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## Re- writing the Mizo: Continuing the Narrative

Catherine Laldinpui Fanai

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to establish that the central aspect of re-writing must be a continuous process in order to achieve a sustained and stable sense of self and identity. It shall argue that various factors continue to influence thought formation in terms of the construction of Mizo identity, and it shall situate the same while locating itself within select works of C.Lalnunchanga (born 1970), a Mizo writer of repute. Although the historical Mizo has been ‘recovered’ and ‘re-written’ into the records of literary history, reclaiming the centre through the historical is no longer sufficient to establish identity in a world which is still determined to a certain extent by colonial hangover as also by the hegemonic influences of globalization and neocolonialism. This paper will propose that maintaining the hold on the center is crucial to resistance against this existing hegemony and, that this can be achieved only when the re-writing continues, persistently centering the Mizo through the changes that time brings with it.

**Keywords:** Mizo, Re-Writing, Culture, Post-Colonial, Identity.

### Introduction

The historical Mizo has been ‘recovered’ and ‘re-written’ into the records of literary history. This paper attempts to establish that the central aspect of re-writing must be a continuous process in order to achieve a sustained and stable sense of self and identity. It shall argue that various factors continue to influence thought formation in terms of the construction of Mizo identity, and it shall situate the same while locating itself within two historical novels of C.Lalnunchanga (born 1970), a Mizo writer of repute. The selected historical novels are set in the tumultuous times of the late 1800s, after the great bamboo famine or *thingtam* of 1880. It was a time of change. Internally, the chiefs had to safeguard their individual interests as well as the interests of the people in the wake of the famine. Externally, the ever-increasing contact with the white man and his professed territory would make an indelible change in how the Mizos perceived not only themselves but also their society as well as their sense of territory.

The first novel *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasaltha*<sup>1</sup> (2015) is set in pre-colonial times. The story opens in the year 1876 in the fictitious village of Vangsen which flourished under the competent and capable chieftainship of Puilura and gives an account of the life of its residents and the daring feats of the village braves, Nghalthianga and his friends. The story

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<sup>1</sup> The title translates as *My Brave and Courageous Men* and will be referred to as KMHKP.

recounts the western migration of the Mizo people, i.e. the *thlang tlak*<sup>2</sup>, which was necessitated by the nature of their agricultural practice of *jhumming* and hunting, and from which stemmed the rivalry and discord between neighbouring villages and tribes in the struggle to both extend and protect their territories. It is in due considerations to their bravery and courageous feats in these endeavours that the braves of Puilura's village of Vangsen earn their fame and the recognition of not just their village but the entire region. The common takes precedence over the individual and, the prosperity and respect accorded to every individual in the community is reflected on the village. Despite the harshness of their lives and their proximity to danger even in peaceful times, the generosity and dignity with which the people lived, is exemplary. The community rallied together in good times and much more so in hard times.

The second historical novel, *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung*<sup>3</sup> (2007) continues the story of Puilura and his people who are now well established in their new village of Kiangzo, in their newfound land of Zâwlsângtlang. The story is set in the 1880s beginning in the pre-colonial times, recounting the fearlessness of Puilura and his braves in the defense of their land against both rival chiefs and the advancing British troops during the *Vai len* or second Lushai Hills Expedition conducted by the British against the Mizo chiefs in 1888-89 following the raid by the chief Hausata that killed Lieutenant J.F. Stewart and three others near Rangamati.

### The “other-ed” Mizo

Subject to the absence of a written script, historical accounts of the Mizo necessarily depend on existent and available documents left behind by the British administrators and Welsh missionaries. Sir Robert Reid who was Governor of Assam during 1937-1942, wrote in his book *The Lushai Hills* that the Military Proceedings of 1890 records that the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 was carried out with the agenda “to subjugate tribes as yet neutral” and “to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power” (Reid, 2005, p. 14). To justify such a warrant required the Mizo to be projected as the archetypal “other”. Thus colonial accounts record the Mizo as a head-hunting savage who benefitted greatly from being brought out of the “darkness of ignorance” to the “light of civilization”. This articulation and justification of moral authority by positing the inferiority of the native (JanMohamed, 1986, p. 103) continues to guide the psyche of the Mizo people to a certain extent.

However, the lives of the characters in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (2015) illustrates that this other-ed Mizo was in-fact quite cultured. Everything he did was well thought out and never random. There was a well established social structure, a belief system, moral code of ethics and much knowledge of nature crucial to their livelihood, i.e. *jhum* cultivation. The people of Vangsen rallied together both in times of celebration as well as in hardship. The festivities and the ceremonies involved in the process of *Khuangchawi*<sup>4</sup>, and

<sup>2</sup> *Thlang tlak*: Western migration. (Lorrain, 1983, p. 477)

<sup>3</sup> The title translates as *Last Days of the Braves* and will be referred to as PNH.

<sup>4</sup> *Khuangchawi* was the greatest of the feasts required to achieve the coveted status of *Thangchhuah* which lasted four days (Zaliana, 2013, p. 74). It entailed the slaughter of two domesticated bull gayals, a cow gayal and a swine. Additionally, a *khuanghlang* or a raised platform that could be carried about had to be constructed. It had to be big enough to seat the whole family of the person, the *Thangchhuah pa*, who was performing the *Khuangchawi*. This platform would be carried into the *lalmual* or the open space in front of the chief's house by the village elders or *Upa* who would carry it around the square. It was during this event that the *Thangchhuah pa* and his family would throw into the crowd, valuable things like clothes, pots and sometimes even guns and gayal, for which they would throw firewood and a piece of rope respectively. The people would then scramble for the

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the public's enthusiastic participation is vividly illustrated in the narratives when it is performed by the chief himself and by his *Upa*, Darchheuva. The village youth eagerly participated in the preparation for the feasts, Romawii and her friends pounded the rice well in advance for the feast as well as for making *zu*<sup>5</sup>. They also gathered the wood for the feast to be dried as *sathingzâr*<sup>6</sup> well in advance to give time for the wood to dry. From the first day of the feast, the whole community does their part, thirteen men searched for and made a suitable *selûphan*, the pole on which the heads of the slaughtered animals would be displayed. The young men and women too went out to gather more wood for the *sathingzâr*. The rest of the men repaired and strengthened the poles and foundation of the house to support the many people who would gather for the festivities that went along with the feast.

The moral code of ethics required a fair amount of self-control which is well illustrated through the celebrations of *Thingfar zan*<sup>7</sup> in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasaltha* (2015) when there was abundance of *zu* and the dancing and singing continued to the small hours of the morning. Although there was free flow of *zu* during the night, the youth took great care not to get too inebriated for it was considered a disgrace especially for an unmarried maiden to be drunk and even more disgraceful for a man to take advantage of her in that state. In addition to the feasts that held centre stage in the festivals, *zu* or fermented rice beer, flowed in abundance so much so that the feasting would continue so long as there was *zu*. Shakespear<sup>8</sup> noted that it is not very intoxicating but contains much nourishment (Shakespear, 1983, p. 38). It was an important component of every ceremony and event of note, whether it is of celebration or of mourning. When *zu* was used in ceremonies, it was not open for all to drink but only for specific people depending on the ceremony. James Dokhuma writes that although *zu* was the main drink served to visitors and was easily available, the young men only drank in times of festivities and the maidens never touched it unless coerced to do so during festivities. Therefore, one would never see a drunken youth in a Mizo village. Even when the old men found themselves intoxicated, they would state to all that they were in no condition to make any decision (Dokhuma, 1992, p. 183).

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articles, getting to keep what they managed to pick up (Dokhuma, 1992, p. 47). The feast also entailed a large quantity of *zu* which had to be prepared well beforehand, necessitating the involvement of others in the community besides the family members. This kind of ceremony involved such expenses that only the affluent could afford it and consequently, those who could afford to perform the ceremony were held in high esteem by the society.

<sup>5</sup> *Zu*: Fermented liquor.

<sup>6</sup> *Sathingzâr*: The firewood or the act of collecting firewood and placing them along the village path to dry them in preparation for a feast i.e. *sa* = meat, *thing* = wood, *zâr* = hangout. The word literally means "to hand out fire wood to dry to cook meat."

<sup>7</sup> *Thingfar zan*: The night during a festival or ceremony specifically arranged for the unmarried youth. There would be much *zu* the singing lasted the whole night. The young men would sit in rows with their knees pulled up to their chests and the maidens would sit on their feet facing them. This was called "*inngai*". Any misbehavior or attempt to take advantage of the maidens was severely frowned upon and would result in the complete humiliation of the young man if any maiden complained against him.

<sup>8</sup> Major John Shakespear was known as "Tarmita" i.e. Mr. Spectacles owing to the fact he wore one. He was the first Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District in 1898 and held this post on and off till 1903. He was responsible for introducing a number of administrative measures among which is introduction of the System of Land Settlement<sup>8</sup>, Circle Administration<sup>8</sup>, and the standardization of chieftainship wherein the eldest son inherited the heirship (traditionally it was the youngest son), subject to good behaviour and ability (Verghese and Thanzawna, 1997, p. 316). He also wrote a number of books based on his experiences in the hills which have proved to be invaluable sources of information on pre-colonial Mizo culture and traditions.

The Mizo society was self-regulatory and egalitarian in that though it was permissive in almost every matter, including pre-marital sex, there was always a clause added to safeguard the reputation and good name of the individuals involved and avert disproportionate occurrences of such incidents. It was so, that no-one could take undue advantage over a situation or anyone and in turn be protected as well. In this way, it could be said that anyone could do as they wished so long as it did not encroach on others' freedom or sabotage anyone else's reputation. Nghalthianga and Ainâwni's case demonstrates how these rules were applied in the society and equally, for both the men and women. Ainâwni is given as much opportunity as Nghalthianga to plead her innocence and not condemned on the basis of her gender.

Since the beginning of the establishment of the white man on Mizo soil, the impacts of colonisation have been the catalysts for constant modifications in the Mizo society and as surely, have thrown it off balance. Consequently, the Mizo worldview too has undergone much change. From taking pride in their indigeniety and the belief that they were at an equal footing with any other peoples, they had come to consider these very aspects to be the embodiment of the opposite. They have become the antithesis. The Mizo's resistance and opposition to the invading colonial power though heated and intense during the time, had eventually given way to awe of their superior military might and artillery and admittedly, knowledge. This impression was expedited by the fact that the colonial experience for the Mizo was in a way different from the general experience of other colonised people in the sense that there was no scope for economic gain by their exploitation as in other places, and much advantage in keeping the peace for the colonial machine to function smoothly elsewhere. This however did not mean that the Mizo people were spared from "the white man's burden". They neither escaped subjugation nor could they stop the complete overhauling of their lives to the "enlightened" path of the white man's ways according to which the lives they had hitherto lived was savage, backward and to be done away. In no less time than twenty years, the change in attitude towards the white man from an intruder to a role model who everyone aspired to emulate had become complete. In consolidating their "imperialists Sovereign Self", to use Benita Parry's words, the colonizing white man had induced the Mizo "to collude in its own subject(ed) formation as other and voiceless" (Parry, 2017, p. 45). To put it simply, this change was a direct effect of the Mizo's witness of the white man's show of ruthless military power and their concerted effort to instill in the native people their superiority as a race. That this tactic was a success can be seen in *Pasal̄hate Ni Hnuhnung* (2007) when Romawii's father Chuaukunga who like many during that time, had been convinced of the futility in fighting against the white man, comparing the strength of their forces to that of a flood that could not be stopped (Lalnunchanga, 2007, p. 333). He also recognised that the white man's arrival was also a harbinger of wealth for the people (Lalnunchanga, 2007, p. 334). So swayed was he that he was able to persuade a hundred others into leaving Puilura's village which was at the time left without a chief, both Puilura and his son, Saingura having lost their lives in their fight against the white men.

Of course, nothing is simple. The wealth that the white man brought with him came at a price. The introduction and establishment of modern infrastructural facilities and most importantly, the introduction of western education have definitely brought the Mizo at par with the rest of the country. But, the imbalance created in the society by the loss of its structure, indigenous knowledge and culture was immense and its after-effect far-reaching, as can be expected with such drastic and irrevocable changes occurring in such a short period of time. It is true that change is inevitable and must happen for there to be progress and development. But when it is catapulted into action by an external dominant influence and

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progresses faster than it would if it had happened naturally, the changes though beneficial could also become a scourge.

In converting to Christianity, the Mizo people had had to denounce the more observable practices of their old religion to prove their rejection of it, as well as their acceptance of the new religion. What became apparent thereafter was the fact that the practices especially the drinking of *zu*, which had been an integral part of Mizo culture – traditions and customs, now was frowned upon. The most immediate effect of conversion could be seen in the way traditional ceremonies were held or the lack of them. Christianity had made the reason for the performance of these ceremonies redundant. This served a severe blow to the essence of being Mizo for, these ceremonies were chiefly responsible for fostering the strong sense of community that existed among the people since they required the effort of the whole community to be a success even though it was an individual's sacrifice. So, as Sajal Nag writes, the “ideology that constructs evilness in indigenous social practices and labels it as backward, tribal, and savage and then arrogates themselves the ‘white man’s burden’ of reforming them” (Nag, 2016, p. 373) had come into play in the missionary’s dealings with the Mizo people. Therefore it followed naturally that for a long time it was the missionaries who decided on what was acceptable and what was not since “What Christianity is and what it is not, as well as what is acceptable to Christians and what is not acceptable, has to be introduced to the people” (Lalsangkima Pachuau, 2002, p. 135.). The lived spirituality of the Mizo’s daily lives was thus forced to undergo a change that Major A.G.McCall observed was “dynamic and sustained” (McCall, 2015, p. 199). He further stated that the changes the missionaries have wrought were “often spectacular, necessarily involving attack after attack on tradition” and that it is “one thing to eradicate and another to build up securely” (McCall, 2015, p. 199 ). Having witnessed the traditional juxtaposed with the transforming lifestyle to the modern, McCall declared, “(H)erein lies the whole secret of the modern problem of Lushai in her chrysalis stage” (McCall, 2015, p. 199). As the number of Christians steadily rose, these developments in the church meant that in the Mizo society there began a gradual shift in influence and hence, power within the society, from the traditional seat of power – the chiefs, to the leaders of the Church, the new elite. By 1923, “...it became quite popular to be a Christian” (Lloyd, 1991, p. 266, italics mine). This statement is a reflection of the immense influence Christianity had come to have on the people. The Church was able to hold sway over the public and on its opinion mainly because besides spiritual gain in the changed lives of the early Christians, people could also see the material benefits of being a convert. The Christians invariably learnt to read and write which opened up opportunities for employment in areas other than in the *jhum* thus creating a salaried class, a section of society that was nonexistent before. It was not just the pull of being free from the back-breaking work of the traditional *jhum* farming but more so the world that literacy and education opened for them that captivated them. The traditional had indeed been eradicated but the building of its replacement had been left much to the hands of a few natives, who were themselves still grasping at straws in the dark – the Mizo had thus not only been other-ed but also, had other-ed himself.

## Re-writing the Mizo

Like other post-colonial communities however, the Mizo have become equipped to “write back” and indeed, are re-writing the records. As Walter J Ong writes, the oral word first illuminates consciousness, tying human beings to one another while writing intensifies the sense of self and fosters a more conscious interaction (Ong, 2007, p. 175). The Mizo postcolonial writer having access to both forms of expression is now privy to construct an antithesis to the “other” Mizo through a “consciousness-raising” process (Ong, 2007, p. 175).

The brave and able chiefs, their *pasaltha*<sup>9</sup> and the virtuous maidens of the traditional oral tales, all embodying the essence of the Mizo worldview in action, *tlawmngaihna*<sup>10</sup> are slowly but surely changing the once negative connotations attached to the Mizo, to a positive confirmation. C.Lalnunchanga is one such influential Mizo writer who opines that without literature, a culture dies, and places the utmost importance to the knowledge of one's own culture and of one's ancestors (Lalnunchanga, 2007, p. 7). The selected historical novels have been instrumental in restoring the image of the pre-colonial Mizo who he feels has been dealt a short-hand not only by colonial narratives but also by the Mizos themselves. These stories have brought to life the quintessential pre-colonial Mizo and made real the daily routines of life during that time – a very important aspect of re-writing the Mizo, because the way we live now, is completely different from the way life was lived during the pre-colonial era. So, for most contemporary Mizos, it is a world removed, and therefore, in a sense not real. This “decolonization of the mind” (Thiong’o, 2017, p. 130), to use Ngugi wa Thiong’o words offers a glimpse of the sense of community that existed. Through the lives of the characters, the “savage” practices can be understood as necessary to their lives – to maintain order in the society and defend against enemies. Although aware that this view of the pre-colonial Mizo may be contested as romanticized, C.Lalnunchanga recognizes its potential to positively influence the younger generations towards a stable sense of self and identity amidst this neocolonial globalised world. His works therefore consciously contest the “notions of power inherent in the model of centre and margin” in existent literature, and thereby “appropriated and so dismantled” (Ashcroft, Bill, et al, 2017, p. 82) the premiere position occupied by the white man in them. His protagonist Mizo and his worldview, his ethos, upstage the white man's centre in his works so much so that the aged chief Puilura asks un-intimidated “*Tute nge Kumpinu chu?*” (Lalnunchanga, 2007, p. 207) meaning “who are the company?” The company here refers to the East India Company. The word “Kumpinu” meaning ‘The Company’s Mother’, is the Mizo name for Queen Victoria (Lorrain, 1983, p. 276). But, it is also used to refer to the British administration i.e. the Company since they were representatives and also because of their physical presence. The aged chief asks this question when McCabe, threatens and tries to subdue the chief by boasting of their power and of the fact that Britain was the empire over which the sun never sets. McCabe was a character in the novel and is represented as his historical self as the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills at the time i.e. during 1890-1892. In this overtly postcolonial scene, C. Lalnunchanga recreates a scenario where the Mizo is un-intimidated and unimpressed by the colonial power.

C.Lalnunchanga's re-writing takes on a new significance in that the silencing of the native by the colonialist is simultaneously juxtaposed with the exasperation the colonialist feels at his inability to break their spirit and suppress the Mizo's continued defiance and undaunted refusal to acknowledge another as superior. McCabe had *silenced* the Thahdo<sup>11</sup> translator Luchuara, by condescendingly telling him that they did not need opinions from a servant (Lalnunchanga, 2007, p. 217). But in the aforementioned confrontation between the chief Puilura and the Superintendent McCabe, it is evident that no amount of threat nor scorn or contempt would perturb the old chief's composure. Rather, it is McCabe who raises his voice and wrings his hands in frustration and ultimately leaves Puilura's prison cell in defeated anger while the later remains composed despite being imprisoned in a cell.

In creating such scenarios where the “superiority” of the white man is overtly questioned, C.Lalnunchanga subtly re-writes the image of the Mizo which had been

<sup>9</sup> *Pasaltha*: Refers to a man who has proven his prowess as a hunter and warrior, and respected for his knowledge in these fields. *Pasalthate* is its plural form.

<sup>10</sup> *Tlawmngaihna*: The spirit of selfless service for others.

<sup>11</sup> Thahdo: A sub-tribe of the Mizo.

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constructed as a foil, thereby de-constructing the colonial native, the Mizo, who had been declared insensible to ethics and came to represent not only the “absence of values, but also the negation of values” (Fanon, 2001, p. 32). The indigenous, in these works regain the prime position upon the basis of which the Mizo can ground their identity which had sadly come to signify all that was *thing* i.e. backward, undeveloped and inferior. In inculcating the idea of the Mizo who is firmly rooted in his knowledge of self and for whom no amount of persuasion or intimidation can change this perception, the Mizo and his worldview are re-centered. Through the re-writing of the historical Mizo can be made, the beginnings of a break from the hegemonic structure of the neo-colonial world fuelled by globalisation.

### Continuing the narrative

As Edward Said said, “(N)o one today is purely *one* thing” (Said, 1994, p. 407). “Other” experience, knowledge and skill are finding their way to the Mizo way of life, reinforcing the indigenous at the reclaimed centre, both culturally and economically. The resultant output therefore, makes possible the subversion of the existent hegemony created by neo-colonialism. What began in the “domain of literary and cultural syncretism” (Jan Mohamed, 1986, p.104) will thus have a tangible outcome. This claim can be made in the sense that experiences, skills and knowledge are garnered from outside Mizoram by the migrant workforce who brings them “home”. All these influence the local in turn – experiences, skill and knowledge; and adds and enhances the Mizo culture, in all spheres of life. The re-writing of the centre continues for the Mizo. It was instrumental in reclaiming the indigenous identity of the past and hence in contemporary times too, in the construct of the post colonial self that has reclaimed or rather is in the process of reclaiming the center. It now has the potential to break the hold of globalization and neo-colonialism in a forcibly shrinking pandemic world where the local has to be the focus.

As in the past, the communal has come to the forefront playing a prominent part in the daily struggle against a present and deadly threat, to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the changed times require different sets of skills and knowledge, the community has come together as in the past. The crisis has brought out the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* in the best possible way. It has manifested in various ways – laboratory technicians volunteering to make up for inadequate man-power, members of the Local Level Task Force, all volunteers, who take up the daunting task of contact-tracing of identified patients of Covid-19. During the nation and state-wide total lockdown, there were instances where various villages would send their harvests of vegetables and fruits for free, to different localities in Aizawl city knowing there would be a scarcity. Likewise, various localities in the urban areas would collect donations to be given to task forces in far-flung areas to aid with the expenses of keeping duty. The contributions and the sacrifices that are being made for the community though different are as important and appreciated as those made by Nghalthianga and his fellow *pasalthate*.

The religious and cultural aspects of Mizo life are once again becoming synchronous. The church representing the religious and the YMA<sup>12</sup> representing the cultural have slowly

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<sup>12</sup> YMA: An initialism for Young Mizo Association. The Young Mizo Association was established on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1935 as the Young Lushai Association (YLA) as an alternative to the regulating and educational function of the *zawlbuk* (the bachelor’s barracks where all the young men of the village sleep for security reasons) and with a view to preserve and nurture Mizo culture and Christianity. Its motto is “YMA *chu tanpui ngaite tanpuitu a ni*” i.e. “YMA is the help for the helpless”. It is at present the largest and single most influential group in Mizoram with a membership of all Mizos from the age of 14 no matter the place of residence. It has taken upon itself the task of ensuring the continuation of

but surely moved towards a unified front where the welfare of the community takes precedence over the set roles they had come to taken on in post colonial times. Since there can be no religious congregation and hence, no church services, the bastion of the haloed walls of the church are now open to serve the community for matters that are not religious in nature. Rather than the church leaders, it is the representatives of the community who are taking the initiative within the church premises. In most localities, Covid Quarantine Centers are being set up in the Church halls and in some, even Covid Care Centers. So, despite the absence of church services or congregations, the church continues to serve its “flock” in an even more expansive and encompassing way. It is not just the members of the particular congregation but also members of other denominations as well as faiths who enter the church and partake of the communion of the sense of brotherhood or *inlungrualna* that is available to all in the community irrespective of tribe, race, religious beliefs, cultures, occupations and social standing.

### Conclusion

Leslie Silko had remarked “(D)enial of ourselves and our own origins is one of the most devastating psychological weapons the Whites have ever found to use against us” (Castillo, 1994, p. 231). Indeed, the Mizo had donned “White Masks”, even to the extent of attempting to obliterate indigenous institutions like the *zawlbuk*<sup>13</sup> that were crucial in nurturing future generations to the Mizo worldview causing the post colonial society to become “so fragmented, so sharply reduced, and so completely diminished in our sense of what our true (as opposed to asserted) cultural identity is” (Said, 1994, p. 387). Re-writing history that foregrounds the silenced perspective has made possible the recovery of “true” cultural identity which in practicality can no longer be “pure”. Thus, any claim to identity in the modern world lies in the “interstices” of Homi Bhabha’s ‘in-between’ spaces which “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood” thereby initiating “new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (Bhabha, 2009, p. 2). The ongoing negotiation between the resurgent indigenous, being central to cultural identity, and the demands of the times being lived are the canvas upon which the narrative is being continued. Robert Young had pointed out the “risk of imposing our own categories and politics upon the past” and “remain unaware of how much the otherness both formed and still secretly informs our present” (Young, 2017, p. 161). Despite this, the re-writing of the Mizo carries on. And as in the past rather than the individual, the society now holds the key to the perpetuation of the Mizo worldview and ethos where community or the feeling of the commune is what will ensure the survival of the Mizo people and taking the bigger picture into account, the survival of the human race, even. That this is efficacious can be seen in the fact that Mizoram continues to be the state with the least number of Covid-19 patients and the only state where there is no record of death due to the virus.

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commendable characteristics of indigenous Mizo society such as *tlawmngaihna*, the traditional dances and clothes, the traditional funeral practice of comforting and assisting the family of the dead, and even burying of the dead. With the increase in anti-social activities previously foreign to Mizoram, the YMA has also taken up the role of vigilante, collaborating with government authorities. With the approval and support of the people in all its initiatives, the YMA has come to represent the Mizo community and stand for all that is Mizo.

<sup>13</sup> *Zawlbuk*: The bachelor’s barracks where all the young men of the village sleep for security reasons. The barracks also served as a place for the youth to learn the history, the culture and develop the sense of responsibility towards the community that was central to their survival as a people.



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**Bio-note**

Catherine Laldinpui Fanai is an Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Kolasib College, Mizoram. She has done her M.Phil from Mizoram University, titled *Towards a New Folklore in Selected Novels of Louise Erdrich: A Study in Ojibwean Culture and Identity*. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis on select works of C.Lalnunchanga, an eminent Mizo writer on the issues of identity formation and culture from the Department of English, Mizoram University. Her Areas of Academic Interest include Postcolonial Studies, Culture Studies, and Native American Studies.

Email: [cathmadini@gmail.com](mailto:cathmadini@gmail.com)