Chapter 1

Between the Self and the Ghost

I

The practice of ghostwriting is as old as literature itself and, possibly, exists “ever since the concept of written language was first invented” (Crofts 1). A ghostwriter serves a subject who is textually challenged and requires a professional help to shape his words into a comprehensible tale. The ghostwritten accounts are often written in first person to create an illusion of personal story. In the case of sports autobiographies, ghostwriting is almost a compulsion since the phrase ‘literary athlete’ is considered an oxymoron or an “unlikely combination” (Rubin, Jr. 240). The ghostwriters in sports autobiographies are not just hovering phantoms who lend narrative cohesion and authorial semblance to otherwise unwriterly sportspersons by way of effacing their presence altogether. They appear right on the cover page with interesting formulations.

Ghostwriters either write ‘with’ the sportsperson who happens to be the protagonist of the autobiography or write along with him, or in some cases write as professional scribers. Here, the semantics of the word ‘with’ goes beyond its conjunctional and prepositional praxis; it becomes the signifier of dialogic engagement of co-presence and critical concurrence. One who writes ‘with’ the sportsperson is not and cannot be a passive scriber, or a mere eulogizer; the very fact of with-ness entails a negotiated togetherness, an epistemic cooperation and a poetics of agreement. ‘With-ness’ blunts the possibility of encounter or of confrontation, but it does not preclude the possibility of uncanny dissentions that might lie beneath the masqueraded unity or consensual world of an ‘authorized’ autobiography. ‘With-ness’ also becomes an occasion or a pretext of performance, more so when the partner with whom one writes ‘with’ is a man or woman of achievement and, hence, of hard earned stardom. The term ‘with’ does not signify parasitical dependence between the two, rather it stands for a contractual space.

The ghosted autobiography allows the ghostwriter to present a mediated subjectivity of the sportsperson. It engenders the element of cultural politics as a
ghostwriter pulling the authorial strings may foreground his subjective prejudices and biases consciously or unconsciously. The subject controls the content of the story and, on the other hand, the writer presumably controls the form in order to reshape it. The writer’s selection of questions for his subject, to a certain extent, allows him to regulate the content as well. Alessandro Portelli problematizes the whole issue:

In a very concrete sense, the source’s narrative can be seen as a response to the historian’s initial question: “When were you born?”, “Tell me about your life.”, “Who was the union secretary at that time?”

By opening the conversation, the interviewer defines the roles and establishes the basis of narrative authority. (Portelli 13)

In the whole process, the writer has the authority to create “meaning at odds with the overt intent of the dictator” (Sanders 446). Since the written narratives in these collaborations are derived from the interviews, a tension between “orality” and “literacy” (448) runs through the narrative form. The nonverbal elements – who is speaking to whom, on what occasion, with what sort of force, with what gestures, what facial expressions and so on – are difficult to be reproduced in a written text (447). Here, the gap occurring between literacy and orality because of the failure to recapture the non-verbal elements allows a ghostwriter to manipulate the original conversation. The outcome of such collaborative performance is that an autobiography culminates in an intimate portrait not only of its subject but also, “in sometimes subtle and sometimes blatant ways,” of its ghostwriter (Sands 40).

Karen Barad, in her essay “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” opines that representation of an object through language leaves a gap between the representation and the thing represented (804). According to her, a subject/body/matter is not a “fixed essence” (828) rather it enacts changes in itself through the dynamics of its interaction with the discursive practices. Subject/matter/body is an “ongoing historicity” (821) and, therefore, any possibility of its authentic representation in words would be a fallacy. Perhaps that is why, Malcolm X asks his ghostwriter Alex Haley, “How is it possible
to write one’s autobiography in a world so fast changing as this?” (Felber 50). His statement questions the possibility of recording one’s full consciousness or subjectivity in a written document. This already fluid subjectivity is further complicated by the intrusion of a ghostwriter. Alex Haley himself confessed that Malcolm X’s views were “almost a complete antithesis” of his own views and, that is why, Haley wanted the autobiography to be read as “as told to” rather than “co-authored” (refer to end note 3) by him (Felber 41). Nonetheless, he managed to suppress Malcolm X’s radical otherness and transformed him into “something domestic and unthreatening through quintessential American images” (34). Due to this possibility to alter one’s subjectivity, ghostwritten autobiography becomes a subject for critical scrutiny. In the world of marked ethnic, racial, gender and political differences, K. K. Ruthven suspects the idea of speaking for the ‘other’:

In the reign of identity politics, however, ‘empathy’ becomes ideologically suspect. If nobody has the right to speak for anybody else, then to do so is an invasive act: ‘feeling into’ someone else’s mode of existence is a molestatory practice akin to feeling them up. In multicultural societies marked by social inequalities between different ethnic groups, ‘empathy’ is unmasked as a myth of benevolence designed by the powerful to justify their practice of selectively appropriating the cultures of the powerless. (Ruthven 27)

James W. Pipkin, in the Introduction to his seminal work *Sporting Lives: Metaphor and Myth in American Sports Autobiographies*, justifies the requirement of a ghostwriter in crafting a sports autobiography. His study, based on the interviews of famous ghostwriters, establishes autobiography of an athlete as his own story in which the role of a ghostwriter is to use “his craft to add the novelistic details that flesh out incidents in the story” (Pipkin 11). Despite considering sports autobiographies as “powerful cultural narratives” (7), he fails to register cultural politics of ghostwritten texts. Ghostwriting is a site of borrowing and lending power (Brandt 551). An athlete, being a person of social and cultural importance, lends currency to written words and a ghostwriter’s creativity and linguistic skills create “an improved version” of the athlete (555). Despite such claims of mutual service, there
is a potential threat of the “colonization of the story” (Ledwon 581) and the threat occurs because of the differences in the subject-positions of a sportsperson and his ghostwriter.

II

The involvement of British sports journalist Patrick Murphy in writing Pakistani cricketer turned politician Imran Khan’s autobiography reinstates the colonial “self” and “other” dimensions and results into the consolidation of the Oriental discourse. The autobiography becomes a textual equivalent of the actual relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. Imran Khan, despite being the subject of his autobiography, its protagonist as well as the master (since he employs the ghostwriter), is relegated to the position of the colonized and Patrick Murphy inspite of being a mere scriptor (and thus an employee) is elevated to the position of the colonizer. Edward Said proclaims in his masterpiece *Orientalism*: “If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction” (Said 42).

Imran Khan’s autobiography, in that sense, is a “subsequent history” (42) that polarizes the marked distinction between the Orient and the Occident. The personal narrative appears to be a hijacked account that confirms English cricket and, hence, England as the patron of prominent cricketing figures. Throughout the narrative, the feats of cricketers, including Imran Khan, are belittled while glorifying English county cricket as “a great breeding-ground for anyone who desires to improve his game” (Khan and Murphy 135). Instead of exhibiting great Pakistani cricketers like Majid Khan, Javed Miandad, Sarfraz and Zaheer Abbas as contributors to English county cricket, they are presented as products of English cricket:

Most of Pakistan’s good Test cricketers are products not of our domestic cricket but of English county cricket. The reason Pakistan became a world-class cricket team in the 70s was because of players like Majid, Asif, Zaheer, Mushtaq, Intikhab, Sarfraz, Sadiq, Javed
Miandad and myself. All these players got a chance to play English county cricket and that is what made them world class. (126)

The word “chance” (126) calls for a comment as it ensures the continuity of the British Raj in terms of cultural dominance. Moreover, any sort of departure from English cricket, as in the case of Majid Khan, is projected as a reminder of guaranteed decline. It is the white men’s burden to rehabilitate the careers of cricketers from the Third World otherwise “many players in Pakistan like me would have been destroyed after just one Test” (19). E. P. Thompson while writing about the food riots of 1790s in England went on to the extent of writing imaginative history of things that never happened. While the other historians were busy observing the “blind reactions of hungry bodies,” Thompson was writing about the possibilities and rules of an unrealized future (Gallagher and Greenblatt 57). Patrick Murphy too becomes victim to the presumptions as he assumes, “If Richard Hadlee had been English, he would have taken 300 wickets by now” (Khan and Murphy 83). His inherent belief of Western superiority allows him to explain English cricket in hyperbolic terms:

Someone said that Alan Ward, one of England’s opening bowlers, was faster than Wes Hall, and some of the juniors like Talat Ali wondered if we would see the ball at all once it left his hand. They would say that the fielding in England was so good that if you nicked the ball, there was no point in looking round to see if the catch has been taken. Our bowlers were told by the experienced hands that we would do well just to beat the bat. (12-13)

Murphy’s eurocentrism continues in the representation of British media which is “far more civilised than some sections in Pakistan” (109). This time the word “civilised” (109) seeks attention since it regenerates the wholesome debate on the essentialist nature of binary oppositions. In the same strain, the internal conflicts of Pakistani team (to say non-euphemistically, their uncivilised behaviour) are set in stark contrast with the attitude of a civilized Englishman like Arnold Long who was “scared to get involved in any type of controversy either with the Establishment or the umpires” (144). Murphy implies that the “moral code” which C L R James discusses at length in his path-breaking work *Beyond a Boundary* is a trait solely to be found in
English cricketers (James 217). Therefore, using cricket as an ideological apparatus, Patrick Murphy has been able to enhance the myth of Western superiority in the process of writing Imran Khan’s autobiography.

Anything that is not stereotypically British constitutes the Orient which is deemed to be “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 1). Hence, Said’s views on the Orient and James’ insights on native strokeplay, which insults the English “straight bat” code (refer to end note 6), expose why Pakistani cricketer Javed Miandad’s batting style appears “exotic” to Imran Khan’s English ghostwriter (Khan and Murphy 48). Murphy, in order to neutralize the West Indian threat to English supremacy in fast bowling, dwells into environmental determinism and labels them as “naturally athletic lithe race, beautifully built to bowl fast” (128). The hidden implication is that the West Indian bowlers are naturally gifted whereas the English have attained supremacy through practice and sheer hard work. Murphy’s resentment against West Indian fast bowlers reflects in the very beginning of the autobiography. He implies that Imran Khan, already considering cricket as nothing special a game, becomes “even less enthusiastic” about it after having seen the sight of pouring blood from a Pakistani batsman’s nose (1). Murphy, in an undertone, holds West Indian fast bowler Wes Hall responsible for discouraging a seven-year-old boy to play cricket, forgetting that cricket world owes body-line legacy to former English captain Douglas Jardine.

It is claimed that a sportsperson checks the final draft “to make sure it’s right” (Pipkin 12). If this is the case, why could Imran Khan not understand the nuances of language used by Murphy? He rather surrenders to “oriental mentality” (Said 44) as he shows no objection on the portrayal of India and Pakistan as typical Third World countries (Khan and Murphy 154). He once again fails to comprehend that even the ideas of First and Third World are constructed notions. Another important issue that Imran Khan-Patrick Murphy collaboration raises is whether it has been a conscious effort on the part of Murphy to consolidate the old canonical categories of the self and the other. Edward Said seems to answer both the questions as he states that “like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western” (Said 42).
According to him, the discourse of orientalism is so consistent within itself that its “pervasive influence, lasts upto the present” (44).

III

Famous golfer Jeev Milkha Singh begins the Introduction to his father Milkha Singh’s autobiography by stating that “[i]t is really difficult to be objective when you have a father as decorated as mine” (Singh and Sanwalka 2013). Any ward, for that matter, would face this difficulty when it comes to writing about a father – a figure to be idolized and eulogized. Sonia Sanwalka, Indian Olympian Milkha Singh’s daughter, in the pursuit of ghostwriting her father’s autobiography The Race of My Life, seems to be handcuffed with similar expectations of ornamenting a father’s image with larger than life significations. She writes well within the frame of the nationalist construction of patriarchy where the father belongs to the “outer” domain of the world and the mother to the “inner” sphere of the home (Chatterjee 120).

What the readers are made to witness is not a father objectively observed in blood and flesh in the private sphere of a family, but an ‘on-duty’ father who is always on a mission as a soldier for Indian Army, as an athlete for India in Olympics, as an Ambassador for peaceful foreign-policy, and as an Administrator for the welfare of sports:

Soon after the National Games, our team had received an invitation from the Pakistani government for the Indo-Pak Sports Meet. What an ironic twist of fate. I was returning to the land where I was born, where I had lost my home and most of my family in the inhuman savagery that followed Partition. It was not the religious bigotry that troubled me, just the fear that the visit would revive those horrible memories. I did not want to go, but Pandit Nehru intervened, saying that this visit was for the honour of our country and that I was going there as an ambassador for India. (Singh and Sanwalka 80)

This particular instance suggests that Sonia Sanwalka gives voice to those aspects of her father’s personality where the father-for-the-nation overtakes the father-for-the-family. His visit to Pakistan, a land of painful memories where his parents were
slaughtered to death, emphasizes the importance of national interests above personal preferences and elevates Milkha Singh to the status of a national hero. Moreover, a good deal of his life story covers his correspondences with the nationalist elites like Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Maharaja of Patiala and Punjab’s chief minister Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon. Pandit Nehru’s decision to declare a national holiday on Milkha Singh’s arrival in India after winning two gold medals in the Commonwealth games finally contributes to his entry into the cadre of national importance (75-6). In stark contrast, the mother is buckled up with domesticity and nature in the nationalist formation of motherhood (Kumar A. 76-8). Sonia Sanwalka remains indifferent towards her mother’s experiments with sports and sports administration since her mother’s public sphere is left untouched by her. Her mother, despite being a woman of repute as a captain of Indian Volleyball team as well as an Assistant Director at Sports Department, Punjab, is demoted to a symbol of matronly sacrifice and suffering. When her daughters were sent to a boarding school in Kasauli, a hill station a short distance away from their home in Chandigarh, “every evening she would look up at the lights of Kasauli and cry” (Singh and Sanwalka 121). She is thus entrapped into the ideological bait of motherhood where her primary responsibility is to nurture her children.

The women-nature relationship finds voice in the chapter “The Bird and a Melancholic Tree”. On the one hand, Milkha Singh is compared with a free bird which allows him to occupy a space in the public domain and, on the other hand, a woman’s rootedness to the inner sphere of ghar (home) is consolidated by the fact that his wife is compared with a melancholic tree which has a fixed essence and therefore cannot displace itself outside the four walls of the house. She is made to possess a stereotypical image of mother: “Nimmi was a devoted wife and mother. I am still amazed by how efficiently she managed her personal life and professional life without letting either of them suffer. She was a perfect housewife, running our home so smoothly that all our needs were taken care of” (121). The use of adjectives such as “devoted wife” and “perfect housewife” belittles Nimmi Kaur’s on-field experiences and establishes her as a typical Third-World woman. Such unconscious rivalry
towards her mother on the part of Sonia Sanwalka can be seen as a manifestation of Electra complex in her personality. She obscures the most glorifying aspects of her mother’s personality. On the contrary, she not only captures her father’s inhuman act of killing birds and animals during shikaar but also considers it as “a manly pastime” (122).

Sonia Sanwalka, trapped in the mode of nationalist construction of patriarchy, fails to recognize the scope of critical adjustments in the persona of a father which contemporary fiction writers manage to practice in their works. Salman Rushdie, for example, in his magnum opus *Midnight’s Children* impertinently presents the image of a father who “snored richly” (86) and spoke in “over-loud voice” (87). Moreover, the father is caricatured for his “vulture-hooded eyes” and “squashy belly” (87) which make his persona all the more realistic. The “Oedipal hostility” (Kakar 132) towards his father which is manifested in the face of caricatures in *Midnight’s Children* is substituted by Electra-admiration in *The Race of My Life*. The other worldly disposition of a father as “a guru, a mendicant, a saint” seeks a place for him in the Sikh saintly tradition (Singh and Sanwalka 131). In addition, thriving on the narrative of Sikh nationalism, the life story revives the same old conflict that was once prevalent between the Sikh saints and the Muslim invaders. The hostility between Sikhs and Muslims which became “less prominent in the eighteenth century” and was revived “during the horrible events of partition” (Veer 54) finds its extension in the on-field rivalry between Milkha Singh and Abdul Khaliq of Pakistan. In the symbolic warfare of sports, the “fighting-ascetics” (Veer 43) are substituted by sporting-ascetics like Milkha Singh who follow saintly principles for athletic prowess:

I lived an austere, almost monkish life, abiding by the rules I had set for myself. I shunned late nights and never indulged in bad habits like smoking, drinking or too much caffeine – I have seen the impact such addictions have had on athletes, how they affect speed and reduce muscle power.

As my fame grew so did the attention I received from my fans, both men and women. Huge crowds would follow me wherever I went, and often I would find that the girls outnumbered boys. At times their
boldness would embarrass me, but there were also times when I would feel flattered by their admiration. But one of my rules was to avoid any close relationship with the opposite sex. (Singh and Sanwalka 50)

Sonia Sanwalka further validates Milkha Singh’s saintly appeal as she establishes him as a Jungian archetype of ‘wise old man’.12 Aiming the life story to be a source of inspiration for others, she exhibits him as a spiritual mentor whose shabad or spiritual message carries forward his teachings. For instance, addressing the young Indian athletes who “have lost the killer instincts when it comes to winning events at the international level” (137), he asks in a rhetorical manner: “‘Do you think that to become Milkha Singh is a joke? A sleight of hand? No, to be Milkha Singh, you need courage and conviction, as well as a goal to aspire towards.’ And for me, that goal was always to excel in running. Otherwise, would I have practised so relentlessly?” (147). The cliché words used for preaching such as “courage”, “conviction”, “goal”, “aspire”, and “excel” provide a didactic turn to the narrative. In the latter half of the autobiography, this didacticism is supplemented by epigrammatic thoughts and philosophical Urdu poetry which reinforce his saintly image. Nonetheless, a man who became a champion overcoming the Partition and poverty does not require narcissistic self-praise to motivate a generation (for example, ‘Do you think that to become Milkha Singh is a joke?’) but the involvement of a father-fixated daughter as a ghostwriter takes away the element of humility from the text.

*The Race of My Life,* apart from being a story of a champion runner, attempts to serve as an alternative history as it is a simultaneous commentary on the Partition between India and Pakistan. The life narrative however discusses the plight of Milkha Singh, his family and villagers during the World War II and later on during the Partition but it lacks the element of first-hand experience because of the ghostwriter’s intervention. The supplementary ideas of the ghost juxtaposed with the testimony provided by Milkha Singh invalidate the text’s claim of being a counter history. For instance, instead of merely describing Milkha Singh’s sister’s attempt to save her child from burning flames, Sanwalka starts glorifying the event as she adds: “Fearlessly, she braved the flames, rescued the baby and ran away. Such is a mother’s love” (12). The use of archetypal phraseology for bravery replays the tunes of
conventional histories. In addition, the temptation towards “the grandeur of something larger” (Pandey 88) i.e. idealized motherhood, contaminates the subjective sensitivity. Autobiographical accounts that claim to capture subjective historical past suffer on the account of the ghostwriter’s inability to retrieve the emotive aspects of the subject’s experience. Inspite of having a family connection, Sonia Sanwalka fails to empathize with Milkha Singh’s nightmarish memory of the brutal killing of his family members:

The fields were soaked with blood and decomposing bodies lay scattered around, a feast for vultures and dogs. Identification of the dead was almost impossible, and in desperation, the soldiers placed all the bodies, including those of my family, in one big heap, poured kerosene over them and cremated them. More than fifteen hundred villagers perished on that fateful day in Gobindpura. (Singh and Sanwalka 13)

The description seems to be a journalistic account of the most fatal incident of Milkha Singh’s life. The shift from personal to factual in providing the statistical data of the deceased people develops like a newspaper report. Autobiography as a narrative largely relies upon the role of memory but the writer’s state of not being a participant denies her the essential support of memory. Stephen A. Saphiro asserts that “[m]emory may be the mother of all the muses … All details have meaning to the memory of the subject, because he can supply emotional color and context” (432). In Milkha Singh’s autobiography the scope of an elaborative and emotive narration is not fully realized because of the dissociation of the ghost with the incident. In turn what the readers receive is a racy description whose preciseness is enhanced through punctuations. The detachment element can further be traced in projecting one’s parents as “a feast for vultures and dogs” (Singh and Sanwalka 13). In another instance, Sonia Sanwalka presents a somewhat similar picture of the killing of Milkha Singh’s father: “I saw my father fighting valiantly, then I saw him fall, fatally struck by a horse-riding murderer” (12). Using the courtly adjective i.e. “horse-riding” for the murderer neutralizes the element of anger against him. Nonetheless, Sanwalka cannot altogether be held responsible for her inability to bring Milkha Singh’s voice
to the surface. Her subject-position of being a daughter largely affects the aesthetics of the life story. Just as it is difficult for a father to write about a daughter, it is equally complex for a daughter to write about a father. In the pretext of an as-told-to narrative, the nucleus of maryada or restraint has to be followed by the daughter and the father in framing their questions and answers respectively.

IV

The control of the ghost over his subject is more obvious in Vecsey-Navratilova collaboration. Martina Navratilova’s autobiography Being Myself is a valuable commentary on the socialist economy in Czechoslovakia. George Vecsey, an American sports journalist, while critiquing the oppression caused by the Communists, cashes on every opportunity to revere American democratic standards of life. Presenting a unilateral picture of communism in Czechoslovakia, Vecsey suggests that for “someone with a skill, a career, an aspiration, there was only one thing to do: get out” (Navratilova and Vecsey 82). Here, getting out means leaving one’s own homeland and taking a shelter in the United States. The hidden implication is that only those people who defect from the Soviet Union and its satellite states to the United States are ambitious individuals and the rest of the people are mind-washed by the communist propaganda. The defection of notable personalities especially sportspersons, artists and authors provide a moral boost to American cultural dominance over the Eastern bloc. Vecsey, at times, audaciously expresses America’s desire to exercise its influence over Czechoslovakia as he laments that it “was a shame the Russians got to Czechoslovakia just ahead of the Americans at the end of the war” (70). Thus, he relegates the Czech people to a perpetual subjugation as if they are destined to be under some outside influence.

After her defection to the States, Navratilova makes several nostalgic claims which find expression in phrases such as “a rich history” (92), “my country” (82), “my real roots” (174) and “pretty Czech countryside” (84), on the other hand, America is perceived as “my adopted country” (69). Moreover, she does not seem to become an integral part of the United States. For her, people of Czechoslovakia collectively remain “we” (68, 92), whereas people of America have always been referred to as “Americans” (17, 70, 75). Despite such claims by Navratilova,
Vecsey’s only concern is to establish American supremacy by putting forward its promises. In order to fulfill this purpose, he even ventures to draw forth the reminiscences of the times prior to Navratilova’s life span:

There was also the proper political slant on everything they taught us about America. We would hear about exploitation in the United States, but then we would see one of those Hollywood movies and we would think it was the exact opposite. And then there were the memories of the period from 1918 to 1938, when Czechoslovakia was a free, Western democracy. Czechs and Slovaks never forgot the promises of the West. (68-9)

Appropriating Navratilova’s life story Vecsey manipulates it into propaganda for democracy and reverence of the United States for being its greatest custodian. He, instead of providing an “improved version” of Navratilova, replenishes an “improved version” of America (Brandt 555). Navratilova’s life story is undoubtedly an idealized version of America as it seems to obscure the negative side of the States. In a ghostwritten text, what is missing is a point of discussion since omissions generally intricate the reality and lead to obscurity. Most of the times, the narrative appears to be a scrubbed justification of America’s misgivings. When the Russians had entered Czechoslovakia, the Czech people were expecting Americans to back them from the German border. Since America failed to deliver in this moment of crisis, Vecsey excuses the expectations of the Czech people by stating that “America had its own problems in Vietnam that year and was in no position to do anything” (Navratilova and Vecsey 75). Ironically, it was Vietnam who had its own share of problems because of the intervention of America. Instead of exhibiting the brutality and casualties of war which affected people on both sides, Vecsey presents it as America’s problem and conceals the motives behind the involvement of America in the Vietnam War. Even if, Vecsey drops some hints about the crimes in America, he ventures to balance this negativity by floating a positive marker in comparison: “All the shooting and raping. I can understand crimes of passion, but the random violence definitely gave me a dual picture: on the one hand, warm friendship; on the other, senseless
violence” (117). Even in this comparison “warm friendship” dominates “senseless violence” as these crimes are “random” incidents and therefore negligible in nature. Moreover, labeling the violence and rape as “crimes of passion” takes away their national specificity and turns them into overarching universal occurrences.

In order to establish America as a benefactor of minorities, Vecsey attempts to generalize the Czech people’s view on homosexuality. Navratilova’s father’s behaviour, on knowing that his daughter is physically involved with women, is described as “fifty years behind the times” (179) and his attempts to convince her through friends and relatives as “soap opera, Czech style” (181). Vecsey fails to realize that America’s standpoint on homosexuality is equally “behind the times” as “there are some states where homosexuality is a crime” (191). Moreover, the issue of racial prejudice in America is treated with a degree of reservation by Navratilova’s male-white-privileged ghostwriter. He denies the possibility of racial discrimination as he speaks through Navratilova: “They had always told us how American blacks were so oppressed, how poor they were, and yet here was a black athlete, obviously in terrific shape, winning a gold medal for his country. That told me something about the Communist propaganda was not quite right” (66). Vecsey attempts to silence the racial difference that was really there and was practiced in the form of violence, seclusion and verbal assault. His subject-position of not being a black engenders an element of the politics of representation in the text. Gilles Deleuze states that representation has “only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective” and therefore it “fails to capture the affirmed world of difference” (55). Vecsey’s inability to see this difference results in the projection of America as a free and secular country.

V

The discourse concerning race takes an altogether different shape when a black ghostwriter represents his coloured subject. Boxing legend Muhammad Ali’s ghostwriter Richard Durham, being a black himself and having suffered the same kind of oppression, naturally seems to identify with Ali’s agony and condemns the United States for its inequality and colour bias:
I got myself together to tell them everything I’d been thinking. ‘This is supposed to be the land of the brave and the home of the free, and you are disgracing it with your actions. . . . I fought for the glory of my country and you should be ashamed of what you are doing. You serve any foreigner here, but not an American Negro citizen. You’ll have to take me to jail, because I’ll stay until I get my rights. You should be ashamed . . .’ (Ali and Durham 65)

Nonetheless, Ishmael Reed while reviewing Muhammad Ali’s autobiography for *The New York Times* asserts that the presence of ghostwriter Richard Durham, who at that time was working as an editor of the official publication of Nation of Islam *Muhammad Speaks*, is responsible for the fact that the book sounds “xenophobic, a *Muhammad Speaks* editorialese” (Reed, <www.nytimes.com/books/98/10/25/specials/ali-greatest.html>). Durham’s editorial work for *Muhammad Speaks* becomes a dress rehearsal for the project of Ali’s autobiography and allows the Nation of Islam and *Muhammad Speaks* to participate as sub-texts in the main body of Ali’s life story. Derailing from its main subject, the book enters into propaganda as it, time and again, propagates the teachings of the Nation of Islam. It glorifies the political impact of organization’s weekly publication claiming that “Muslims selling *Muhammad Speaks* on the streets in many communities did so at the risk of their lives” (Ali and Durham 201). Durham at times blatantly seeks applause for his work as an editor of *Muhammad Speaks* saying that “[i]nspite of the hostility and opposition, membership in the Nation of Islam has expanded so much that there is not one major city in America without a Mosque of Islam, and *Muhammad Speaks* has the largest circulation of any publication in the world, with more than one million copies each issue” (203).

The very involvement of the ghostwriter foregrounds his personal interests in the process of narrativization. Edward Said rightly claims that “no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society” (Said 10).
Ghostwriting, in this way, enables a cultural theft and hence “it is seen to threaten social order by surreptitiously seducing and exploiting the trust people put in literacy” (Brandt 563). Things have become all the more complex because of the penetration of ghostwriting in making legal notes, drafting pharmaceutical research and preparing military reports (564-66). These particular fields deal respectively with sensitive issues such as justice, health and security. Discretion, therefore, becomes a fundamental necessity because any inconsistency on the part of a ghostwriter can lead to severe consequences.

VI

In the first person account of sports heroes, there thus always lurks the uncanny subterranean presence of the ghostwriters. They however emplot the life details of these heroes in a marker-friendly manner that readily caters to the voyeuristic needs of the star-starved masses, yet the ghostwriters unleash their own ideological biases or cultural preferences in the narrative in the name of aesthetic finesse. Notwithstanding the politics embedded in the act or practice of ghostwriting, sports autobiography has come to acquire an intellectual legitimacy in the age of counter history or popular culture. The hitherto silenced voices of black, homosexual and women athletes, though mediated and even at times tampered with ghostly undercuts, do find expression and are re-played all over again off the field, enlarging the very spatio-temporal matrices of performance. As a genre, sports autobiography has a potential to be a “subversive literary practice- because it can redistribute the goods of literacy across the usual barriers of inequality” (Brandt 568). Its contribution to the sports world is remarkable because it not only establishes the sports legacy in national discourse but also contributes as an important bit of social history from below. Writing life and boxing punches or running races or banging balls are not so easily compatible and, therefore, ghostwriters shall always remain a reality and are there to haunt us.
Notes:

1 Ghostwriters enjoy a long tradition descending from the classical Greek orators. Plato is often credited for documenting Socrates’ views and philosophy; emperors hired ghostwriters and provided them patronages; educated women wrote on the behalf of the wives of soldiers when the soldiers were away at war (Crofts 1). Literature is full of the instances of helping-hand phenomenon. For instance, Indian epic *Mahabharata* is considered as a ghostwritten account. Likewise, ghostwriting is practiced in other emerging or relatively new fields such as musical scores, visual arts, e-books writing and children fiction. Political and corporate speechwriting is also an offshoot of the practice of ghostwriting.

2 In the ghostwriting circles, sportspersons are perceived to be frustratingly reticent or silent figures. Arthur Porritt, who ghosted legendary cricketer W.G. Grace’s autobiography, recalls: “Getting material from Grace was almost heartbreaking. All he would say in recording some dazzling batting feat of his was ‘Then I went in and made 284’” (qtd. in Keating, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2001/jul/23/comment.theguardian1>). In such cases, a ghostwriter largely depends upon researched material and available media resources for writing a life story.

3 In the dictated autobiographies the collaboration of a dictator i.e. the subject, and a scribe i.e. the writer, is identified on the cover of the book in one of the following manners – “by A with B,” “by A and B” and “by A as told to B.” Each of the rubrics implies different levels of involvement on the part of the ghostwriter – “with” suggests mere assistance, “and” indicates equal contribution and “as told to” signifies that the ghost has merely transcribed the athlete’s story (Ledwon 582). Nevertheless, the skeptical audience is competent enough to discern that the writing is done by the ghostwriter and these euphemistic categories are merely a part of the agreement between the ghost and his employer.

4 Karen Barad, in her essay “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” argues that discourse is not, as traditionally described, a linguistic system composed of speech acts, grammars, or conversations.
She laments that representationalist thought perceives discursive practices merely as “spoken or written words forming descriptive statements” (819). According to her, the purpose of discursive practices is not to “describe” but to “produce” a subject or object of knowledge (819).

5 Edward Said, in his pathbreaking work *Orientalism*, states that the discourse of orientalism is based upon “an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” ” (2). In this systematically approached project of orientalism, the occident assumes the superior position of “the self”, and on the other hand, the oriental “other” is denied even its average humanity. The orient is perceived as depraved, irrational, childlike and different and the occident, its construed opposite, is virtuous, rational, mature and normal (40).

6 C L R James in *Beyond a Boundary* exposes how the colonizers used cricket as a moral code. This game in the Victorian England represented puritan values and a rigid adherence to its external codes was considered essential for internal development of its practitioners. James observes that the phrases like “straight bat” and “it’s not cricket” became the watchwords of manners and virtues. These puritan codes were designed to make people conformist in England and its colonies through a “game least spoilt by any form of vice” (238). Cricket’s moral code is discussed at length in Chapter- 2 and 3, pp. 27-61. James reveals how the code shaped his orientation towards life:

I never cheated, I never appealed for a decision unless I thought the batsman was out, I never argued with the umpire, I never jeered at a defeated opponent, I never gave to a friend a vote which by any stretch of imagination could be seen as belonging to an enemy or to a stranger… If I caught myself complaining or making excuses I pulled up. If afterwards I remembered doing it I took an inward decision not to do it again. From the eight years of school life this code became the moral framework of my existence. It has never left me. I learnt it as a boy, I have obeyed it as a man and now I can no longer laugh at it. (34-5)
According to C L R James, cricket provided an opportunity to native cricketers to mock the burdening codes of cricket while mimicking them. He opines that great cricketers like George Headley, St. Hill, Sobers, Collie Smith fought for expression against “the heavy burdens that were unexpectedly placed upon them” and every new cricket shot became their expression (James 172). He highlights how a particular shot i.e. “cutting” signifies a radical gesture to the British way of playing with the “straight bat” and, thus, symbolizes a libratory form of expression (5-7).

John Bale, in his essay “Nyandika Maiyoro and Kipchoge Keino: Transgression, colonial rhetoric and the postcolonial athlete,” accuses American journalist Kenny Moore for belittling the success of Kenyan athletes by projecting the African continent as a place that produces “the natural athlete” (227). According to Bale, such explanations of African athletes as having unfair advantage reinforce environmental determinism which is “common in colonial and neo-colonial discourse” (227).

For England’s tour of Australia in 1932-33, English captain Douglas Jardine prompted his fast bowlers to bowl short and bouncing balls aimed at the body of Australian batsmen, especially Don Bradman. The batsmen were surrounded on the leg side by the fielders at close catching positions. Jardine’s tactics proved helpful about which he wrote in an account of the tour Quest for the Ashes (Guha 196-99).

Partha Chatterjee, in The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, suggests that nationalism separated the domain of culture into binaries – the spiritual and the material, the inner and the outer, the essential and the inessential. This model was further applied to the social space and consequently the distinction between ghar and bahir was made, where the women represent “the home”, and “the world” is typically the domain of the male (119-20). This distinction is commonly known for the gendered division of social space.

Carl Jung believes that “in the case of the son, the complex (Oedipus) develops in a more masculine and typical form, whilst in the daughter, the typical affection for the father develops, with a correspondingly jealous attitude toward the mother. We call this complex, the Electra-complex” (Jung C., The Theory of Psychoanalysis 69).
Jungian archetype of ‘wise old man’ is generally a fatherly figure possessing authority who takes over the role of a mentor. In other words, he particularly performs a didactic function. The archetype of spirit “appears in a situation where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning etc. are needed but cannot be mustered on one’s own resources” (Jung C., *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* 216).