

with courage, leading a life of fulfilment and celebrating the beauty of a mother-daughter relationship. *Mom & Me & Mom* is a heartwarming narrative of Angelou's extended family, their influential role in her formative years and challenging life as an adolescent, recounting the memorable experiences of her growing up that had in time taught her the best lessons in life. Some of the highlights in the first section of the work are the memories of both her grandmothers; glimpse of their family history, her mother's "big city ways" (33), accounts of her rape as a child, experiences of motherhood, struggles as a single mother and the influence of her mother's practical wisdom. The second section presents Angelou's own carefree days as a youngster, her disturbing experiences of brutal violence in the hands of an old lover; sincere attempts at saving her marriages; the experiences of her grown-up son; brother Bailey's battle with drug addiction; the sprouting of new literary interests; her own accomplishments as well as her sincere gratitude to the contributions of Vivian Baxter in her own life and the lives of countless others in the society.

---

---

**Dr. Pallavi Gogoi\***

S. HUSSAIN ZAIDI AND JANE BORGES. *Mafia Queens of Mumbai*.  
New Delhi: Tranquebar Press, pp. 290, 2011, Price: INR. 250  
ISBN: 978-93-80283-77-7.  
Category: Non Fiction and Crime  
Pallavi Gogoi, Assistant Professor (English), KKHSOU. email:  
pallavigogoi01@gmail.com

*Mafia Queens of Mumbai* almost instantly engrosses one into the firsthand accounts and narratives of the Mumbai Underworld which to the reader's surprise is dotted with some of the fearless and influential female criminals who had navigated their way through these dangerous waters. Most of them were ordinary women who had dared to operate through these established criminal networks by taking up the numerous risks inherent in their professions and figuring out

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of English, KKHSOU, Guwahati, Assam.

ways of defending (rather than securing) their positions through their continuous scheming, manipulation and intelligence. It presents a string of true stories centered around the lives of these criminal and deviant women with their life-changing experiences taking into account their initiation into the world of crime, interactions with the criminal networks, their underhand dealings, the changing graph of their outlawed professions, their inevitable brush with the police and confrontation with criminal gangsters. Moreover, it also presents the challenges of juggling their roles as mothers, daughters and social figures in a hostile environment that is chequered with much strife and violence.

These stories are divided into separate parts which are further subdivided into chapters namely, 'The Wily Old Woman of Dongri' based on Jenabai Daaruwali; 'The Matriach of Kamathipura' covering the life of Gangubai Kathewali; the story of Ashraf in 'Femme Fatale'; drug baroness Mahalaxmi Papamani's story in 'The Narco Empress'; 'Mobster's Moll' capturing Monica Bedi's story; 'Wives of Hindu Dons' based on the lives of Asha Gawli, Neeta Naik, Sujata Nikhalje and Padma Poojary. The story-telling mode adopted by Zaidi effortlessly conjures the images of the soft-spoken Jenabai for an instance who negotiates her tricky position between the law enforcers and the law breakers or in another instance, the empathic Gangubai who while ensuring that her territory is free from any sort of unwanted violence also champions the rights of sex workers in Kamathipura. It unravels the journey of these ordinary women-next-door, leading normal lives before being compelled and transformed by circumstances to discover their alter egos.

It thus provides the reader a fuller picture of how these women were involved in a range of nefarious and outlawed activities; assuming their powerful roles in the absence of other alternatives while also determining the course of their criminal and deviant lives of ruling and surviving in the shadows. Towards the end of the book, 'The Ganglord's Girls' and 'Bewitching Beauties' provides interesting snippets into the experiences of several ambitious female criminals involved as aides or accomplices of criminal gangsters and being trapped in the criminal networks of Mumbai. The work of crime journalists, S. Hussain Zaidi and Jane Borges therefore marks the significant attempt to trace and capture the lives of these influential 'masterminds' each with a defining story of their own. A reading through this book reveals that these powerful stories have been recorded

with a passion for exploring the psyche and the lives of these female criminals while also sensibly providing a rounded description of them. On an end note, *Mafia Queens* certainly leaves a lasting impression on one's mind long after one has read it from cover to cover.

---

---