

Eroticism as displayed by romesh gunesekera essay sample

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



To begin with our research on the book “ reef” by Romesh Gunesequera , it is important to understand the concept of eroticism. Eroticism is defined as the quality that arouses sexual desires and the aesthetic philosophical thoughts that accompany it. This quality is normally found in many forms such as art, sculpture, drama, films, literature, paintings, music, advertisement and many other aesthetic forms that arouse the feeling of sex. This paper researches the theme of eroticism as displayed in literature by Romesh in his book “ reef”.

It is a basic fact that hunger and desire can be coiled together and they all constitute arousal, sensuality, and titillation. It is also said that eating and sexuality are very close associates; a chef amplifies passion by playing with the texture. A quote from Luna says that “ Eggplant with the seeds at the back of your throat. Passion fruit on the tip of your tongue, any type of liquid, gelati, coconut. It covers the salivary glands in your mouth. It creates a sensory overload.” Fruit like the one in the Garden of Eden basically became the symbol of pleasure and pain since time, combined with the realities and qualities of sex. Classic cooking recipes are most of the time aphrodisiacal, for example the fesenjoon which is pomegranate stew, groundnuts with chicken. Pomegranate is said to increase genital sensitivity by interfering with blood flow.

Within the book food and the representation of eroticism are expressed as situations of the involvement that exist between consuming and desire.

Triton’s expression of eroticism is dependent on downplaying certain aspects the past while glorifying others. His debut in the book is characterized by him

not having a name but ends up being named “ Triton” by his master Salgado whom he becomes his disciple. Mister Salgado’s first impression to him captivates him (7) in whose voice he recalls his uncle’s speech (7). The melodic intonation of his voice and his house inspires Triton. Earlier in the book Triton triumphantly declares “ we would undergo a revolution” “ Mister Salgado had reversed everything in our world” (41). Triton designs his expression of eroticism in the sense of a revolt within the precincts of the house and the world outside. He places himself in the league of Mister Salgado who believed in designing their own future (24) in whose belief “ there were no boundaries to knowledge”. Triton conceptualizes Mister Salgado as a teacher by asserting “ I watched him unendingly, all the time, and I learned to become what I am” (43). All this brings out eroticism as Triton’s inner being is aroused by Mister Salgado who in this scenario acts as a role model to Triton.

In the book the cooking process, the situations within which food is being consumed and the culinary creations arouses Tritons self awareness, expression and knowledge. At the Christmas dinner party (88), Mister Salgado the host remarks on the vegetarianism of one of his western guests as “ divinely primitive” and his American guest salivates at the very thought of local ladies clad in (wet skin clingers) over the delicious feast placed before him. The presentation and description of food potentially expresses the desire created by the act of food being consumed by a diverse multicultural atmosphere.

Triton's greatest achievement is shown in the text when he prepares turkey to perfection with spices and local ingredients (79) and further expresses his stylistic prowess by decorating the table with " temple flowers and some left over Christmas tinsel". Mister Salgado entertains a mixed crowd of foreign guests and Sri Lankans by telling stories to exit and entertain them. Hearing from the edges, Triton is amazed by the stories. Mister Salgado in his usual style reminds them that Sri Lanka was ones called the Garden of Eden he says " It panders to anyone's chauvinism, you know: Sinhala, Tamil, aboriginal. Choose a religion, pick your fantasy. History is flexible" (85). In this context desire quickly turns to fantasy in the choice and claim in history with no regard to any other form of histories and identities that might exist.

At the same dinner party, Miss Nili who is seated at the central point of the table has become the centre of desire. She is sensationally described into detail by the guests that her ears " curled in like the edge of a puppadum when it hits hot oil" (89) prompting a desire in from Triton to " press the ears back with my hands and keep the entrances to her soul open like the lips of a glazed pink conch" (89). The desire generated by her body perfume that is described as rubbed in " like honey paste to enrich the skin" (89), here we grasp the sensuality of either all of the guests or one of them rushing to get their share of the feast. Both Mister Salgado and Triton and even the American Robert take Miss Nili as their special taste of fantasy, importantly it is afterwards that Triton admits " how little I had seen her really" (156). In the first instance of introduction of Miss Nili into the picture in the book, she is being referred to by the three in terms of food and the quantity she can

take in. Her big appetite threatens Triton when he says “ she is so hungry looking.

I expected her to bulge out as she ate, like a snake swallowing a bird” (64). Eroticism is displayed here by food as it becomes the charge as quoted “ huge chunks of the richest, juiciest love-cake disappeared into her as into a cavern” (64). As Salgado becomes more and more absorbed by Miss Nili, Triton establishes his space in the ensuing bond between the two by fantasizing a routine in his head where by he manages the meetings between his boss and Miss Nili by him preparing food and feeding the two as Miss Nili visits “ It was our little ritual. I would nod, she would smile and he would look longingly” (67). Triton imagines the “ scent from her fingers” whenever he watches Mister Salgado eating the cake left over from Nili (67).

He admits that “ I too sneaked a piece from time to time”. Triton fulfils his desire by sneaking and consuming the cake. This eroticism displayed by food (the cake) allows Triton to satisfy his desire without knowing Nili at personal. The knowledge of her presence is useless in the exchanges made by the two Mister Salgado and Triton through the cake. The cake explores her image making her imaginary. With Miss Nili acting as a mediator between them, the nature of the exchange between the two only displays the sexual tension between them.

Later on in the “ reef”, Triton attributes his responses to the ever growing culture of consumption, as he makes his own delicacy of baked crab where “ deep inside the stuffing I would bury a seeded slice of green chilli steeped in

virgin coconut oil” (120). His is organic and untouched delicacy is different from the produced cuisine of the “ stuffy hotel restaurant” (120) which is starting to show in a country that has just started commercial tourism. In this context food authenticates tourism which then brings out the desire for a necessary cultural image into the commercial attraction of eroticism.

Consumer desire has brought about the knowledge of the fact that authenticity and exotic behavior are interchangeable despite the fact that we have been taught to deny and distrust them at all cost. In this excerpt Mister Salgado expresses how futile are his dreams that failed for both him and Triton,

“ I used to plan it in my head: how I’d build a jetty, a safe marina for little blue glass-bottomed boats, some outriggers with red sails, and then a sort of floating restaurant at one end. You could have produced your finest chili crab there, you know, and the best stuffed sea-cucumbers. Just think of it: a row of silver tureens with red crab-claws in black bean sauce, yellow rice and squid in red wine, a roasted red snapper as big as your arm, shark fin and fried seaweed. It would have been a temple to your gastronomic god, no? I thought of it like a ring, a circular platform with the sea in the middle. We could have farmed for the table and nurtured rare breeds for the wild. A centre to study our pre-history. We could have shown the world something then, something really fabulous. What a waste.” (177).

Mister Salgado’s ultimate vision is a combination of consumption and conservation such that it provides both him and Triton with productive pathways into their history and at the same time offers refuge through which

they can get involved indirectly. Triton instead learns to earn his living in another version. This is shown when he says

“ The nights were long at the Earls Court snack shop with its line of bedraggled, cosmopolitan itinerants. But they were the people I had to attend to: my future. My life would become a dream of musky hair, smoky bars and garish neon eyes. I would learn to talk and joke and entertain, to perfect the swagger of one who has found his vocation and, at last, a place to call his own. The snack shop would one day turn into a restaurant and I into a restaurateur. It was the only way I would succeed: without a past, without a name, without Ranjan Salgado standing by my side.”(180).

According to Triton life without past claims is a means of survival in the present. From this is gains knowledge of how to incorporate and become nameless in the cosmopolitan setup of the city. Cosmopolitan setup dictates one to assume a certain defined identity for him or her to find favor and a sense of collectiveness in the society. Again in this case there is the desire for a sense of belonging. The change from his organic cuisine creations and Salgado’s dream to urbanization needs consumerization and dilution of identities augmented by a sense of history that was imagined at youth. Triton accepts his immigrant self by saying

“ I was learning that human history is always a story of somebody’s diaspora: a struggle between those who expel, repel or curtail – possess, divide and rule – and those who keep the flame alive from night to night, mouth to mouth, enlarging the world with each flick of a tongue.” (174).

The future indeed requires fresh models of habitation and connection as a vital part of survival in the world. Globalization is made within the personal and local interrelations, which make up human history and alter an individual's identity. Gunesequera has used potential images of food in his book to hint eroticism yet he plays with these indicators to show that more reliance on identity through adaptation by allowing contrasting food flavors to mix and produce fresh ones.

References

Jazeel, T. " Unpicking Sri Lankan ' island-ness' in Romesh Gunesequera's Reef." *Journal of Historical Geography* 29. 4 (2003): 582-598. Print

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/reef.html>

Island Paradise (p. 111 and on) [http://books.google.com/books?id=ekloez5XPSwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=](http://books.google.com/books?id=ekloez5XPSwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=island+paradise+and+gunesequera&hl=en&sa=X&ei=_kajUv2nGlj_qgHOq4CgCg&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%20gunesequera&f=false)

[island+paradise+and+gunesequera&hl=en&sa=X&ei=](http://books.google.com/books?id=ekloez5XPSwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=island+paradise+and+gunesequera&hl=en&sa=X&ei=_kajUv2nGlj_qgHOq4CgCg&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%20gunesequera&f=false)

[_kajUv2nGlj_qgHOq4CgCg&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=](http://books.google.com/books?id=ekloez5XPSwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=island+paradise+and+gunesequera&hl=en&sa=X&ei=_kajUv2nGlj_qgHOq4CgCg&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%20gunesequera&f=false)

[%20gunesequera&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ekloez5XPSwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=island+paradise+and+gunesequera&hl=en&sa=X&ei=_kajUv2nGlj_qgHOq4CgCg&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%20gunesequera&f=false)

" Consuming Desire" <http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/reef.html>