

“STORIES WHICH GO ON AND ON”:  
TRANSFORMATIVE RESILIENCE AGAINST  
GENDER VIOLENCE IN TISHANI DOSHI’S  
*GIRLS ARE COMING OUT OF THE WOODS*

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ABSTRACT

Tishani Doshi’s *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* (2017) details the gender violences inflicted against women in India and the world to promote consciousness-raising, resistance, and subversion against interlocking systems of patriarchal power based on economy, ethnicity and gender. In this paper I firstly propose that Doshi promotes a transformative mode of resilience that guarantees socio-politic change rather than acceptance and submission. Secondly, I reflect on how Doshi’s description of the fear and gender violences systemically inflicted on women unveil counter-stories that exceed the portrayal of women as victims. Finally, I propose that Doshi’s presentation of resilient bodies embraces the interplanetary possibilities of creating constellations of co-resistance that allow the world to go forward instead of leaning back.

KEYWORDS: Indian Writing in English, Tishani Doshi, Transformative Resilience, Gender Violence.

«HISTORIAS QUE SIGUEN Y SIGUEN»:  
RESILIENCIA TRANSFORMADORA EN CONTRA DE VIOLENCIAS  
DE GÉNERO EN *GIRLS ARE COMING OUT OF THE WOODS*,  
DE TISHANI DOSHI

RESUMEN

*Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* (*Las chicas salen del bosque*), de Tishani Doshi, relata las violencias de género cometidas contra las mujeres de India y el mundo promoviendo concienciación, resistencia y subversión contra los sistemas patriarcales basados en variables económicas, étnicas y de género. Se analiza cómo Doshi promueve una forma de resiliencia transformadora que garantiza un cambio socio-político en vez de una mera aceptación y sumisión. Seguidamente, se estudia cómo Doshi describe el miedo y las violencias de género contra las mujeres permitiendo su testimonio para que tengan más matices que los de víctimas. Para terminar, se destaca cómo las descripciones de corporalidades plurales favorecen una interplanetariedad que crea redes de co-resistencia que permiten al mundo ir hacia delante en vez de contraerse.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Literatura india en lengua inglesa, Tishani Doshi, resiliencia transformadora, violencias de género.



Violences against women in their multiple forms that inflict fear, hate, shame, and pain on the physical and spiritual bodies of women in India have been the subject of much research by feminist theorists (Bhuthalia 2000, 2006; Menon 2004, 2012; Mankekar; Kandasamy 2020). In this context, resilience emerges as a theoretical concept which can challenge dominating political, economic, and capitalist structures through narratives that promote awareness-raising, resistance, and subversion against interlocking systems of patriarchal control based on class, race, gender, caste, or sexuality. This understanding of resilience therefore implements a social transformation (Roy 2011; O'Brien 2015; Folke; Coleman; Chatterjee; Fraile-Marcos) that is obviated in neoliberal uses of the term that simply safeguard the stability and power structures of patriarchal control.

These narratives of resistance and subversion that understand resilience in this transformative trend promote the alteration of socio-politic, gender, caste, and ethnic constructs which systemically limit individuals and communities. Writers, such as Arundhati Roy (1996, 2017), Manjula Padmanabhan (2008, 2015), Anuradha Roy (2015, 2018), Meena Kandasamy (2014, 2017), Prayaag Akbar (2017), and Tishani Doshi (2010, 2019), have described characters in contemporary or a near-future India who contest the current neocolonial tellings and capitalist arrangements of Indian history that stereotype, control, and limit the role of women. These authors have presented Indian women who survive and escape the “treacherous hypocrisies of Indian society” (Kandasamy 2015) in order to challenge the multiple systems of domination and violence placed upon women living in contemporary India.

Tishani Doshi's poetry collection, *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* (2017), is an example of these subversive possibilities of resilience because it exposes the brutality perpetrated against women's bodies and demands the survival of women subverting and denouncing gender violence to be guaranteed. The poems present women whose existences appear in history to refuse the routes and roots of systemic attacks against their sex. Doshi offers a multivocal testimony of transformative resilience to raise awareness about the necessity of a collective action to disrupt the performance of violence against women in India and the world.

Doshi fosters a heterogenous poetic space that denounces the many acts of gender and sexual violence that are a consequence of what Doshi calls the “large-scale malaise of gender violence in India” (in Nair). In this context, the aim of this paper is threefold. Firstly, it dwells on resilience to explain the differences between a mode of resilience that simply adapts and another which confronts. Secondly, it studies the fear and gender violence performed against the bodies of women in *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* to see if there is a transformative or adaptive resilience in their stories. Finally, it unveils Doshi's portrayal of resilient and plural

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bodies to connect with a transformative hope that answers Doshi's own question about "how we go forward with this [current] momentum [of gender violence and human catastrophes]?" (2018b: 36'06"-36'08"). My ultimate goal is to show how Doshi calls for interplanetary and feminist possibilities of survival (Spivak 2012; Moreno Álvarez 2017) through her stories to defy, transmute, and come out of the woods together.

Tishani Doshi shows that the physical body is born to decay, but its corporeal and spiritual stories stay, adapt, and challenge existing narratives. In the eponymous poem, *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* (2017), Doshi repeats the echo of "girls are coming out of the woods" (37) to reflect the resilient capacity that human beings develop to survive, denounce, and attack the entrenched structures that perpetuate gender violence. This survival is understood not only as individual but collective because, as Susie O'Brien exclaims, "you cannot be resilient by yourself" (2018). It is not only about surviving and congratulating your own life as an individual but being aware that there is a social change required to modify the political, safety, family, caste, religious, and economic strategies in a state like India. A collaborative transformation of the individual and social realms defies the commodification of stories of self-resilience to implement a community resilience that fights against the hegemonic patriarchal powers of the socio-political array.

Political discourses articulate narratives of fear that limit the self and community agency of human beings with insecurity and hesitation as inhabitants of the world. Strategies of survival and adaptation are necessary to ensure the future but it is crucial to analyse the neoliberal fetishisation of resilience that praises adaptation and survival without questioning why vulnerability and precariousness occur (Bracke 852; Fraile-Marcos 5; Coleman 21). This mode of neoliberal and adaptive resilience seems to match the act of being alive with inevitable suffering or disadvantage.

C.S. Holling defined natural resilience as "the ability of a given system to absorb changes of state [...] and still persist" (17) and Susie O'Brien highlighted how Holling challenged "the traditional ideas of a harmonious balance in nature [because] the natural world is in a perpetual state of flux" (2017: 46). The neoliberal uptake on resilience, on the other hand, only celebrates the individual equilibrium that assures individual survival. Accordingly, there is a mode for resilience that praises transformation, revolt, and renewal (O'Brien 2015) as opposite to a form of resilience that safeguards "adaptation," "recovery," and "re-organization" (Folke 256) without social change. Neoliberal interests reside on the latter trend, assuming that the "fantasies of the good life," such as "upward mobility, job security, political and social equality and life-building accomplishments" (Berlant 3) happen if you individually adjust to the system. Leanne Simpson signals that there are "politics of grief and victimization," which emerge and "focus on individual trauma instead of collective" (239). In contrast, there is a mode of resilience which is transformative because it modifies the individual and also collective to, as Eva Darías-Beautell points out, "bounce forward" (164) instead of bouncing back to subaltern nets.

Tishani Doshi's *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* congratulates the transformative mode of resilience which exceeds the violence exerted, both



historically and systemically, against women. Doshi's collection denounces that violence is a neoliberal strategy to distil an affective fear that emerges when there is a threat of pain (Ahmed 2017; Maillard 2018). Activist and writer, Meena Kandasamy exclaims that the book is "a battle cry" that "captures gendered violence and the hostility with which victims are viewed [...], and yet, celebrates the impossible beauty of the everyday" (2018). Gender violence in India is a structural problem that positions women as subordinate to men and the law system, dependant on "a flawed democracy" (Roy 2016: 66) and "a judicial void" (Menon 2004: 41) that favours a dichotomy between the public/private space where religion orchestrates the public and the state limits the private.

The result of gender violence and fear is the enactment of what Sara Ahmed calls "an apartness [...] inferiority [...] dependence [and] vulnerability" (2004: 64) placed upon women in both public and private spaces. This description of women as subaltern links them as "vulnerable objects" (Menon 2004: 142-143) subject to suffering violence. Doshi's collection accounts for different forms of violence against women but does not show women as static victims. Instead, the book works as a polyphonic canvas of challenges and opposition that criticises the patriarchal construction of India's legal, social, religious, and state politics. This is the transformative mode of resilience that Doshi recognises as her primary goal in the collection: speaking about and against centuries of violence and silencing to validate the stories of women because, "these voices wouldn't be gone for nothing. They will come back and we will be forced to hear them" (Doshi 2018a: 14:04-14:26).

This promise of regeneration emerges in the vision that Doshi used to write her eponymous poem. In her own words, she was

travelling on a bus in Ireland five or six months after Jyoti Singh was assassinated [...] listening to Bollywood and [she] had this vision of armies of women marching coming out of the Irish woods. Some of them were alive, some of them were dead, some of them had disfigured faces, some of them were armed [...] I wrote this poem thinking on What do we do with all these disappeared women, killed [...] only because they are women (12:40-14:04).

She states that she was trying to negotiate her personal experience as a woman, with "a passion and desire [...] to react against the reality" (14:06) that favoured the killing of Jyoti Singh and her friend, Monika Ghurde, to whom the poem is dedicated.

*Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* details the different forms of violence exerted upon the bodies of women like girls "wrapped in cloaks and hoods, [...] carrying a multitude of scars, collected/on acres of premature grass and city/buses, in temples and bars" (35), "girls [...] with panties tied around their lips," "girls lifting their broken legs [...] with uncles [...] who put bullets in their chests/and fed their pretty faces to fire," "girls who sucked the mud clean/off their ribs," "girls/found naked in ditches and wells," and "girls forgotten in neglected attics/and buried in river beds like sediment/from a different century" (36). However, there is a comeback from these women, who return "the way birds arrive/at morning" with a spirit of war and vengeance to point these testimonies towards a brighter future.



This promise of revenge is articulated in that echoing voice that announces that “girls are coming” to avenge. Other poems, such as “The Women of the Shin Yang Park Sauna, Gwanju” (52-53), “Encounters with a Swedish Burglar” (55), “Understanding My Fate in a Mexican Museum” (62-63), “Meeting Elizabeth Bishop in Madras” (75-77), and “Grandmothers Abroad” (78-79), reflect on how gender violence is transnational. Nevertheless, the collection adds hope, within what Kandasamy recognises as the “celebration the impossible beauty of the everyday” (2018), to escape the fetishisation of victimisation. Doshi is a valedictorian of a transformative mode of resilience that strives for survival through transformation, and so the collection closes with an ode to “the transformative capacity of art which is a thing of great potency and contagion” (in Nair) as the last lines of “When I Was Still a Poet” read “love springs/from dirt like carts” (2017: 95).

The book should be read beyond its pessimistic notes as its primary message is a promise of change because, as Henry Giroux states, hope is subversive (64). Arundhati Roy (2020) and Partha Chatterjee have argued that careful optimism favours a collective change in contemporary politics. Doshi has also noted that she is not the “dark poet,” who writes about “tragedies” (2018a: 22:42-22:54). Instead, she declares, “I would classify myself as a happy poet” and she recalls the positive notes of “The Leather of Love” (2017: 66-67) and “the light in the end of the book” (21:03-21:11). She argues that there is a possibility for change, which is facilitated through telling stories because “stories are eternal igniters” (in Nair) that invite reflection.

This interpellation is clear in the first poem, “Contract” (1-2), which is dedicated to its readers. It features the poet as a mosquito and it was written when she was awakened by one and realised that she wanted to “find as many ears as [she] could [to] buzz all around and make as many ears as possible to buzz around and awaken the reader hopefully not to pass on life-threatening life diseases” (2018b: 00:42-01:00). The poem features the poet’s skin “turning inside out” to incite the reader to “reinvent every lost word, to burnish, to steal, to do what I must /in order to singe your lungs” (Doshi 2017: 1). This renewal and collective opposition are necessary because her body is “meagre” and she “has lost so many limbs to wars, so many/eyes and hearts to romance” (2). The poem/contract uses an imperative tone (“Don’t kill me, reader,” “love me”) to embark upon the collaborative rewriting of stories and histories. She closes the poem with a warning:

But love me  
and I will follow you everywhere—  
[...]  
to every downfall and resurrection.  
Till your skin becomes my skin.  
[...]  
And when you put your soft head  
down to rest, dear Reader,  
I promise to always be there,  
humming in the dungeons  
of your auditory canals—  
an immortal mosquito,



hastening you towards fury,  
towards *incandescence* (2, my emphasis).

Kandasamy has stated that “Contract” “invokes the powerful image of tortured female genius for whom melancholy is a precondition [and] readies the reader for a series of brutal, bitter truths” (2018). Doshi describes how the poet’s body has suffered violence and that the telling of this suffering will make the reader visit all their “dungeons” “hastening towards a fury” that calls for the transformative power of those who are denounced (in Nair). It is then our role as readers to understand the structures of gender violence in order to undermine the systems that sustain them.

Violence is understood as a myriad of systems (Maillard; Zizek) that inflict subjective violence (“performed by a clearly identifiable agent”; Zizek 1), symbolic violence (“embodied in language and its forms”), and systemic violence (“the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems;” Zizek 2). Doshi states that it is “violence against women” that worries her the most (in Nair) and Kandasamy has acknowledged that *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* “retells stories of pain against different women and from different ages” with “compelling moment[s] of anger.” In this section, I will describe the ways in which Doshi explains these experiences of fear and violence to create “constellations of coresistance” (Simpson 9) that guarantee a transformative resilience that denigrates the power of gender violence.

Doshi asks herself “what can I offer as a poet?” (2018a: 03:42) and “how do you write about violence without perpetuating it?” (in Nair). In an interview with Indian poet, Karthika Nair, she exclaimed, “[w]hat do you do with [violence]? A greater violence would be a disconnect, to not feel someone else’s suffering. And this is where poetry enters, and dance and film.” The poem, “Find the Poets” serves as her reply:

I wanted to find out the truth  
about how a great land like this  
could allow ancient columns to crumble  
[...]  
Find the poets, my friend said.  
If you want to know the truth, find the poets.  
But friend, where do I find the poets?  
[...]  
and what do they sing about?  
Find the poets, my friend said.  
They will not speak of the things you and I speak about.  
They will not speak of economic integration  
or fiscal consolidation.  
[...]  
But they could sit you down  
and tell you...  
how they arrive like the rain,  
unexpectedly cracking open the sky.  
[...]



They will talk as they have been talking  
for centuries...  
till only the bones of truth remain (82-83).

The line “cracking open the sky” (83) provides the objective for this poetry collection. Doshi explains how poets want to subvert survival “till only the bones of truth remain.” Kandasamy has pointed out that the words in this collection “will change [the readers’] life” (2018) as she recognises “an agency of disclosure” in Doshi’s descriptions of fear and violence. This agency of disclosure forms the backbone of this collections’ transformative resilience. She details the “burdens of enforced shame” (in Nair) that women carry but she also celebrates the possibility of shouting back and marching against such injustices. Kandasamy believes that this book “will jolt you into wokeness [and] tense and clench your fists because this is a battle cry” (2018). This collaborative reaction ignites hope as it urges its readers to form strategies against fear and violence.

The disconnecting effect of the fear of physical, mental, and spiritual pain has been amply studied (Ahmed 2004; Khair 2016; Roy 2019). Amit Chaudhuri recently stated that “a new India is emerging, and it is a country ruled by fear,” pointing how Indian politicians are stifling “dissent.” *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* exposes fear but also transformative dissent and opposition. For instance, in “Fear Management,” the narrator describes an encounter with “a row of fishermen” who “are making noises at her” (Doshi 2017: 14). The poet feels afraid because this is “the kind of sound designed/ to entice a small, brainless creature/into a corner before smashing it/underfoot [...] with their ceaseless, cooing threats.” This poem is a reflection on an incident that occurred when Doshi was walking along a coastal village in Tamil Nadu, which made her realise how she was a victim of the systemic violence modulated by a patriarchal hegemony. Her vulnerability and fear are shown in the last lines:

When so much can be vanished  
so silently into the dark teeth of sleep,  
tell me, wouldn’t you fear for your life?  
What it is. What it might become (15).

The fear of “what it might become” is also described in “Everyone Loves a Dead Girl” (16-17), which analyses the management of fear in a different environment, that of upper-class “parties” (16), where upper-classes would deliberately silence the stories of gender violences. In this setting, there is an exhibition about “Wounds you Never/Thought Imaginable” and people “discuss methods/of dying [...] because the myth of the peaceful/bed annoys them.” There is a celebration of fear because girls “arrive at parties alone because they are dead/now and there is nothing to fear except for the sun.” However, there is hope because

[...] A girl  
call her my own, call her my lovely, stands up and says,  
I would like to talk about what it means to suffocate on pillow  
feathers, to have your neck held like a cup of wine, all delicate



and beloved, before it is crushed. Another stands, and another,  
and even though they have no names and some of them  
have satin strips instead of faces, they all have stories  
which go on and on

This voice unveils the violence that makes women afraid and denounces those who fetishise the dead female body. The poem ends with the dead women's narratives "charg[ing] around like Bolshoi dancers re-entering/the world alive, and with wonder." Doshi subverts the stories of victimhood and urges women to tell their own truths in order to understand why women feel afraid and to learn who benefits from that fear.

*Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* describes different types of violence (explicit, symbolic, and systemic) to illustrate the social, political, caste, and religious gender violence in India and in the world. Gender violence is established as a collective problem rather than an individual act. Societies that are driven by patriarchal patterns that believe in men's natural and cultural superiority over women are illustrative of what Slavoj Žižek calls "explicit violence" (1) because there is an "identifiable agent" that performs visible violence against another. In the collection, Doshi recognises this possibility in her exploration of individual perpetrators of explicit violence, such as Bill Cosby in "Disco Biscuits":

We were talking about the subject of Quaaludes,  
Of which I know nothing except back in the 70s,  
When I was being born, Bill Cosby slipped them  
To a bunch of women (40).

In "Saturday on the Scores" (50-51), the narrator recognises that the female body "is just a cage" trained to "seduce/a stranger" while he is "walking beside you" and "you agree on nothing" (51), thereby indicating the lack of consent. This version of a controlling man is the central figure in "Ode to Patrick Swayze" (21-22), where Doshi denounces the tendency to cling onto a man. She describes the toxic idealisation of love in popular culture: "I wanted to be your baby [and] I realized what I'd wanted/most was to be held by someone determined/to save me (22).

She also recognises group perpetrators. Accordingly, Doshi points at Boko Haram in "A Fable for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" and the femicides in Mexico in "Understanding My Fate in a Mexican Museum" (62-63). These two poems talk to each other, acknowledging the normalisation of collective explicit violence. In "Understanding My Fate in a Mexican Museum," the narrator recognises social forms of collective violence, such as "fertility flagellation." She gathers these experiences of being "subjugated, fumigated, skinned/ and mutilated like those girls in the barrios" (63). The poet recognises that by naming, telling, and retelling there is a collective reply that can enhance subversion. She writes, "I long to see/A clearer vision of wayward women who list/between the knowing and unknowing." She calls for a common transnational action because "in time/dear past and future selves in time/ we will resolve our joint concerns." Here, there is a possibility for transformative resilience because "unknowing" becomes key to changing old patterns.





“Symbolic violence” (Zizek 1) assembles discursive and sociolinguistic practices which silently privilege men and assume an inferior status for women (Menon 2012). “Your Body Language Is not Indian! Or Where I am Snubbed at a Cocktail Party by a Bharatnatyam Dancer” (47-49) and “Grandmothers Abroad” (78-79) account for these acts of symbolic violence committed against women. In the former, Doshi explains that she has “withstood barricades/of scolding aunts and so many diabolical winters/of social conditioning” on the subject of breeding (47). She complains that she “has been carted around/like a lady’s lapdog, peeing and being petted” (48) because she is not married. Nevertheless, she utters “N-O” (47) in response to this violence when she “declined the invitation/to breed.” Here, there is a commitment to defy the expected patterns of maternity and marriage. She disagrees and celebrates it as a cooperative act of agency. She writes, “we will dance, /the wind and I our bodies like rosebushes alight / in the sky, clanging against the geometry of stars, / with no one around, and no one watching” (48).

Doshi urges women to tell their own stories and to reject the victimisation imposed upon them as recipients of symbolic violence. In “Grandmothers Abroad” the migrant women are “stripped of all [their] memories” (79) because they are “scourged of colour, / bandaged in their daughter’s fleeces, hounded by their sons and nieces.” She writes “[y]ou will want them to tell them to resist [...] Granny, don’t become that omnipresent/migrant woman, stripped of all her memories.” Doshi invites them to meet in courtyards and “unfold upon the paisley sleeves/ of [their] bereaved imagining,” thereby granting a sense of possibility and hope to these women, their daughters and granddaughters. This is a poem about memory as a tool of resistance and resilience against forgetting, and so these women get to know their origins, where they are coming from.

Economic and political systems work, as Nivedita Menon (2004) or Arundhati Roy (2019) have proclaimed, on the assumption that women must occupy inferior or limited positions. The paternalistic attitudes of the state, legal, and religious institutions in India are based upon pillars of “systemic violence” (Zizek 2) that are interiorised by women as the recipients and by men as the performers of violence. This systemic violence validates the current neoliberal political system of violence in India and fosters women’s self-repression as a survival mechanism (Mankekar).

Doshi celebrates the bonds that different women share in new spaces and cultural practices. Accordingly, she interweaves a collective net of counter-stories against systemic violence. In “O Great Beauties” (71-73), Doshi dismantles the “devotion to serious women” (72) and laughs at the canonical descriptions for of female beauty. In “The Women of the Shin Yang Park Sauna, Gwanju” (52-53), she details her own shame when she sits along Chinese women who are naked in a sauna and subverts her sense of fear to feel the revolutionary possibilities of tracking similarities and differences between female bodies without shame or a male mediation. In “Strong Men, Riding Horses” (38-39), Doshi condemns the violence of “the empires of harmony, of men who ride horses” (38) to denounce how politics and the state are managed by patriarchy and fear. She calls them “treacherous” and urges that we “counter these phantoms [because] they are/lurching towards [women]



with balsam” (39). Doshi implores women to “wake now” because there is hope for change as “All that we mourn is here already.”

As stated in the first section, plural voices in the form of *we* emerge in “Girls Are Coming out of the Woods,” “Everyone Loves a Dead Girl,” “Contract,” and “When I was Still a Poet” to resist, survive, and defy. Also, in “Understanding My Fate in a Mexican Museum” the narrator changes from *I* into *We*. So, we read, “dear past and future selves in time/We will resolve our joint concerns” (63). Through her poetry, individual voices become both resilient and collective to attain change for those “past and future selves.”

“Girls Are Coming out of the Woods” unveils the corporeal and physical limits placed upon women. It encourages a collective change, enhancing what Leanne B. Simpson calls the creative constellations of coresistance (9), where resistance against systemic violence involves “persistence, commitment and profound caring” (9). Doshi reclaims the recovery of stories and the creation of these constellations of coresistance to safeguard their “individual self-determination” (Simpson 3) together with a vision of community as a “constellation opening a doorway” to a different world (212). The urgency of the poem and the use of the plural voice fosters hope. Doshi writes,

Girls  
are coming out of the woods  
with panties tied around their lips,  
making such a noise, it’s impossible  
to hear. Is the world speaking too? (Doshi 2017: 36)

Morbid descriptions of different forms of violence against women are organised in the collection to ignite a common and collective transformation. This is how women can bounce forward rather than bounce back to violence.

## A CONCLUSION TO THE STORIES THAT GO ON AND ON

Tishani Doshi favours a feminist option where physical and psychological female selves survive, defy political and religious structures, transmute, and come out of the woods together. Nivedita Menon has urged for the necessity of a “feminist practice” (2012: 64) that fosters change instead of theories. Sara Ahmed has also insisted upon the necessity of performing and celebrating “disruptive acts” (2017: 7) and Priyamvada Gopal has prioritised “dissent” (viii) to ensure a transnational change. Doshi’s descriptions of women challenging the violence inflicted upon them are such practices of dissent and disruption that foster a transformative mode of resilience.

*Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* gathers individual stories as fuel for a collective action to exercise agency against the patriarchy’s transnational hegemony. This supremacy is addressed in the collection, as previously stated, not only within the Indian context but also transnationally. The book emerges as an archive that fills the generational gap for many Indian women who can exercise processes of knowing and unknowing to master the narratives of his-story within the dominating political



arena. The agency of disclosure shared in every poem nurtures healing spaces where writing narratives is key because, as Michael Basseler argues, “narrative is perhaps the major cultural and cognitive scheme through which notions of resilience are currently generated” (25). The testimonies of these women reclaim their space on the pages of the collection through the subversive agency of hope (Giroux; Ahmed 2017; Chatterjee). Doshi writes in “Girls Are Coming out of the Woods” that “[g]irls are coming/out of the woods, clearing the ground/to scatter their stories”; these collective voices are celebrated as they are marching “forward” to make the world a better place, instead of going “backward” to strategies of adapting.

Telling stories and writing become essential in this process. In “Every Unbearable Thing,” which was written after *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* on the occasion of the emergence of the #metoo movement in India, Doshi states that “it is the/world asking to be made again/so let us bring flowers let us/bow down let us worship/and reveal our scars let us” (2018c). The promise and practice of renewal inherent to transformative resilience happens when “scars” are acknowledged and the perpetrators of those marks are addressed, attacked, and subverted because the remaking and telling of stories allow the world to be asked “to be made again.”

This cry to make the world anew is an interplanetary commitment in the collection. Interplanetary is what Alejandra Moreno Álvarez calls “empathetic universals whose embodiment, spatiality and intersubjectivity is constituted in relation to others, where being human is being conhuman” (85). This conhumanity is interplanetary and overcomes differentiating adjectives, such as global or cosmopolitan, which position everything in relation to the self and other. Instead, the adjective interplanetary celebrates the fact that “to be human is to be intended toward the other” (Moreno Álvarez 85). This is Doshi’s promise in her collection.

Kandasamy urges the reader to “pick up this book” and “listen to the girls coming out of the woods [because their] words will change your life” (2018). Accordingly, *Girls Are Coming out of the Woods* promotes awareness-raising, resistance, and subversion because, as Tishani Doshi states, while women can now “go out alone at night [...] the dangers don’t go away” (in Wroe) In this context, transformative resilience is still limited by the dominating political, economic, and neoliberal structures.

The collection tells of the brutality inflicted on women and contemporary India’s gender prejudices but it also creates the possibility of dismantling the interlocking systems of patriarchal power based on the economy, race, gender, or sexuality. In Doshi’s work, women are not merely fetishised victims but they are also agents who change, threaten, and, most importantly, tell their own stories, because “everything that’s been said/is worth saying again” (Doshi 2017: 8). It is our role as readers, authors, and researchers, to decide whether we accept our current world or whether we go forward and join the constellation of coresistance reflected in Doshi’s poems that tell “stories which go on and on” (16).

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