

Setting as Symbol in Yann Martel's *High Mountains of Portugal*

Mr. M. Arul Darwin<sup>1</sup>, Dr. J. Arul Anand<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract**

Writers do normally employ cultural, religious and spiritual symbols in their works. Yann Martel is one such writer who employed symbols which enriched his novels. His novels are allegorical. As theme is the soul of the story, setting is the body of the story. Unless the chance of identifying the core concepts with regard to the setting of the work, it remain futile and unexplored. Martel is a master in using settings as a vehicle to move his story of quest in a right path. In his novel, *High Mountains of Portugal*, he propagates the story with the aid of setting; employing rich symbols to code them with suspense and discovery where any reader would enjoy the thrill and sublime understanding of the truth amidst mysteries with connection to emotions, mystical experiences and by the way to the attainment of truth. Nevertheless, this research article ponders over the unleashed symbols behind the settings and leashes them to light to imbibe the quest myth that emanates in the novel.

**Keywords:** Symbol, Setting, Yann Martel, *High Mountains of Portugal*, Quest, Reality, Magical Realism.

Plot and setting are very essential to a work of fiction. While the theme can be considered to be the soul of the story, the plot and the setting are the very body of the story. Setting denotes the apt time and concurrent place of action in a literary work. It may be any literary genre; the setting of a work could be framed as an actual city or imaginary region that has been made in the work of art to project it greater than life. For example, Hardy's *Wessex*, Trollope's *Barsetshire*, and R. K. Narayan's *Malgudi* serve as models for setting. Settings could be a complete imagination as in Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada* or as in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and in Martel's *High Mountains of Portugal*.

The setting in a literary genre exhibits time and location and initiates the disposition of the story. Usually settings are the world within the story and the themes have been included in regard to the cultural, religious, historical ideologies and time. Along with plot, theme and style, settings play a vital role in the development of a literary genre. Indeed, fiction evolves through the setting. Yann Martel's novel *High Mountains of Portugal* has such strong patterns of setting that develop the story and character.

In general, setting can take three basic forms in a novel. The first point can be of the natural world or in a fictional place. In such setting, the real landscapes play an important role in the development of the narrative, beside the other living creatures and different seasons. The second point exists from the cultural and historical sources utilized in the novel. The precedent

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<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, India, aruldarwin707@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Research Supervisor, Professor of English, English Wing, DDE, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, India, arulanand65@yahoo.co.in

events that have influenced the cultural background of characters or locations in the novel are from ritual, cultural or historical impact and inspiration. The third type emanates a public or private place that has been created for the characters to act in. Setting refers to the social setting or the quest of the generation in which the ensuing events of a novel that takes place. The chief elements of the story setting may include the passage of time, place and action.

The etymological meaning of the word 'Symbol' comes from the Greek word 'symbolon' that means 'token'. This Greek word creates the sense 'compare and contrast' to determine the genuine. Symbols represent an object or an act representing something in the unconscious mind that has been repressed in the mind from the childhood days. Merriam Webster Dictionary online defines symbols as "an act, sound, or object having cultural significance and the capacity to excite or objectify a response." ([www.merriam-webster.com/](http://www.merriam-webster.com/))

Symbols have complex meanings and can be decoded from cultural, religious and spiritual point of view. It helps to judge and understand the underlying real fact in the novel. So, they carry indirect meanings to give direct understanding in connection to the cultural background. Every civilization has its own symbols and it often becomes anew to create new quests and vistas of life. Zimmer, one of the symbolists, scrutinizes the importance of symbols. He put forth the idea that words, concepts, visions, rituals and images because they mirrored through the aid of the symbols. It always remains ineffable and remains enigmatic. Symbols evince truth to the mind but are not themselves the embodiment of truth. So, it remains delusory and borrows them from culture. Each civilization and age ought to bring forth its own symbols to hover to the higher plane of life. In this novel *Signs and Symbols*, Miranda Bruce-Mitford says symbol as a visual image or sign representing an idea, a deeper indicator of universal truth. Symbols permit the reader to create new meaning through denotative and connotative meanings. In psychoanalysis, a symbol stands for an unknown on that is not clear or precise to correlate. For example, 'Christ' is the symbol of the 'Self'. Martel's 'protagonists' are the symbols of 'quest'.

Symbolism is widely employed in the works of Yann Martel. Martel elevates the humble and the common over the ideal and his symbolism is a reaction in favor of spiritual quest; may be the quest of the self representing his interest in self identity and spiritual clarity. Martel has used abundant symbols to convey the complex meanings through the setting, actions, imagery, events to exhibit the quest and to create the moral and spiritual meaning he wishes to convey. Many abstract concepts in connection to the settings are used to give shape to his plot, character and theme. Yann Martel expresses his view on symbols and allusions as:

On some level *all* literature operates on a symbolic level - language itself is symbolic - but as for strict allegory, I don't know what today's tastes are, but I do believe readers are always open to something that moves them and makes them think, and allegory can do that as well as any other mode. Personally I love allegory. *The Divine Comedy* is one of my favorite works of literature. To me, allegory is the opposite of literal, and who wants literal? (Goodreads on February 1, 2016)

In *The High Mountains of Portugal*, the Spanish-born Canadian author works in a different setting - or three settings, actually, since he offers a series of three interlocking tales. The whole is more than the sum of the parts here, since each section picks up power from the others. Three makes one, as in the Trinity. The high mountains of Portugal turn out to be grassy uplands rather than high mountains and the book turns out to be three stories rather than a novel. The stories, connected ingeniously, vary greatly in tone and quality.

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The first part of the novel *The High Mountains of Portugal*, 'Homeless', is set in the year 1904. It is about a young man named Tomás, whose life dwells in crisis after the death of his beloved wife Dora, his young son Gaspar, and his father within a week. Tomás in a wretched mood and dismay remain dormant in his self. In a while, he discovers an ancient diary that creates a quest in him for a lost treasure in the high mountains of Portugal. In real sense the mountains are geographically an obscure realm that actually contains of low, nondescript hills and bluffs. There are no mountains at all; it signifies the penance that the self of Tomás is on pursuit. For the interview to Goodreads, Yann Martel answers about the high mountains of Portugal as:

The High Mountains of Portugal have no mountains, as various characters in the novel discover. And yet these characters have aspirations, they wish to climb mountains. And they do. Tomás wants to climb a mountain to conquer it, out of pride, hurt, mournful madness. Peter quite contentedly lives on a mountain, in a state of blessed detachment. Dr. Lozora has faith that there are mountains. The High Mountains in my novel is a place of heightened being; they are mountains in the mind. (Goodreads on February 1, 2016)

This reminds of the mount sermon by the Holy Christ and the ones who were willing to cleanse their sinned heart by climbing behind Him.

After the horrible loss in his life, Tomás starts to walk backward to find the meaning for his life. Actually, he holds a job as assistant curator in the National Museum of Ancient Art. He recognizes from the diary of Father Martin that an artifact (sculpture) concealed in a habituated island in the Gulf of Guinea would "turn Christianity upside down" (HMP 19). Without any clear idea Tomás starts his pursuit for the sculpture in a "brand new 14-horsepower, four-cylinder Renault" drives without proper experience anyway through a setting of amusing irrationality to the High Mountains of Portugal, where he discovers the object (sculpture) of his quest. Tomás believes the artifact; a carved wooden crucifix flaunts a chimpanzee as the Christ figure will shock the entire world and retell the history. Tomás utters, "With this object I'll give God his retribution for what he did to the ones I love." (HMP 84) Tomás walks backward after the deaths of his beloved ones, as a personal objection to God that becomes later a tradition in the village of Tuizelo.

In the beginning of the novel, Tomás heads off to Rua São Miguel via Largo São Miguel and passes through Rua de São João da Praça before entering Arco de Jesus. He trusts the whole city as full of beauty and bustle, of commerce and culture, of challenges and rewards. In Arco de Jesus, he is ambushed by a memory of his wife Dora, smiling and reaching out to touch him. His memories of her always throw him off balance. He remembers the moment Dora realized that he was addressing her not as a servant maid in his uncle's household but as a woman. The very woman he needs to share his self. He experiences the feeling about their gaze locked still for a moment, and her turned away with a quick complicit smile curled up in the corner of her mouth. The barrier of class, of status, of utter improbability and unacceptability gets vanished. Next visit, they had experience of sexual intimacy. He has already experienced terribly depressing with prostitutes and fled each time having ashamed of himself and vowing never to do the act again. He feels a satisfaction of complete fulfillment with Dora that is terribly exciting and had no desire to flee anywhere. Tomás asks her "Marry me, marry me, marry me," "We will be each other's wealth" (HMP 7). By the amorous standstill little Gaspar was born. Even in precise opposition from his uncle's silence, his father advises him to live with love for Dora. Dora and Gaspar live in the Lobo household and get deep love from Tomás. He visits them as often as he decently could and Dora and Gaspar came to see him in the Alfama. Thomas and Dora go to a

park and watch Gaspar play sitting on a bench. They live like a normal couple and he was in love and happy.

Tomás feels the happy times of his life when he reaches the setting 'Arco de Jesus'. It gives him the passionate events of his life in the past. As symbols can talk through the mind of the protagonist, Tomás gets the happy moments of his life and remembers with exasperation. Thus, the place 'Arco de Jesus' exhibits the noble feelings of Tomás in a lucid manner.

Fate changes his life utter murky and chaotic. In the course of one week little Gaspar died on Monday, Dora on Thursday and his father on the Sunday. His heart becomes undone like a bursting cocoon and a stinging moth on it piercing it deeply. He is assailed by tragedy so he chooses to walk backwards in his life, back to the world, his back to God and is not grieving. He starts to object God after seeing his dear souls in life has been taken away.

When he decides to go to the high mountains of Portugal, his uncle asks him, "Why on earth do you so badly want to go to the High Mountains of Portugal?" Tomás replies "I'm looking for something," "It's in a church," and asks his uncle, "Have you heard of Charles Darwin", and do you know "what, is he buried in a church in the High Mountains of Portugal?" He laughs. "You want to bring his body back and give it pride of place in the Museum of Ancient Art?" He replies his uncle 'no' and unfolds the secret of the diary and the discovery of an unsuspected treasure and has located it, approximately. He zealously utters, "I'm on the brink of a great find." "It is...a religious statuary, a crucifix, I believe..." "It's a very odd crucifix. A wondrous crucifix." His uncle asks with a great surprise "Is it? And what does it have to do with Darwin?" Tomás replies him, "You'll see," "This Christ on the Cross has something important to say. Of that, I am certain." (HMP 38)

Weeping and grief is nothing new to Tomás. He has felt grief and wept many times since death strike a triple blow on him. The remembrance of Dora, Gaspar, or his father is the source and the focus of his grief and weep. There are many situations that Tomás has endured grief and agony. Now, the journey is clearly very different in nature. He feels an uncontrollable acute sense of dread, painful loneliness, and defenselessness. So he pants, weeps in grief with simmering panic. So, he takes refuge in Africa, in the waters of western equatorial coast, on the former Portuguese island colony of São Tomé. His grief seeks the man of quest who is leading him to the High Mountains of Portugal to find the artifact to prove his finding to satisfy his self. Yann Martel says:

Grief is an appallingly solitary experience. What rips one person open may well be something that others merely glance at in a newspaper and feel nothing for. We shield ourselves against pain, we're very adept at *moving on* when it comes to the pain of others—it's a natural defense mechanism—until pain hits us in the middle of the chest like a well-thrown spear. Then you stagger and can't imagine going on. So yes, any tradition that helps lighten grief has value, although I suspect it's never enough. There's no trick that can make pain go away entirely. Time is a soother, of course, but time is also the great eroder. Time makes *everything* go away, pain and grief, but also life itself. I think what helps with grief is a belief system that places it in a greater context, that invests it with *meaning*. Because that's the killing part, otherwise, the meaninglessness of grief. And so Tomás walks backward, a reaction as absurd as the grief he has to endure. (Goodreads on February 1, 2016)

From the words of Martel, it is clear that time is the redeemer of all misfortunes and is the case of the protagonist Thomas. Only time gives Thomas the space of joy, nostalgia, grief

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and quest. Hence, time becomes the vital pivot of setting and becomes a powerful symbol in the novel's first part 'Homeless'.

Tomás feels "cast off, thrown away, abandoned." The car he thinks can give satisfaction to his heart "coughs and jolts to a halt." It is noted as pandemonium for its sound and for the eternal chaos that it gives to him. "The clanging pandemonium mercifully stops." (HMP 47) He ponders over the loss of all his family men. He gets pangs in his heart for their departure from his life. Tomás thinks:

His uncle is gone, Sabio is gone, there is no one else in sight—and his beloved Lisbon is gone too, scraped away like the leftovers of a meal off a plate. Into a silence that is more vacuum than repose, his little son vaults into his mind. Gaspar often ventured out to play in the courtyard of his uncle's house before being shooed away by one servant or another, like a stray cat. (HMP47/48)

Then, he approaches Póvoa de Santa Iria, a small town near Lisbon, the closest settlement to the northeast of the capital on this road by the car. It is a place has lain dormant and his heart beats like a drum when he enters the town. Men of the place appear with napkins hanging, a chicken leg and stare. To see him in the car, barbers holding foaming brushes, trailed by men with shaving foam lathered on their faces and stare at him. A group of old women, Men and Women stop their business and stare. Moreover:

Children shriek, run to hide, and stare. A horse neighs and makes to buck, startling its driver, and stares. Sheep in a pen off the main street bleat in despair, and stare. Cattle low, and stare. A donkey brays, and stares. Dogs bark, and stare. The eyeballs blink, and the silence crumbles. Imperceptibly, shyly, the people of Póvoa de Santa Iria ooze forward, pressing the automobile on all sides until they are ten, fifteen thick. Many people come forward to stroke the machine. Most simply stare in benign silence. The man of the military salute salutes every time Tomás happens to look his way. (HMP 55)

Fatefully, the vehicle leaps forward and promptly dies. Women scream, children wail and men mutter. Tomás shouts apology and starts to strike the steering wheel and reprimands the automobile in the strongest terms. He comes out to help the affronted people and kicks the vehicle's tires but there is no positive effect. The eager and will of the people of Póvoa de Santa Iria has evaporated in the wintry Portuguese sun. Miraculously, the automobile shakes and tiptoes ahead. Then, he roars through the next town, Alverca do Ribatejo, in his vehicle keeping his foot firmly on the accelerator pedal thinking to reach the high mountains of Portugal to fulfill his task. He ignores all the stares of the people. Then, he crosses the places like Castelo Branco, Covilhã, Guarda, Rosmaninhal, Meimoa and Zava. He has never heard of these obscure villages but he crossed in utter speed to fulfill his dream. All places create a sense of longing to move across and to reach the island São Tomé which is shown as an eternal symbol for the protagonist Tomás.

São Tomé is also used as symbol that creates some distinct feelings and historical evidences that the protagonist comes across. It is an island of half-abandoned plantations and feuding elites. The island supplies slave ships with other provisions. The island was both an ideal way station for a ship that is about to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Tomás thought on the words said by Father Ulisses, The pocket of the rich "jingles with dazed African souls," He reminds of the words uttered by the priest "I want to serve the humblest of the humble, those whose souls Man has forgot but God hasn't." (HMP 60) The words of the priest pierced the heart of Tomás. He becomes increasingly cut off from everyone while reading the diary. As the diary progresses, there are few mentions of interactions with the fellow Europeans. Tomás is able to feel the

barriers of social status, language, and culture between a white priest, and slaves. Tomás understands the state of the priest is completely isolated.

In thinking of the Father Ulisses, Tomás drives towards Portugal. The land changes as Tomás drives on. The Portugal that he knows is beautiful becomes an element of wilderness to him. He sees the High Mountains of Portugal prefigured in the extrusions of rocks. Tomás, at one afternoon reaches his destination. He enters the High Mountains of Portugal and seems jubilant. His mission is almost accomplished. "A broad smile illuminates his face." (HMP 117) He encounters concentration of loneliness and feels wide-open spaces between them. He sees people live in plain, square, solid stone houses.

Then, he heads for the village of São Julião de Palácios. The wooden crucifix in the church Guadramil is ordinary and unremarkable. It is on the way to Espinhosela that the accident happens. While he is driving along the open and flat land, the child falls under the moving machine. His mind moves alternately slow and wants to check the child. He feels tighter and walks faster. His heart jumps in his chest. Indeed it is a child, a boy of five or six years old. Tomás shakes him, "Boy, are you all right? Boy?" (HMP 121) Then, he kneels and touches the boy's chest. A trail of blood appears under the boy's body. Tomás shudders and lifts the boy's but of no use. Martel writes:

Then, in an instant, without any warning, a little boy tripped everything up. Surely the fields will notice; they will rise, dust themselves, and come closer to take a concerned look. The road will curl up like a snake and make sad pronouncements. The sun will darken with desolation. Gravity itself will be upset and objects will float in existential hesitation. (HMP 121)

Tomás becomes completely upset and Martel shows the protagonist's existential condition in the manner of exploiting it into a rural elegiac condition evidenced by nature itself. He also thinks back to the last place he stopped and believed some child would have climbed in the automobile during that break. That also reminds of his lost son Gaspar and he might have the same to watch the machine. Then, he walks with horror. He feels guilty and ponders over the curiosity of the children. Tomás moves from the place with his inner being crash down. He suddenly feels swallowed like a struggling insect floating on water eaten by a great mouth. With a hard heart, he gets the automobile into gear and starts driving.

In the morning, Tomás enters a village named Tuzelo where the three stories climax meet. He is able to see in the small villages in the High Mountains of Portugal, the inhabitants survive on a mix of self-sufficiency and barter system. He discovers that the village is in fact full of animals like "cats, dogs, chickens, ducks, sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, songbirds." (HMP125) A woman comes to help him and hands the keys because of Father Abraham absence. He notices the woman is beautiful reminds of the beautiful woman in his life. The occasion gives him the past life with his beloved wife. In the meantime, the lady unlocks and opens the door of the church and moves aside to let him in. He notices the narrow windows, the thick walls, and the barrel-vaulted ceiling of the church. It appears to be a typical small Romanesque church, a forgotten seven-centuries-old church. Then, he turns around to face the altar and takes long deep breaths. He sees the crucifix above it.

The crucifix is not the standard-issue maudlin symbol he has found almost everywhere. It seems to be early Renaissance. Christ's long face, elongated arms, and foreshortened legs speak of an awkward attempt by the artist to correct the distortions caused by viewing an elevated figure from below. The extended arms and reduced legs make the body look normal to the viewer looking up at it. The work is no Mantegna or Michelangelo, but it's

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expressive, the face of Christ especially so, nearly Baroque in its emotional eloquence. It's a worthy attempt to express the humanity of Christ and juggle with perspective, circa the early fifteenth century. (HMP 127)

He makes his way backwards and rests his concentration on the crucifix again. On seeing it, a point of stillness makes itself felt inside him. It becalms not only the troubles of his body but also the irritation of his brain. It gives him a sort of peace in his mind. All of a sudden, he points with his arm and finger and asks her:

"What is that?"

The woman looks bemused. "It is Our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Yes, but how is he represented?"

"Suffering on the Cross."

"But what *form* has he taken?"

"The form of a man. God so loved us that He gave us His Son," she replies simply.

"No!" shouts Tomás, smiling though every muscle in his midsection is twisting. "What you have here is a chimpanzee! An ape. (HMP 129)

He asks the lady for been praying to a crucified chimpanzee all these years. "Your Son of Man is not a god - he's just an ape on a cross!" At this juncture, he thinks in himself that his Christ on the Cross widely known will mock all the others. He yells inside him and whispers his private business: "There. You took my son, now I take yours." He estimates it as his victory over God who had taken his beloved ones and he found the secret of God as an Ape. According to him, the crucifix is "breathtakingly beautiful" (HMP 129), and for him it will give him the glory of discovering it and bringing it to the museum.

Tomás begins to weep because he feels his ordeal is only half over because he still has to drive all the way back to Lisbon. He weeps because he is cold and cramped. He weeps because he has lost his job and has discovered a crucifix he no longer cares to have discovered. He weeps for his father, son and his lover. He weeps for the child he has killed. Tomás is utterly strangled by loneliness. Finally, the place has kindled all of the collective emotions in him and enables him to ponder over it. However, he has accomplished his task he has aloofness engulfed in him. It is the last feel of emotions he got in the island. Such varied sensations get evolved in the mind of the protagonist. The settings that Martel has created give us the glimpse of the protagonist's inner dilemma and his core feelings and emotions that pursued to get success in the quest. Even he gets success in his attempt, he feels solitary at the end.

In the second part of the novel, 'Homeward', set in the late 1930's, and Bragança and Tuzilo are the two main place settings. Bragança is a place with a population within thirty thousand people, Eusebio Lozora works in the Hospital São Francisco, in which he is head pathologist. He is the protagonist of the part of this novel. He has deep faith and praises the Lord and asks God to bless his wife and their children. He asks God for continued support and protection to his family. Even he is a pathologist, rooted in the body, he also a believer of God, "rooted in the promise of the Lord, he repeats, perhaps two dozen times, the words "The Body of Christ," after which he gets up off his knees and returns to his desk." He considers that "Every dead body is a book with a story to tell, each organ a chapter, the chapters united by a common narrative." (HMP 137)

The theme of magical realism is also seen in the novel. At one day Eusebio's wife enters-but she is actually dead but he is to do Post Mortem - Magical Realism. He loves his wife; her memories ponder in him all the time. He reminds of her beauty and delves over it all the time. He expresses:

A woman in her fifties, with lovely features and large brown eyes, stands before him. In one hand she is holding a bag. He is surprised to see her. She eyes him. In a warm, deep voice, she starts up: “Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but find no rest. I am poured out like water. My heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd. Oh my darling, come quickly to my help! (HMP 139)

While he expects his wife to assist him, she comes to satisfy his wish in dream. Her name is Maria Luisa Motaal Lozora. They pray together and often pray the Psalm 22; it is his wife’s favorite psalm. He thinks about his wife’s attitude. According to him, his wife never likes conventional suffering. She lives in good mental and physical health. She lives in a very nice house and never desires to leave him or the town. She lives with very good friends and never gets bored. They have three children happy and healthy. In simple, she has all the elements of good life, “a priest manqué” (HMP 139) and takes all the parameters of life very seriously. These all comes to his memories when he thinks of his wife in his hospital, the place where he often do postmortem. His thoughts on her got evolved in his mind while he is feeling alienated. It purports the hope inside him. Even it is a strange setting, he gets satisfied and mentally free out of his psychological agitation.

There are some instances between them to talk about religion and spirituality. It portrays the quest of religion seen in the part of the novel. Maria has the viewpoint that, “Humour and religion do not mix well,” She continues, “Humour may point out the many mistakes of Religion” She points out that there is a number of vile immoral priests or monsters who enjoy shedding of innocent blood in the name of Jesus and marks down that humour never sheds light on true religion. She points out that worse humour misunderstands religion and humour has a little place for levity in religion. She affirms, the originality of religion abounds in joy. “Religion is joy.” (HMP 143)

Eusebio has the inner heart lurking for his dear wife and her words as eternal message to start his quest to find out the artifact. He becomes morally strong and needs refreshment through the support of his wife. The flashback of Eusebio portrays his psychological development.

They also had talked about the miracles of Christ. While talking about the miracles done by Christ, they talked about the two powers of Him. He reminds of his wife’s answer to the first type of benefiting human body. His wife says:

Jesus performs these miracles because they bring relief where we want it most. We all suffer in our bodies and die. It is our fate—as you well know, my dear, spending your days cutting up human carrion. In curing and feeding us, Jesus meets us at our weakest. He eases us of our heavy burden of mortality. And that impresses us more deeply than any other display of mighty power, be it flying in the air or throwing mountains into seas... (HMP 147)

Then, he ponders over her talks about the second category of the miracles of Jesus Christ. She gives value to them as “the miracle of interpretation.” She utters to him it contains of only a single miracle. When Eusebio asks about it, she tells to him about the miracle how Jesus walked on the water. While the disciples of Jesus were in mortal danger, Jesus tells his disciples to get into the boat and travel ahead. Then, “they see Jesus coming towards their boat, walking on the sea. They are terrified. Jesus reassures them: ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’” When Peter ask the Lord if he can join him. ‘Come,’ says Jesus.” (HMP 147/148) These elucidations of Clara gives Eusebio gives him moral support at the juncture of alienation. It also signifies how the symbols have been transformed into the psychological balance through the words of his wife. Suddenly,



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his wife leaves imagination. Martel uses magical realism as a medium to exploit his quest myth in a sequel. Eusebio is psychologically disturbed and wishes to get out of the tumult and turmoil so he seeks his dear wife in his imagination. To any reader it seems a mystery but there lays a moral message. Anyone who is under psychological pressure will expect a remedy from the beloved ones. This happens in the life of Eusebio even though he is in his office.

Then, Maria Castro enters; she is the mother of the child in the part one of the novel. He thinks that it is his wife but she is not. It shows his imbalance mind. This woman is much older and a black-dressed widow. She introduces herself, "My name is Maria Dores Passos Castro." (HMP171) "I've come down from the village of Tuizelo in the High Mountain of Portugal" (HMP 173). She has come down to Bragança where the protagonist's hospital is situated. She wants him to do autopsy to her husband's body where she keeps with her. She also unfolds the mystery of the small boy killed by Tomas in the Part one of the novel. She confesses that it is their son. She expresses to him how she was distressed and filled up with guilt. She expresses their love on their son:

We loved our son like the sea loves an island, always surrounding him with our arms, always touching him and crashing upon his shore with our care and concern. When he was gone, the sea had only itself to contemplate. Our arms folded onto nothing until they met their frame. We wept all the time. (HMP 200)

Martel uses sea and hands as a symbol to exhibit the loss of the parents. The ever ending waves of the sea are compared to the ever ending love of the parents and the soulful hugging of the parents as the frame that now exists as an empty frame in the above lines. These lines are strong enough to explain the loss and grief of the lady.

Maria pressurizes Eusebio to do autopsy and to tell her "how he lived" (HMP 152) and not how he died. When the autopsy is over, he takes out a chimpanzee, with a chimpanzee's protective arms, a bear cub, small and brown. Maria Castro leans and presses her face to the bear cub. She astonishes, "Is this then how her husband *lived*?" (HMP 207) Eusebio never speaks and retrieves the suitcase from his office. Then, Maria Castro opens the suitcase, places it on the autopsy table and starts to transfer the objects from Rafael Castro's body, one by one. Then she starts to undress until she has not a piece of clothing on her body. She takes off her wedding ring and pulls off the band that holds her hair. Finally, she puts in the suitcase. Then, Maria Castro climbs onto the autopsy table and leans over Rafael Castro's body, nudging, pushing and wiggling here and there, carefully settles into her husband's body. All that time, she repeats, "This is home, this is home, this is home" (HMP 209). She places herself so that the chimpanzee's back is nestled against her front and her arms encircle both the chimpanzee and the bear cub, with her hands resting on the cub.

Originally Eusebio has to do autopsy to his wife. His colleague Dr. Otavio is away on holiday so he couldn't bear the thought of anyone doing autopsy to his wife. Moreover her body is decomposing; so he performed the autopsy of his own wife. His assistant Senhora Melo witnessed the whole thing. She has recorded the report in the autopsy room. Dr. Lozora asks her, "how do you record pain, how do you record wreckage?" (HMP 214) and has doubts in her death but it was not a suicide, murder or an accident. Indeed a mystery, specially endured by him as a husband, doing autopsy to his wife. He thinks to himself "Bragança, not Chicago. Murders were unknown in these parts. This was not a town where innocent women were randomly hoisted up in the air and thrown off bridges." (HMP 214) Then Dr. Eusebio Lozora begins to weep. The volume increases with great cracking sobs. Senhora Melo becomes infuriated with herself because she could not help him. This is how it ends.

The climax comes with an absurd ending that life is often mysterious that unleashes miseries in battalions without mercy. No one is in the situation to help him to bring him out of the psychological turbulence. He only endured it. This is how the place and office as a setting works with innumerable symbols kindling the feelings of Eusebio and creates mystery in his life only one thing he understands is life is always a pain. The quest only gives him satisfaction and he happens to find it in the imagination of Maria Castro's behavior. He sees she gets inside her husband Rafael Castro's body that signifies of the Adam and Eve whom Eve has been taken out of the body of Adam. Maria Castro plunges her inside he husband's body signifies that it is the way she can attain resurrection and the chimpanzee already inside indicates the symbol of the artifact and the cub indicates their son. The action has the symbolism of the father, son and the soul and the one who realizes can attain peace.

Martel uses Ottawa in Canada as one of the settings in the third part *Home* of the novel. The time of the third part of the novel is set in early 1980's. The protagonist of the third part of the novel Peter Tovy and his wife Clara lives in a larger and nice apartment with a view of the beautiful river. The family prefers the quieter pace of the capital with their relatives. At one instance, Clara becomes sick and dies and Peter Tovy is involved all the day compromising his prodigal son Ben and his wife Dina but fails every time. It gives him too much remorse. Tovy is totally fed up with grief after Clara is taken by death.

His friend, The Whip, finds Tovy is filled with grief and isolation. He suggests him to get a break that may give him change and hope in his life. The Whip says, "Maybe you should take a break. Bust loose for a while. You've been through a lot." After a few days, the Whip comes to him with a proposal of a trip "To Oklahoma?" Peter responds. "Hey, great things come from remote places. Who'd ever heard of Nazareth before Jesus showed up?" "Or of Saskatchewan before Tommy Douglas." (HMP 222)

Oklahoma is a marginal state of America which is warm and pleasant in May. Tovy notices a tourist brochure about the City Zoo in Oklahoma. He has a special fondness for zoos. It is not because of the animals but it is Clara who was very much attached to zoos. She was also once on the Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo. So, he expresses his wish to visit the Oklahoma to see the City Zoo. It shows his longing to satisfy the space for his wife inside him. He becomes ready to go there with great enthusiasm. So, the zoo setting creates reminiscence inside him with a happy feeling over his life with Clara. The zoo has been portrayed in a fertilized atmosphere with absurd inhabitants. Tovy thinks about each animal in a puzzle, except Odo. Odo often sits quietly in its cage, merged in its own thoughts. Tovy seems struck by Odo's extremely varied behavior. The absurdity and the mysterious emotion expressed by Odo attract Tovy. So, he buys Odo believing that it can bring down the suffering of his isolation since Clara's death.

Bragança is also a setting in the novel that gives new vistas of life for Tovy. At this place, he has no real control over Odo. He only hopes that Odo will not get strayed from the house or not to get into any trouble. In Bragança, he buys needed supplies like candles, lanterns, kerosene, soap and other groceries. Then, at the post office in Bragança, he makes two phone calls to Canada to talk with his son Ben. Ben says he is pleased to hear his father over phone. When Tovy has come too far from his son, he understands the need of his father and eagerly talks to him. Certain places have their part in the development of the novel. Settings of Martel fulfill the task of his maze quest in the third part of the novel. At one instance, Tovy speaks to his son. "Ben, you asked me a question. I don't know what's with all the apes. All I know is that Odo

## Setting as Symbol in Yann Martel's *High Mountains of Portugal*

fills my life. He brings me joy." (HMP 328) Tovy compares Odo to the chimpanzee in the crucifix/Jesus and fulfills his quest.

When Tovy decides to go to Portugal, the word really illuminates his mind. Actually, Tovy is of Portuguese origin. His family emigrated from Lisbon to Canada when he was a child. After marriage, he and Clara visited Lisbon once in the beginning, and loved the tiled houses, the luxuriant gardens and the hills of Lisbon. The setting reminds him of his parents who lived in a rural area in the High Mountains of Portugal. He feels it as a return to his native. Indeed, Tovy is peace less by the great loss of his wife so he returns to his native place in hope of peace. He has also the past memories with Clara at there while they were young couples. There is also a quest inside him to discover the mystery about his family where he gets separated many years ago.

Actually, Tuizelo is the exact place where his parents came from, and that is the place where Tovy and Odo settle. Tovy is completely taken by the tranquility and isolation of the village. He has no memories of Tuizelo and of his childhood. At the end of the novel, he discovers his ancestral home and how they lived. The death of the small boy in the car accident done by Tomás before a few generations is still a mystery for the villagers of Tuizelo. It is revealed that the character Rafael in the first part of the novel is Tovy's great uncle. The dead boy who is celebrated as a superhuman and the wooden crucifix of Christ with chimpanzee image is the symbol of mystery and quest in this part of the novel.

Boulders seem one of the peculiar settings in the novel. The mountain in the title does not mean the exact mountains. It is the general plateau with enormous boulders which Tovy and Clara like very much. These also remembers him of his wife and their days that happily been spent there. Now, while Tovy and Odo visit the boulders, it gives them happiness, peace and a mystic feeling. At the time of their last visit, Tovy finds something mystic in the behavior of Odo. They witness an Iberian rhinoceros behind a boulder and also a bird eyeing on them from their top. Tovy climbs onto the top of the boulder to sit upon it. He breaths heavily and a few later he dies. After feeling the death of Tovy, Odo walks on the direction where the Iberian rhinoceros disappeared. Hence, the boulders remain as the symbol of mystery and death. More over than that all of the settings unleash certain emotions and feelings to the protagonist and he wishes it at some places and worries at some places. Finally, he fulfills his quest decoding his ancestral living, the myth of the superhuman child, the happy moments with his wife at Lisbon, his time with Odo, his good relationship with his son and his completion of his quest finding the crucifix gets fulfilled by the aid of the settings in the novel. The settings promote every touch of the novel with the power of symbolic meaning to the protagonist.

In Conclusion, Martel's keenness in utilizing symbols in his writings is reflected in his work. He has used animals, human characters, nature, and many other common symbols this novel. The study has focused on how Martel has used the settings of the novel as symbol to convey his inner conscious through the characters with peculiar meanings. They reflect anthropological, scientific natural and pragmatic meanings and insights through the settings. The three major different settings in the novel *The High Mountain of Portugal* are discussed in the paper that conveys the life's message of quest and love. The protagonists' of the novel has vivid fond of quest and love and is decoded with the help of symbols collected from the settings of the novel. Martel in the novel proves that, quest for truth and faith in love, are the two wheels which carries an individual towards life's fulfillment. Every protagonist thrives towards such a pursuit to get fulfillment. In deciphering their inner consciousness, one fact is reliable that Martel has succeeded in telling life's philosophies through the settings of the novel.

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