

---

## REASONS FOR VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF R. K. NARAYAN'S "ANOTHER COMMUNITY"

CRUZ BONILLA  
Universidad de Granada  
[cruzbonilla15@gmail.com](mailto:cruzbonilla15@gmail.com)

Received: 31-08-2015

Accepted: 30-09-2015



### ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding its fictional character and its year of publication, 1956, "Another Community" is a modern critique of communal violence. This short story shows Narayan's concern with the immediate consequences of a divided Indian society on religious grounds. His communal subjects are shaped according to the ideological purpose of the group. Based on exclusion and rivalry, this reflected identity stimulates communal antagonisms that revolve around ideas of nationhood and otherness. The protagonist's savage murder becomes the excuse for violence in the hands of local politicians. The author's intentionality avoids taking side with his protagonist who does not escape the communal duality of the Self and the Other; the rational and the irrational sides of a fake hero.

**KEYWORDS:** postcolonialism; Indian literature; R.K. Narayan; communal violence

**RESUMEN** *Razones para la violencia: un estudio de "Another Community" de R.K. Narayan*

A pesar de su carácter ficticio y del año de su publicación, 1956, "Another Community" es una crítica vigente sobre la violencia sectaria. En este relato corto, Narayan muestra su inquietud sobre las consecuencias inmediatas de tener una sociedad india dividida en espacios religiosos. Los sujetos de estas comunidades están configurados de acuerdo al propósito ideológico del grupo. Basada en exclusión y rivalidad, esta identidad remedada estimula los antagonismos sectarios que se desarrollan alrededor de ideas sobre nacionalidad y otredad. El salvaje asesinato del protagonista se convierte en la excusa para la violencia en manos de políticos locales. La intencionalidad del autor evita tomar partido a favor de su protagonista, quién no escapa de la dualidad comunal del Ser y del Otro; los aspectos racionales e irracionales de un héroe fallido.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** postcolonialismo; literatura india; R.K. Narayan; violencia sectaria

The question of *communalism* is a specifically Indian issue intimately connected to ethnic groups and political opportunism, which has a ripple effect and reverberates throughout the world. "Another Community" is one of the very few stories in which Narayan addresses an all-pervading, contemporary Indian conflict, communal violence.

It appeared in the collection *Lawley Road and Other Stories* published in 1956. Narratively speaking, Narayan seems to glide over the major crisis of the 1947 Partition of India. However, a careful analysis of the short story reveals the trauma that the event inflicted on the author's intellect, and the critical attitude he takes towards violence. A close examination of the short story and India's modern historicity allows the reader to associate Narayan's narrative and his deep attachment to his country with clear allusions to Gandhi, linguistically condensed in the narrator's words when, for example, he states that "a good action in a far off place did not find a corresponding echo, but an evil one did possess that power" (Narayan, 1956: 150). This is relevant to an understanding of Narayan's text because it repackages Gandhi's concept of passive resistance as Dharma: the Gandhian translation of Dharma as the duty to exercise nationalist opposition against colonialism and foreign influences, therefore, accentuated the divide in "the body politic" (Guha, 1997: 36).

My purpose is to show how the holistic interpretation of Dharma, as duty or moral virtue, differed from one social group to another, and this acted as a disintegrative agent, enhancing caste and religious divisions, thus "ranging the rural gentry against the peasantry, upper castes against Namasudras, and above all Hindus and Muslims against each other" (Guha, 1997: 36). This sensitive issue that the Hindu Dharma specifically presents forces a moral interrogation of the modern intellectual stance, which is influenced by religious beliefs, and demands an ethical attitude from those who hold responsibilities towards their community, as in Narayan's case. Treading carefully on contemporary politics, the author's self-effacing voice resembles the Gandhian soul-force – *Satyagraha* – in a piece of writing that is inspired by communal riots. The text also reproduces stereotyped indexes from colonial and postcolonial Gothic literature that approximate communal violence to a western literary representation. The protagonist conveys some 'civilised' characteristics that describe him as a suspicious *Other* within his own group, as he carries the westernised alterity of the *babu*.

My study of this short story shows three essential aspects which cannot be glossed over: firstly, it will be clear that the perception of communalism and communal violence depends on the area or geographical region involved and its diachronic development; secondly, that communalism affects the social conditions of people, which manifest themselves differently in rural and urban societies; thirdly, that

communalism presents a complex social fabric that cannot simply be rationalised from the perspective of a religious community or as a modern social phenomenon.

I will focus on how Narayan manipulates contexts and words in such a way that the reader's perception is led to a linguistic domain where a cross-examination of essential questions seems to be absent, and where the text thus avoids making a conspicuous political judgment. Roger Fowler describes as "a *practice*" of language (1996: 54) the situation present in this text, where language becomes the place for debate and negotiation. This analysis reveals the "artificiality" of Narayan's discourse and the ideological encoding that lies beneath. I will then proceed with the scrutiny of his text that uncovers Narayan's role as a creative thinker acting as a critic who exposes a problem with no easy solution. As the origin of communal violence derives from mythic interpretations of social realities, its magnitude cannot be constrained within a theoretical framework, nor can any temporary agreement be considered the definitive solution. Neither can an essential aspect of communal violence be overlooked, that which describes the particular relationship between the subject and the group influenced by the moral principles of Dharma.

Thus, at the beginning of the story, Narayan's narrator advances the following information: "I am not going to mention caste or community in this story" (1956: 150) and it is precisely in denying these conflictive categories that the author establishes the scope and parameters of the thematic structure of his narrative. Fowler calls this process one of "*uncoding* – disestablishing the received tie between a sign and a cultural unit" (1996: 55). This sort of deconstructive process is relevant here because using the device allows Narayan to set the tone of a deceptively apolitical short story, which is suitable for a wide audience of the most diverse ideologies, without falling into an unreliable thematic narrative. Likewise, this narrative artefact allows the author to handle, almost incidentally, an Indian conflict of primary importance which remains unresolved and which in actual fact seems to grow worse rather than better.

Considering the viewpoint of Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, the central argument of my analysis is that Narayan's choice of a nameless Indian town as the setting of the story must be understood as a narrative strategy with universal implications: the place operates as embodying a "coextensive" geography, which ultimately represents the "generic sovereignty of the country" (1993: 95). Thus, this generic, nondescript town becomes

the representation of other towns and states with similar communal terms and specific communal interests. Logically, this coextensive geography leads us to a conclusion that throws light on part of Narayan's plot: if the state-formation revolves around this coextensive epicentre, any local crisis might provoke a sudden spread of violence without any apparent reason that will lead to a centrifugal movement, causing a domino effect throughout the entire region and, eventually, the whole country. This is precisely what happens in Narayan's short story.

The protagonist naturally bears the submissive condition of a willing servitude, *vātsalya*, which is of the same filial hierarchy as a child's towards its parents. "Another Community" narrates the last days of a man's ordinary, uneventful life, his thoughts and feelings shaken by the communal violence that exploded in the aftermath of India's Independence and Partition. The omniscient narrator describes him as a propitious sacrificial victim subdued both by his community and by his own fears that exercise a petrifying effect on him. Unable to overcome his mechanic behaviour, this paralysis signals him as a perfect recipient of the mob's violence. Unwittingly, he lets himself be killed, and his death ignites the town's communal uprisings. Meanwhile, the history of India is far from being paralysed. In fact, the narration serves to depict a backdrop to a crucial moment in the country's collective memory after Partition: India takes over the princely states of Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947, which is an issue beyond this paper's scope.

In short, the *Other* represents the enemy's community. Narayan makes use of rhetorical tropes from horror literature to portray the people's anguishes, fears and oppression. The story shows how the masses are easily controlled and manoeuvred by communal violence and opportunistic politicians who take advantage of a chaotic situation to maximize their profits and occasionally instigate the riots, as the hypermasculine uncle, commander-in-chief of the protagonist's family and religious community. The narrative structure leads to a multiplicity of interpretations according to the communal reading. My conclusion is that evidences and testimonies are subject to ideological translations that heavily rely on, and emanate from, the victorious party and whose judgements can vary due to their relative and contradictory natures. According to Amartia Sen, one of the social simulacra lies in the reduction of identity to a religious or a political affiliation (*Identity and Violence* xv); the person's social value is therefore determined by religion or culture. The subject is then metonymically associated with the

group that monopolises any individual value or personal choice and shapes the minds of its members in tune with the collective ideology. Thus, the group steps into the place of the individual, who in turn suffers holistic misrepresentation from rival affiliations.

Often, these ideological constructions of communal antagonism depart from the politics of divide and rule that open up spaces for political and religious contestations, which, in this particular case, strive for a nationalist supremacy. This is the expression of a break-up of the “civilizational unity” that begins with a discourse of anticolonial nationalism and ends up destroying the “civic ethos” that holds any plural community together (Ahmad, 1992: 119). These phenomena give way to radical expressions of nationalism and internal struggles among different social strata that, in India’s case, have remained unresolved. They constitute one of the major problems faced by the modern Indian state, as religious minorities deny the right of the government “to interfere in their religious affairs”, arguing that it is against the “freedom of religion” principle (Chatterjee, 1994: 1,772), guaranteed by India’s Constitution.

In modern politics, the syncretic origin of the idea of India is a relevant element since it has been challenged by the power of religious electorates which, according to Aparna B. Dharwadker, “have tended to deconstruct the nation back into its principal ethnoreligious components, represented most strongly by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism” (2005: 170). In my opinion, this situation implies that the politics of discord continue steadily and systematically. It describes a nationalist determination towards the implementation of a communal discourse upon the project of a secular nation and secular politics under the auspices of Dharma.

Against this background, Narayan writes this short story from a temporal detachment. The country has been partitioned and the notion of the “stranger” has been bounced from the English colonialists to the Muslims, who now embody the *Other*. They are the enemy subjects according to a racial divide. Narratively speaking, Narayan constructs a syntagmatic duality that defamiliarises the reader from the historical background of the Independence and the Partition periods. The public sphere is controlled by the commanding leadership of the media as the narrator informs the readers: “The newspapers of recent months have given us a tip which is handy – namely the designation: ‘One Community’ and ‘Another Community’” (1956: 150). Narayan’s hero has no name but the narrator invites the reader to participate in the reconstruction of the experience of his last days. The omniscient narrator uses a literary strategy that

gives the reader an active role while he structures the “writing of Otherness” directly addressing the reader: “I want you to find out, if you like, to what community or section he belonged” (1956: 150); accordingly, he forces the reader to participate in an unconscious dynamic of identifying the *I* with the rational, and the *Other* with the irrational madness of communal violence.

In short, this typical postcolonial description of the *Other* as an alien subject that brings anxiety to the group contrasts with Narayan’s hero, who presents certain Hindu characteristics of the *satvic* type: his intimate self feels the need to follow his Dharma, which is a profound sense of personal duty that exposes a docile public facade behind which there is a tortured inner world. The protagonist then feels righteous in his own way and holds onto “a peaceful, happy life” (1956: 150). However, a major characteristic of Dharma is its representation of a socio-political order that, in the short story’s context, is used by the communal leaders to relate to their subordinates “as nonantagonistically as possible” (Guha, 1997: 34). Following this efficient way of leadership, the subordinates willingly accept their position in the caste hierarchy as both a moral obligation and a universal order. Indeed, the author has quietly affiliated his hero with an ethnic group defined by Max Weber as the “chosen people”, implying that there exist people who can compare themselves to him on equal terms according to an established “differentiation translated into the plane of horizontal co-existence” (1968: 391).

Narayan’s hero possesses what Peter van der Veer calls a “hyphenated identity”, which is also a composite made of *tamasic* characteristics: he carries within himself the passive, neglected being of a communal member who is submitted to the dictates of his group’s ideology. These dictates are consubstantial with the caste system and complete the dual condition of Dharma: the protagonist’s subordination to the group’s authority is rewarded with its protection, support and social promotion (Guha, 1997: 35). Dwelling on the liminal space of abstraction, the group’s negotiation of its religious politics widens a space for representation and jurisdiction that forces the removal of alien elements that live nearby (Veer, 2004: 7). Under these circumstances, the narrator informs us that “[n]ow when [the protagonist] heard his men talk menacingly, he visualized his post office friend being hacked in the street” (Narayan, 1956: 151).

According to Kapileswar Parija, “Another Community” is “a moving story of a martyr at the blood altar of communal blood-bath, one of the rare stories of Narayan

with a topical theme” (2006: 12). Parija though fails to explain what, in his opinion, is meant by a “topical theme”. Is it topical because communal violence happens with some frequency in India and remains unresolved? Or is it because Partition and gang crimes are historical and endemic Indian topics which Indian people have grown used to suffering? May it also be a topical theme because of the super-abundance of literary and artistic expressions on communal violence?

In my opinion, art has proved its influence as a healer in traumatic experiences: in the first stages, there is a peremptory necessity to forget and release the social memory from its burden. Then, as time acts with curative efficiency, there grows the necessity to understand and question the reasons why it all happened. I maintain that Narayan’s text is imbued with a modern literary perspective that creates contextual structures that attend to a need to convey meanings for *different* cultural backgrounds. However, it is also filled with techniques derived from the oral and storytelling traditions that require some cultural translations before they are written down and these transformations do not always succeed in breaching this specific cultural gap. In my view, the “topical theme”, as Parija describes this story’s violence, responds to an authorial ideology and its intentionality that lie within every short fictional narrative whose translation *differs* – it may be *differing* or distinct – from English to Indian readers. I contend therefore that Narayan’s writings are prejudiced, which does not necessarily imply a negative assessment, but that they are *marked* by the author’s cultural consciousness. Accordingly, Narayan’s hearsay style initially continues with a story formula that is typically Indian, as confirmed by an opening that makes the communal conflict conspicuous precisely because the narrator denies any allusion to “caste or community” (1956: 150).

As the story develops, the main character is depicted as a white-collar worker, a *babu*. The description corresponds to someone who in principle would not favour any kind of revolt, change or act of violence, but who would take no action to prevent these from happening either. This description of the character is compatible with a modern, English-educated, middle-class Indian citizen who is, therefore, marked with the signs of Otherness from an ultranationalist perspective. The text describes both the beginning of the “collective persecutions” that made “the loss of social order” evident, and the proliferation of chaos brought about “by the disappearance of the rules” (Girard, 1986:

12): “Our friend saw the tempers of his neighbours rising as they read the newspaper each day”, writes the narrator early in the story (Narayan, 1956: 151).

Violence escalates fast as a means of securing the bonds of national belonging. The abusive behaviour becomes a uniform reality or what René Girard calls a “negative reciprocity”. The destructive (re)actions share the same patterns of aggression with the opposite party (Girard, 1986: 13). I then deduce that there is a desire for violence and pride in its exhibition, and whose discourses revolve around ideas of patriotism and nationhood: “‘We must smash them who are here—,’ he heard people say” (Narayan, 1956: 151). The educated middle class, therefore, reproduced the colonial perception of an Indian dark side through expressions of race, caste and religion as Dharmic traditions. This rise of political genuineness exacerbated the same national feelings that caused the outsiders or non-participants to suffer violent exclusion from the group, an exclusion imposed through sheer force. In Weber’s opinion, a “racial identity” with a number of inherited features and a shared history is necessary to create a racial group with any identifiable characteristic that is “subjectively perceived as a common trait” (1968: 385). When this cultural identification happens, those perceived as “racially different” and who share the same geographical space become the target “of joint (mostly political) action”; likewise, when members of the same race suffer “common experiences” that predispose them against the members of an antagonistic group, the result is negative social action towards “those who are obviously different. [They] are avoided and despised or, conversely, viewed with superstitious awe” (Weber, 1968: 385). I affirm that Narayan’s narrator uses a synecdochic device that attributes human qualities to natural elements, highlighting the uncontrollable nature of the social unconscious and the dangers that this carries within, while avoiding full revelation of the terrible substance of communal violence. The portrayal reads as follows: “the air was surcharged with fear and suspicion” (Narayan, 1956: 152).

“Another Community” describes the protagonist’s consciousness about the mental artifice created by these opportunistic persecutors who have fabricated a “type of illusion” triggered by violent actions where the commanding event is the persecution itself (Girard, 1986: 11). Nevertheless, he fails to move beyond thought itself and take action, which confirms his subaltern condition inside the group; he only manages to express his emotions in a conventional way “by telling his fellowmen: You see... but

such things will not happen here. But he knew it was wishful thinking. He knew his men were collecting knives and sticks” (Narayan, 1956: 151).

In my opinion, the narrator succeeds in representing a conciliatory process of thinking that reflects the hero’s Dharmic essentials. Yet, as the narrative advances, his integrative desires acquire a greater sense of abstraction in such a way that they become closer to the discourses of nationalism. Therefore, Narayan’s subtle irony constructs a protagonist who belongs to the community; he receives support and security from the communal group and in return for their favours, he must submit himself to the group’s strategies while, simultaneously, he sacrifices his portion of individual subjectivity for the group’s sake. According to this narrative strategy, Narayan thus creates two subliminal worlds where the imagined politics of nationalism stand for the real – a desired communal violence – and the particular foundations of the individual signify the utopian – *ahimsa*, the Gandhian ideal of nonviolence.

For reasons mentioned above, the subverted scale of moral values becomes a fertile soil for the rise of all kind of persecutors who find causes that barely need to be imagined to justify their violence. These violent agents elevate themselves to the category of judges who are in need of guilty victims. According to Girard, the persecutors’ “certainty of being right encourages them to hide nothing of their massacres” (1986: 6). The most brutal violence thus is unleashed on women who become the site of struggle for nationalistic purposes. It is highly significant that women are responsible for the family and the community’s honour, and therefore they receive, together with the children, the worst treatment of all from both communities. This is probably the most outrageous way of playing a significant part in the nationalist equation. Because men and women are perceived as an indivisible whole, the Indian woman is defined as a portion of the man and his family. Likewise, power relations of dominance and exploitation will determine her status within the communal family as a whole. This patriarchal organisation explains why men and women possess “*different already* constituted categories of experience, cognition, and interests as *groups*” that transmit “a simplistic dichotomy” of the whole population (Mohanty et al., 1991: 70). Carrying the figurative value of the community’s honour in a male-dominant world, the abuses suffered by women and girls during these violent periods imply not only the trauma of their experiences but their social exclusion. They are marked as the *Other*, the polluted soil, which then becomes the fertile ground for violent retaliations (Kumar,

2004: 77). The narrator describes this socio-political situation through the comments overheard by the protagonist: “‘They don’t spare even women and children!’ he heard them cry. ‘All right, we will teach those fellows a lesson. We will do the same thing for them here – that is the language they will understand –’” (Narayan, 1956: 151). Ideological constructions and the politics of an imagined community determine the bases for agreements and conflicts under these exceptional situations or, as Mohanty et al. argue, they constitute “the political links [that] we choose to make among and between struggles” (1991: 4).

Sociologically speaking, virulence aims at producing a primitive fear that grants power to those who wield it, and here, the protagonist develops a paranoid pattern of thought, encouraged by his surroundings, that demonstrates his susceptibility to that fear. The narrator notices that “[e]veryone seemed to him a potential assassin. People looked at each other as cannibals would at their prey” (1956: 151-152). The notion of danger is perceived first in the people’s language, and secondly in the individual mind, now poisoned by frenzied rumours that transform the protagonist’s appeasing Dharma. So, the narrator informs us that “now he saw them in a new light: they were of another community” (1956: 151). Moreover, rites and sites for religious practices also grow into emblematic possessions that must be defended and avenged in the local streets that have become communal targets: whoever occupies the streets holds the power. “Someone or other constantly reported: ‘You know what happened? A cyclist was stabbed in — street last evening’” (1956: 152).

In fact, Narayan dwells on the general disgrace that is magnified by the absence of “law and order” and the unreliability of the police forces who are supposed to protect the citizens, as the short story portrays through the people’s gossip: “Of course the police are hushing up the whole business” (1956: 152). No longer were they the neutral forces who could be counted on for protection. The division had also split them into communal factions where separate contingents only felt safe if they were shielded by their own community’s armies and in case of doubt they trusted no one. As a consequence of this failure of the state to provide protection, political agitators pour out of the patriarchal family as the only remedy against aggression. Family ties are very demanding; they are prior to the subject’s insertion in community relationships. The communal group puts first and foremost the Gandhian ideology inspired in the concept

of Dharma, which has the effect of securing its communal/nationalist superiority (Guha, 1997: 38).

In the protagonist's family, there exists a false sense of security that cancels out any pretension of innocence and makes the protagonist's wife exclaim when asked about the mobs: "No one is afraid. As long as your uncle is near at hand, we have no fear—" (1956: 153). In relation to communal violence, Sen defines all of the above mental processes taken together as a "vicious mode of thinking" which "managed to persuade many otherwise peaceable people of both communities to turn into dedicated thugs" (Sen, 2006: 172). Indeed, the nature of communal violence obliterates non-communal or secular ideologies, which are seen as part of the enemy's polluted being and as threats against the group's ideological purity.

However, this story reflects Narayan's particular conception of Otherness as a secondary issue waiting to be assimilated by Indian society under the symbolic aesthetic of the Gothic literary tradition (Khair, 2009: 4). The genre also lends the literary symbols of a colonial past to a postcolonial reality, reproducing the power struggles, excesses and political ambiguity of Gothic literature in the context of war between rival communities. Consequently, Narayan simultaneously elicits a response to his rhetorical questions without straying from his non-political stance and while essentially preserving the text's local colour and Indian character.

I contend that Narayan renders a postcolonial leitmotif which depicts the *Other* as a usurper and potentially destructive towards the world that is known as democratic India. This negative *Other* represents religious superstition and the irrational fear of being contaminated by its forceful proximity, even if, ironically, the rejection of this evil *Other* generates the same violent dialectic in every party involved.

Furthermore, socio-economic limitations strongly determine an almost inevitable condition of victimhood: the poorest members of society lived in houses described by Sen as "shelters that can be easily penetrated and ravaged by gangs" (2006: 173). This reality is fictionalised in Narayan's story. Taking the edge off the analysis' account and omitting the fact that there is nothing this family can effectively do to defend themselves if they are assaulted, the narrator also suggests a feeble defence, when in the following way, the protagonist "secretly resolve[s] that he'd fetch the wood-chopper from the fuel room and keep it near at hand in case he had to defend his home" (Narayan, 1956: 152). Narayan's fictional world seems to comply with Sen's

theory of an existing “tyranny of conformism that may make it difficult for members of a community to opt for other styles of living” (2006: 117). This conformism affects the whole community as well as the individual. It is important to notice that Narayan portrays, through a subtle irony tinged with sadness, how the primary character’s viewpoint mirrors the other community’s posture, since both adopt the same discourses of victimhood versus retaliation.

It is not enough that the *Others* integrate in the surroundings of the community; their “irreducible presence of otherness” must be removed because their alterity is recognised as an independent agency which is “potentially, terrifying” (Khair, 2009: 173). Thus the uncle and his men decide to “clean up th[e] town” from “those [who] hold secret assemblies almost every night” (Narayan, 1956: 153). This communal stance attributes the “cause of terror” to the *Others* who organise themselves, in the same way they do, and yet are beyond their control; hence, they seek the physical elimination of these *Others*, thus fulfilling the typical characteristic of a “colonial Gothic/ised text” (Khair, 2009: 173) of fear of the unknown that is in every narrative space.

The narrative devices that spread the violent infection are precisely those that belong to oral tradition: rumours, gossip, half-veiled hints, hearsay, vague assumptions, suggestions and remarks taken at face value. “He often wondered amidst the general misery of all this speculation how will they set off the spark”, informs the narrator (Narayan, 1956: 153). Narayan chooses a historical moment of general crisis – from East to West – to portray, as Bhabha writes, “the subject’s lack of priority (castration)” (1984: 131), which the writer considers a genuine and active menace to individual and social freedom. Thus, Narayan causes his narration to deviate “from the expected cultural context” (Fowler, 1996: 115) – represented by the communal violence which spread as a side effect of the first Indo-Pakistani war – not so much in order to question the subject or the system’s responsibility in general, as to recreate a closer illustration of Indian sociology in particular: the helplessness and fallibility of individuals connected by a cultural historicity that reproduces the “[c]ommon language and the ritual regulation of life” associated with an “ethnic affinity” (Weber, 1968: 390).

In Narayan’s text, the protagonist and his uncle embody two political stances that are shaded with the colours of Dharma: the moderate democratic discourse of secularism, on the one hand, and the exalted populist discourse of orthodox Hindu nationalism on the other. The protagonist talks about “the idiocy of the whole

relationship”, while his uncle’s preferred course of action is to “cut each other’s throats” (1956: 155).

On the announced day, October 29th, the protagonist goes to work against his wife’s wishes. The hidden reason is that he finds “at the office” a place where he will not “waste” his time as his colleagues do, “discussing the frightful possibilities of the day” (1956: 154). He needs the “deadening effect [of figures] on his mind” to escape from hatred and the sound of it that comes from his communal surroundings. As I have previously mentioned, he lives the Gandhian ideal of nonviolence and “fe[els] all right as long as it last[s]”, but as soon as he sets foot on the street, the peaceful mirage vanishes from sight and “a feverish anxiety about reaching home” (1956: 154) preys on his mind. Suddenly, he feels that the limits between his positive Self and the negative *Other* have disappeared and the theoretical menace has grown into a dreadful certainty.

Derrida’s argument in *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony* posits that literature allows the writer to fabricate a testimony that seems to be real but in fact contains some elements of “fiction, simulation or simulacra” that confer a testimonial condition on the character that is similar to that of an authentic witness (1996: 29). As the plot reproduces Gothic indexes as well as the panicked unconscious of the Indian subjects threatened by this communal frenzy, the protagonist’s “fevered mind” thinks of hardly any place but the one where he feels secure, that is no other than the realm of his joint family, near his uncle.

Since his single desire is “to reach home in the shortest time possible” (Narayan, 1956: 154), he blindly chooses a route that goes across the *Others’* communal ground. The hero thus symbolically enters the forbidden limit of the evil *Other*. The menacing Gothic elements invade the narration now that “it [is] past seven thirty” and he imagines his family “feel[ing] anxious” because of his delay (1956: 154). As if conducted by an invisible bloodthirsty hand, the protagonist comes across a cyclist in the dark path, the two passers-by misjudging “each other’s moves”. He loses his nerve when the cyclist accidentally runs “his wheel between our friend’s legs and [falls] off the saddle, and both [find] themselves on the road-dust” (1956: 154) and at this moment, he stops being simply a witness to become the crucial agent of a fictionalised history: he is now a testimonial piece of the exposure to violence, and the two men resort to a fight where they hit and kick at each other, blindly possessed by Goddess Kali’s desire of blood.

Inevitably, a gathering crowd surrounds the fighters, among which are some of these professional instigators, shouting: “He dares to attack us in our own place! Must teach these fellows a lesson. Do you think we are afraid?” (1956: 155). These words mark the protagonist’s physical end. He then transmutes into a hero through his martyrdom, reflected in the Gandhian echoes of his conciliatory thoughts: “What is it all worth? There is no such thing as your community or mine. We are all of this country” (1956: 155).

According to Derrida, a pure testimony is that which remains secret inside the experiencer. The hero’s is a secret testimony whereby “no one can, in [his] place testify what [he] do[es]” because he is attesting to his own and the *Other*’s pain from his unique point of view. In Derrida’s opinion, the testimony “remains reserved for [him]. [He] must be able to keep secret precisely what [he] testif[ies] to” (1996: 30). At the moment that the character’s experience is voiced “within a couple of hours all over the city” (Narayan, 1956: 155), he stops providing testimony and becomes a certainty, a piece of physical evidence confirmed by an “empirical proof”, his corpse abandoned in a gutter. He is the “sacrificeable” victim that triggers the communal desire for blood and racial cleansing.

However, Narayan places an ambiguous semiotic element in the hero’s breast pocket, as he is a dubious, “impure” hero with a paradigmatic translation. To his community, he is the excuse for retaliation and an unquestionable martyr, savagely murdered by the community of the *Others*. Nevertheless, for the *Others*’ community, the “kerosene ration coupon” in his pocket lays the suspicion on the victim himself because of the reciprocal phenomenon of distrust; consequently, they view him as “a potential assassin” (1956: 150). The text omits that, after Partition, gasoline was short and strictly rationed by India and Pakistan’s governments, though it was plentifully supplied to the raiders who used it to burn people and properties.

Although the omniscient narrator ironically adds that “[h]ad he been able to speak again, our friend would have spoken a lie and saved the city, but unfortunately this saving lie was not uttered” (1956: 155), it seems that not even the author can save the failed hero; indeed, he treats him as a *fake* hero. His narrative explains the protagonist’s last mental process, which definitively places him within the idiom of Hindu Dharma: if he had opposed violence and favoured people’s equality and a peaceful country, he would have acted accordingly when he was given a chance. Then,

why did he remain passive and communalist? If he knew the lies that could have saved the city, why did he remain silent? It appears that Narayan's critique is also directed against this character, both a victim and an anti-hero whose example should not be followed, as it supports exclusive aspects of Hindu Dharma from a nationalist elite that has succeeded in dividing the nation into communal compartments.

The answer to the questions is that the narrator, in fact, avoids dwelling upon the depiction of the appalling cruelty of the slaughter and instead of choosing it for the climax of the story, he moves into a discursive reflection on the futility of an ordinary man's death. His belated clairvoyance, which will be of no avail, transfigures the protagonist into a useless martyr for no good cause and simultaneously converts the story into a parable on the absurdity of violence. He becomes another mute victim, a voiceless testimony, a corpse adding to the numbers of human casualties; his body will become the empty sign which each of the communities will fill in with a different political message, either a sacrificial victim whose death must be avenged or another war trophy of an endless rivalry.

To conclude, the nature of the short story "Another Community" reduces the perception of alterity in communal societies. It diverts the attention of the reader away from Indian civil society and directs it towards sporadic outbursts of ferocious violence, while overlooking individual relationships between the members of the community, tiptoeing around the tightly hierarchized social system that begins in the joint family and extends to take in the traditional caste system, economic class groups and ethnic differentiations that constitute the basics of Dharma. Nevertheless, the protagonist wishes to bridge the limits of Otherness in order to reduce its menacing effects, while he would like to integrate, or at least try to minimise, the irreducible alterity that separates the two communities. He fails to understand, however, the nature of communal violence and the artifices that sustain it, which are essentially the struggles against the assimilation of the *Other* into one single national body and the experience of a unique communion through a hierarchized relationship of power. Ironically though, Narayan's artistic approach to communal violence reproduces the simplistic political discourses on the present phenomenon of religious violence that keep appearing in the daily news.

**WORKS CITED**

- AHMAD, AIJAZ (1992). *In Theory. Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1994.
- BHABHA, HOMI K. (1984). "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", *October* 28, Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis. Spring: 125-133. DOI: 10.2307/778467.
- CHATTERJEE, PARTHA (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- CHATTERJEE, PARTHA (1994). "Secularism and Toleration." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29.28: 1768-1777.
- DERRIDA, JACQUES (1996). "Demeure: Fiction and Testimony." Blanchot, Maurice. *The Instant of My Death*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000: 15-103.
- DHARWADKER, APARNA BHARGAVA (2005). *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- FOWLER, ROGER (1996). *Linguistic Criticism*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- GIRARD, RENÉ (1986.) *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore, MD, USA: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- GUHA, RANAJIT (1997). *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- KHAIR, TABISH (2009). *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- KUMAR, SUKRITA PAUL (2004). *Narrating Partition. Texts, Interpretations, Ideas*. New Delhi: Indialog Publications.
- MOHANTY, CHANDRA et al. eds. (1991). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- NARAYAN, R. K. (1956). "Another Community". *Lawley Road and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1967.
- PARIJA, KAPILESWAR (2006). "Short Stories of R.K. Narayan: An Evaluation", in Khatri, Chhote Lal. *Narayan: Reflections and Re-evaluation*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.
- SEN, AMARTIA (2006). *Identity and Violence*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

VEER, PETER VAN DER (2004). "Transnational Religion; Hindu and Muslim Movements." *Journal for the Studies of Religions and Ideologies* 3.7. DOI: 10.1111/1471-0374.00030.

WEBER, MAX (1968). *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans. E. Fishcoff, et al. Vol. I-II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

CRUZ BONILLA is Doctor Cum Laude (2015), MA in English Literature and Linguistics (2011) from the Universidad de Granada and she holds a degree in English Philology from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Open University). Her main research interests are focused on Indian postcolonial literature, in particular, the Hindu-Anglian literature of R. K. Narayan. Her studies are concerned with the representation of Indian literature in the western world.