**Motive**: can boundaries be a political tool? Conventionally seen to be just crucible, sensitivity – Noel Sturgeon. How is it political? “The Hunt” and “Maharlika” as case studies to analyse through this lens, and to tackle key questions arising from their analysis.

**TS**: I argue that “The Hunt” and “Maharlika” use liminality as a political tool (along with its usual role as a crucible of difference) both in their narrative and their wider message. This is a consequence of their temporary subversion of value hierarchies, which I will illustrate by comparing the language, writing style, character identities and plot of the two stories. Often photographic negative.

Main ideas: fluid boundaries subvert rigid hierarchy, boundaries within and b/w subalterns.

Maharlika: criticism of mechanistic thought, grand narratives.

**Fluid Character identity – boundaries as Political**

* Within and b/w latitudes of difference

In narrative: white-blood as positive.

* Further, a sceptic might ask whether “The Hunt” suffers from a white saviour trope in portraying Mary’s white blood to be superior. However, this is not Devi’s intention. Rather, it is a viewpoint held by the boxed-in, socialized natives. She makes this evident through Prasadji’s justification of Mary’s extraordinary nature with “It figures. White blood.”
* Victory isn’t complete (the village still has been plundered).

Use Soper to analyse the question, Karen to answer it.

In wider message: In a rather political story about exploitation of tribals, why does Mahasweta Devi choose to depict the protagonist as a mixed-race tribal woman rather than as a conventional native who exemplifies the tribe? (use Soper observation -> extend to Karen) Why does Carlo recognise his parents as “blood-thirsty strangers” and then go on to kill an innocent child? (boundary of identity shows illogic of domination)

Bourgeois women as complicit in oppression – boundary b/w subalterns is clearer (Blue Donkey)

* Carlo’s mother (“you should have seen her,” “anything for my babies”)
* Prasadji’s wife (Mrs.Prasad).

Fluid human nature identities b/w characters and b/w subalterns

**Kate Soper: Great chain of being 🡪 transformed**

**Nature = boundary (within and outside)**

**Human nature = instinct is bad. But both tehsildar (lusty nature) and Mary are shown to be instinctive in their assigning of traits. Mary is not 100% rational. Healthy and unhealthy nature in both characters.**

**Mother’s dual instincts (both Carlos’ mom), father as instinctive and rational (museum).**

**Soper – man in nature (great chain of being), nature in man (human nature). 100% culture or 100% nature. How do boundaries help to go from Great Chain to Great Web?**

**Representation of Subaltern in plot as Political**

* Plot arc (train & railway station, Mary’s liminal shift = pivot point, frame story).

**Plot**

**Narrative boundaries**

“The Hunt”

Mary’s liminal shifts from first to second nature (Tehsildar, cutting of Sal, the hunt) drive the plot. Bookchin.

In wider message: asphyxiation of borders by a value hierarchy + environmental degradation (deprivation of oxygen). Bookchin’s posit of a rigid “deep-seated hierarchy” (and consequent environmental harm) is often broken by depiction of porous identities in the texts. For example, Mary often performs both “first” and “second” nature roles in the “The Hunt,” thus laying her groundwork for class and environmental liberation.

True political agency = not personal reversal, but systemic.

Development of social institutions in Kuruda over time – slowly destroy village

Keep adapting (village-town)

Only Mary has agency to intervene and change the environment – to hunt the hunter.

Sophisticated tourist attraction – 2nd nature

“Maharlika”

Frame story - purely 2nd nature - complete separation b/w plots and natures. Intersection at the end leads to a questioning and tension (discussed in the next section), but nothing more.

**Physical boundaries in plot**

Physical boundaries provide a clear political tool within the plot of Maharlika, and as a political message against class exploitation. When borderzones temporarily crystallize into hard borders, both stories zoom into the subaltern, making it the hyper-local, forcing an acknowledgement of what lies on the other and Other side. Faced with representing this Other side, the two stories have two political expedient options - celebrate borders within the Other side or lump them into one. Sturgeon recommends us to play down differences.

**The Hunt: Train + railway station**

**Maharlika: vermin city**

Under stress – entangled, fluid borderzones crystallize into hard borders to focus on the subaltern Other. We zoom in on one side, trumpet the difference , viewing it as the photographic negative of the hegemony.

* Essentializing induces us to suspend disbelief and emotion – crucial to logic of domination. Thus, Sturgeon’s strategic essentialism might also share the same pitfalls.
* Identity vs no identity
  + Promote individuality through Self-Narrative: Mary has one, shaped by her unique circumstances. Whereas in Maharlika, everyone follows the groove of nationalism and bigotry. This is why at the end, Carlo struggles with his (originally it is nationalistic, but he starts to question it).
* Race vs no race
  + Vermin plot

**Language, Narration and Writing Style boundaries as Political**

In wider message: postcolonial reclamation by the native (use Andersen)

* The Hunt : plenty of linguistic diversity. Maharlika: besides the title, none
* gender, Marxism, capitalism and language
  + Minoli Salgado: decries translation as overly intrusive
  + Spivak: as emblematic of evolution in language (second nature and Marxism)
* Cash: “cash” vs money. Statistics – lump together the vermin as numbers. Same for Oraon.
* “The Hunt” : myriad. With Prasadji, benign, With the coming of Tehsildar, malicious.
* “Maharlika”: singular, horrible.
* Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory: “The Hunt” teases out each element in Mary’s life. “Maharlika” collapses all of them to one grand narrative.
* The two texts peel the layers in different ways
* Carlo pushed to the extreme, thinking he’s going to die : “or were these bloodthirsty strangers really his parents.” Why does Carlo kill the infant and not the adult?
* Another instance of photographic negative - family: Mary grew up without a father (unconventional). For Carlo’s family, it is a very conventional nuclear family (relatable, yet distant).
* Feels like The Hunt is bottom up, while Maharlika is top-down (maybe this is why characters are generic enough, the family uses familiar slang, all roles are conventional
* This gives Sarmiento the ease to make the narrative in “Maharlika” dystopian, and mockingly satirical, such that it is convincing not only for the character but also the reader. The impartial, stoic tone of the story is persuasive – it could easily have come from one of Datu’s films. There is no narrative commentary, and the reporting is flat – to emphasize the normalization of the slow violence.
* “not that hunting has anything to do with race”- that’s just urban legend
* “… the Phillippines was rewarded by being made a colony of the United States”
* Help us to situate the texts geographically – in Asia.