edu/sri-lankan-civil-war/>. Accessed 1 March 2021.
- “Bachelet urges restraint, and pathway to dialogue as violence escalates in Sri Lanka” (10 May 2022). *OHCHR*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/bachelet-urges-restraint-and-pathway-dialogue-violence-escalates-sri-lanka>. Accessed 19 August 2022
- Bhabha, Homi. (1990). *Nation and Narration*. New York, Routledge.
- Carey, Sabine C., Gonzalez, B. & Glaßel, C. “Divergent Perceptions of Peace in Post-Conflict Societies: Insights from Sri Lanka”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1-30. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/00220027221104719>.
- Chotiner, Isaac. (2022). “The Hope and Fear of the Sri Lankan Protest Movement” *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/the-hope-and-fear-of-the-sri-lankan-protest-movement>. Accessed 24 August 2022
- De Silva, K.M. (2005). *A History of Sri Lanka*. New Delhi, Penguin Books.
- Eaglestone, Robert. (2020). “Trauma and fiction”. In Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (pp. 287-295). Routledge.
- Feith, David. (2010). “Tamil and Sinhala Relations in Sri Lanka: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective.” *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 22(3), pp. 345–353, 10.1080/14781158.2010.510270.
- “Full Text of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s Speech to Parliament.” *EconomyNext*, 20 Aug. 2020, <https://economynext.com/full-text-of-president-gotabaya-rajapaksas-speech-to-parliament-73220/>. Accessed 20 Sept. 2020.
- Frost, Mark R. (2004). “Cosmopolitan Fragments from a Splintered Isle: Colombo and Ceylonese Nationalism.” *Academia.Edu*, [www.academia.edu/19523836/Cosmopolitan\\_fragments\\_from\\_a\\_splintered\\_isle\\_Colombo\\_and\\_Ceylonese\\_nationalism](http://www.academia.edu/19523836/Cosmopolitan_fragments_from_a_splintered_isle_Colombo_and_Ceylonese_nationalism). Accessed 23 Nov. 2020.
- Grever, M., & van der Vlies, Tina. (2017). Why national narratives are perpetuated: A literature review on new insights from history textbook research. *London Review of Education*. 15(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.15.2.11>
- Gunasekera, Romesh. (2014). *Noontide Toll*. Delhi: Penguin Books.



- Kaplan, Ann E. (2005). *Trauma Culture. The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press.
- Heidemann, B. (2019). The symbolic survival of the “living dead”: Narrating the LTTE female fighter in post-war Sri Lankan women’s writing. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 54(3). pp.384-398.
- Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*.
- Hussein, Ameena. (2017). *The Moon in the Water*. Colombo, Perera Hussein Publishing House.
- Jayasuriya, Maryse & Halpé, Aparna. (2012). Contestation, Marginality, and (Trans)nationalism: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, *South Asian Review*. 33(3), 17-28, DOI: 10.1080/02759527.2012.11932893.
- National Legislative Bodies / National Authorities. (2017). Sri Lanka: National Policy on Reconciliation and Co-Existence (2017), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b44a79b4.html>. Accessed 7 March 2022.
- Newton, Ken.M. (1997). Victor Shklovsky: ‘Art as Technique’. In: Newton, K.M. (eds) *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*. Palgrave, London. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25934-2\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25934-2_1)
- Mukherjee, Payel Chattopadhyay. (2020). Unhomely Home, Unhomely Women: The Precariousness of Being, Belonging, and Becoming in the Sri Lankan Diasporic Fiction of Nayomi Munaweera, *South Asian Review*. DOI: 10.1080/02759527.2020.1827928. Accessed 1 March 2021.
- Munaweera, Nayomi. (2012). *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. Colombo: Perera Hussein Publishing House.
- “Picturing Sri Lanka’s Undead War.” *Crisis Group*, (17 May 2019). [www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/picturing-sri-lankas-undead-war](http://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/picturing-sri-lankas-undead-war). Accessed 5 Apr. 2020.
- Posner, Eric A., Spier, Kathryn.E., Vermeule, Adrian. (2010). “Divide and Conquer.” *Journal of Legal Analysis*, vol. 2(2), pp. 417–471, [academic.oup.com/jla/article/2/2/417/910589](http://academic.oup.com/jla/article/2/2/417/910589), 10.1093/jla/2.2.417.
- Ranasinha, Ruvani. (2016). Resistance and Religion: Gender, Islam and Agency in Kamila Shamsie, Tahmima Anam, Monica Ali and Ameena Hussein. *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women’s Fiction*. 129–174. doi:10.1057/978-1-137-40305-6\_4 Accessed 1 March 2021.
- Salgado, Minoli. (2007). *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance & the Politics of Place*. Routledge.
- Satkunanathan, Ambika. (2020). “Justice in the Time of a Pandemic.” *Groundviews*. [groundviews.org/2020/03/29/justice-in-the-time-of-a-pandemic/](http://groundviews.org/2020/03/29/justice-in-the-time-of-a-pandemic/). Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.
- Satkunanathan, Anita Harris. (2018). Haunts and Specters in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Biafran (Re)visitations, *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 24(4). 185 – 198. <http://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2018-2404-14>
- Selvadurai, Shyam. (2007). *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*. Toronto: Tundra Books.
- “Sri Lanka: Human Rights Gains in Grave Peril.” (14 Jan. 2020). Human Rights Watch. [www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/14/sri-lanka-human-rights-gains-grave-peril](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/14/sri-lanka-human-rights-gains-grave-peril). Accessed 10 Apr.2020.
- “Sri Lanka scraps Tamil national anthem at Independence Day”. (4 February 2020). Al Jazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/4/sri-lanka-scraps-tamil-national-anthem-at-independence-day>. Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Tearne, Roma. (2010). *Brixton Beach*. London: Harper Press.
- Valančiūnas, Deimantas. (2020). “Haunting memories: Sri Lankan civil war, trauma and diaspora in literature and film” *South Asian Diaspora*. DOI: 10.1080/19438192.2020.1767959.