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MARGIN MOVING TO CENTRE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STEPHEN GILL'S *IMMIGRANT* AND GLORIA NAYLOR'S *MAMA DAY*

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In a trans cultural society, multiculturalism adds richness and diversity, but it also generates a lot of dilemmas and issues for the minority groups. There is a social and psychological need for the uprooted and fragmented people to be sustained by a sense of common experience, when they feel estranged. 'Race' provokes more emotional and violent feelings than any other word in the contemporary world. It has been used to justify the differential treatment of the ethnic minorities all over the world. The concept of ethnic groups was socially constructed to facilitate slavery, holocaust, colonialism and ethnic cleansing. Classification of people, allocation of their rights and privileges are based on genetically insignificant features like color, hair, skin and nose. Race based on color is the signifier of the other in the case of Africans, African Americans and Asians. The other is marginalized in the mainstream society.

The marginal man... is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in not merely different but antagonistic cultures... his mind is crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and either wholly or in part fuse (Park 53).

Marginalization at the individual level results in an individual's exclusion from meaningful participation in the society. The whites have considered themselves the most civilized and hence superior to all other races culturally, morally, and intellectually. In the process of the colonization this idea of white superiority fortified, creating a sense of

inferiority in the psyche of 'the colonized'. Thus the natives of the "New World" (America and Australia) were labelled as primitives and the people of the East were believed to be barbaric.

In his *The Souls of Black Folks*, W.E.B. Du Bois penned the plight of the African American race in America: "Men call the shadow prejudice and learnedly explain it as a natural defence of culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the higher' against the 'lower races'". (Bois 16) Edward Said in his *Orientalism* argues "Western cultural institutions are responsible for the creation of those 'others' the Orientals, whose very differences from the Occident helps establish that binary opposition by which Europe's own identity can be established. (Ahluwalia 63)

The diasporic sensibilities of the 'other' are universal and their literatures express their sense of alienation and powerlessness which lead to meaninglessness in their existence. This paper is a comparative study of Stephen Gill's *Immigrant* and Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*.

Stephen Gill is a prolific writer born in Sialkot in Punjab, a region which is now in Pakistan, where he spent his childhood. He taught in Ethiopia obtained a doctorate in Ottawa University and settled in Canada. Global peace and social concerns are the main areas of his interest. He has authored more than twenty books including novels, literary criticism and collection of poems.