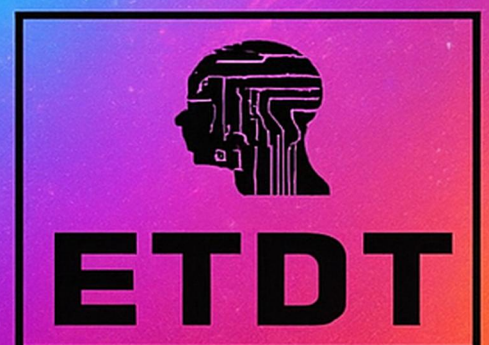


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MAGIC BUTTON OR DISASTER BUTTON AT THE BACK DROP OF SURVIVAL AND ASSIMULATION IN RICHARD MATHESON'S BUTTON BUTTON AND SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN'S ONLY BUTTON

Dr.D.Sailakshmi & Dr.C.Lakshminarayana

**Associate Professor, Dept. of Basic Sciences & Humanities, SVTM(Autonomous),
Angallu,dandu26@gmail.com, 9959808868**

**Associate Professor, Dept. of Basic Sciences & Humanities, SRIT(Autonomous)
Rotarayapuram Village, BKS Mandal, Anantapur, lakshmin39@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT: Shauna Singh Baldwin, an internationally praised, award winning novelist is an Indo-Canadian diaspora writer who belongs to the Second Generation diaspora writers of SouthEast, mixed of three cultures: India, Canada and America, Baldwin writes from the perspective of these three cultures. Darwin's law of survival of the fittest continues to the modern age. The concept of globalization created a peculiar form of scattered lives which challenges the home land and foreign land. Displacement forces the process of assimilation and adaptability. It is an inevitable process. Richard Matheson is popularly known for his science fiction. Matheson's short story "Button Button" is a fine example of his exceptional quality of work. The story consists of real ideas of one's life; those who see it or read it get involved with characters. The present paper explores the symbol is m and narrative techniques in these two stories "Only a Button " and "Button Button". Only a Button is a story from Shauna Singh Baldwin 'We are not in Pakistan' and the story Button, Button by Richard Matheson. "We are not in Pakistan" is a collection of ten stories inspired by human values and frailties. The characters in these stories are men and women, old, rich and poor, like able and hateful. They are from different nationalities and religions: Sikh, Jewish, Christian, Canadian, Pakistani and Ukrainian. Baldwin focuses on global events such as 9/11, Perestroika, glasnost, Chernobyl and its impact on middle class families.
Keywords: Button, Symbolism, Narrative technique, Survival, Assimilation, Diaspora.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper would explore the concept in the story "Only Button" of survival and assimilation in a metaphorical expression which is often mentioned in the literary world as the period of struggle, and strife, in a new world.. We Are Not in Pakistan is a collection of ten short stories motivated by human values and frailties. "Some expose latent fears, mistrust and prejudice, while the others underscore and repose faith, nudging the conscious emergence of truth, belief and acceptance" (Singh 3). Characters of these stories are male and female, young and old, rich and poor, likeable and hateful. They are from divergent religions and nationalities: Jewish, Christian, Sikh, American, Canadian, Pakistani, Costa Rican, Ukrainian, Mexican, and Greek. Baldwin relates the World events such as 9/11, Chernobyl and India's Partition with smaller-scale tragedies of families. Her engaging and enlightening prose explores the daily realities affected by horrific events in the life of estranged characters.

The study in a textual approach would see through the experiences of immigrants within home land and host land. The second story 'Button Button' the theme doesn't allow someone to get the best of you, listen to the people who love you. If the button is pressed it can kill someone you love or someone you don't know. Norma the protagonist desires for material wealth. The main conflict in the story is the incompatibility between Norma and Arthur man and wife, in terms of their thoughts; they are opposed to each other. In Button Button the plot revolves differently, Norma presses the button, and receives money after her husband dies in a train incident, where he pushed onto the tracks. The money is the no fault insurance settlement, which is \$50, 000 instead of

\$20000 in the Twilight zone episode. Literary terms which are used in the story are dialogue, foreshadows, symbolism and pacing to connect his readers and show that there is no perfect relationship. Greed as another theme; immoral chase of easy money by pushing a button in a puzzle box that will result in the death of an innocent stranger. One character comments that this may be acceptable if the person dies is some veteran Chinese peasant ten thousand miles away. This suggests the story may also be an allegory. Pressing a button to launch a missile in war and dealing in commercial quantities of drugs in peacetime, have one thing in common: the victims are all faceless strangers. On the other hand The story 'Only Button' is woven around the members of a family Viktor, his wife Olena, his mother Matushka, daughter Galina and her great grandfather Dedushka. Viktor has been assigned a well deserving position at 'Lenin power station' near Ukraine. Viktor was greeted along with his school children as the Great T Brodin ``The Beard Igor Kutchor, the father of the Soviet bomb" when he was seven. Viktor was assigned to study Great T Brodin and the reactor design. Viktor's and Olena's families were ideologically opposed to each other, as Viktor's father had been a member of the Communist party and Olena's grandparents were detained in a camp and her mother was born there.

Dedushka, Olena's grandfather, calls party members "Crownless crown tsars and the new feudal. By getting married to Viktor, Olena has been washed of her family 'sins' and has been doing Viktor's line of thinking since then. The central theme around which the main story is woven is in precarious conditions in which human race exists. The deep analysis of the short story "Button, Button" by Richard Matheson exhibits that it has a sequential structure. The story covers moments that foreshadow the twist ending. The main protagonist of the story is Norma Lewis. She wants to go with the choice of pushing a button, which will fetch her large sum of money, but someone would have to die in return. Despite the dire consequences, Norma is tempted to push the button. The setting of the short story is in an apartment in New York, where the couple live. The setting is not explored in the story as the focus is on the characters and the events. However, there are hints of a social setting which in a nutshell points to class issues and racism.

The story is narrated in third-person narration, which is limited to Norma's point of view. This supports to create tension in the story as readers know only as much as Norma does. The story features unbiased language. There are no metaphors or figurative language, but several symbols, such as the button, draw the attentiveness of the reader and help them interpret the meaning at the backdrop of the events.

2. STRUCTURE

The story "Button, Button" by Richard Matheson has a logical plot structure. The story runs with the events that take place over the course of several days, when the main character receives a magical button that might transform her life for the better, although it would have negative repercussions on someone else. The story is broken into several short scenes, marked by three asterisks.

The story begins in medias res, right when Norma finds a package addressed to her left in front of her apartment. In this way, the beginning of the story itself arouses readers' curiosity.

The moment when Norma enquires Arthur about the button, after Mr. Stewart leaves the package can be considered to be an example of fore shadowing: "What do you think it was?" she asked. (...) 'Aren't you curious at all?' ' This moment h...

Characterization of Norma

Norma Lewis is the important character of the story "Button, Button" . She lives in New York, is married to Arthur, and works in an office. She does not have children, although she wants to and is dissatisfied with her life and financial status.

In the story, Norma is tempted to push the button and its promise. She wishes to get the \$50,000 regardless of the consequences, which suggests that she is greedy: This shows that Norma desires to have extra money which would provide her the possibility of going on expensive holidays and having ni...

- 'Fifty thousand dollars, Arthur.'
- 'What has the amount –'
- 'Fiftythousanddollars,Arthur,'Normainterrupted.'Achancetotakethatripto Europe we've always talked about.'
- 'Norma, no.'

'A chance to buy that cottage on the island.' observes from the address on the box Norma receives: "Mr. and

Mrs. Arthur Lewis, 217 E. Thirty-seventh Street, New York, New York 10016". The time setting is not mentioned, but given that the story was published in 1970, it can be imagined the setting is somewhere around that period.

The main location of the short story is the apartment, where the couple lives and a quick scene takes place at Norma's office. Norma and Arthur have a lot of arguments about the box in the bedroom before they go to sleep. The setting is not mentioned in the story, which allows the focus of the story to be on the characters and the events that take place.

Soviet block and American block accuse each other of creating unlivable conditions. In the story "ONLY A Button" personal familial and international political problems are skillfully woven together. Hence the story doesn't confine itself to the narrow bounds, narrated in the third person, one family, with five members, has been focused. The other important person is Rivika, a columnist and journalist, whose balanced and impartial opinion about the Soviet Union.

Physical setting

The physical setting of the short story "only Button" is in Ukraine and Russia, which the Soviet Union receives appreciable support from the readers and observers. Even the main family has been divided into two camps, supporters of the Soviet Nuclear Explosion and those who had experiences opposing the Soviet Union and its Nuclear Explosion.

The story narrates a detailed description of the conditions prevailing in the bipolar world, in which the same conditions are prevalent in the outside world also. The feud between Mathusha and Olena though not for the political causes, because of the loss of the decorated button and the futile search for it by Olena disrupts the relationship even between Olena and Viktor, the couple in the story. This is symbolic of the disturbed relationship between the two powerful nations.

The Chernoby Nuclear Explosion and its unaccountability, its devastating effect on humans and animals, mutual blaming of the two nations plunge the readers in chaos. "Glasnost and Perestroika" proposed by Gorbachev, resulting in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, hasn't worked up to expectations, but weakened the strength of the Soviet Union as one of the mighty blocks of the bipolar world.

The compromise reached between Mathuska and Olena, mediated by Galina and her match with an Italian German is symbolic of the coordination reached between the Soviet Union and America in space exploration, the American astronauts walking in space bearing Russian suits. Though the story is woven around the family members, Viktor, his wife Olena, his daughter Galina, mother Matuska and great grandfather Dedushka. The family story is inseparable from the nuclear Explosion, which is the focusing point of the story. The loss of an embroidered button is a mere alibi.

When Viktor announces to Olena that he has been allotted to supervise the Lenin Power Station, which the narrative hook in the story, which takes the readers' attention. Flashback technique is skillfully introduced in depicting the early days of Viktor and Olena's family life from back to front. At one point of time birthday celebrations of Olena takes readers into the lighter mood of the global things of the story. Baldwin opens the narrative from the middle of a sequence, in Medias res. Receiving the phone call from Matushka, Viktor goes to personal thought process and searches for an embroidered missing button is an unexpected change in direction of the story, we call it 'plot twist'.

Change of scene from Pripy at and introduction of one more couple Antoli and Lima, who works along with Viktor in the same power station is an insignificant sub-plot. Russia and America are the two rivals in the bipolar world that occupies the major part of the story. When the narrative approaches the climax, the Nuclear power station explodes and brings about a catastrophic change, which impacts the lives of men and animals. Olena and Matushka and coordination between America and Russia in space exploration are at the resolving end of the story. Glasnost and Perestroika, the Russian philosophy propounded by Michael Gorbachev comes under international scrutiny. Nuclear Power Station explosion results in a great loss of lives and is an extension of a disaster, which is seen in the dissemination of nuclear energy and spreads several diseases. "Radiation sickness-nausea, diarrhea, changes in blood". It has been impacted even animal also, Radionuclides have been found in Pripyat river and wells" Viktor and Matushka's impulsive and violent behavior towards Olena who has been subjugated in spite of her commitment to domestic duties has been included as a parallel theme. Though Olena searches for the lost button she has been blamed for not searching it out. When the button in the white

triggers world war causes a rift between the main political rivals. The lost button in the Viktor's house doesn't have proportionate importance in the story but adds as a symbolism and theme of the story. One more theme which attracts the attention of the readers is subordination of the news media to the interest of part in power at that time. The reconciliation between religions ignoring all about cultural animosities has been one of the minor themes of the story and a brief reference has been made in the narrative about American culture and modern way of life, Nothing is free there, college education is unaffordable, no common syllabus and curriculum only English is taught in schools".

Button Button is a short story, a compact one, nothing to do with political and international problems. The button in the story causes a rift between Mr. Arthur and Mrs.

Arthur Lewis, a couple living together. The Carton left outside the house with its button, and Stuart's revelation of the button and its effectiveness when pressed– plants different opinions in their minds. The story is narrated with the help of interesting dialogue between Arthur and Lewis on one hand and between Stuard and both of them on the other.

The Button before being triggered propels greed and curiosity in Mrs. Lewis mind, which Mr. Arthur equated with murder, for instance of any child orphan woman or an innocent person. The end of the story is abrupt, unexpected and causes shock treatment to the readers.

Themes of two stories

There are three themes that can be identified in the story 'Button Button'. Some people stop at nothing for money greed generated because of alluring things and money leads to destruction and sometimes you don't know someone as well as you think you do. Greed can change the perception of reality of what is moral and what is immoral. Button is symbolic of two things - once a desire for wealth and it is symbolic of death. It is a situational irony that one doesn't expect that it is Mr. Arthur who dies. There is a conflict in the story - the protagonist doesn't care any matter who dies, she is allured by money. Conflict between two individuals whatever is the amount of money one gets - murder is immoral. The story "Only A Button" themes depict the devastating effect of the explosion of nuclear reactors in Chernobyl. The USSR and USA are two poles apart in the bi-polar world fighting for supremacy and hegemony.

3. CONCLUSION

But in two stories the critic fails to draw parallel lines between the two stories though the title is the same. The titles are similar, the pressing of the button in the white house or in the Soviet Union or in the Carton left outside in the house. The question who pushed the button in the first story is left unanswered. The pressing of a button in the second story causes murder - just a coincidence and this death yields not the gift of the money as expected but their own money. A compromise familial and political in the first story, presents amicable co-ordination between the two giant warring nations. The end of the second story is quizzical, chaotic and almost unexpected causing dismay in Mrs. Lewis, because of her greed and unheeding mindset. The short family story with the intervention of an outsider Steward, ends on a tragic note, with the death of one of the main characters of the story. The surprise element is one of the main characteristics of a short story. But the first story ends on a compromise between the members of the family and between two great nations.

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