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Kingsley Amis: *The Anti-Death League*

Suresh K. Shukla

The Anti-Death League marks in more than one way a significant phase in Amis's development as a novelist. Here Amis moves away from the comic mode of *Lucky Jim*, and seeks to engage issues of deeper import. This might give an impression of there being a discontinuity in Amis's career as a novelist, but as is clear from a study of the preceding five novels, this increasing commitment on the part of Amis to issues of a more serious, and fundamental, character is already anticipated in Amis's earlier work.

The main issue faced by Amis in *The Anti-Death League* is, as the title suggests, that of death. Amis's strategy in dealing with his theme in fictional terms in this novel shows distinctive features which bear the stamp of his unique talent. Amis's earlier novels show a constant tension between his preference for the comic mode and the seriousness of his intention as a moralist. In *The Anti-Death League*, it might seem, this tension touches a high point, and the novel might seem to suffer as a consequence. But *The Anti-Death League* should be of special interest for a study of Amis's art as a novelist, precisely for the same reason. The main concern of *The Anti-Death League* is with death, and in giving it a novelistic form, Amis has used a variety of fictional genres. The novel is actually a mixture of diverse genres: spy-story, romance, and science fiction.

This feature has been noted by reviewers and critics, though not in the same light by all of them. Heywood Hale Broun comments: "*Lucky Jim* and the novels that succeeded it have made Kingsley Amis perhaps the leading writer on the sex life of the reckless: but it had come to seem, as book followed book, too narrow a field for his considerable talents."[1]

Distributed into three parts, the narrative has a considerably large cast of characters. Among the more important characters in the novel are Max Hunter, a captain in the army, now undergoing treatment in the army hospital; Captain Leonard, the Security Officer; James Churchill a sensitive young man who has got involved with a mysterious army project called Operation Apollo; Catherine Casement, a cancer patient with whom Churchill falls in love, and Major Ayscue, a clergyman, and Dr. Best, a psychiatrist attached to the army hospital. The novel uses an army camp as its chief setting, and it is probable, in his choice of setting, Amis is drawing on his personal experience of life in the army.

The Anti-Death League reminds us of Amis's collection of short stories, *My Enemy's Enemy*.

Amis's pre-occupation with the theme of death is centred in the portrayal of the love-relationship between James Churchill and Catherine. The first part of the novel is entitled The Edge of a Node. The Node here is "a lethal grouping of events it is death to enter."[2]

James Churchill, who is pre-occupied with death and is meant to hold the centre of the novel, from the point of view of its theme, is shown at the start of the novel to be at the edge of a node. As the narrative progresses he sees himself entering further, without choice into the node, facing the threat of death. Mainly it is through his emotional involvement with Catherine that Churchill is brought round to face the fact of death for Catherine.

Another major factor which contributes to Churchill's pre-occupation with death is the fact of his being in-charge of Operation Apollo. The precise nature of this Operation is kept as something of a mystery at the outset in the novel. It turns out, however, that this Operation is proposed by the army as a device to dissuade the Chinese from leading a major invasion on the Indian sub-continent. As such, it involves the spreading of a special type of plague among the Chinese through a certain chemical preparation devised for the purpose in the laboratory. In being made to share the responsibility of this piece of macabre strategy, Churchill comes to a point of collapse towards the end of the novel, and he could come through his crisis only because of his love for Catherine. For most part of the novel, Churchill is Amis's mouthpiece, for it is through him Amis expresses his sense of protest against death. This is the theme for example, of his conversation with Ayscue towards the end of the novel. Ayscue is a churchman and is supposed to believe in God. Churchill on the other hand, has reached a point when he cannot bring himself to believe in anything. As he tells Ayscue: "You love everything I hate. Go away; Leave me alone." (p. 286)

Churchill's protest is very much to the point, and it is expressive of feelings which Amis has registered perhaps more tellingly elsewhere, for example, in a poem entitled "New Approach Needed." There is a reference here to what Christ would feel if He were to visit this world again:

> SHOULD you revisit us,
> Stay a little longer,
> And get to know the place.
> Experience hunger,
> Madness, disease and war.
> You heard about them, true,
> The last time you came here;
> It's different having them.[3]

From this point of view, the arguments put forward by Ayscue in order to bring Churchill out of his despair, are also significant. Ayscue, as is evident from what he says to Churchill in the concluding pages of the novel, himself does not believe in God, at least in the conventional sense. As he puts it in the course of a conversation with Churchill:

> "Death is not your enemy. Death's nobody's enemy. Your enemys is the same as everybody else's. Your enemy is fear, plus ill feelings, bad feelings of all descriptions. Such as selfishness, and not wanting to be deprived of what comforts you, and greed, and arrogance, and above all belief in your own uniqueness and your own importance. All these bad feelings come from considering yourself first. It's hard to say and I don't want to be a preacher, but if you could simply begin to love life in everything there is, then your bad feelings would start to diminish. You must make up your mind to love Catherine with all your heart, so that your heart has no room for the fear that you'll be deprived of her. You must cast out that fear and then you'll have begun to cast out all fear. At the moment you're so afraid that you're pretending to be dead. Please stop, James and begin to try. We must all try to become man." (pp. 268-69)

On this side, the novel tends to give an impression of being a serious, and even somewhat heavy work. The novel no doubt has its serious side, an aspect which has prompted Bernard Bergonzi to call it "an anti-theological novel of ideas."[4]

To make up for this strand of a serious nature, however, the book has other features which show a greater continuity with the earlier Amis. In addition to being a romance with idealistic overtones, *The Anti-Death League* is also a spy story and a novel partly adopting the mode of scientific fiction. Captain Leonard is hardly an ideal spy-catcher and he feels constantly ill at ease in his role as a security-man. He is suspicious of leakage of important information and the exposure if Dr. Best the psychiatrist, as being something of a fraud, comes as a culmination of his efforts to spot the spy. The description of Operation Apollo represents the author's interest in yet another genre which has emerged to the fore among contemporary fictional modes namely, science fiction.

Along with seriousness of intention on the part of Amis in the novel then, there is also present a strong comic element; the comedy is yet grim at best. Beginning with *Lucky Jim*, Amis has shown a predilection for a type of presentation in the comic mode which verges on the fantastic and the farcical. This provides the source of yet one more kind of tension in his writing, a tension between realism and fantasy. In *The Anti-Death League* this mixture of opposed elements is brought out at one or two important places and it centres around the episodes in

which Dr. Best figures. Dr. Best is full of psychological jargon and is at times impressive in his performance as a doctor. In the end, he is shown up to be a fake and is driven mad through a plot laid to trap him by one of his victims, namely Captain Leonard. As Christopher Ricks has suggested, Dr. Best should remind us of Malvolio:

> Like Malvolio, Best is a memorable character and one whom the author seems inordinately to have it in for. Something of a seapegoat Best, and the exultation in the practical joke has a smack of Kipling about it. Still, again like, Malvolio, Best is graced with the most telling comic effects even if the morale of his manhandling seem a bit dubious.[5]

Professor Rick's reference to the precise nature of the morals of Dr. Best's manhandling as being dubious is very much pertinent. The presence of Dr. Best, and the comedy surrounding him, is to a certain extent out of character with the rest of the novel and this strand serves to have an unsettling effect on the work as a whole and disturbs its unity.

There is a similar sequence turning on the so-called "The Anti-Death League."[4] On the army camp, there appears a pamphlet in type-script bearing the cryptic title "The Anti-Death League" incorporating human beings anonymous. The draft of this pamphlet is in the best comic vein characteristic of Amis. The appearance of the pamphlet becomes an immediate source of anxiety for Captain Leonard who is bewildered and feels "dimly that Security was involved here in some way, but could not have said in what way." (pp. 163-64)

Once again, this sequence is marked by a note of exaggeration which is typical of Amis, and takes on a tone of irony which is almost Swiftian, as in the following exchange between Ross-Donaldson and Captain Leonard.

> "There's no point in getting hot under the collar about it."
> "There's every point. This is an abnormal happening and there's no knowing where it may lead. A secret project like ours has got to keep all parts of its environment under control at all times. We can't afford to have fanatics or lunatics or jokers around the place."
> "I realize that, of course."
> "I hope you do. It's our job to be pre-death, Leonard, and don't you forget it." (p. 165)

The Anti-Death League is therefore an impressive work, although it is marked by the presence of contradictory elements. Bernard Bergonzi is quite justified in saying: "It represents Amis's immersion in the nightmare that flickers at the edges of his earlier fiction."[6]

He further comments: "It is a brave book, for in writing it Amis surrendered a great deal of novelistic territory in which he is most at home, and got very little in exchange. Considered as a novel in the every day sense, *The Anti-Death League* is feeble and unconvincing, and supererogatory spy story jars against the novel's deeper pre-occupations. Yet it is a work of impressive seriousness and marks a crucial point in Amis's development.

NOTES

1. Heywood Hale Broun, "Top Secrets and Cosmic Riddles," *Saturday Review*, August 20, 1966, p. 31.
2. Kingsley Amis, *The Anti-Death League* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 77.
3. Philip Larkin, ed., *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 530.
4. Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 174.
5. *New Statesman*, 15 March 1966, p. 387
6. Bernard Bergonzi, p. 174.

Multiculturality and Western Critical Perspectives: Problems for Indian English Poetry

John O. Perry

I

Given its present historical situation and political processes, the fundamental need for Indian society, and thus for Indian English criticism of poetry, is to preserve its multiculturality by strengthening the network of interconnections among cultures and communities, traditions and technologies. The network is in many places a heavy net, to some an imprisoning, to others a comforting, blanket; in other places the network is extremely tenuous, fragile and fragmented—weaknesses threatening national unity, yet also offering opportunities for experimenting with distinctive developments of autonomous identities. The most crucial linkages are those that deal with cultural strains that almost every Indian lives with—strains that are stresses for some, productive lines of force for others. Except for the most physically isolated agricultural villagers or tribal foresters, at one extreme, and the most culturally isolated, affluent, cosmopolitan urbanites protected from the surrounding social realities, at the other, every Indian person copes with rapidly changing social and cultural conditions. Those who insist that "India will always be India" are demonstrating their need to cope with change by asserting their faith in continuity. In every aspect of living, from religious practices and preparation of food to daily labor and use of leisure, typical Indians are no longer dealing with only well-defined traditional choices but find themselves increasingly in a complex transitional situation. Not to overemphasize the dimension of change over time, we should understand the situation also with spatial metaphors. Most Indian living is woven with at least some threads of modern, forward-looking manners, of cross-cultural communication, urban market-based consumption and industrial production, while other threads, and much of the general pattern of living, consist of age-old, inward-looking acceptances,—recognizing customary boundaries, ancient authorities, traditional bonds.

Although no tradition is ever entirely static, each one containing and dealing with its own tensions, inherent contradictions and inevitable conflicts,[1] in the modern world, however much or little a traditional pattern is being modified by outside forces, to that extent it is no longer simply traditional. Transition is more rapid when a culture is overwhelmed from the outside, but even where, as in contemporary India,

there is a conscious social policy to select and control outside influences and where the complete cultural isolation of early nineteenth century Japan is neither feasible nor defensible, still no amount of internal control can arrest, it can at best slow down, the accelerating processes of change. With respect to the very same societal practice—e.g., caste marriages, rural electrification, religious censorship—what seems overly speedy social change to some can easily seem too slow for others. Though to a highly modernized observer a transitional culture may seem to work predominantly in the old ways, a tradition-bound viewer from prior generations would certainly judge the differences to be more striking, more crucially significant for the present, more suggestive of further cultural destructions, than the continuities.

Those educated in Indian English are, by and large, a class, not a community. Because of the continued social, economic and political uses of English in India and the spread of elitism as an increasingly secularized extension of the Brahmin-dominated caste system, Indian English users comprise by far the largest and the most powerful subgroup of India's intellectual elite.[2] Paradoxically, the national identity and extent of this elite class in presentday India were probably produced less by economic forces of opportunity and abundance, the obvious potential for dominating and exploiting one's co-Indians by allying with the British, than by the long history of political resistance to various forms of imperialism, as was the case certainly for the anti-colonial vernacular-speaking intellectuals.[3] Although undoubtedly heavily skewed toward political elitism, social conservatism, and economic liberalism, the cultural views of this dominant subgroup in the upper class are today as diverse as those of the entire Indian population.

The supposedly liberated search for individualized identities condemns the modernist to more and more frantic, marginal and insubstantial expressions of outward individuality and to ultimate conformity, an enslaving dependence on the social recognition of differences in sameness. The fanatic conservative finds no refuge from the modernistic forces of faddism coopting the fine old bottles for new and acrid wine.

As a basic perspective for criticism as for individuals and groups, a pluralist attitude is multicultural, fits the multicultural Indian world, when it does not pretend in itself to be "value-free," but actively values multiculturality and itself performs multiculturally. The pluralist becomes multicultural not merely by actively defending and supporting diverse cultures in a compatible, non-violent mix; but also and crucially by incorporating diverse cultures into a whole multicultural complexity. Except for the most extremely parochial of Indians, certainly among most members of the widely scattered elite class of the Indian-English-educated population, the individual Indian's cultural situation is pre-eminently multicultural. Each person mixes elements of one or more regional-language and

possibly communal-religious cultures with that analytically describable culture—modern, practical-minded, market and consumption oriented, etc.—which, willy nilly, comes with the Indian English language and contemporary change. Whatever the highly educated individual's conscious and unconscious attitudes toward each of the outwardly separable cultures with which he or she copes, these distinctive cultures are, inwardly, personally, not separated but combined multiculturally, truly pluralistically. No matter how functionally, socially and even psychologically divergent are the strands of an English-medium-using Indian's compound-complex identity—the modern and businesslike processes out there, the pre-eminently tradition-valuing for inside the home, and so on—they still are interconnected in the same person at the nexus of multiple interpersonal relationships. However necessarily intensified the capacity of a contemporary Indian intellectual, especially an English user, for tolerating cognitive dissonances between functioning realms of his or her thought—between, to put examples crudely, the pragmatic and the esthetic, the old and the new—this highly developed "context sensitivity," to use A.K. Ramanujan's term,[4] is governed by a single, if conflictual, multicultural intelligence for imaginative, integrative processes.

II

Persons acquainted with recent post-structuralist fashions in criticism that have spread from Europe to America and, indeed, throughout the world, will have noticed little, if any, attention being paid here to the profound philosophical issues that supposedly vitiate not only intercultural communication but the mere consideration of literary texts, including criticism, as expressions of determinable cultural meanings. Two such philosophical questions, about "critical objectivity" and "interpretive communities," are especially relevant both to discussion of the political and social responsibilities of Indian English criticism and to evaluating the various critical perspectives available for contemporary use. Operating in a violence-prone transitional society, it is crucial for criticism not to act irresponsibly either by pseudoscientifically pretending to objectivity (and thus supporting the status quo) or by dogmatically and imperialistically repressing some social and cultural elements and promoting others, when the primary task is to cope with threats to the life and health of overall cultural diversity and its consequent productive tensions. The present concerns of Indian English criticism are not with the current philosophical arguments over objectivity. Rather we ask how to achieve in a vastly scattered, highly diverse multicultural situation some consensus—a new tradition, if you will—about reasoning in literary discourse. Particularly we need to make standard practice the offering of close and clear analysis of textual evidence in pursuit of concrete

descriptions and theoretically suggestive interpretations of especially lesser known, yet culturally valuable, Indian English poetry.

With respect to the hotly debated issue of "interpretive communities," whatever the extremes of political persuasion, national, social and ethnic identity, and cultural commitment, the great bulk of the readership of Indian English poetry and its criticism, the majority of practitioners in the field, is composed of Indian academics, mostly students in post-graduate departments of English, who probably will not follow this poetry very closely in later life. A much larger, less "serious" public exists sporadically and at usually lower levels of comprehension among readers of popular Indian English journals like *Debonair* and *The Illustrated Weekly*. A very few, paradoxically unsuited, yet authoritative "outsiders" from abroad add an alien leaven to make a confused chapati-bread. Thus, the readership community is again multiply multicultural, but with an identifiable active core and a vague penumbra of vaguer critical potentiality. As the plethora of cliche prejudices—about their arrogance, alienation, modernism, xenophilia—show, such a "non-community" can scarcely define itself, much less the limits of interpretation of Indian English poetry. The consequence of this situation is that the practical aims of contemporary Indian English criticism must be severely circumscribed, not only by the historical and political and cultural situation generally in India, but further by the hope and need to deepen critical responsibility and seriousness and thus to defend and expand the exemplary multicultural character of Indian English poetry and its criticism. Thus, it seems evident, at least, from this perspective, that the higher technologies and concomitant philosophical preoccupations with abstractions of presentday Eurocentric criticism—post-structuralism and the like—cannot properly function in the contemporary Indian English literary scene. No longer do most Indian scholars and critics feel required to demonstrate for Western eyes or themselves that Indian criticism can be quite "up-to-date" with the most recent Eurocentric philosophical concerns and analytical technologies; nor is their aim, only marginally less self-assured, to show the West in communicative Western terms what contemporary Indian culture is, creatively and critically. Rather, almost all Indian critics see their task as developing a responsible and responsive Indian tradition of literature and criticism in India, by Indians and for Indians.

It is particularly rare for an Indian scholar to take up the Western post-structuralist line, for its thrust runs counter to the widely expressed need for clarity of critical principles, coherence among critical directions, and a broad intellectual and cultural responsibility. That need is felt as desperate both by creative writers, like Nissim Ezekiel, Salman Rushdie, Jayanta Mahapatra, and by English Department academics, journalistic literary critics, and the general intellectual populace.[5] The post-

structuralist schema has certainly attracted brilliant minds (and dull imitators) by its flashes of revolutionary rhetoric against imperialist ethnocentricity, male chauvinism, technocratic arrogance and its inspired sermonizing against naive assumptions about language, reality, knowledge. Where this sort of philosophically-minded criticism has most value is among those who have not previously been made sceptical by pondering abstract issues in criticism and by quick changes in critical fashion. In the Indian critical climate scepticism about reality or "reality" is rampant enough, both on traditional religious and philosophical grounds and in view of the radical instability of critical concepts and procedures, the absence of one or more critical establishments with authority, and the general, almost fatalistic sense of frustration and powerlessness that Indian intellectuals feel, whether or not using Indian English. Critics with some acknowledged authority do exist, but the authority is usually limited by its dependence on a parochial academic powerbase (not in Delhi or Bombay or Madras), by working through the guru-shisya tradition, and by the jealous scoffing of excluded groups. Rarely are these critical authorities proponents of a well-defined methodology or perspective, though it is possible to characterize several, like Professors C. D. Narasimhaiah, Amiya Dev, A. K. Shrivastava, M.K. Naik, and O.P. Bhatnagar, for certain general tendencies and techniques. Kaa Naa Subramanyam complains about the lack of independent thinking among the Indian intelligentsia and attributes it to both a feeling of powerlessness—stemming again from a crisis of authority within Indian culture—and a sense that everything has already been said and done at some time in the Great Tradition or somewhere else in the world—another acquiescence to traditional or alien authorities.[6] Still, given the attractiveness of the newest critical terminology it is best to begin surveying current Indian English critical practices with some general critique of an alien one. The impatience of this writer with his colleagues in America and Europe who pontificate about semiotic systems, the sinister fallacy of a unified sensibility, and such like horrors will not be masked, but if this quick dismissal seems to lack seriousness, let it be understood that some sharp philosophical analysis—e.g., by John Searles in "Deconstructing Deconstruction,"[7] as well as critical expose by other thinkers like the neo-conservative historicist Gerald Graff, the post-Freudian Frederick Chews and the neo-Marxist Terry Eagleton and, indeed, by supposed practitioners of Deconstruction like Geoffrey Hartman, David Lodge, and Harold Bloom[8]—all lie behind this denigrating sketch of current post-structuralism from the outside.

III

What the Eurocentric post-structuralists are reacting against are several kinds of attempts, from about 1920 to 1970, to make criticism more

scientific, not only more objective in its methodology (and its evaluations, if any) but also more disciplined and consensual. Since those goals under attack are precisely what most Indian critics and poets seek, each of the prior attempts has found followers in India, so that the array of superseded perspectives will have to be looked at again as it played out in the Indian literary context. In the west the process of making criticism a serious academic discipline like the natural and social sciences began with the first New Critics, as I.A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* clearly indicates or less obvious T.S. Eliot's notions of objective correlatives, authorial impersonality as mere catalyst for creative reactions, and the dissociation of modern sensibility. Both early Marxist and Freudian critics from the 1930s onward contributed to this attack on mere impressionist or historicist criticism, and the latter, at least, found common ground with the New Critical close reading of texts, which came to emphasize paradox, irony and multiple meanings in symbols, images and even ordinary words. With an overt assertion that criticism should aim at scientific accumulation of knowledge about texts, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) tried to organize into one analytical system all the different categories of descriptive statements that critics make about genre, myth and archetype as well as rhetorical effects in literature, unifying the western classical and Christian traditions according to seasonal tetrads much like a medieval scholastic, but also with Jungian connections. It was not long before the search for basic patterns in texts came under the influence of Claude Levy-Strauss's brilliant anthropological readings of tribal customs, and again a paramount aim was to be scientific, to use radical structures of human thought so as not to project the observer's own values and schemes onto other cultures.

Structuralism in the 1960s emerged as a harsh, pseudo-scientific, heremeneutical methodology that disparaged as impressionistic and ethno or ego-centrically biased whatever critical interpretations were not derived from analysis of rudimentary polar categories: absence-presence, dark-light, raw-cooked, and so on, the more ingeniously conceived dyads being thought insightful and interesting. What the post-structuralist Deconstructionists pointed out, rightly enough, is, first, that structuralist polar terms are not value free, so that Eurocentric or phallocentric (dominating male) preferences for the second, "civilized" member of the dyad are not "natural," for not all cultures or persons agree; and second, that structuralism itself is a polarized position needing structural analysis, but that procedure leads to an infinite regress, so that a profound philosophical flaw in the method is revealed. (I reduce the argument greatly, just as I have grossly simplified the recent history of criticism in a few sentences.)

Well, of course, it had been logically demonstrated some decades ago that any complete language system (one that can examine its own

functioning) will include self-contradictory statements of one kind or another. My favorite example: Some words like "noun" or "word" refer to classes of words that include themselves; this class may be called homo-referential, the opposite of which is hetero-referential. All words are one or the other, so is "hetero-referential" a hetero-referential word ? If it is, then it is homo-referential; if it is not, then it is. Thus, an inescapable self-contradiction or falsity appears in this language, and in all languages which endeavor to describe themselves, that is, if they include some meta-language, language about language. The post-structuralists also like to demonstrate the impossibility of scientific or even meaningful criticism by pointing to profound epistemological problems—about other minds, reference, qualities, and so on—that have been argued about since scholastic times in the West and since Buddhist times in India. Over the past few decades contemporary semantics and analytical philosophy have dealt with these issues more or less satisfactorily, so that most professional philosophers do not now find the new Deconstructionist critique of pure reason as devastating (or even interesting) to the sense of ordinary language as many literary critics have considered it.

The practical methods of myth critics and structuralists and even old-fashioned New Critics are sound enough, if not too much is claimed for them: their analysis and statements make a discussable and improvable sense about readings of text that can be shared, developed, and evaluated according to terms and methods agreed upon. Playing with words, with basic critical concepts like "reading," "text," "language," "context," like arguing over "form" and "content" can heighten awareness of unexamined ethnocentric assumptions in ordinary criticism, but in the situation that Indian English criticism finds itself today, such an approach is rather self-indulgent, if not simply irresponsible. For the Japanese, tightly controlled in their manners by severely ascetic cultural tradition, some of the dyslogical, self-indulgent practices of Zen Buddhism have a liberating, enlightening function; for most contemporary Americans the enlightenment achieved by a few Zen-like jokes, without the supporting discipline and without a rigid cultural context as a psychosocial background, ultimately confirms our affluent culture's narcissistic insecurities and anxious self-indulgence. Perhaps the games of Deconstruction and the resultant focus either on theories of criticism and meta-meta-criticism or else a cavalier display of verbal wit and interpretive ingenuity—those ways of loosening up the tight American and European critical scene, may have been quite properly occasioned by the overly serious, arrogantly pretentious, incestuously over-specialized academic profession of criticism practiced there. Unfortunately critics with these same professional attitudes have caught onto post-structuralism and employed its supposedly liberating, anti-scholastic attitudes with their own kind of academic rigidity.

IV

Certainly a good deal of criticism of Indian English poetry has been terribly pedestrian, scarcely more than paraphrases and precis with brief explanations of mythic allusions and exclamations about major symbols. Examples can be found among American critics as well as Indian: Bruce King's essay on Keki Daruwalla for the blessedly revived and ordinarily well-edited *Indian Literary Review* centers on a rather condescending four-page stanza-by-stanza summary of "The Hawk."[9] M. Tarinayya's analysis of "Nissim Ezekiel's 'Night of the Scorpion,'" in the *Journal of Indian Writing in English* plods through the well-known poem with reasonably forthright thematic, stylistic, prosodic, and rhetorical commentary.[10] These efforts are understandable only insofar as the presumed audience for almost all this criticism, the economic market which begets too much of it, is composed predominantly of M.A. (final year) English literature students and their teachers in need of a crutch, or even a "crib" or "pony." But, as most essays in *ILR* as well as several other Indian literary journals suggest, the needs of some readers for line-by-line "translation" of poetry into prose or for narrative or descriptive explanations of poetic texts with authoritative value judgments do not improperly dominate the consciousness of most Indian English critics.

Rather the better critics of contemporary Indian English poetry, indeed the majority, concern themselves with reasoned interpretations of both general stylistic or thematic trends and particular texts—a single, usually widely anthologized poem, a recent volume, a poet's entire work, types of poems by one or more poets, and so on. And they treat these materials as indications of a more or less stable poetic consciousness, certainly a critical construct that does not fully accord with modern psychology or post-Husserlian phenomenology. Yet in the Indian English context it seems captious to denigrate the perhaps naive assumption that an important critical job is defining the creative personality of a group of poets or, more usually, a single poet, the person making a poem or "text," sometimes confused still more naively with the speaker of the poem or quite mistakenly (according to New Critical theory) construed as the everyday man or woman who eats, votes, loves, reads and also writes poems. Because most Euro-Amero-British critics today feel some need to acknowledge, if not do battle with, the current fashion for tracing out epistemological and phenomenological problems in (instead of ?) interpreting poems, it is not condescending to the Indian English literary scene to praise and expect something quite different. In fact, the earlier methodology of New Critical interpretation is not outdated by structuralism or post-structuralism, for not only is the basic aim of objectivity or, at least, consensual rationality, still well defended and exemplified through-

out the contemporary critical world, but also most adherents of the later criticisms incorporate openly and admittedly quite a few New Critically emphasized notions, like the fallacies of intention and of paraphrase, the principles of irony and of plurisignification, the complex mysteries of voice and of symbolic language. Though it may never be proven that truly free-form modern art requires training in the traditional forms (as the career of Picasso but not of Pollack suggests), yet it must be the case that responsible and responsive literary criticism requires training in ordinary practical reading skills—knowledge of the language—and in some extraordinary reading skills for poetry. Practice in "practical criticism" is needed for understanding the tone, imagery, genre, tradition, and so on immediately presented by the words of a poem (if that old-fashioned formulation of "the text" can here be tolerated). A sophisticated form of this criticism, interesting to highly skilled readers as well as useful to the less skilled, would raise issues beyond the immediate textual or interpretive occasion and deal concretely with them in and through that occasion. For example, we need an essay that deals closely with Keki Daruwalla's paradoxical vigor and fatigue—in standard but varied poems like "The Hawk," "Routine," "Keeper of the Dead," etc., the interpretive process would grapple with the wider problem of how formal tradition, from rhyme to moral closure—the rather Victorian element in Daruwalla's work and in much other Indian English poetry—functions conservatively yet not regressively in the contemporary Indian multicultural context.

V

If only pragmatically, the New Critical focus on the text as an autonomous object for esthetic contemplation cannot survive a critical climate wherein other responses and responsibilities are urged on poetry, and that certainly has been the situation throughout contemporary literary worlds, including those in India. The contemporary demand for social responsibility and cultural responsiveness in Indian English poetry and criticism fairly easily overcomes whatever remains of other cultural traditions, indigenous and foreign, that prefer to isolate esthetic experience from the crush of everyday life. The latter highly conservative, supposedly a-political attitude is strong throughout most of India's cultures—including the academic holdovers of indigenized New Criticism in the moralistic Leavis-Eliot strain as well as the various attempts to revive the Brahminical-Sanskritic Rasa-Dhvani (bliss-suggesting) theory. Yet conservative as India's academic institutions are, especially English Departments, which only slowly have come to accept Indian English literature as a field worth Indian students's and scholars's attention, they have never been able to deny since Independence that their work, including criticism, must serve the society undergoing such painful

transitions. It is not only India's situation as an economically developing nation but more importantly its postcolonial political status that makes issues of social responsibility inevitable in its criticism. Examining the same historical context further into the contemporary cultural situation helps explain how that social responsibility takes on much of its character—as an ideological, moralistic activity rather than a pragmatic, radically revolutionary social and political one.

Probably a majority of Indian critics, academic and otherwise, would maintain that their role and the function of art and of criticism is essentially conservative, to preserve older cultural values—usually meaning Hinduism or indigenous myths and legends but even, for xenophiliacs, including certain ideals of the British Empire. Still, the other extreme of progressivism is not necessarily less indigenous, for parallel with the still active cliche that modernity means adopting from the West and adapting higher technology and its concomitant values—individualistic consumerism, intensified work schedules, mass mobility—goes the contrary notion that to become fully decolonialized in the postcolonial world the whole Indian society must revivify indigenous democratic institutions, break down caste and color barriers, and, most of all, develop its unique multiculturality, a genuine form of pluralism not well recognized or implemented in the West and only dimly understood even among those who practice or incorporate its contentiously integrative processes. In short, whatever the brand of politics, criticism in India has accepted a social role, even when, as seems endemic among modern intellectuals around the globe, the feeling is that such a culturally significant role is neither appreciated by nor effective in the contemporary postcolonial socio-political structure. It is that sense of a larger obligation, beyond that to literature and criticism as a culturally transcendent, "universally" valid and valuable discipline, which gives Indian English criticism much of its distinctive character. It should not be surprising that such a character may derive in part from a multiculturally transcendent Great Tradition in India wherein differences in one's birth-given obligations—one's dharma—are more identifying than distinctions achieved by individual effort. What remains to be seen is how these obligations are differently conceived in the many Little Traditions of multicultural India, how different kinds of Indian English critics and criticism fare in the contemporary Indian context.

NOTES

1. For a compelling instance of this truth applied to the most ancient Vedic culture, see J.C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, New Delhi: O.U.P., 1985.

2. See a study of the 1960-70s intellectuals, only slightly outdated now, by H.C. Srivastava, *Intellectuals in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Heritage, n.d. (1973 ?). Studies of the growing power of vernacular-speaking intellectuals (distinguished from pundits, scholar-priest traditionalists) have been more recently collected by Yogendra K. Malik, ed. *South Asian Intellectual and Social Change*, New Delhi: Heritage, 1982; there Eleanor Zelliott observes that in Maharashtra, where Brahmins and Prabhus still dominate establishment institutions, writing in English seems to be almost entirely from those castes. (p. 85)
3. Yogendra K. Malik, "Hindi: From Traditional to Modern Roles of Intelligentsia," *Ibid.*, pp. 119-159.
4. AKR, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking ?" a "Rough draft" 1986 revision of an informal essay for the Person in South Asia project, Chicago, 1980.
5. A bibliographical note substantiating this claim could exceed in length this entire essay.
6. KNS, "Literary Speculations," *Indian Literature*, 121 (Sept.-Oct. 1987), p. 149.
7. JS, "The Word Turned Upside Down: Deconstructing Deconstruction," *New York Review of Books*, 30: 16 (Oct. 27, 1983), pp. 74-79.
8. GH, *Saving the Text*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P. 1981 (see also his approving survey of "The Culture of Criticism," *PMLA* (May 1984), pp. 371-390-397; David Lodge, *Working with Structuralism*, London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1981; Harold Bloom: "the mode now called Deconstruction . . . has nothing in common with hermeneutics, but . . . increasingly I find equally misleading and equally what I don't want. . . . Because it is reductive and because it discovers the same abyss or gap in any work whatsoever. Because . . . it increasingly and pragmatically simply amounts to another formalism, just a greater sophistication of the American New Criticism, in that it emphasizes the ironic apprehension of literary works . . . as not even being a trope but as being a condition of literary writing itself. . . . The Deconstructors themselves, especially the younger ones, increasingly see me as a sort of rear guard battler for tradition and for what they call [naive] realism or sentimental humanism." "Interview," with Ellen Spirer, *Tufts Magazine*, Spring 1985, p. 54. Again a full bibliography of the recent American (and European) arguments over structuralism, Deconstruction and post-structuralism, including dozens of published seminar papers, would equal another essay.
9. BK, "Keki Daruwalla: Outsider, Sceptic and Poet," *ILR*, IV:2 (April 1986), pp. 45-58. In his book, *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (Delhi:

O. U. P., 1987) King summarizes stylistic and thematic traits with a more judgmental edge: "The poems [of Keki Daruwalla] may seem like a kind of American writing in their concentration on the physical, but the descriptions themselves have neither the transcendence nor the denial of transcendence (and affirmation of the physical as all) which are often the kinds of consciousness expressed in American poetry." (p. 124.)

10. MT, *Journal of Indian Writing in English*, 11: *2* (July 1983), pp. 30-34. But the guest edited Nissim Ezekiel number of *JIWE*, 15:2 (July 1987) contained a variety of useful and stimulating essays.

Howard Nemerov's "The Scales of the Eyes": A Drama of Perception

Manorama Trikha

Among the mid-century American poets, Nemerov holds a distinctive place primarily because of his deep involvement in the epistemological puzzles that make his poems the life-reflecting mirrors catching the confused appearances of the beauty and terror of life. To achieve this object he has adopted the philosophy of watchful waiting. He says, "I have found poetic imagination to be chiefly a matter of waiting."[1] The statement reveals two things: (a) that he was fascinated by the working of the creative aspect of the human mind, i.e., the poetic imagination; (b) that the central virtue of the human mind is "attentiveness" as his famous article "Attentiveness and Obedience," a title from Thomas Mann, emphasizes. He valued the quality of perception as the main attribute of a creative act which, according to him, would inspire mankind "to see a thinking way."[2] Nemerov's remark shows that the "eye" and the "mind" are the authentic sources of true perception, if the "eye" sees things of the external world of varied shapes, structures and sounds, the mind enriches the observations by weaving subtle thoughts around the objects, by penetrating through the things; if the former records the visible, the latter penetrates the invisible; and it is out of the relationship and the cross-relationship between the two that true poetry emerges. In this connection Nemerov writes that "The invisible does not begin with God, the gods, and such high matters; it begins much closer to home, wherever pattern is discriminated and relationship inferred."[3]

Thus Nemerov attempts to reconcile the eye and the mind with each other and both with the outer and the inner worlds. It makes his poetry an experience of a peculiar kind in which the thing and the thought mingle into a complex design adding a deeply reflexive note to his poems. Nemerov says in his article "The Sweeper of Ways": "My belief about poetry says that you write a poem not to say what you think, nor even to find out what you think though that is closer but to find out what *it* thinks."[4] Nemerov's realistic attitude makes him aware of the unknowableness of being and the world; his romantic sensibility encourages his fascination with perception. The tension between these polarized views makes his poems "the drama of perception," to use Ross Labrie's phrase. Nemerov argues emphatically that a true poem or a story comes out not from the thought which the mind

contains but from the movement of the mind. For the successful handling of these movements of the mind in the poems Nemerov's mysterious instrument is language. In his essay "The Swaying Form" he asserts that language can be seen as a "marvelous mirror of the human condition, a mirror so marvelous that it can see what is invisible, that is, the relationship between things."[5] This sort of interfusion of the thing, the thought and the language makes a Nemerov poem, "a great reckoning in a little room,"[6] to borrow an expression from his autobiography. Its special significance lies in the fact that a poem does not communicate the values of the poet or any system of thought; it becomes "a value in itself" as Ross Labrie puts it. At this juncture the best approach would be to understand the poet not through opinions—his own as well as others's—but in the light of his long poem "The Scales of the Eyes."

I

"The Scales of the Eyes"[7] a sequence of eighteen numbered poems from *The Salt Garden* (1955) is an ambitious but appallingly ambiguous piece of work. It opens with an allusion to Jason and his search for the golden fleece which launches its central theme, that is, the voracious eating of the world by the mind and subsequent defeat of the man by the external world. However, Nemerov goes deeper into the source of the problem thinking in fragments about the continuum of experiences of life while passing through various stages from the outward to the inward journey. The poet concentrates on the surface and the depth simultaneously and this process of thought characterizes various poems of "The Scales of the Eyes" with a note of despair, confusion and minimal affirmation as "life is hopeless and beautiful."[8]

To anchor one perception to another, Nemerov uses the last word of the first poem "sleep" as the opening word of the second poem but with the change in perception the meaning of the word changes. The line, "Sleep in the zero, sleep in the spore" shows that sleep leads to the beginning of the introspective, "regressive" journey. Emphasizing the significance of his dreamscape, he takes "zero" as a starting point, a still-point to his inward-turning thoughts. Besides, "zero" gives meaning to the word "scales" in the title as "zero" originally and literally stands for any kind of measurement, positive or negative. Nemerov thinks it essential to turn back to the mythical reality to comprehend fully the present reality. The lines, "Time being Always going west, Let it be your dream," introduce his central theme of "running down" which may give the secret of "standing still." Nemerov capitalizes "Always" to emphasize that it is a tested belief, "the whole truth" as he phrased it in "Painting a Moun tain Stream."

Running and standing still at once
is the whole truth. Raveled or combed,
wrinkled or clear, it gets its force
from losing force. Going it stays.[9]

The dream sequence at the end of all the three stanzas, "Let it be your dream," "Begin a falling dream" and "Life is your long dream," reveals a series of perceptions. The first indicates a fall within a fall, that is, to quote Kenneth Burke's words "falling asleep by dreaming of a fall" with theological connotations, i.e., fall from grace; the second refers to the stream of consciousness, that is, the flowing continuum of an individual experience as the dream emerges from "the liquid of the brain" and the third refers to the idealistic view of life. In brief, one proceeds from the loss of innocence to the dense, dark experiences of confounding inner self, till "the eye will flower in your night" and attains an awakened self that cherishes a "long dream."

If in the first two poems the self confronted with self through the eye and the dream, in the third piece the mind travels out to the city and nature to find a self-definition. The perception is worked out through the contrast between the city and its "Dead men" and "the sea" as the former seemed to have lost all zest for life being in the rut like "Trains run a roaming sound" on the charted route, the latter follows "a free way." Kenneth Burke has elaborated the central idea of the poem insightfully when he sums up that the poet, separated from the city, (not entirely devoid of the "subliminal" motives) finds "his separateness solemnized." "Thus the city, viewed from the retreat to which it drove him, shares somewhat the quality of the end it has imposed upon him. The city is as abstract in one way as the sea is in another. . . ."[10]

The fourth poem retains the thought and the mood of the previous piece. In a riddle-posing manner he describes the city, "the secret beast" whose "stone sinews/Tremble with strength." Unrelieved darkness and aimlessness overshadow the mood of the speaker. The predatory motif, which was introduced in the first poem with Jason myth, prevails but not without a sense of renewal;

City, white lion among waters,
who settest thy claw upon the time,

is well matched with the unbreakable cycle of life:

The bees hum
The honeyed doom of time and time
Again, and riddle this underground
How sweetness comes from the great strength.

The "time-mindedness," to use a phrase from Burke, is the source of the city's strength despite its dark strings, which reflects positively on the nature within man below the stream of consciousness. The last line of the poem alludes to Samson's discovery of the carcass of a lion in which there were bees and honey –(Judges, 15:5-11)—that indicates the possibility of life, i.e., "sweetness" in a hard world. (Nemerov's poem "Lion and Honeycomb" from *The Next Room of the Dream* also deals with the Samson riddle.)

The next two poems dwell on the childhood experiences of the poet when he got terrorized by the portrait of an old, whimsical woman, on "a can of Dutch Cleanser"—a can of cleansing powder, which causes a sense of sexual guilt in him. He registers the shock of that moment thus:

> she
> To violate my oldest nights;
> I frighten of her still.

The speaker ironically speaks about the "faceless bonnet," "bleached virginity" and "her anger" of the "blind maid," but luckily he is left "without stain"—an expression which gives moral significance to this event.

If the portrait of the woman in the previous piece reminds the reader of maternal chastisement, an angry father figure—"Already old when I began"—confirms that the speaker again undertakes an introspective journey into his past, when he was in the hands of the man where purgative anger demanded answer for "all things." The last stanza shows his discontentment and disassociation with the traditional idea of subordination of an individual to the God-father or to the world. He admits that "The world is not my oyster"—a thought which has echoes of Blake: "Auguries of Innocence"—a poem from the section entitled "The Everlasting Gospel" which opens thus:

> O see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour.[11]

But without Blake's visionary imagination Nemerov's unsettling experiences make him turn upon himself only. He becomes the oyster, "the blind values are closing on only *one* grain of sand." The images employed in the earlier poems, i.e., of the eye, the food, the old age, the blindness and the "white grits" are re-structured to re-inforce the perception on the theme of guilt.

In poem seven and eight he shifts his attention from himself to the outer would—a predicament endemic to human perception at large especially when one is in flurry and has the scales over the eyes. Here the poet suffers, to use Burke's phrase, "his snow-mood," which reminds one of Frost's "Design"—but not to appall as the snow is "patient snow" that

> Had lodged itself in tips of grass
> And made its mantle bridging so
> It lay upon the air and not the earth
> So light it hardly bent a blade.

The snow has learnt to bear its penance. And "the moment of purification through acquiescence in frigidity is a transcendental kind of penance."[12] The complete agreement of the mind to the conditions depicted here through the analogy of the all-absorbing snowy landscape makes the poem the most effective and picturesque piece in the sequence. The peace experienced here vanishes soon and Poem Eight is characterized by a sense of fear and threat revealed by the images of deserted farm house, white shore and

> The crab eaten in the house of self
> And the torn dog shark gutted in sand;
> The whole sky goes white with silence
> And bears on a few brazen flies.

The horrifying scene of destruction on the land causes fearful sensations in the sky that "goes white with silence." The plunger outside causes the darkness of the subconscious "the deeper sleep." He feels "the ground sighed under the foot" as he walks "the mined world." Nemerov's dark vision is an integral part of his perception that makes these poems a drama of light and shade, white and black.

The next two poems confirm that in Nemerov's poetry the imagery corresponds to the psychological divisions or the states of consciousness. Poem Nine, which is of two stanzas, shows "the caged sea . . . pacing to be free," but the man comprehends the motive of the sea through "The spiral shell" whose "coiled air" "Hums the ocean or the blood/A distant cry." The perception may be real or illusory. The next poem also presents the moment of uncertainty about the world of nature as well as about his pursuits. The very first line of the poem reveals the perplexed mind of the speaker: "Roads lead to the sea, and then ?" He has covered "a long journey so far" but he has lost his purpose "why to be here and now." He asks: "Gull, where do I go now ?"—but, apparently, "Gull" and "girls" would not be able to dispel his confusion. He realises the futility of his approach to life either through senses or perception and concludes: "Ask Polaris about the fish./No good," as

these distant things are not specifically involved in the life of an individual. Perhaps distance makes them indifferent to the query of the speaker. "All lines were lost" in the previous poem, here too "there is/ No way to go but back." The speaker has to take a "regressive" journey to find an answer to his epistemological questions.

The next two poems sum up the history of man's life from the moment of birth to the moment of illumination or ultimate fulfillment. The speaker manages to convey the process of his maturity through the images which have the rich motivational qualities. In the opening lines he refers to plunging "the tunnel with the wet wall/through," that, obviously, stands for passing through the birth canal. The shock of being born is borne well by the images employed in the lines, but he acknowledges that "Against drowning to be born in a caul/Is well."

An examination of the remaining six poems confirms that nothing would easily solve the existential riddles, which rather multiply in a self-generative manner. One may faintly feel "blessed" but soon to realize that the sufferings, confusions and victimization prevail endlessly. The duality of experience adds two things: (a) the repetition of relevant cross-references, major motives and motifs and (b) the reflexive note to the poems. In poem thirteen the speaker rejects all the social, religious practices with a view to face "life and death" in its totality. He outgrows himself. The images used here echo loudly the images of the previous poems but this sort of interweaving at the level of craft reinforces the point of view of the speaker and makes his utterances a sort of meditation or inventory. His perception changes vitally; the nature and his consciousness, the sea and the body, the city underground and the mind become interchangeable and even one. For a while he thinks of himself as "the ram" a symbol of God's sparing of Isaac—who "waits/In the thicket of nerves."

Poem Fourteen is a complicated piece as it rearranges the important images and words into new patterns. It is an inventory in which "The eye turned upon itself." It is a moment of self-analysis; the image of "the spider strangled in her web" shows that the catcher, in "the last hour of the dream," is caught. He reflects on the past and his "heart bled its secret food" turning him into a helpless sacrificial figure in search of an essence:

> The eye for the caged water of light,
> The beast asleep in the bleeding snare.

From Poem Fifteen to Eighteen there is a spectacular change in the mood of the speaker. He retains his revulsion for his socio-cultural surroundings as they offer nothing substantial except some mechanized pleasures and are passing through a strange inanition; but he returns to his dream of establishing a bond with the sea that "goes her own way" the first affinity between them, which encourages him to say:

And we informal liquors may
Easily despise your bones.

Through the imagery of "liquors" the relationship is established. Perhaps it is the climax of Nemerov's venture into motivational self-portraiture. From now onwards the vision of the speaker undergoes a permanent change which is symbolically conveyed by the change in the weather from winter to spring. The total atmosphere glitters with the celestial lights "the ocean moon" and "a star." He is delighted by the beauties scattered around him. Not only that the "Gull" not seen earlier "rises" in the snowy marsh" and "in the warm dream./The lily bows among the ruins." A perpetual joy permeates the world of nature while the man-made "kingdoms" "rise and are blown down."

The survey makes it explicit that Nemerov's central theme has been to study the self and to poetize self through various mysterious impulses, skeptical moods, appetites and blindness, sleep and self-sickness, sins and levitations, and to organize his perceptions through the biblical, mythical, and complicated linguistic devices that add "psychologistic and intellectualistic complexity" to the poem, as Burke puts it, but without disturbing the consistency of the theme. In the "Acts of the Apostles" (9:18) Paul was blinded by God in order to force him to be receptive to inner vision, after which the scales of blindness slipped away from his eyes automatically. In the present poem too, the speaker passes through the blinding chaos of the particular experiences but finally achieves the "essence of himself" by developing a series of perceptions which establish the vision of the continuum characterized by "New happiness of everything."

NOTES

1. Ross Labrie, *Howard Nemerov* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 13.
2. "An Interview with Howard Nemerov," *Island*, 4 (November 1966), p. 2.
3. "Speculation Turning to Itself," *Prose*, 3 (Fall 1971), p. 93.
4. "The Sweeper of Ways," *Reflexions on Poetry and Poetics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1972), p. 160.
5. "The Swaying Form," *Poetry and Fiction*: *Essays* (New Brunswick: N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), p. 11.
6. *Journal of the Fictive Life* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1965), p. 21.
7. In *The Colleted Poems of Howard Nemerov* (Chicago Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), pp 103-11.

8. Peter Meinke, *Howard Nemerov* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1968), p. 24.
9. "Painting a Mountain Stream," *The Collected* Poems, p. 203.
10. Kenneth Burke, "Comments on Eighteen Poems by Howard Nemerov," *The Sewanee Review*, 60, No. 1 (Winter 1952), pp. 118-19.
11. William Michael Rossetti, ed. *The Poetical Works of William Blake* (London: G. Bells, 1974), p. 180.
12. Kenneth Burke, "Comments on Eighteen Poems," p. 120.

Pinter's Drama of Silence

Pradip Lahiri

T.S. Eliot strove to wrench the precise lingual idiom in order to give vent to the mood of utter disillusionment and spiritual sterility of the twentieth century world around him. W.H. Auden complimented Eliot: "When things began to happen . . ./It was you/Who, not speechless with shock but finding the right/Language for thirst and fear, did most to/Prevent a panic."[1] It was indeed the panic of inexpressible agony of the soul which had fallen dismayingly foul of the aggravated Arnoldian "strange disease of modern life" felt by his Scholar Gipsy.

Contemporary history which in Eliot's words, is "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy"[2] demanded life-mark implementation of a lingual agent. Old-world values, views, systems, symptoms, code of conduct all in a body started to tumble down fast with an alarming fillip. Normal lingual idioms of expressions, the entire army of pale cliches and deformed figures of vocabulary were hit hard. They failed to match the communicative urge of hollow men and women, shot through with a razor-sharp sensibility. Shorn of its basic spiritual and moral values our very own and golden world was transformed into a waste land where to go on living was felt by and large to be totally useless, devoid of any purpose, leading to Hemingway's "nada" or Sartre's "neant"—both the terms denoting nothingness or non-being.

The Symbolist Movement, having exploited the mysterious suggestiveness of private symbols, concentrated on achieving a musical effect in verse by blurring the senses, seeking to reach for *higher* reality. Symbolists explored the negative aspect of language. They declared that the so-called medium of communication no longer communicates, but impairs true communication. Hence, as Andrew Kennedy rightly puts "first music, and then silence, which have affinities with the mystic's discipline in attempting to reach communion beyond the noise or obstruction of words, became the ultimate analogies for verbal expression."[3] Thereupon creative writers such as Charles Baudelaire, Stephane Mallarme, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Valery seriously called in question the utility and effectiveness of conventional language.

Eliot perceived that time demanded nothing more badly than a precise lingual idiom to rightly communicate its feelings, its own rhythmic

subtle variations of thought. W.B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound and Hart Crane were also deeply influenced by Symbolist poetic culture. They all tried to do their bits in their own way in this regard. As the oriental poet Rabindranath Tagore hankered after the exact poetic idiom for uttering a consummate romantic attainment and moved from *Kori O Komal* (1886) to *Manasi* (1887-90) and finally attained his bliss at *Sonar Tari* (1891-93); similarly Eliot's quest for this specific purpose of attaining exact poetic idiom runs from *the Wasteland* (1922), cuts through *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and gets culminated in *The Four Quartets* (1944). Eliot expresses his concern over our verbal communication--its inadequacy and ineffectiveness. He writes:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still. (149-53)

Samuel Beckett carried Eliot's torch. The flame then was handed over to Harold Pinter who did not miss Antonin Artaud's message: "It is essential . . . to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought."[4] Pinter, acclaimed as a master of pregnant silences on the stage signalling human failure to comment and communicate, adheres to the view, as Gareth Lloyd Evans points out, that "non-verbal communication (and that can only mean aural, physical or extra-sensory) offers a far greater range and flexibility of expression."[5] A raw, real-life dialogue is the sine-qua-non of Pinter's plays divulging the bulk of everyday conversation as devoid of logic and reason, sliding into nonsense. Pinter's theatre uncovers this hiatus existing between what we say, what we mean to say and what we actually communicate to other homo sapiens; for these three are no longer homogeneous, often not even shadow-replica of one another.

Virginia Woolf spoke of her tiredness of common language: "How tired I am of phrases that come down with all their feet on the ground . . . I begin to long for some little language . . . broken words, inarticulate words."[6] Dating back even to Shakespeare we find a clue to this failure of vocabulary: "words are very rascals/since bonds disgraced them . . . words are grown so false,/I am loath to prove reason with them."[7] Literary artists over the ages felt the gradual inadequacy and ineffectiveness of words. William Carlos Williams stressed the need for literary inventions and creations out of the blankness about us which the words are unable to dispel, and wanted to go in for new constructions.[8]

Pinter observes: "You and I, the characters which grow on a page, most of the time we are inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable,

elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it is out of these attributes that a language arises. A language . . . where, under what is said, another thing is being said."[8] In *The Homecoming* (1965) Teddy, a professor of Philosophy says, "You wouldn't understand my works. You wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about." (III ,77) Pinter's plays too, at the first encounter, baffle understanding. After the premiere of *The Birthday Party* (1958); Milton Shulman, reviewer of the *Evening Standard*, without having the "faintest idea" of what it was about, criticised the play as a "crossword puzzle." Excepting Harold Hobson of the *Sunday Times*, almost all other reviewers of various dailies rejected the play outright.

From *The Room* (1960) all the way to *One for the Road* Pinter has continually sketched effective communicative power of silence, of insinuation and gesture cautiously grasped through timed pauses and sleek stop-gap stage dialogue. A Pinterian *Pause* is a wonderful landmark in modern playwriting. It causes the mind to hold its comprehensive process for some quiet moments during which myriad shades of diaphanous suggestions flash across the diaphragm. The audience holds its breath at the cross-section of perplexing insulated meaning, which inheres only in the direct impact of on-stage action. Observes J. L. Styan: "Dramatic pause is essentially a means of implanting a dramatic impression."[9] A pause is very carefully used in Pinter in order that a particular theatrical effect may have time enough to sink into the circumstances of the audience to react fully to that effect.

Pinter's language in its totality injects into us a deeper dose from the ampule of silence. The real sense of the situations emanates from the silent impact of action. His dialogue is identical with the exact reproduction of the words shot out of the lips, or blurted out offhand, by men and women with palpitating life in their unguarded, naked, nonplussed, weak and tormenting moments of existential predicament. It discards window-dressing. A consolidated Wordsworthian doctrine may be envisaged here that linguistic idiomatic units must be culled out of the exact spoken words of men in their natural habitation—Nature being defined in its essential cosmic sense as the state of *Being* from an existential standpoint, which is close not to Kierkegaard or Martin Heidegger but to Sartre, Kafka or even Thornton Wilder. Evans significantly holds "language dictates the reality of character and character is conjugated with plot." (p.xvii)

Pinter's drama of silence points to Steiner's pertinent question "Are we passing out of an historical era of verbal primacy, out of the classic period of literate expression, into a phase of partial silence ?"[10] This at once refers to Eliot's "Speech without word/and word of no speech" ("Ash Wednesday"), and echoes, as it were, in Pinter's *Old Times* (1971): "What [Silence. Is it always as silent ? It's quite silent here, yes. Normally." The answer to Steiner's weighty question comes in

the affirmative. It is obviously towards an age of partial silence on the stage that modern drama moves. In Pinter we discern a calculated movement towards pure art or "de-humanised art"[11] as Jose Ortega Y. Gasset puts it.

The dramatic effect that is evinced by Pinter's manoeuvring of silence through a very subtle egg-shell handling of his dramatic dialogue is devastatingly appropriate to the twentieth century existential predicament. Bernard F. Dukore rightly comments that "framed by dialogue, and achieving their effects in relationship to words, are various types of silence."[12] A Mephistophilian silence haunts the action of almost all the major full-length plays of Pinter, including the one-Acters such as *The Dumb Waiter* (59), *The Lover* (63), *Landscape* (68), *Silence* (69), *A Kind of Alaska* (82), *Victoria Station*. Silence is Mephistophilian in the sense that the audience never for a moment forgets the looming uneasy presence of pertinent silence tearing into the cross-texture of dialogue or monologue; for one agrees with M.C. Bradbrook that "easy communication at a superficial level makes communication in depth more precarious."[13] In Pinter there is an affirmation of Beckett's mandate that "art is the apotheosis of solitude."[14] Pinter's characters, may they be Stanley or Petty; McCann or Goldberg; Ruth or Rose; Teddy or Lenny; Emma, Roberts or Jerry; Ben or Gus; Duff or Beth; Controller or Driver; Nicolas Victor or Gila—are all essentially cellophaned by a silence of strange import. Bradbrook significantly remarks "their inner voice becomes more halting under the burden of words." The playwright himself admits about his characters "it is in their silence that they are most evident to me."[15]

Pinter's drama cuts through the intricate cobweb of absurdity stuck around today's mankind. He wants to record those subtle moments of life when we deceive ourselves by word jugglery in our day to day conversation, neither meaning what we speak, nor speaking what we mean. In *The Caretaker* (60) we read: "I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations." (II, 82) Pinter's pinning down of an individual at his everyday conversation inside his or her twentieth century existential igloo has been performed in the very delicate way that a Chinese Acupuncturist medically treats a patient by pricking certain parts specified in human anatomy with sharp-pointed needles. Catharsis of a Pinterian play may be said to be wrought with a greater force in a deeper apocalypse.

The more the playwright negotiates various bends along the zig-zag playwriting pathway, length of his dramatic dialogue substantially contracts. Pinter has admitted, "My Plays are getting shorter . . . words are so tender. One-Act Plays are all I seem to be able to write at the moment. I doubt if I will ever write something mammoth."[16] Conversational

gambit in his plays demonstrate a definite marching forward along Beckett's worked out route through the territory of absurdism. Pinter's lingual filigree takes much after this senior playwright. Bradbrook's comment is once again noteworthy—"the speech of Pinter or Beckett rests on great gaps—it is a no-speech, like the Japanese no-action." (p. 55) Oleg Kerensky labels Pinter's plays as "non-realist verbal games of Harold Pinter"[17] having acknowledged the dramatist's crucial influence in introducing a new style of language.

As Pinter's journey is decidedly into the interior of a man or a woman he focuses his powerful lingual lens on modern man's self-scrutiny, ceaseless metaphysical quest for establishing subtle identification with infinity or eternity from where he has originated, into which he will pass. This reminds us of what the *Rigveda* says—"Antāya vahuvādinam, Anantaya mukam." (translated by Sri Aurobindo as: 'for the finite the eloquent man, for the infinite the mute.') Indian philosophy teaches us that in the depth of the spirit is the pathway to the Supreme. Likewise Dr. Radhakrishnan interprets: "Our strength is in the silence where utterance is not and where definition is unknown. A fundamental reticence marks the seers."[18] The secret of silence is inwardness for which a human soul yearns; for a man's life has always evaded an easy definition. "The more," observes William I. Oliver, "we strive for definition and permanent distinction the more absurd we are."[19] Pinter panns his lingual camera accordingly as he projects characters at a level of existence where they are not anxious to cover their nakedness. Darker aspects of their selves are prominent—aspects which normally avoid illuminated mannequin representation. Characters are caught at their deeply buried selves which, as Bradbrook says "may exert a gravitational pull that powerfully affects conscious life." (p. 53) A scepticism about language is detected at the centre of Pinter's plays. Tunnelling into human sub-conscious his dramatic dialogue prevails upon us to dwell on the crucial philosophical question raised by John Russell-Brown: "Can anything ever be stated correctly in words ? Can anything ever be said to be 'stated' ? We play with words and words play with us. We can neither say what we know, nor know what we say. When we stop to think, we do not trust words." (p. 15) We are reminded, nevertheless, of Eliot's "intolerable wrestle/with words and meanings" of which W.W. Robson has said "there is no doubt that what he (Eliot) wished to convey is hard to approximate in language."[20]

Words are the components of auditory language dealing with speech sound. A word is a combination of one or more speech sound symbolizing a unit of thought and communicating a meaning. The visual language of drama has to depend a lot on words as carriers of dialogue. A dramatist has to be concerned with the careful selection and correct patterning of words as materials of emotion and thought to be conveyed

precisely by his drama. Hence, appropriateness of a word representing an idea or an object is necessary for the successful communication of its meaning. Pinter's plays confirm that words are not to be trusted; that our linguistic coding does not correspond to our feeling-response, for in conveying an idea, it is the qualitative aspect that counts. Dramatic effect is best wrought in abstraction. Silence helps in projecting a particular feeling quality onto the basic structure of the play. In other words, it helps in building the 'dramatic tension' as the generic term connotes. A piece of dialogue, used in *A Kind of Alaska* may sum up the issue:

> Hornby : Well, all right. Speak to her.
> Pauline : What shall I say ?
> Hornby : Just talk to her.
> Pauline : *Doesn't it matter what I say* ?
> Hornby : *No.*

We may hear a faint echo of Eliot's *Sweeny Agonistes* (1932):

> I gotta use words when I talk to you
> But if you understand or if you don't
> That's nothing to me and nothing to you.

Pinter's dialogue follows the lingual practice of the brazen life we live. The playwright probes the inadequacy of spoken language restricting *intended* communication. It is his existential insight into man's universal situation which relates Pinter with the major profound literary artists and thinkers of the present age. We may take a few instances from his plays. McCann, in *The Birthday Party*, tears a sheet of news paper into five equal strips, sitting at the table. Rest is silence, having no follow-up action. Later Petty comes up to pick up the same newspaper; from inside the folded pages fall those five torn pieces, rest is silence again. Meaning emanates from this silence which establishes a non-plussed absurdity, creating a crisis of verbal expressiveness. The following extract is from the glass of water episode between Ruth and Lenny in *The Homecoming*:

> Lenny : Just give me the glass.
> Ruth : No. /pause/
> Lenny : I'll take it, then—
> Ruth : If you take the glass . . . I'll take you.
> /pause/
> Lenny : How about me, taking the glass without you taking me ?
> Ruth : Why don't I just take you ?
> /pause/

An eerie silence prevails on the stage thereafter. The audience is engrossed in its own impulses and somewhat awesome feelings it finds reflected in those of the characters. What is found here is a highly charged symbolic language of silence along the track of neo-realistic expressionism. In the *Betrayal* (1978) Pinter dives into the deepest interior of modern Man. He uses a lingual microscope to bring into minute examination the inexplicability of the psychological state in which all the three characters of the play are held. After a spell of two years Emma, Robert's wife, meets Jerry her husband's married business partner with whom she had an affair.

Emma : You know what I found out . . . last night ? He's betrayed me for years. He's had . . . other women for years.
Jerry : No ? Good Lord. But we betrayed him for years.
Emma : And he betrayed me for years. (Sc i)

Later the following conversation takes place between Robert and Jerry:

Robert : No, she didn't. She didn't tell me about you and her last night. She told me about you and her four years ago.
/pause 1/
So she didn't have to tell me again last night. Because I knew. And she knew I knew because she told me herself four years ago. (Sc ii)

The dialogue reveals not only the idiom of lies, but insinuates the tremendous silent psychological pressure exerted by the simple-looking words: *know, knew, betrayed* and *years*, holding out myriad possibilities of interiorised psychic reaction at the feeling-response end. Theme of action vs. words incorporating latent silence is also brought forward. Professor Seldon writes, "actions frequently allow characters to express their real feelings even when verbally they are carrying on a pretence."[20] *Betrayal's* long silence makes us see below the surface-life beyond the lingual limits of immediate understanding.

Michael Anderson holds that Pinter's characters create a "private system of language."[21] This observation may be supported with an eye to the idiosyncratic sentence structure of Pinter's plays revealing inner obsessions. To understand a Pinter-play serious audience participation is required; similarly as it is required in understanding contemporary Indian films such as *Anant Ram, Aakrosh, Chakra* or *Aakaaler Sandhane* directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Govind Nihalani, Jabbar Patel and Mrinal Sen respectively.

August Strindberg believed that in a play the mind of the characters should be permitted to work as "irregularly as they do in reality, where during conversation the cogs of one mind seem more or less haphazardly to engage those of another one, and where no topic is finally exhausted."[22]

Pinter's dialogue follows a similar pattern with desultory, clumsy talk ridden by interruptions, overlappings, or repetitions. Incidentally it may be pointed out that Eliot too found the conventional dialogue of the well-made play as "remote . . . from the vocabulary, syntax and rhythm of our ordinary speech—with its fumbling for words, its constant recourse to approximation, its disorder and its unfinished sentences."[24] So, according to Pinterian tenet a dramatic message is better revealed in silent implications.

Subtextual thought, which prompts the actors to search underneath the express dialogue and to mould their stage performances accordingly, is enlarged by Pinter in achieving a consummate language of silence. "The unconscious workings of the mind revealed . . . in Pinter's subtext," observes Anderson, "hint at mysteries which even the author does not claim to be able to unravel." (p. 88) Tchekhovian or Beckettian plays refuse to be comfortably paraphrased; their characterisations are based not merely on neat logical understanding capacity of the audience, but on the potentiality of feeling-response. Pinter's dramatic dialogue demonstrates how the unspoken, hinted at, vaguely suggested hinterland of meaning expands in intensity as well as in dimension through an inward movement establishing the kinship of communication between the artist and the audience, having, thus, assigned to the latter a very important role.

Peter Hall, who has ably directed many of Pinter's plays, accepts the quality of Pinter's dialogue as (i) architectural shape of words, and (ii) any resonance that they may have for the actors, emotionally. The second one is quite important, for there is a communication beyond words linked with subtle feeling. There is a halo around each word, and the composite effect of these words on our mind is akin to that of music. Hall remarks "the parallel . . . is with music. . . . I don't think if you merely sing the right notes, you make any sense in human terms. You don't in opera, you don't in Pinter."[25]

Pinter's drama of silence has explored a great possibility in experimenting with language, setting a landmark on the highway of absurd drama. Thereby Pinter has left his indelible initial on the post anti-rationalist, anti-realist dadaist and surrealist anarchical literary movement calling for liberation of human mind from the grip of logical reasonings holding that art should grow out of a direct confrontation with the subconscious. In *Old Times* we hear "there are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place." (31-2) Again, in *The Dwarfs* (1960) Pinter has raised the question: "You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections ? Whose reflections ? Is that what you consist of ? What scum does the tide leave ? What happens to the scum ? When does it happen ? . . . What have I seen, the scum or the essence ?" (ii, 112)

In one of his poems Beckett wrote:

> What would I do without the silence where the
> murmurs die . . . what would I do . . .
> in a convulsive space
> among the voices voiceless
> that throng my hiddenness.[26]

Pinter took this message in all seriousness and concerned himself chiefly with the treatment of dramatic language in his plays. Russell-Brown did not forget to mention that "I found as I proceeded that an interest in what is radical in theatre-practice was fed more by Pinter than by any of his fellows." (p. 14) This Pinterian feeding has been done mostly from the lingual angle, confirming Jacob Corg's observation that "none of the themes and methods identified with modern literature is more indicative of the modern spirit than its treatment of language."[27]

We struggle with ourselves to get ourselves understood, but communicative pieces hardly fall into a set pattern as we intend them to do. Pinter displays colloquial speech variously as barriers, hiatus and broken bridges between personages. In fact, as an absurdist playwright Pinter takes pains to uphold the major theme of the absurd theatre—to establish man's metaphysical agony at loggerheads with the gross absurdity of human situation. He performs this task with his unique dramatic language of silence, inherent in it is the Existentialist "Angst" or the state of dread, emanating from man's realisation that the future is determined solely by his own free and deliberate action. Anderson rightly remarks: "Pinter undoubtedly plays his card much close to his subconscious than most dramatists, with the result that it is often difficult to explain at any rational level, why his drama affects us so deeply." (p. 89) Orestes in Sophocles's *Electra* blurts out "God, what can I say—when words fail ?" (1174-5) In Pinter's plays we are made to realize that words do fail, and that silence has its own communicative overtures. It may be worthwhile here to call to mind the French symbolist Rimbaud's quest for a unique language "of the soul, for the soul, containing everything, smells, sounds, colours."[27]

In the first scene of *The Caretaker*, the language is spelt by silent movements on the stage; words are eliminated. Mick, all alone, in silence, looks about the room, taking time to look at each object in turn, "he sits quite still, expressionless." What we find is that the culmination of all movement of his body, head and eyes create a noticeably important language of silence to be continued further in the play.

Whereas Beckett grew increasingly withdrawn, Pinter, in his quest for a new language, felt its all-pervasive sickness. He wanted to add an altogether new dimension to an artist's use of words in post-naturalist drama, taking upon himself the task of recreating a dramatic language for himself. With a decided and cultivated calmness Pinter faced the

situation which arises when, in Beckett's words "there is nothing to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express,"[29] and points to an artist's paradox in facing the Existentialists's absurd world over the immutable compulsion to communicate his feelings; for, he exists only in his perception which goads him to his predicament to express.

Since Pinter's plays hold out lurking menace where laughter stops, often creating eerie situations vis-a-vis evasion, lies, mystery and deliberate uncertainty, paving the way for latent or explicit terror-stricken violence, his practical use of silence through a very special and selective dialogue becomes a potential dramatic success. This has, nevertheless, illuminated the absurd theatre by the spotlight of *objective correlative* affirming that form and content are totally diffused, one into the other, in a true work of art.

The climax in a Pinter-play is no climax of events reached through a temporal sequence; it is rather an existential climax of contrasted experience. Pinter's drama of silence uncovers the extraordinary mystery within the recess of human soul.

NOTES

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12. *Harold Pinter* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 10.

13. *Literature in Action* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), Preface.
14. *Proust* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), p. 47.
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16. "Shorter Pinter," *The Times*, 11 April 1969.
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18. Address to the nation on 26.5.65 to mark Nehru's first death anniversary.
19. *Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism* (New York: O.U.P., 1965), p. 4.
20. *Modern English Literature* (London: O.U.P. 1970), p. 116.
21. Dr. Raman Selden teaches at the Durham Univ., U.K. and expressed his views in a letter dated 11 August, 1981 to the author.
22. *Anger and Detachment* (London: Pitman, 1976), p. 101.
23. *Preface to Miss Julie*, trans. E. Bjorkman, *Eight Famous Plays*, p. iii.
24. *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957), p. 73.
25. Peter Hall, "Directing Pinter" (1974)—Interview with Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler, Quoted in *Harold Pinter*, ed. Michael Scott (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 45.
26. "Four Poems" (written originally in French and translated by Beckett himself). Quoted in *Literature in Action*, pp. 15-16.
27. *Language in Modern Literature: Innovation and Experiment* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979), p. 1.
28. Rimbaud's letter to Paul Demeny in 1871. Quoted in *Rimbaud*, ed. Oliver Bernard (London: Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 13.
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W.B. Yeats's "Anashuya and Vijaya": Indian Artistic Tradition

Sankaran Ravindran

W.B. Yeats's "Anashuya and Vijaya," which first appeared in *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* of 1889, under the title "Jealousy" and subsequently in *Poems* of 1895, under the present title, was intended to be the first scene of a play that Yeats wanted to write. About the original intention and about the suggestion of the theme of the poem, Yeats wrote: "The little Indian dramatic scene was meant to be the first scene of a play about a man loved by two women, who had one soul between them, the one woman waking when the other slept, one knowing but daylight as the other only night."[1]

Presumably, the original project to write a play was abandoned. All that we have at present is "the little Indian dramatic scene," the poem, "Anashuya and Vijaya." In fact, Yeats's own observation about his original plan very often preconditions the critical studies of the poem. The fact that in "Anashuya and Vijaya," one of Yeats's major techniques—his dramatising conflicts, attitudes, and contrary beliefs—which he perfected in his later poetry and which became a quality of his brand of modern poetry, is introduced in its rudimentary form has gone unnoticed. As critical studies of this poem, so far, have been done in the shadow of Yeats's own observation about the genesis of the poem, it has not yet been pointed out that "Anashuya and Vijaya" can be looked at from a perspective free from the shadows of previous criticism.

Whatever critical attention the poem has received so far can be grouped into two categories. First, attention is given to the poem by Indian critics who have discovered in the poem some elements of Indian philosophical ideas. The tendency, in this respect, is to read the poem as an allegory. Secondly, casual critical observations are made on this poem by critics of Yeats. Such observations are cursory, in passing, and of a general nature. My intention in discussing this poem is to show, first, that "Anashuya and Vijaya" is one of the most successful early Indian poems by Yeats and, secondly, that it gives a foretaste of a major poetic technique that Yeats perfected in his later years, and, thirdly, that Anashuya and not Vijaya is the central figure in the poem.

Any fresh venture to explicate the poem is likely to be buffeted by a few notions built up through decades. The first of these is the widely shared belief that this poem and other early Indian poems were written

under Mohini Chatterji's influence. That it was written after Yeats's meeting with Mohini Chatterji, a representative of the Indian Theosophical Society, who visited Dublin in the final months of 1885, makes critics believe that it was written under Chatterji's influence. For example, A.G. Stock observes: "There are three poems on Indian themes. They are, no doubt, a witness to the spell the Hindu thought cast over him by the Brahmin Mohini Chatterji, whom he and his friends had invited to Dublin to teach them in 1886."[2] Among the three poems, Stock includes "Anashuya and Vijaya," "The Indian upon God" and "The Indian to His Love." In fact, these three are now printed under "Crossways" in all standard collections of Yeats's poems. However, an investigation into Yeats's early Indian poems can prove that he versified some of Chatterji's teachings in a poem, "Kanva on Himself"[3] and some Indian ascetic ideas in "Quatrains and Aphorisms." Stock would have been nearer the truth if she had listed these in the context of Chatterji's influence on Yeats's early poetry.

Another critic, Mary Catherine Flannery, observes: "Most of his early poems were written before 1886, the year in which Yeats met Mohini Chatterjee."[4] The implication of such observations is that "Anashuya and Vijaya" (and other early Indian poems arose out of Yeats's sudden enthusiasm on hearing Mohini Chatterji. Yeats's association with George Russell had introduced him to the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Chatterji's influence in rekindling Yeats's interest in Indian ideas is thus not of much significance, especially because the poem was written in 1889.

Another factor that obstructs a fresh approach to "Anashuya and Vijaya" is the strong tendency among scholars to see early Yeats's championing an ascetic philosophy especially in the context of his early Indian poems. It may be conceded that Yeats's interest in asceticism was life-long, that his fascination for abstract philosophy was a permanent feature of his mental frame, and that his penchant for the mysterious and the occult was always ardent. Nevertheless, as he had rejected "mechanical materialism" and orthodox religion, it was imperative for him to create his own system of faith. That system of faith is often a new territory, a typical Yeatsian premise where art, related to philosophies and religions, reign with autonomous status. In "Anashuya and Vijaya," Yeats successfully creates such a Yeatsian premise.

Naresh Guha argues that the poem is "only a slight modification of the Indian conception of the higher and the lower selves in us." He argues that "Anashuya in the poem represents the night part, the lower self in man, while Amrita is the eternal, unmoved, day-light part of the soul, the higher self. . . . Anashuya has normal human desires, passion, hatred, anger, and she loves the earth with its flickering corn and

flamingoes. . . . She loves as a woman loves, while Amrita's love is that of a mother who protects."[5] According to this critic, Vijaya, the hero, is held between the abstract perfection, Amrita, and the profane perfection, Anashuya. Vijaya's wavering between the two women suggests his trying to choose between the two qualities. Obviously, it is a reading that reduces the poem to a simple allegory.

Further, Guha compares Yeats to Vijaya. That means Yeats, like Vijaya, is wavering between the abstraction of philosophy and the pleasure-giving concrete realities of the world. This amounts to saying that there was a conflict in Yeats's mind: between his liking for the ascetic and abstract philosophy on the one side and the natural inclinations and desires of a young man on the other. In the poem, Vijaya gives up Amrita and chooses Anashuya. As Guha compares Yeats to Vijaya, does Yeats, like Vijaya, give up his liking of abstract philosophy or asceticism in favour of the pleasures of real life ? Such a conclusion may not be what Guha wants. Yeats retained his love of abstract philosophy and asceticism. Thus, reading "Anashuya and Vijaya" as a simple allegory or as a mere poetical reproduction of a philosophical idea is dangerous. Equally dangerous is the tendency to see Vijaya as the central figure.

The poem dramatizes a conflict between ascetic attitudes and worldly temperament. The specific conflict which is the source of the vitality and significance of the poem is presented through Anashuya and not through Vijaya. Yeats himself experienced such a conflict all through his life and many of his poems centre on that conflict, especially poems like "Vacillation" and "A Dialogue of Self and Soul." Yeats's early love of an ascetic philosophy was very much against his natural disposition as a young man whose mind was sensitive to beauty in the real world, and whose passions and desires might have made it hard for him to bear the self-imposed ascetic attitude. Any artist may like asceticism as a philosophical idea or understand it as a religious idea. However, art springs from an acceptance of the world, as experienced through the senses primarily. Yeats knew it as well as any other great poet. Therefore, his love of asceticism in his early years could be a burden in his personal life. But, undoubtedly, he converted it into a productive pose in his art.

Flannery, like Guha, interprets the poem as an allegory or as if its meaning is something that can be fixed easily: "At this point when Yeats became dissatisfied with the Vedantism of Chatterji, he met Madame Blavatsky in London, and in that year "Jealousy" was written. Like the hero of the poem, Vijaya, who is torn between the love of Anashuya, a worldly priestess, and Amrita, a spiritual figure who bears his mother's name, Yeats was aware of the split within himself between

the active philosophy of Blavatsky and tne quietism he had recently embraced." (pp. 30-31)

This observation raises two problems. First, it cannot be proved that Yeats was dissatisfied with Vedantism at any point in his career. On the contrary Yeats's interest in Vedantism increased and lasted till the end. Moreover, Vedanta does not advocate asceticism as the only desirable way of life. However, whether Mohini Chatterji expounded all the phases of Vedanta or only an ascetic aspect based on it is not clear. Flannery, like others, compares Yeats to Vijaya.

Secondly, I wonder what evidence in the poem supports the view that Amrita is a spiritual figure, except that her name suggests immortality. All that Vijaya says about Amrita is:

> I loved another; now I love no other. Among the mouldering
> of ancient woods You live, and on the village border she,
> With her old father the blind wood-cutter; I saw her
> standing in her door but now.

The interpretation that Amrita is a spiritual figure is, it seems, based on the connotations of that name. But, names can be misleading in this poem because Anashuya, whose name means "devoid of jealousy," is full of jealousy. If in one case the name can suggest what is contrary to the character, there can be a similar suggestion in the other case also. Yeats had first named the poem "Jealousy." It is not certain whether Yeats knew the meaning of the name right from the beginning and deliberately introduced the element of contradiiction or whether he discovered the meaning of the name after publishing the poem and subsequently changed the title of the poem to "Anashuya and Vijaya." It is probable that Yeats knew the meaning of the name, Amrita, from *The Secret Doctrine*.[6]

That Yeats read Kalidasa, the ancient Sanskrit poet of India, and that "Anashuya and Vijaya" echoes *Śakuntalam*, Kalidasa's best drama, have been pointed out by critics. The name "Anashuya" occurs in that play, as the playmate of Sakuntala, the heroine. Also another name, Kanva, which Yeats uses in two other poems, is in *Śakuntalam*. However, a careful study of *Śakuntalam* will reveal that it has a different theme. A worldly king, Dushyanta, falling in love with a girl, Sakuntala, who knows only the life and people in a hermitage, his promising to marry her and seducing her, subsequent disasters in their lives, separation, suffering, endurance, and final reunion through divine interference, make the plot of the play. Vijaya's meeting Anashuya in the temple in Yeats's poem faintly recalls the atmosphere and conversation between the hero and the heroine in Kalidasa's play. But that compares superficial elements.

Other obvious Indian features are the images such as "Brahma's ever-rustling robe," "Kama" showering his "fragrant arrows," and "gods" dwelling on the "sacred Himalay." Yeats depicts the scene: "A little Indian temple in the Golden Age. Around it a garden; around that a forest." (p. 70) Yeats never visited India; but such settings are seen in India. However, these are not the basic Indian elements in the poem. "Anashuya and Vijaya" is Indian in the sense that it reflects some of the characteristics of traditional Indian art, which includes literature, painting, and sculpture. One aspect unique to the Indian artistic tradition is that the theme, atmosphere, and characters in the artistic creation can be traced back to Indian mythology, which is an integral part of Hinduism. Art and religion are inseparably interlinked in traditional Indian art. It is aptly said by Laurence Binyon: "Art and religion lie mingled in India. Religion supplies the themes, creates the mood of devotion, edifying him with pictures and sacred story."[7] It seems to me that Yeats has understood this tradition. As the Indian poets, sculptors, and painters take the atmosphere, theme, and characters for their art from the mythologies of India, Yeats adopts a theme for "Anashuya and Vijaya" from his Indian source, *Sakuntalam*. As the powerful effect of Indian art is its capacity to evoke memories of the stories behind it, it serves very often as a medium for communicating and preserving culture. "Anashuya and Vijaya" functions like a piece of Indian art. The poem reminds an Indian reader of the atmosphere of *Sakuntalam*. The temple, the priestess, and her prayer for the well being of everything in the world—a true Vedic prayer—create an atmosphere that is similar to what traditional Indian art creates.

A piece of traditional Indian art does not stand in isolation, nor does it produce an isolated emotion. On the contrary, it seems to integrate the mind and the memory with the accumulated but not the easily felt cultural background. "Anashuya and Vijaya" becomes evocative of an atmosphere and a mental climate. The description of the surroundings reinforces the evocative power.

The poem affirms the sanctity of love between man and woman, which is the basis of human life itself. That Anashuya is a priestess and that she is in a temple do not underplay the intensity of her love. In the beginning, her prayer is a tortured utterance owing to her lack of assurance in Vijaya's fidelity:

> Send peace on all the lands and flickering corn—O' may tranquility walk by his elbow/ When wandering in the forest, if he love/ No other—Hear, and may the indolent flocks/ Be plentiful—And if he love another,/ May panthers end him —Hear, and load our king/ With wisdom hour by hour—May we two stand,/ When we are dead, beyond the setting suns,/ A little from the other shades apart,/ With mingling hair, and play upon the lute. (p. 71)[8]

Here the devotion to God and Love for Vijaya are mingled to such an extent that one feeling becomes almost the other. Anashuya's prayer is in the true spirit of traditional Indian art. Most traditional art of India affirms the kinship between spiritual and sensual love. Yeats's reading Indian books, probably on a large scale, helped him to understand the features of Indian artistic tradition which holds religion, philosophy, and art as a single unit and which ultimately harmonizes aesthetic pleasure and spiritual pleasure.

Yeats, though fascinated by asceticism, does not glorify asceticism in this poem. Anashuya is a priestess, and therefore a kind of ascetic. However, love is her dominant passion. She can offer a prayer, with a peaceful mind only at the end when she is assured of Vijaya's love. More than the source of the poem or the Indian images in it, it is the capacity of the poem to remind the reader of the qualities of traditional Indian art that makes it Indian.

The pivotal conflict in Anashuya between her love for a man, Vijaya, and her ascetic as well as priestly bent of mind is essentially Yeatsian. The conflict Anashuya experiences in the poem reflects the conflict Yeats experienced in those early years and it gives a foretaste of the intense conflict that he dramatized in many of his poems in the subsequent years. Asceticism and Yogic life always fascinated him. But life, with all its turbulent passions and desires, pleased him ever. That Anashuya is placed in the Indian cultural tradition is of tremendous significance because it is that tradition which harmonizes human passions and spiritual temperament. Harmonizing personal passions and spiritual feelings was not easy for Yeats as his own tradition did not have such a harmonizing system of belief as Indian tradition had. Therefore Yeats's reading Indian material, meeting Indians, and absorbing Indian tradition were almost a necessity to harmonize a conflict in him. Indian tradition and Indian art not only supplied Yeats with themes, settings, and images, but also taught him how the conflict between passions and spirituality could be harmonized. In that respect the poem is the first major announcement of Yeats's adopting Indian tradition as a substantially useful way to approach life in this world, so that passions needed for art and spiritual fervour needed for the soul can be retained without the one damaging the other. In this respect, the essential Yeats is not reflected through Vijaya, but through Anashuya because she, like Yeats, experiences conflict and harmonizes that conflict.

The poem does not suggest an easily graspable meaning. Trying to fix its meaning is to ignore the importance of Yeats's technique, his method of dramatizing a conflict. The significance of the poem is that it outlines a quality of Indian tradition and of Indian art: the spiritual and the physical are not contraries, they form a unity and are complementary. The poem suggests the idea that the spiritual is in and through

the physical and that expressions or the human passion, love, are also, sacred.

NOTES

1. The Poems of W.B. Yeats, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 841.
2. *W.B. Yeats: His Poetry and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 11-12.
3. The poem first appeared in *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems*, and was rewritten under the title "Mohini Chatterji" in 1928.
4. *Yeats and Magic: The Earlier Works* (Garden Cross: Colin Smith, 1977), p. 28.
5. *W.B. Yeats: An Indian Approach* (Calcutta: Jadavpur Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 40-41.
6. "The root of life was in every drop of the ocean of immortality (Amrita) and the ocean was radiant light, which was fire and heat and motion." H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, 1988), Vol. I, p. 69.
7. Laurence Binyon, *The Spirit of Man in Asian Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1935), p. 45.
8. The prayer reflects the spirit of the Vedic prayer, in which the well-being of the world is sought for, though in this case such a prayer is distorted with personal reflections.

The Marxist Approach to Literature

M.P. Sinha

The Marxist approach to literature has been practically ignored by both the British and American critics. The critics, notably Edmund Wilson and René Wellek,[1] who have ventured to say a few words on Marxism and literature have, because of their ideological prejudices, focussed their attention more on the "limitations" than on the profundity and comprehensiveness of the approach. Wilson has gone to the extent of saying that "Marxism by itself can tell us nothing whatever about the goodness or badness of a work of art."[2] In India, the general view, and, of course, this is a very superficial view, is that Marxism inspired a few literary critics and poets in the thirties and later on died its natural death like other literary fashions.

The present paper tries to give a brief outline of the nature, origin, development and function of literature from the Marxist point of view, and show, inter alia, the limitations of the bourgeois approaches.

Marx and Engels studied all the branches of knowledge with equal seriousness and evolved a philosophical system that could explain the development of man from the hunting stage to the present day and the forces that worked behind this progress. They considered literature and art to be one of the important activities of man and placed them in the right place in the structure of society. It is the material activity that determines man's conceiving, thinking and mental intercourse. It follows then that ideas are the products of man, and he, not some superhuman power, is the producer of law, morality, metaphysics, literature and art. "Consciousness" they said, "can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men in their actual life-process. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."[3] Literature or art is not a divine gift, nor is it imitation of reality as Plato erroneously held, but is a specific form of social consciousness, based on man's material activity. The Marxist conception of literature and art is at one with that of Aristotle who put these in the category of productive science.[4]

Both literature and art are products of labour. In the beginning of history man's hand was very much like that of an ape and it became more and more flexible after he started making tools for his living. In the constant effort of improving the tools the hand became not only the organ of labour but also the product of labour. The development of the thumb and other fingers and, as Engels said, "the ever-renewed employ-

ment of this inherited finesse in new, more and more complicated operations, have given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to bring into being the pictures of a Raphael, the statues of a Thorvaldsen, the music of a Peganini."[5] We can add that the oral form of poetry came into existence with the development of language (a product of the human tongue) and the written form with the flexibility of the hand.

The folk-tales, legends and ancient hymns all bear testimony to the fact that poetry originated from man's material activity, i.e. labour. Such natural events as the cycles of seasons, day and night, human life and the moon effected man's material life. Naturally, birth, death, union, advent of the spring season, coming of the rainy season, plantation and harvesting were the momentous events, and man celebrated these occasions, the way these events effected him. He was also able to see a correlation between the cycle of human life and the cycles of the day and of the seasons. The early myths, in fact, are the explanations of the cycles of the day and the seasons. The folk-tales and legends are about man's material activities. The hymns were composed to please the forces of nature which controlled his material activities. And the tune and rhythm of the songs were patterned on "the rhythmical movement of human bodies engaged in collective labour."[6]

Secondly, the changes in the content and form of art and literature are brought about by the changes in the material base; i.e. the socio-economic structure. In the Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*, Marx wrote: "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. . . . With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."[7]

Poetry, which is a part of the massive superstructure, lost its universality in the class-based society and reflected the author's world-view determined by the interests of his class. The epic poetry, both of the East and the West, gives expression to the view-point of the ruling class, represented by the Kings and priests, never of the exploited class that comprised the slaves and the peasants. Aeschylus's *Oresteia* represents the view of the patriarchal form of society that did everything to lower the status of women. Apollo's verdict that the mother is not the blood-relation of her son may sound fantastic to modern ears but it pleased the rulers in those days.

The formalist or structuralist approach to literature fails to make distinction between a good and a bad work of art. The New or Practical critic can tell us about irony and paradox, about synthesis or

synaesthesis, the genre critic about the principle of organisation or structure but none of them can say anything convincingly about the content or the idea; their occupation with the form or structure precludes them from explaining why Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* or Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* is such a great work of art. Even a great critic like F.R. Leavis failed to appreciate Dickens's novels, barring *Hard Times*,[8] so long he was under the influence of T.S. Eliot. In order that we can appreciate and evaluate a great work of art, it is necessary to analyse its content and study the socio-economic forces that shaped the author's ideology and made him produce it in a new form.

The development of literature, the rise and fall of a genre or trend, can be interpreted scientifically in terms of the laws of social development. As said earlier, once the ruled class gains control over the means and modes of production, it begins to assert its own ideas and these new ideas come in conflict with the old ideas, the ideas of the declining class. Later on, the new ideas become the dominant ideas of the epoch and are reflected in the law, religion, politics, metaphysics and literature of the age.[9]

Most of the literary historians have divided the history of English into the periods of the Renaissance, Elizabeth, James, Restoration, eighteenth century, romanticism, Victoria and so on, focussing their attention on the technique only. Such divisions are neither systematic nor logical. Again, these literary historians are not able to see the connection between one age and the other. They fail to explain the reason why there is a close connection between the poetry of the sixteenth century and that of the nineteenth century. The task for a systematic division of the periods has been admirably performed by the Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell who, in his book *Illusion and Reality*, has explained how the changes in the economic structure brought about changes in the content and form of English Poetry.[10]

The great writers in every age have been able to see contradictions in a class society. Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe saw the barriers and raised their voice against them, taking the side of the suffering humanity.[11] Engels praised Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau for their materialistic outlook and the conviction that humanity moves on the whole in a progressive direction. He praised Balzac for his realism, and in his letter to Margaret Harkness, he wrote that he learned more about the French economy from Balzac's novels than from the books on economics and statistics: "He (Balzac) groups a complete history of French society from which, even in economic details (for instance the re-arrangement of real and personal property after the Revolution) I have learned more than from all the professed historians, economists and statisticians of the period together."[12]

This leads us to the problems of realism and artistic truth. For the Marxist critics reality and artistic truth are identical. Artistic truth is reality presented in a special way. The artist must be a truthful observer of life and present it in all its details. There is no opposition between artistic truth and scientific truth. In fact, as Novikov has said, while considering the question of artistic truth and the general laws of art, it is necessary to combine both the interests of science and art.[13] The artist as Goethe pointed out is concerned with truth, not verisimilitude.[14] Both literature and art are concerned with truth, truth which is historical, tangible and concrete. Artistic truth is to be seen in the content not in the technique only.[15] It is the gist of the artist's interpretation of reality and is inseparably associated with the art of realism.

The term *realism*, which is the main topic of discussion in Georg Lukacs's criticism, was first defined by Engels in his letter to Margaret Harkness: "Realism to my mind, implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters in typical circumstances."[16] in the same letter he expressed the opinion that Balzac was a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas *passès*, presents *et a venir* (past, present, and yet to come).[17] He praised Minna Kautsky for her realistic presentation of the Vienna society in her novel *Old Ones and the New* and explained the word *type*: "In both spheres the characters exhibit the sharp individualisation so customary in your work. Each of them is a type, but at the same time also a definite individual, a *Deiser* (this one) as Old Hegel would say, and that is how it should be."[18]

Maxim Gorky was the first man to use the terms critical realism and socialist realism. In his famous "Address Delivered to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers," on 17 August, 1934, while evaluating the bourgeois writers and their works, he criticised what he called bourgeois romanticism as being divorced from reality and leading to a despairing nihilism. He made a distinction between the "good bourgeois" writers and the "apostate" and concluded that the first group of writers were poor talents but the second group contained the most outstanding creators of critical realism and revolutionary romanticism."[19] These writers, he said, wandered away from their class, observed the stifling atmosphere of the bourgeois world and produced technically perfect works of literature, works that depicted the way of life, traditions and acts of their time from a critical angle.[20] Tolstoy, Dickens, George Eliot, Balzac and Gaskell, to name the outstanding ones, are the creators of critical realism.

Socialist realism is the heir of critical realism. Critical realism was born when the bourgeois system was declining under the pressure of its contradictions. It exposed the negative aspects of the bourgeois society. Socialist realism is the product of the time when the proletariat

was powerful enough to destroy the crumbling bourgeois structure. The difference between critical realism and socialist realism is that whereas the former, in the words of Arnold Kettle, in the "literature written in the era of class society from a point of view which while not fully socialist, is nevertheless sufficiently critical of class society to reveal important truths about that society and to contribute to the freeing of the human consciousness from the limitations which class society has imposed on it,"[21] the latter to quote him again, is "literature written from the point of view of the class-conscious working class, whose socialist consciousness illuminates their whole view of the nature of the world and of the potentialities of mankind."[22]

Socialist realism is the most recent trend in the development of literature. As Avner Zis has pointed out, the art of socialist realism began to take shape at the moment of the collapse of the old capitalist order in the later nineteenth century. Its emergence coincided with the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie, the oppressed people's struggle against the imperialists and the neo-colonialists.

Marx, Engels and the Marxist critics have placed literature in its right position. Literature is as important as law, religion, politics, and metaphysics and the artists are unacknowledged legislators of mankind. Marxism has shattered the Freudian theory that the artists are neurotic and that creative writing is a kind of wish-fulfilment and the Jungian theory that it is a product of collective unconscious and the creative writers are mere mediums. Literature and art, the Marxists have explained, play a much more important part in social development than hitherto thought of and man can learn more from a Dickens or a Gorky than from all the economists, political scientists and religious teachers for the creation of a better future.

NOTES

1. Rene Wellek, *History of Modern Criticism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), VI, pp. 86-87.
2. Edmund Wilson, "Marxism and Literature," *Twentieth Century Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 241-253.
3. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), I, p. 25.
4. Elder Olson, "The Poetic Method of Aristotle: its Powers and Limitations," *Twentieth Century Criticism: Major Statements*, eds. William Hardy and Max Westbrook (Delhi: Life and Light Publishers, 1976), p. 137.

5. Marx and Engles, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), pp. 128-29.
6. George Thomson, "The Art of Poetry," *Marxists on Literature*, ed., David Craig (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 63.
7. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, I, pp. 503-4.
8. F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus).
9. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, pp. 47-48.
10. Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality* (Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1956).
11. Marx and Engels, *On Literature and Art*, p. 260. "There is more life and reality in the first act of *Merry Wives of Windsor* alone than in all German literature."
12. *Ibid.* p. 90.
13. Vassily Novikov, *Artistic Truth and Dialectics of Creative Work* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 10.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
16. Marx and Engels, *On Literature and Art*, p. 90.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
19. Maxim Gorky, *On Literature*, p. 210.
20. Idem.
21. Arnold Kettle, "Dickens and the Popular Tradition," *Marxists on Literature*, ed. David Craig (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 214.
22. Avner Zis, *Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 262.

Myth and Mystery in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*

S. K. Tikoo

R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is an important novel for it constitutes an interesting experiment in the reinterpretation of an ancient Hindu myth in contemporary terms. The writer retains the original structure and outline of the myth and attempts to put across its essential element of supernatural mystery through the use of the detective fiction pattern. The main objective of this paper is to focus attention on the analysis of the novel from the point of view of the writer's effort to establish the contemporary relevance of his subject matter.

M.K. Naik's critical analysis of the novel has drawn a good deal of attention to the writer's theme and technique.[1] He has aptly demonstrated the novelist's concern with grafting a realistic narrative of modern South Indian life on to an ancient myth.[2] The Bhasmasura parallel is introduced in more than one place but we have, it seems to me, yet to ascertain its precise significance in the context of the novel as well as in the context of the cultural and religious ethos that is presented as backdrop to the action:

> Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakhshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity ? (p. 242)[3]

In the light of this parallel, Vasu the taxidermist is a human manifestation of the rakhshasa (demon) introduced in the legend. In modern terms, Vasu is an ebullient and sturdy young man and also a product of the modern system of education. He is a Master's degree holder in three disciplines—history, economics, and literature. It is ironical that despite studying this "strange" combination of humanities subjects, Vasu is discourteous to his printer-friend Nataraj and even cruel to the pet animals he comes across. His professional interest in obtaining the hides of animals which he shoots down and then mounts to earn his living exposes an unpleasant aspect of his personality. A tiger cub is a precious animal to him not for its beauty but for its skin which can fetch a high price in the market. If we do not cast aspersions on his profession we must admit that we are not pleasantly impressed by such a man of literature to have chosen that kind of profession. Besides,

he lacks the noble and fine human sentiments and he sees men merely as animals of one type or another. Rangi the temple dancer is a female animal to him. One wonders whether the novel is not a subtle comment on the modern system of education which cannot transform the animal in man. Perhaps the novel can be shown to carry a comment on the presence of evil in man in general which has not so far been transformed into good and that it is only through good action combined with religious faith that this evil may be subdued and controlled. The modern system of education provides no solution to the deep-rooted moral disorder that one witnesses everywhere. Part of the malady of the modern world consists in the people's overwhelming preoccupation with money or some kind of sentimentalism. Vasu is aware that he lives in a world which is governed by money and religious sentimentalism. Yet, hypocritically perhaps, as a member of the society—he says he is "as good a citizen as any" (p. 10)—he shares popular enthusiasm for the worship of Krishna and Radha evident in his contribution of a ten-rupee note to the fund for celebrating the holy festival.

However, what puzzles one is Vasu's secret and sacrilegious design to shoot down the elephant Kumar which will carry the holy couple on the day of the festival in a procession through the streets. He plans to press the trigger of his rifle as soon as the procession passes by the window of the printing press building on the attic of which Vasu resides. Vasu advances an interesting explanation for his covert design. He looks at the elephant not as other processionists including Nataraj himself look at it as a symbol of the divine carriage for transporting the divine couple through the streets with the frenzied throng of worshippers dancing and singing around. To him the elephant means precious ivory: its legs useful for a table, the hair of its tail as a vanity for women who wear its stripes around their wrists for bangles. The elephant has become a commercial proposition because of its association with the cultural and religious traditions of Indian life. While we get in the concerned scene a typical representation of Indian religious and devotional ritualism, the whole scene throws into bold relief the stark, low-minded and drab commercialism of Vasu. What, of course, comes out as a serious weakness of character in Vasu is his voluptuousness or sensuality, his transactions with women in the attic noticed by Nataraj through a peep-hole in the bamboo canvas. Rangi is found present in Vasu's attic even at the last moment fanning mosquitoes from his face. A complex character, Vasu may fittingly be described as an embodiment of the modern man given to commercialism, sensuality and sex. In reality, he has no sympathy for the devotees of Krishna and more particularly for a religious zealot such as Nataraj. Thus, the novel needs to be read not merely as a study in good and evil, the good represented by the superior benevolence and goodness of Nataraj and his level-headed, practical-minded press-assistant Sastri, and the evil represented by Vasu. It may

also be studied as a work which focuses on the contrast between the "altruism" of Nataraj and 'egotism' of Vasu' (as Naik would like us to read), the contrast between religious sentimentalism and moral depravity, a contrast that suggests the inadequacy of the modern educational system either to curb the one or transform the other.

The religious sentimentalism touches a high point in chapter eight. While writing the book on Krishna and Radha, Nataraj's friend the poet comes to the stage of the divine lover's marriage when he accepts Sastri's proposal that the event might be publicly celebrated. Accordingly, the climax of the novel approaches with the preparations for the performance of the ritual and the taking out of the procession. It is also in this chapter that the evil begins to unfold its nature in contrast with the good.

While the celebration of the "auspicious" occasion (p. 100) on the traditionally accepted date of the festival is at its acme with the procession passing through the street, Vasu's lowliness or wickedness comes into focus. He is seen leisurely brushing his rifle preparing it to kill the elephant. It is a very tense moment in the action of the novel: a citizen in defiance of public sentiment preparing to commit the sacrilege.

Vasu's intention to kill Kumar is meant to shock the reader into knowing what could be the reason for the planned mischief. Vasu is firm, determined, cool-headed and logical, but he is ready to flout law and threaten public peace. The impact of his threat can be seen in the excessive sweating of Nataraj who faints at the gathering of worshippers in the temple premises when he comes to know of Vasu's plan. Nataraj is taken home to recover from a swooning fit. Vasu is always inclined to hurt religious sentiment or life. He abuses Nataraj's generosity and kindness, unauthorisedly occupies his attic, pays no rent for its occupation, and commands and compels him to listen whenever he wishes. By groping around for people's pets which he might shoot he has become a menace to the people of Malgudi. The strange, foul smell emitted by the animal hides in his attic in a sense makes him comparable to the animals he deals in, which indeed makes him both literally and metaphorically a man-eater. His failure to respect the religious sentiments of Nataraj who so much dissuades him against killing Kumar or even the pets of people staying in the vicinity of the printing press emphasises his demoniacal nature. If he represents one extreme, that of evil, and Nataraj, the other, that of good, then one can easily concede that the other group of characters in the novel—the poet, Sen the journalist, the elephant owner, Muthu Swamy, the forest officer, and Rangi moves between them, having only a commonplace perception of things.

However, the most exciting feature of the novel is not the age-old pitting of good against evil or vice versa, but the manner in which evil is

subdued at the crucial moment and even wiped out of existence. To his utter amazement Nataraj discovers that Vasu, instead of killing Kumar and causing public anxiety, is himself found dead in the attic (Naik's analysis stops at this point in the novel) and that there is a strange air of mystery about the unexpected death of the demon itself.

That a powerful, logically-minded, and flamboyant Vasu who dominated the entire scene of action should have suddenly and quietly died on the very day and time of the passing of the procession and his rifle been permanently silenced induces a feeling that God himself might have intervened in some mysterious way to destroy the evil. The contemporary parallel of the killing of the man-eater to the mythical destruction of the demon can be completed only when the mystery of Vasu's death is solved. The fascinating aspect of the novel lies here in the manner in which the mystery is finally cleared. With the focus on the attempt to unravel the mystery, the novel suddenly gets a new twist which provides it with a new unity and drive that seem to be lacking in the earlier parts.

The link between the completion of the mystical pattern culminating in the death of the demon and the rest of the novel which is devoted to the unravelling of the mystery is significant. It is anticipated in the words, "Vasu dead is as much a nuisance as Vasu alive." (p. 10) These words carry deeper implications than are visible on the surface. In fact, they have a serious concern with the structure and content of the novel as a whole. We may, therefore, turn our attention to this important aspect of the novel in which the writer goes beyond the age-old structure of the myth to lend contemporary interest to it.

The discovery of Vasu lying dead in unknown circumstances on the day of the festival is intriguing. When the postman Thanappa goes to deliver a registered letter to Vasu in his attic, he finds Vasu dead. Nataraj soon discovers that the mysterious death warranted police investigation so that nobody was implicated. He has obviously become a witness to the fact of death having occurred but is himself ignorant of the circumstances in which it had come about.

The disorderliness of Vasu's personal belongings in the attic—

> His clothes lay, as usual, scattered on his cot and on every available space. The lid of his trunk was half-open, revealing his familiar clothes, particularly the red check bush shirt and the field-grey jacket he affected when he went out on his depradations—

and the repeated mention of "orang-outang" impart a shade of the Edgar Allan Poe mystery to his death. It is suggested that the death might have been caused by an orang-outang, reminding one of that kind of brutal murder inflicted by that animal on both the mother and the

daughter in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, of which the novelist himself seems to have been well aware. But, in *Man-Eater*, before the mystery of the death is investigated the accidental recovery by Nataraj from Vasu's jacket of a green folder containing festival accounts clears away the minor mystery of the lost folder. Vasu had obviously snatched away the missing folder from Nataraj.

The situation takes a new turn with the arrival of police on the scene of the "murder." The investigation is set afoot. The enquiry is conducted by the coroner's committee comprising five members with the District Superintendent of Police in the Queen Anne chair: "There was a body of five to find out and declare the cause of Vasu's death." (p. 161)

As a part of the investigation, the detective team gets the corpse to the mortuary for post-mortem. The pathologist's report is intriguing: there is a positive indication of a murder having occurred:

> Mr Vasu of Junagadh died of a concussion received on the right temple frontal bone delivered on the frontal bone by a blunt instrument. Although there is no visible internal injury to the part, the inner skull covering is severely injured and has resulted in the fatality. (p. 163)

The report does not throw up any helpful clues about the identity of the criminal. However, to stall any other possible doubt having come about through a stroke from some blunt instrument and not by poisoned food which Rangi had brought Vasu on the previous night, the contents of a brass container recovered from the room as well as the food sample in the dead man's stomach are referred to one Madras Institute for chemical examination. This is a necessary step for elimination of factors which might preclude the revelation of truth but which constitute the usual red herrings in a detective novel. This is clearly additional evidence which shows that the writer is aiming to bring the second half of the action to conform to the detective fiction pattern.

The food-container which has raised hopes of yielding a substantial clue to the mystery is brought in only to mislead the investigative team as well as the curious reader. The examination of the food-container is unproductive as none comes forward to furnish any useful information on its contents.

Meanwhile, the investigation committee examines some of the probable witnesses. The Town (police) Inspector too is one of the possible witnesses who might enlighten the team. The Inspector reveals that he had a scuffle with Vasu when he went to investigate why the latter had threatened to imperil public peace and safety on the festival day and so had examined his gun licence, etc. The Inspector himself comes momentarily under a cloud of suspicion for he had threatened retaliatory action against Vasu for the latter's assault on him. The

elephant-owner Muthu Swamy believes, as he tells Nataraj, that it was even possible that the Town Inspector might have sent a few musclemen to Vasu and "hit his skull with a blunt instrument." (p. 166) Sen, the Municipal Commissioner, has a suspicion that the murder might have been committed by Muthu Swamy out of vindictiveness because Vasu had threatened to kill his elephant. The poet suspects Sen himself because he was frequently insulted by Vasu. (p. 166) Each character suspects another, and the atmosphere is rife with suspicion.

What sounds somewhat farcical is that rumours too are afloat: Nataraj is himself implacated in the crime:

> I know that they were all unanimous in suspecting me when I was not there. I could almost hear what they were saying about me "... But how that man tortured poor Nataraj. Poor man, his patience was strained. Deft work, eh ? What do you say ? Smashed the vital nerve in brain without drawing a drop of blood ! Never knew Nataraj could employ his hand so effectively ! Hee, hee." (p. 167)

While the last sentence ironically anticipates the revelation of the mystery, the whole tenor of the quotation clearly suggests not only the deliberate deepening of the suspense and involvement of all characters in the "crime," but the stress on the moral dimension of the action. Each one begins to feel guilty in one way or another.

However, the frivolity of the detective process set in motion soon becomes evident. The investigation has been less than satisfactory. The statements of probable witnesses were recorded but not carefully analysed. Nataraj, the sole representative of good in the novel, himself comes under suspicion and the rumours have made him feel that he too was involved in the foul deed of killing the demon. This is evident from his psychological reaction to the people casting furtive glances at him.

The Madras report scuttles any possibility of the death having been caused by poisoned food which further deepens his psychological involvement in the crime. He feels humiliated by being treated like a seasoned homicide. (p. 170)

Suspense continues unabated, the investigation having failed to discover any meaningful clues or evidence or even witnesses. On the contrary, the detection squad upsets our usual expectations. Instead of ordering cremation of the corpse, it authorises its burial which could be objectionable in the context of the religious ethos of the novel because Vasu is a Hindu and not a Christian or a Muslim who might welcome his burial. However, as explained in the novel, the burial is a temporary measure for easy exhumation, should further examination of the corpse be necessary. Cremation is then expected to be done when the

mystery has been cleared. One might also point out that the writer, living in the present scientific age, might have more fittingly made use of the modern scientific knowledge of chemical substances used for preserving dead bodies for a certain period of time. The only doubt about that is whether the use of the chemicals for the purpose in hand would have been desirable in the treatment of an ancient myth which is in the background of the plot outline.

The press assistant Sastri, who might have supplied some valuable information about Vasu's end, managed to slip away from the scene of the investigation. One might recall, of course with hindsight, that it is later only that Sastri finally presents some credible information relating to the murder. He mocks at the fools who had spun various yarns about the incident. Rangi, another most important witness who knew about the last moments of the living Vasu, was not properly examined by the detective squad. It misses the most vital information she later gives the reader, and it is she who had cleverly acted on the spur of the moment to avoid the catastrophe towards which the whole community was heading. It is another matter that the clue she had with her was only another red herring to deepen or maintain suspense even at the last moment. As she reveals later, she had mixed some narcotic with the sweet *pulav* to induce the devilish Vasu to sleep and by doing so to divert him from killing Kumar at the most fateful moment. The curious reader should obviously feel at this point that the mystery has been cleared. But he is led away rather than brought near the solution of the mystery: he is told that the *pulav* in the brass container had not been touched at all by Vasu, which only points to the futility and the foolishness of sending the sweet rice to Madras for chemical examination. At this high point in the escalation of the mystery, then, comes the final revelation of the mystery with a confounding statement. Rangi states that while Vasu was having a nap in his chair and she was asked to fan away mosquitoes from his face, she too had dozed off. The mosquitoes so pricked and tormented Vasu that he could bear the torment no longer and with the heavy, muscular palm of his hand had two of them flattened on his forehead making a sharp noise like a thunder-clap, (p. 173) and thus brought about his own end too.

At last, the mystery is cleared and all suspicion scotched. The unravelling of the mystery marks the end of the modern demon who had threatened the peace of Malgudi and ultimately used all his conserved energy to destroy himself. Thus the modern parallel to the ancient myth employed by Narayan includes within it the detective story pattern which is not essentially present in the plot outline of the myth. In other words, the ancient myth is recreated in modern terms.

The comic form of the novel emerges most clearly in this part which presents the detective team and its functioning. The team standing

around the corpse in the mortuary closely watches the pathologist's examining the inside of the stomach of the dead man. There are no revelations. Given the details of the circumstances of the death at the end, we may even say that it is rather implausible that the medical expert does not even so much as find any injuries to any part of the skull of the deceased. The secret pleasure of Nataraj and other people of Malgudi issues from the fact that even the Town Inspector who is normally a terror to the ignorant rustics is also put in the dock and called upon to submit the facts of the case. There are various other details which accentuate the delightful comedy in the novel. Perhaps the greatest fun is to be derived from the description of the manner in which the demoniacal Vasu "Plasters" the two mosquitoes on his own forehead with the noise of a "thunder-clap" only to precipitate his destruction. The crowning part of the comic design is to be seen in the way the investigation is conducted. The statements of witnesses are recorded but not examined. The only dependable witnesses, Sastri and Rangi, who ultimately throw light on the mysterious death and reveal the truth, were not called upon to make statements. At a crucial moment, an apparently vital clue to the mystery—the "chicken pulav"—is not touched upon by the police. The members of the detective team are ridiculed for their incompetence and professional sloth which reaches its climax in their ordering his *burial* rather than cremation as "an interim measure." But all this is well in keeping with the overall comic design of the novel.

In conclusion, we must admit that as an Indian English novelist Narayan has made a significant and successful attempt to create an equivalent contemporary story out of the framework of the ancient Bhasmasura myth, and, as T.S. Eliot remarks about Joyce's method in *Ulysses*, manipulated a parallel between the ancient myth and its modern version. It must also be conceded that while manipulating this parallel the writer preserves in the ancient mythical pattern the supernatural mystery of the providential intervention to destroy evil and contrives to make the modern evil individual the sole agent for his own destruction.

NOTES

1. M.K. Naik, *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1984).
2. As the ancient Hindu legends have it, Bhasmasura, one of the demons, after performing certain austerities won from Lord Siva the power to destroy whatever he touched. The demon was soon tempted to destroy Vishnu, the highest of gods, and usurp his

throne. Awakened to the demon's temptation, Vishnu adopted his female form, Mohini, and appeared before the demon. He was tempted to embrace Mohini who conceded his temptation on one condition that he first dance the way she danced. Bhasmasura imitated her dance in which Mohini put her hand on her head. As soon as the demon touched his head with the palm of his hand, he was reduced to ashes.

3. The King Penguin, 1983.

Salman Rushdie's *Shame*: A Thematic Study

Indira Bhatt

Rushdie's novels do not lend themselves easily to interpretation, since there appears to be a deliberate mystification. Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are written in a language designed to mystify and obfuscate the majority of readers so much so that the readers admire the novels only to put them aside and never to take up again. Even the Indians or Pakistanis, not to say the readers in the west of the English-speaking world, would require a knowledge, not only of history and geography, but also of the beliefs and myths of these countries. R.K. Narayan when asked about Rushdie's *MC* said that he "neither wanted to read it nor inflict it on anyone." (quoted by S. Krishnan) This paper attempts to analyse the theme of *Shame* and how the action of the novel is controlled by this theme. The novel is about life in Pakistan; but Rushdie claims that the country in the story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying almost the same space. In fact *Shame* is 'fictionalized picture of the ideas of Rushdie about Pakistan.

The novel is shaped by the controlling theme of shame. The characters, the action, the conflict are all so arranged and dramatized as to focus our attention on this total meaning. As the story unfolds, this theme of shame at different levels becomes more and more sharply defined. The questions that haunt us are: Whose Shame ? How does it shape the story's action ? What are its consequences in the lives of the principal characters ?

Rushdie defines shame (p. 38) in its original form. "Not the English word shame but the Urdu word *Sharam*—a short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance." At a personal or individual level, the hero Omar Khayyam Shakil continues to be affected by shame and shamelessness throughout his life even when his mothers had banned him from feeling shame at an early age. He is born of three mothers (!) and does not know who his real mother is to the end of his life. Nor does he know who his father is. Though when he enters the world of school he understands that he is an illegitimate child born of a British Officer and one of the Shakil mothers. Like Saleem in *MC*, here too the hero is a Eurasian. The Shakil mothers do not show any feeling of dishonour when O.K. was conceived, but lock themselves up in their large mansion and remain in their self-imposed captivity till the end of the novel.

O.K. is born in this prison-like enclosed world of his mothers. And to add insult to injury, he enters life without benefit of mutilation, barbery or divine approval which the Muslims consider a must. Born in the death-bed of his grandfather, his first sight is the spectacle of a range of topsy-turvy mountains which afflicts in him a sense of inversion, of a world turned upsidedown. "Hell above, Paradise below." (23) He grows up between twin eternities whose conventional order is, in his experience, precisely inverted. This exposition to the topsy-turvy world reminds one of the topsy-turvy world of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Here too, it is hinted right in the first chapter that foul is fair and fair is foul, shame is honour and honour, shame in this country of Pakistan.

Fat and frightened, Omar Khayyam lives with his mothers exclusively for some twelve years and then joins the school and the outer world for the next six years, finally leaving them and the city of his birth for further studies at the age of 18, and only visits them when his brother Babar dies: ultimately returning at the age of 65 to die there. We do not hear of him for a long time, except that he has become an internationally famous doctor, and friend of Iskander Harappa. He marries the daughter of Raza Hyder who ultimately becomes the Chief Martial Law Administrator. The novel begins with his birth and completes the circle with his death in the same room and the same mansion in the city of Q. Though Rushdie says his hero is a peripheral man, a marginal man, not a central figure in the novel, at a different level O K. and his wife Sufiya Zinobia represent the people of Pakistan who entered into a world of freedom only to find themselves in a captivated world of broken dreams, shattered illusions and religious fanaticism, a shameful world where they cannot reject their religious beliefs nor can wish to be ruled by Islamic scriptures in their political life. Omar Khayyam, the Eurasian, is not truly a Muslim and hence is bound to live at the edge of this world of Muslims.

The shame that Sufiya Zinobia feels is that of a young woman who has the mind of a child. She is a wrong miracle in the sense that her parents Bilquis and Raza Hyder wanted a son and got a daughter. Bilquis always calls her 'shame' and so the child in Sufiya never grows up. But she imbibes and absorbs shame around her and is a personification of shame itself so much so that she blushes at the slightest shameful thing. The beast of this shame is bottled up in her and at times takes possession of her mind, growing stronger gradually. When it first possesses her at the age of twelve with a three-year old mind, she kills Pinky Aurangjeb's turkeys. She is medicated upon by Omar Khayyam, who is 43 and falls in love with her but has not the courage to declare it until she is brought back to him when she tries to kill Talvar Ulhaq, the bridegroom of her sister, Good News. She is now nineteen with a five-year old mind. When O.K. marries her, she is a

fully grown young woman of 21 with a seven-year old mind. One feels that she represents the growth of political Pakistan which has not grown to true nationhood. The beast in her too grows and reminds one of Stevenson's Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde. Like Mr. Hyde, she becomes a woman in veil wandering at night and killing urchins after fulfilling her womanly desires. When O.K. realises this he informs her father Raza Hyder who wants to put an end to the life of Sufiya Zinobia. What a shame that a father wants to kill his daughter. But O.K. the doctor and husband does not like the idea and so decides to keep her in the attic alive, though drugged and chained, so as not to be a danger to others.

Rushdie explains the father's desire to kill his daughter in the name of honour. A Pakistani father killed his beloved daughter for making love to a white boy in London. Though the story appalled Rushdie, he says that "I, too, found myself understanding the killer that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride." (p. 115) He asserts that shamelessness and shame are the roots of violence. The girl who was thus killed in London, Anahita Mahammed haunts the novel since Rushdie finds this sort of happening understandable only in the East. (116) He cites another event of an "Asian" girl travelling in a late-night underground train who was humiliated by a group of teenage white boys. The shame, burning within, bursts out and sets fire to shops, etc. causing wreckage all around, but taking pride in its power. The third ghost inside Sufiya Zinobia is a boy in London who had simply ignited of his own accord without dousing himself in petrol or applying any external flame. (117) The seeds of all the three incidents are to be found in Sufiya Zinobia and thus the character feels shame but at the same time finds power to bring about wreckage all around her. Rushdie also refers to Kafka's Joseph K (*The Trial*) who is stabbed to death. " 'Like a dog,' he said: it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him." (118) Sufiya Zinobia does not die under a knife but the shame that all these persons feel, hangs over her, making her all the more powerful when it finally bursts out of her. Only, the writer has to make her an idiot because "idiots are, by definition, innocent," the only way Rushdie finds of creating purity in what is supposed to be the Land of the Pure (Pakistan). (120) Sufiya grows up, her mind more slowly than her body, and owing to this slowness she remains, "for me" says Rushdie, "somehow clean (Pak) in the midst of a dirty world," (120) a world full of corrupt power and false promises. She blushes uncontrollably for herself and also for the world in which shameful things are done but not felt: "lies, loose living, disrespect for one's elders, failure to love one's national flag, incorrect voting at elections . . . maltreatment of women folk . . ." (122) Sufiya absorbs unfelt feelings of shame and thus represents the simple-

minded people of Pakistan who feel shame for the shameful actions of their political leaders.

The shawls embroidered by Rani Harappa also record this shameful history of the Pakistani leaders. On one such shawl, the allegorical shawl, which Rani calls "Iskander and the Death of Democracy," she depicts his hand around the throat of a young girl, small, physically frail, internally damaged, the idiot but innocent Sufiya Zinobia, gasping and empurpled in Iskander's unyielding fists. (114) Here Rushdie clearly equates Sufiya Zinobia with the spirit of democracy, the true power of the people and leaves no doubt in the minds of the readers what she stands for.

Raza Hyder is frightened to learn that the chained and unconscious Sufiya Zinobia has escaped, "the white panther" was being mythologized, fantasized and considered illusive. It is in fact "Time's ghost, the future, stalking the forests of the past." (p. 252) Raza Hyder is frightened that his past—his own daughter uncared for and unloved, would become his nemesis and ruin him completely. He is perfectly right. When it is known that the white panther is none other than his own daughter, he is almost house-arrested and has to escape disguised in the garb of a woman. Omar Khayyam on the other hand feels proud of Sufiya Zinobia in the sense that she is now free for the first time in her life. "He imagined her proud, proud of her strength, proud of the violence that was making her a legend. . . . She has risen above everything, she did not wish to hear." (254)

Rushdie poses here a question: "Can it be possible, that human beings are capable of discovering their nobility in their savagery ?" (254) Does Rushdie suggest here that violence can free Pakistan from the shameful past ? The country, the people do not know their real power till they resort to violence, till they break loose from the chains of their past. Rushdie creates a situation where Raza Hyder (who can be likened to Gen. Zia Ul Huq) has to run away and find shelter in Nishapur where no ray of light or hope penetrates. But Sufiya Zinobia will not kill her father, that is left to Omar Khayyam's mothers for whom it is a simple act of revenge for the killing of their son Babar.

The last we hear of the beast wandering the roads of Q is that she is following in the footsteps of her husband, catching up with him in Nishapur. Omar Khayyam the peripheral man does not consider himself responsible for any of the events in the life of any of the characters in the novel—Raza, Isky or Sufiya. His failure to act in a responsible manner, to fulfil his wife's womanly desires, to protect and to support her, to share her ills, brings about his death at the hands of his wife. He confesses to doing his job well and to social climbing. But he always remains in the wings watching the drama being enacted and not preventing it. His inaction meets with Sufiya's action and there can be no

hope for him. Perhaps Rushdie suggests that the marginal man, the peripheral man should not simply stand and watch, but should himself act according to his lights of right and wrong. The suppressed instincts of Sufiya, the fury of the people, will catch up with the rulers and they will have to answer one day. Could not the doctor and the patient join hands to bring about a change in the political life? The allegory appears a little confusing but then the confusing state of affairs in Pakistan may well be mirrored in this confusing manner. Yet the allegory is not sustained throughout and Sufiya simply appears to be the fantasized ideas of Rushdie who creates a substitute reality out of fantasy, obsession and delusion. O.K. and S.Z. live not only in the real world, they also inhabit the world of spirits, Sufiya Zinobia being the wrong miracle as is so often emphasised by the writer. When Rushdie says, "A beast is born, a wrong miracle, within the citadels of propriety and decorum. This was the danger of S.Z.: that she came to pass, not in the wilderness of basilisks and fiends but in the heart of the respectable world," (200) he perhaps implies that Pakistan was a wrong miracle and that the people who dreamt of freedom found themselves chained by the dictators of the country. The cultured world, the westernized world, believing in the values of freedom and demoratic principles not only ignores the plight of the people of this country—the disorder's *avatar* but helps strengthen the disorder, the dictatorship, stifling the voice of the chained people. This is the universal shame, Rushdie brings to light. He cites a British diplomat's wife saying, "why don't people in Pakistan get rid of Zia in, you know, the usual way ?" (29) "Shame is not the exclusive property of the East," Rushdie comments.

At the political level Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder—Bhutto and President Zia-ul-Haq follow the history of the Moghul empire where a son killing his father to become a king is a common affair. Their empire is built upon the promises which are never kept. Especially Raza promises elections again and again and is known, not as chief martial law administrator but as "cancel my last announcement." Rushdie presents Raza Hyder as someone who meant well but who was guided more by a man like Maulana Dawood than the precepts of administration. Raza always finds two ghosts of Isky and Dawood on his shoulders—the two ghosts who haunt him both in life and even after death. A mention of Danton and Robespierre reveals the conflict that Raza Hyder feels but he is driven by the religious Dawood and feels safe in talking about the Islamic scriptures and imposing its dictates. Rushdie appears to suggest that religious fanaticism is not the right resolution of this conflict. Isky is killed by his orders and he himself dies at the hands of the revengeful witch-like mother of Babar. The country is now in the hands of Arjumand and Haroun Harappa and possibly will continue the same path. The novel is open-ended and we have no glimpse of the

future except that of a silent cloud in the shape of a giant grey and headless man—a figure of dreams, a phantom with one arm lifted in a gesture of farewell.

The novel is loosely structured, the fantastical comedy sweeping everything away. The incidents and the emotions are exaggerated. The characters are caricatures. Omar Khayyam is not the only one of the grotesque eccentrics and loons who people this novel. Sufiya Zinobia the fantasized heroine represents the shame felt by the individual, by the nation, but also by the universe and the writer himself. It is the universal shame which man should feel but does not care to. To bring home this truth Rushdie makes almost all his characters neurotic. Not one single character is normal and healthy. What one likes to ask is, could not Rushdie press his truth home in some normal way?

Rushdie says in *Grimus* through *Elfrida* about the concept of a novel: "I do not care for stories that are so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning. So it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful. How terrible to see a meaning or a great import in everything around one, everything one does, everything that happens to one." (149)

If this is what Rushdie believes, we should not try to find meaning in every fantasized event and action of the characters who people this novel. In fact one feels that this meaninglessness, this confusion and chaos in the novel create the right type of atmosphere for the people who inhabit this novel. The reference to the Islamic Calendar indicates the repressive life of the people dragged backward and chained to the Middle Ages; the world where heroes are clowns and clowns are heroes, where fair is foul and foul is fair, where life is full of turmoil and suffering and there is no escape from shame, from the Kafkaesque nightmare in a totalitarian state. Rushdie in his egoistic and showy, malicious and mischievous manner gives the novel a factitious glamour and panders to the gullibility of British intellectuals.

Joseph Conrad's Vision of Life

V.T. Girdhari

For a highly sensitive and impressionable mind of Joseph Conrad, there was not an event or phenomenon that escaped his perception and reaction. All his reflexes and responses were so itchingly engraved on his thoughts that it becomes a tedious task to isolate one in particular and say that this motif predominantly formed his vision of life and centrality of his novels. In no other creative artist's life the early impressions betray their influences so apparently on his works as in case of Joseph Conrad. In fact his own experiences became such a direct source of his creativity that he plainly transcribed into his works incidents and names of peoples that he happened to come across during his voyages. His early living conditions, his experiences as sailor and then writer further induced the sense of loneliness which already existed in his background and was inherent in his temperament. His men are isolated individuals who "forever face an impossible wall that separates them even from the people who stand close to them."[1] Conrad was an isolated individual himself who lived through the torments of exile and sufferings of a family in the throes of uncertain and nightmarish state of existence. The full realization of moral isolation dawned upon him when he left his native country—Poland—as also his first love, an intensely patriotic girl. His romantic and adventurous spirit found fulfilment on the high seas and in the mysteries of Eastern jungles. But it only proved to be a spell of fascination; when it was over, an everlasting mood of disillusionment and all-pervading loneliness followed. His was not a disposition to share his dreams with anyone. "We live as we dream alone" is Marlow's brooding.[2] His works, as Gillon puts it, show "a veritable procession of isolatoes".

Long association with sea opened up new, vast panorama of marvel and wonder inculcating in him a spirit of romance and adventure. His refined romantic and impressionistic sensibility was an object to be moulded by sea into a definite character with convictions. Like Lord Jim, sea had a sound grip over his soul but the awards that follow total devotion to duty and fidelity, ever evaded him resulting in bitterness and frustration. Poor health and linguistic barrier also caused a tense sense of fatigue and gloom that was to remain with him till end. Poverty, ennui, weariness—this was not the kind of life he had bargained for. This was not the realization of his dreams. Congo and its mysterious surroundings gave him a life-time shock which was beyond all his credibility. The jungle and its laws, the dehumanization of a human

being isolated in the willderness filled him with contempt and turned him into a cynic and sceptic. He felt no affinity with these people. He saw the negative aspect of human nature and started suspecting the very purpose of life whose essence was nothing but regrets. 'Droll thing this life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for futile purpose,' is Marlow's conclusion. (p. 150) Conrad's was a transition from a romantic sailor to a lovely thinker. Transition was consequent upon an inner crisis. He turned to introspection aad mainly reflected upon "his own fate and that of humanity, with meaning of failure and success, fidelity and faithfulness."[3] His dreams were shattered into realization that individual was just an insignificant spec in the broad spectrum of universal scheme. But still Conrad never succumbed to the starkness of melancholic, despairing truth of life, like Almayer and Decoud. One can inhale a certain moral and spiritual climate in his work which makes him akin to Polish masters specially when he delves deep into the torment torn soul of an individual and his relation to society.

It is an undeniable assumption to identify the mental states of Conrad's heroes with his own sense of loneliness. Every phase of his life—sad formative years, struggling sea years and agonizing writing period—added to his inborn melancholy. Not unlike his suffering heroes, Lord Jim, Lingard, Captain Whalley, Emilia Gould, Lena, Nostromo, Decoud, Heyst and others he felt that loneliness was: "a hard and absolute condition of existence, the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand and there remains only the capricious, unconsolable, and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp."[4]

Conrad's major characters are highly individualistic in their approach to life and its surroundings. His lovers, one or both, suffer often "deadly alienation from human community, or else they separate from each other by insurmountable barrier."[5] Hindrance may be caused by racial or cultural gap (Lord Jim and Jewel, Willems and Aissa) or may be due to difference of level between their social status as in case of Alice and Captain in 'A Smile of Fortune.' Heyst's philosophy of complete detachment from the world has incapacitated for his relation with a woman. Jim's jump and events consequent upon it go to prove that one cannot simply run away from the world which will always overtake us and take its toll.

Even in their love relationship Conrad's people are not able to drop their isolation and when they cannot love they are still more isolato type not because they are individualistic or independent like male characters but because they are too passive. Love to women is what passion is to men—sole existence. Not allowing too much freedom to a woman in man's world is a Victorian idea which, otherwise, is not

in tune with Conrad's idea of womanhood. His women do not have any independent financial status to provide them a social position. They sometimes betray some meek signs of protest but eventually seem to accept their fate with calm immobility. They appear more tragic in their isolation because of the mute helplessness in struggling against adversities. Flora suffers the destiny of a social outcast with no one to share her sufferings and sense of futility except herself. Like Jim she is obssessed with the events of the past even when she is given a situation to forget it. Like Lena in *Victory* she is rescued from a miserable existence by a man who is himself, 'a hermit in wilderness' and a masterpiece of aloofness."

The lives and experiences of Conrad's heroes are the evident manifestation of Donne's proposition that no man is an island unto himself and if he does not particularly care for the society, the society is always eager to pay him back in the same coin. Society, obviously means accepted moral, behavioural code of their time. Almayer breaks this code and takes a woman of a different race who remains a stranger to him till end. Same is the lot of Willems. Kurtz transgresses the principle of human solidarity by committing the greatest of the sins—failure to be loyal towards the moral ideas that he had come equipped with—resulting in his moral decay and eventual death. Those moral ideas represent the society, the civilization, the European world of which he was a product and any sort of transgression would be penal. Decoud's and Nostromo's was not just a simple sin of greed and stealth, it was a sin of failure to be loyal, it was a sin of total absence of the greatest of all virues—fidelity. Jim had shown his disloyalty by his act of cowardice in a moment when something different was expected of him. He must run away from his world to rehabilitate himself in an alien land where none knows him and to rehabilitate himself in his own conscience—that symbolizes the civilized world that he represents.

Where exactly the dismal plight of these depression-borne creatures of Conrad leads to ? It cannot just be a journey to fathom the bottomless pit of perdition called life. Conrad's romantic men and women cannot be so totally negative. Theirs is a quest for self-knowledge, a process of gradual self-discovery, the search for truth.

NOTES

1. Adam Gillon, *The Eternal Solitary* (Bookman Associates, New York, 1966), Preface.
2. *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of Tether* (London, 1967), p. 82.
3. Adam Gillon, p. 32.
4. *Lord Jim* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, 1924), p. 180.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

BOOK-REVIEWS

Culture and Criticism, Suresh Chandra, Delhi: B.K. Publishing Corporation, 1987. 109 pp. Rs. 95.

Most critical writings in English in this country have been in one of the three broad streams of literature: British, American and Indo-Anglian, focussed mainly on thematic or artistic aspects of one or a group of authors in a particular genre or period. Except for the painstaking researches of a few devoted scholars, the studies usually are the by-products of doctoral theses in any of the streams. Since not many Indian universities have departments of comparative literature and not many scholars show interest in looking at literary works from a comparative angle, critical works encompassing at least two of the three broad streams are rare to find. It is in this direction that Suresh Chandra has done a commendable job. His book *Culture and Criticism* has for its study American, Commonwealth and Indo-Anglian (Indolish," as he calls) writers like Norman Mailer, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi and Uma Vasudev. It is not a Ph.D. work and hence one gets a refreshing impression of reading a critical work free from scholastic constraints and abundance of allusions to other critics. Instead, Suresh Chandra seems to feel so free and uninhibited in giving his evaluation that he abandons the role of tight-rope walking fixed for a critic and hovers freely like a creative writer.

In the "Introduction" to the book, Suresh Chandra spells out the need for studying Indian and American works as rooted in and governed by their respective cultures. Thus he recommends for the critic "an adequate knowledge of the Quranic ideal" to appreciate Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and a thorough understanding of Hindi psyche to comprehend the plight of Naipaul's characters. It is in this context that he derides the practice of Indians "straining their jaws to acquire the RP and ending up in some regional variation of English" and recommends that we make an attempt in the direction of "an educated Indian standard pronunciation of English free from provincialism and gravitational pull of the mother tongue."

Suresh Chandra discusses various Indian authors in the light of these parameters. Thus Anand treats poverty "like a roving saint," listening to the poor, soothing their wounds and raising their sufferings to the heights of civilization itself. He looks at the well-being of sweepers, coolies and the underdogs who, though suppressed, "display meekness in the face of injustice and cruelty," without retaliating or uttering a syllable of protest. Like Kabir, Rahim and Tukaram, Anand too feels that religion should not be allowed to be a means of coercion and exploitation.

There are other writers and their writings viewed from their relationship with culture. Naipaul is physically rooted in Trinidad, mentally in England while his soul is set in India. His major fiction is around the lives of Indians in Trinidad even though his look is westernized. Rushdie too focusses on the peripheral existence of the third-world heroes of the modern times.

The genre of "New Journalism" for Chandra is associated with the American writers's desire to write a great book in accordance with national ambitions and pride—"a work of national epic." Norman Mailer, for him, "is a Sarvodaya saint caught in the din and noise of deafening and disorderly traffic on the busiest crossing, that is America."

The writer uses the term "high culture fiction" for the works of Arun Joshi and Uma Vasudev. The world of the former consists of the educated, intelligent and cultured people with aspirations and dreams. Rattan Rathore, Sindi Oberoi, Babu Khemka and Billy Biswas belong to this category. The people of Uma Vasudev are no less advanced and belong to the high class of neo-rich. Her strangers can sleep in the bedrooms of divorced daughters. The women are particularly liberated and do not bother about traditional middle-class attitudes and taboos. For them, licentiousness becomes a thing of pride and sexual orgies a normal desired activity.

The approach of Suresh Chandra is quite fresh and stimulating. The book is scholarly without being pedantic. The language is simple but dignified and moves freely and spontaneously. The publisher has introduced some innovation in using asterisk marks along with the numbers of references both within the text and in footnotes. It might have been better to stick to the *MLA Stylesheet*. The book is an excellent addition to the studies of Western and Indian authors and a significant contribution to the criticism of American and Indo-Anglian authors in India.

RAMESH K. SRIVASTAVA

Goldsmith and Sentimental Comedy, B.S. Pathania. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1988, 152 pp. Rs. 120.

Oliver Goldsmith, known for his famous novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*, was a dramatist in his own right. His plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* have made on indelible impression on the growth of the drama in England. More than that, Goldsmith made a great impact on the French stage. In fact, the dramatist has remained almost as popular south of the channel as in England.

The recently-published *Goldsmith and Sentimental Comedy* by Professor B.S. Pathania is a welcome addition to the corpus of criticism on Goldsmith as a dramatist. Though much has been written about Goldsmith as a comic dramatist, there has been surprisingly little in the way of a really close and systematic examination of his comedies in the context of sentimental comedy which was a popular form of drama in the eighteenth century. Several critics, according to the author, have put Goldsmith on the sentimental bench by greatly exaggerating the resemblances and ignoring the differences between his comedies and those of the sentimental school. In order to restore a correct perspective, the author has laid special emphasis on the gay and anti-sentimental nature of his comedies, *The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Goldsmith indeed seems to have been deeply disturbed by the popularity of the sentimental comedy in his time. He lamented that the contemporary critics and audiences continued to admire this comedy despite its pathetic scenes, gushing sentiment and dull moralizing. His pronouncements against sentimental comedy and for genuine comedy help us to appreciate his own two comedies, written in accord with his theoretic ideals. The book attempts to show that both *The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* are delightful because of their funny situations, witty dialogues and humorous characters. It has successfully been established that Goldsmith's contribution to dramatic history lies in restoring to comedy much of its former elan. The present study, well-argued and elegantly-produced, makes a significant contribution to the domain of criticism on the eighteenth century drama.

R.K. DHAWAN

Six Indian Novelists in English, Ramesh K. Srivastava, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1987. 359 pp. Rs. 100.

Six Indian Novelists in English is a collection of nineteen research papers. Professor Srivastava wrote these research papers while he was teaching these six novelists to M.A. and M. Phil. students in his University—this has been admitted by him in the "Preface" which is indeed interesting and which also, importantly enough, highlights a pandemic malady that serious academic work, specially independent research work, is done in most of the Indian Universities by devoted scholars in a totally uncongenial atmosphere confronting heavy odds at every level deliber-

ately created by learned colleagues who are motivated by extra-academic factors invariably.

Out of the nineteen essays, Professor Srivastava has devoted nine to Kamala Markandaya and her two novels—*Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*—and three to Bhabani Bhattacharya and two each to Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Anita Desai and only one to Arun Joshi. This apparent lack of any patterning in the essays notwithstanding, Professor Srivastava's pieces allow us a peep at the way his critical acumen has been operative at different times and significantly denote a sort of subtle intellectual growth, meriting consideration. With a view to evaluating the growth of a critical mind, the existence of such a collection of essays is indeed inevitable.

Despite having a good grounding in American scholarship, Professor Srivastava's book is singularly free from the miasma of fashionable critical jargon with which the books written by America-trained academics generally get infected. All of his essays, characterised by a remarkable perspicacity and profundity, perspicuity and precision, are insightful studies, revealing not only his critical sharpness and profound understanding of the contemporary Indian-English novel but also his wide-spectrum knowledge of world literature. The essays on Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi are decidedly highly illuminating. Professor Srivastava has set himself such aspects of novelists and certain novels to focus on as have not been expatiated on. Such essays as "Portrayal of Children in R.K. Narayan," "What Is So Great in R.K. Narayan ?," "Symbolism in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*," "Symbolic Triumvirate: Bicycle Chain, Sari and Tin Trunk in Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice*," "The Theme of Hunger in Bhattacharya and Markandaya," "The Psychological Novel and Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*" and "The Theme of Alienation in Arun Joshi's Novels" treat of hitherto neglected aspects in a very perceptive manner. The two essays which critically study symbolism in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* are undoubtedly commendable and stand out in the book. No critic has so far made such in-depth studies of symbolism in these novels as Professor Srivastava has. In addition he presents masterly studies of prose style of Markandaya and Bhattacharya in an elaborate manner. The need of the hour is that scholars now apply themselves to making such profound studies of Indian-English novelists and their individual novels rather than sweeping surveys, jejune paraphrases or surfacial studies.

MADHUSUDAN PRASAD

The Novels of William Styron, S. Laxmana Murthy, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1988, 204 pp. Rs. 150.

The twentieth-century South America has produced many authors of genuine literary merit. These writers whose work must be termed excellent according to the most stringent standards from a national as well as regional perspectives. Prominent amongst these are Ellen Glasgow, William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, Thomas Wolfe, Eudora Welty and William Styron. These are some of the most significant writers of fiction in this century. William Styron belongs to the younger generation, those born since 1916. The present study by Professor S. Laxmana Murthy analyses Styron's four novels *Lie Down in Darkness*, *The Long March*, *Set This House or Fire* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and explores his increasing consciousness of violence and compassion as constants of tragic human existence—from the stage of muted suggestion of the power of compassion in *Lie Down in Darkness* to its unequivocal affirmation in *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

Styron scholarship, in the opinion of Professor Murthy, has all along shown specialist approach to one particular thematic aspect of his work: its Southernness, its religious sensibility or its sociological significance. Criticism has not given adequate attention to Styron's evolving awareness of modern human condition shaping his fiction. The book therefore makes a comprehensive study of Styron's thematic concerns, especially in the context of man's complex predicament today marked by global violence and degeneration of human values. This search for values has also been the central theme of Albert Camus's work. The author expounds Camus's tragic humanism for it provides helpful insights into the study of Styron who has always insisted on staying human in a world imperilled by violence in various forms. He brings into focus through his novels the tragic fact of human existence and a constant endeavour to affirm love and compassion despite the nihilistic terror caused by ubiquitous violence in the present-day world.

One must say that Prof. Murthy's contribution to the Styron criticism is fresh and invigorating, for not much, especially in India, has been written on the novelist. One only hopes that the study will help the readers in comprehending the fiction of Styron, one of the greatest American living writers, and inspire them to go deeper into his work. And the book should be well-received in the West; its contents as also its production is appealing.

SUMAN BALA

Rich Like Us, Nayantara Sahgal, Heinemann: London, 1985, 236 pp. £ 9.50

Within the span of just one year Nayantara Sahgal has bagged two prestigious awards for her new and sixth novel, *Rich Like Us* published in 1985. In that very year, she was awarded Sinclair Prize for Fiction and in 1986 the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award was bestowed upon her for this novel.

During Emergency, Sahgal resigned from Akademi's Advisory Board in protest, because her suggestion that the Board should pass a resolution to condemn censorship of Press and imprisonment without trial was not acceded to. Ironically, the same Akademi has now honoured her for her novel which subjects the Emergency to a rigorous critical scrutiny and launches a seething attack on the excesses committed by the political dragons during the period.

Sahgal has the honour of being the first Indian woman novelist writing in English dealing with political themes. She started her literary career in 1954 with her autobiographical work, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954). Since then, she has consistently been engaged in writing novels and journalistic columns for newspapers dealing with the contemporary political themes. In *Rich Like Us*, she vividly and pungently delineates the socio-political scenario of India particularly during Emergency the backdrop of which is Delhi.

Emergency meant opportunity, plenty and power for a handful of loyalists. While the hero-worshippers prospered, the majority of common, simple-minded, straight-forward people were being exploited and deprived of civil liberties. The sincere officers and civil servants had become virtually "like cherry stones on a plate, not like people" (p. 86), or to say in the language of Sonali (the protagonist of the novel), "the automatons," who were forced to indulge in corrupt practices just to please a handful of hangers-on. The state-of-affairs, the suppressed cries under the rule of rod, have been aptly symbolized by the recurring image of a bandless, helpless struggling beggar in a street being dragged by society ladies into a mobile vasectomy clinic.

Besides depicting the anguish during Emergency the novelist takes the reader to the scenario of the second World War and nostalgic pre-partition days and describes the magnetic, transforming influence of Gandhi on the masses. The portrayal of the upper strata of society who are as usual indifferent, insensitive to the chilling upheavals around, lost in their own small, rich, glamorous world of clubs, parties and get-togethers is unsurpassable.

Sonali—a sincere, senior civil servant, is pained to see the murder of democratic ideals. Her sudden apocalypse of her well to do grand parents, especially her grandmother's submission to 'Sati'—an evil social system leaves her dumb-founded for sometime. The entire political drama during emergency is seen through Sonali's eyes.

The love-triangle of Ram, Rose and Mona, the tears and bleeding heart of Mona-Ram's first wife and her religious fervour, her regular fasting peculiar of a traditional Hindu wife and later the development of friendship between co-wives are some of the incidents carefully blended into the mainstream of the novel.

Sahgal has special regards for patriots like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru (her maternal uncle). Some passages in the novel reveal her true respect for Pt. Nehru. She pays a tremendous tribute to his overall personality:

> what a man, what character, what integrity, what ability, what democracy. What refinement such as never-before-seen ! ... . Relationships, anecdotes, encounters with Panditji popped up like jack-in-the boxes. (p. 146)

She vividly recalls the matchless patriotism, selflessness and sacrifices of freedom fighters before partition and contrasts them with greed, selfishness and shamelessness of contemporary politicians.

After a gap of eight years, since the publication of her earlier novel *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) there is a marked development in her prose here, which is complex, deep, rich with apt images, symbols, gentle humour and irony. Her description of events is marked with accuracy and foresightedness. *Rice Like Us* is in fact, one of the best novels Sahgal has so far written.

NEENA ARORA

The Novels of Bernard Malamud, M. Rajagopalachari, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1988, 222 pp. Rs. 150.

Bernard Malamud is considered one of America's most important new writers. He has succeeded in bringing to American literature a note that has long been absent from it and in a style it never possessed. In a period when the novel itself threatens to vanish under the weight of anti-novels and anti-heroes, when denigration and nihilism have become the norm, Malamud has dedicated himself to tending the

resources of human personality which seem to be disappearing not just from literature but from life itself. In his novels, he manages to affirm man, to find the vision through which the elusive and enigmatic sense of life's possibilities counters man's fall from grace.

The present study by Dr. Chari comprehensively reveals Malamud's concern with the theme of compassion. Malamud, the author says, is sensitively alive to the human suffering and this attitude towards life is in conformity with the Jewish tradition and history. Although Malamud does not want to limit himself as a Jewish writer, he acknowledges his debt to the authentic Jewish experience and sensibility. Significantly, he values authentic human experience in the act of writing because 'what moves him moves him to art.' The impact of Jewishness on Malamud's work has provided him with a compassionate and tragic vision of life. Working on this thesis, the author shows that a serious study of Malamud's novels reveals a profound reverence for human dignity.

The book makes a definite contribution to the large body of critical scholarship on Malamud, in as much as it breaks new ground in the exploration of the theme of compassion in his novels. Dr. Chari seeks to show how compassion is integral to Malamud's world view in his fiction. The author's style is lucid and matter of fact that holds the reader's attention from beginning to end. And if the style is arresting, the physical appearance of the book is no less charming.

R.C. KAPOOR

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A Select List of Indian Contribution to English Studies during 1987.

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Sujatha Joseph	:	University of Kerala, Trivandrum.
M.B. Geetha Kumari	:	Women's College, Trivandrum.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CQ	*Commonwealth Quarterly* (Mysore).
EC	*The English Class-room* (Bangalore).
IJDL	*Internatianal Journal of Dravidian Linguistics.*
IJES	*The Indian Journal of English Studies.*
IL	*Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi)
JDE	*Journal of the Dept. of English, University of Calcutta.*
JELT	*The Journal of English Language Teaching.*
JIE	*Journal of Indian Education.*
JIWE	*The Journal of Indian Writing in English.*
JLS	*Journal of Literary Studies.*
KUJ	*Karnatak University Journal.*
LC	*The Literary Criterion.*
LHY	*The Literary Half-Yearly.*
NQ	*New Quest.*
OJES	*Osmania Journal of English Studies.*
PJES	*Punjab Journal of English Studies.*
PURBA	*Punjab University Research Bulletin* (Arts).
YR	*Yearly Review* (Delhi).

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