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Intricate Alleys in Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth*

RAMESH K. SRIVASTAVA

A labyrinth refers to intricate alleys and tortuous paths within or without a building in which it is difficult to find the way out. The title of Arun Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth* can be operative on many levels. On the surface level, it alludes to the last of labyrinths in Lal Haveli at Benaras, the kind one finds in *bhulbhulaiyan* at Lucknow. Lal Haveli, the scene of important activities in the novel, is situated amid the tortuous lanes of Benaras and becomes a "sepulchral, sensual den of Aftab, amidst the labyrinths of Benaras."[1] In one of his poems, Shelley refers to the city of Venice as "a peopled labyrinth of walls"[2] because it comprises about 120 islands on each of which is a tortuous labyrinth of narrow, paved streets and lanes. Benaras, too, has labyrinths of narrow and tortuous lanes because of its being a very old city when motorized transport requiring broad streets did not exist. In these lanes exist Lal Haveli and its labyrinths which have so much been associated with intense and passionate activities of his life even though Bhaskar wonders if they existed at all in reality. In order to ascertain that Lal Haveli is not a vapour-like figment of imagination, Bhaskar recapitulates certain images associated with it:

> A desolate garden; an alley; a brooding windowless facade; white-washed walls smudged with the hands of rickshaw pullers; a broken fountain, a ceiling full of unlit chandeliers; ventilators of stained glass. Where else could have I seen the sarcophagus of green marble that, even in my dreams, possesses the power to chill me? How else the idea of a *labyrinth within the labyrinth of lanes* that stretch westwards from the ghats of Benaras. (29, Italics mine)

The location of Lal Haveli and the structure of the building itself are a pointer to the existence of wheels within wheels. But even wheels within

wheels are patterned along certain predictable lines within which one's movement is usually smooth whereas "a labyrinth within the labyrinth of lanes" in Benaras refers to a puzzling structure, a sort of *chakravyuha*, purposely constructed to mislead an enemy so that he fails to come out of it. The puzzling nature of Lal Haveli and more so of its labyrinths correspondingly imply the mystifying nature of its inhabitants.

When Bhaskar is brought from his hotel to Lal Haveli, he comes across the narrowing road, dusty footpaths, a nullah, a ditch, and a row of small shops before reaching the "medieval structures of the rich" which take him 300 years back. Then came a fire station and finally "a blind alley" with "a heavy antique door." (30) With the well-furnished Blue Room and the odd chipped table, Lal Haveli with its corridors appeared to Bhaskar "as a maze." (35) Aftab concedes the fact of the haveli's decadence but affirming at the same time that its labyrinths remain intact. In order to baffle the enemies, the haveli is built like a labyrinth with rooms within rooms, and with corridors that only bring the person back to where he had started. If a man were to be locked up in one of the rooms, he might never be found, nor his cries ever heard. Though "death" is believed to be lurking in the last labyrinth, this fact is denied by Anuradha who considers it one of the make-beliefs of both Aftab and Bhaskar. Anuradha traces the idea of the labyrinth of Lal Haveli to the *bhulbhulaiyan* of Lucknow after the visit of which Aftab had thought that Lal Haveli too is built like a *bhulbhulaiyan*.

The haveli, because of its architectural peculiarity, has been associated with other structures. While the haveli has labyrinths like the *bhulbhulaiyan* of Lucknow, Gargi's room too becomes "a labyrinth," (97) particularly so because its stained glass ventilators resemble those of Aftab's haveli. The darkness in the haveli caused by the electricity failure makes Bhaskar stumble against a hump in the carpet in the same way as one could easily lose "one's way in the maze of that haveli." (218) The danger of losing one's way is voiced by Anuradha who tells Bhaskar: "Things could happen to you in this haveli and no one would ever know." (219) This fear of unknown dangers in the haveli turns out to be true when Anuradha disappears. The police searched the haveli without finding her, confirming what Anuradha had warned against: "things could happen in this haveli without leaving a trace." (220)

On the metaphorical level, Som Bhaskar's world is as tortuous and winding, full of dark and intricate alleys as the location of the haveli and the nature of its labyrinths. Arun Joshi had used the word labyrinth in the same sense in his earlier novels too. Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* talks

of his sad affairs with Kathy as the wound that still bled "somewhere in the labyrinth of my consciousness."[3] Similarly, Romesh Sahai in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* talks of life's meaning lying "not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish for ever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun"[4] to the call of which he had abandoned himself. In *The Last Labyrinth*, too, Lal Haveli and its labyrinths have close associations with Som Bhaskar. If Lal Haveli was built at a very high cost, so was Som Bhaskar's education, costing a quarter-million rupees in the world's finest universities. The haveli is a unique piece from the feudal past; Bhaskar from the enlightened present. One is non-human; the other is human, though the former touches and affects the latter. They may not have a complete correspondence but Lal Haveli remains what Som Bhaskar gradually becomes— "an odd mixture of the decrepit and the affluent." (33) Nathaniel Hawthorne often characterized a human heart as a dark cavern in which many mysteries could lie without being revealed to the people. Bhaskar's cries, too, at best, are muffled. No one hears Anuradha's cries even when she had done all she could to give an extra lease of life to her lover by pleading with Gargi. The labyrinths of the haveli, as per professed aims of its feudal architects, continue to puzzle and confuse Bhaskar, and to create in him some kind of void, hunger and inadequacy which make his quest directionless with the result that he continues to utter the words, like a refrain: "I want. I want. I want." (11) Som Bhaskar's quest of love is as tortuous as the mazes of narrow alleys in Benaras or the labyrinths of Lal Haveli.

The association of labyrinth can be extended further from Bhaskar's life to the lives of the people in general. Sujatha Mathai is right when she says that Joshi "sees lives as labyrinths—hopeless mazes where you may get irretrievably lost or discover the shining secrets of the core of life."[5] The lives of Anuradha, Aftab, Som Bhaskar and his father are characterized by the wanderings in the labyrinth—ceaseless quest for one thing or the other but ending in futility.

Thus the haveli within the lanes of Benaras can be considered the world itself. Bhaskar's odyssey around the world in quest of happiness turns out to be as futile as an enemy's wanderings might have been in the labyrinths in the past. He has money, women and all sorts of pleasures but there remains a void within him which does not let him rest in peace. A. Ramakrishna Rao points out that in Jorgo Louis Borges's *Labyrinths* and Lawrence Durrell's *The Dark Labyrinth*, "labyrinths are voids emerging out of insatiable human thirst to know and vindicate oneself."[6] The

disquiet soul gropes for something illuminating which might show a way out of the puzzling labyrinth. Rao goes on to assert that in Joshi's novel under discussion, "the image of labyrinth is juxtaposed with the image of void"[7] and supports from the text of the novel the frequent use and significant relationship of the labyrinth and the void:

> And hers, on Manikarnika, were voids with a bang. Both within and without. That was probably how it had always been except that I had been too cocky to notice. You have to have a little "incident" or get a telephone at midnight about so and so popping off or catch your wife with another man or be told you have cancer to see the voids within. It was the voids and not the guava groves that I had walked through that morning my mother died; and voids too in her room in Bombay; and voids each time an affair ended; and the morning my daughter was born, and on and on. Voids all. (48)

The voids are created from the quest of soul for something unidentifiable but in vain. The world is a labyrinth in which people wander around after birth but fail to find a way. Bhaskar's father, too, had failed to find the First Cause. Believing in science, he had gone after causes, knowing well that science cannot solve the problem of the causes. His quest, like Bhaskar's later, was as tortuous as the labyrinths and had ended similarly in vain. Bhaskar's father had talked of everything happening in cycles: "Birth, Growth, Decline and Death." (27) Death is the last labyrinth. Having gone through birth and growth, Som Bhaskar now faces or fears the other two stages: decline and death. The quests of Som Bhaskar and his father whether for the First Cause or for love will end the same way as the enemies had ended in the labyrinth—lost to themselves and to the world. Som Bhaskar's failure in love becomes associated with voids. Like the obsession of Som Bhaskar's father for explanations, Leela Sabnis too had an identical obsession which drew Bhaskar's explanation about "voids" within him and his cry of "I want" as in the following passage:

> "I am not fond of you," she told me one evening. "That would be lying but I am concerned, I am worried. Tell me, what makes you tick?"
>
> "The voids," I said without enthusiasm.
>
> "The voids? What voids?"
>
> "I hear this song way up in the sky. All the time."

"What song?"
"I want; I want; I want."
"I want. I want. I want. Just like that?"
"Yes." (78)

For Aftab, too, to live without Anuradha is to wander aimlessly in a labyrinth till one reaches the last one having death. In different situations, the cases of Bhaskar and his father are no different.

The correspondence of the last labyrinths with death becomes clearer when the locale too begins to take an identical hue. Thus death, believably lurking in the last labyrinth, is not only a reality to Bhaskar and Aftab but is also widely pervasive. Aftab's ancestors were dead and their smiles seemingly mock at Bhaskar's life which might be terminated, like theirs, and thereby breeding a fear of death within him. In a boat, Bhaskar finds Ganga to be "some unknown segment of the universe leading to a reality" (49) that he had not known. The river and the Ghat, in being serpentine, unfamiliar and suggestive of death, become closely associated with the labyrinths.

The Blue Room of the haveli, too, becomes associated with the labyrinth as is clear from the following passage in which Bhaskar wonders:

> Was this maroon Blue Room a part of the labyrinth, too? If so, what was I doing here amidst these strangers? If someone, man or god, had watched my life from a great height, would I have appeared to him like an ant threading through a maze, knocking about against one wall, then another? (53)

Bhaskar wonders what he was doing amidst the strangers who, in reality, are the human version of what non-human labyrinths are—unfamiliar, mysterious, causing anxiety but no less fear. Could these mazes of Bhaskar's wanderings contain love, money or simply the wavering doubts with the cry of "I want"? But he is as ignorant of the nature of this want as he is of what the labyrinth contains. For him, this want, too, is a labyrinth.

Gargi's room, too, is associated with the labyrinth as Aftab had suggested to Bhaskar: "This, too, is a labyrinth." (97) The stained glass ventilators of Gargi's room are identical to those at Aftab's haveli. Bhaskar desires to know of Gargi, her blind father, and their miraculous acts, considering them to be "the labyrinth of their mysterious world."

(60) After meeting the deaf-mute priestess and hearing of her miraculous powers, Bhaskar wonders, "Was this it, then? The terminus? The last of the labyrinth?" (211) Then, the realization comes that the labyrinth had not ended with the priestess and with shares but would continue till his death.

The darkness in Blue Room and in Aftab's haveli because of electricity failure implies the absence of light and as a corollary the absence of way. It also is, like the last labyrinth, associated with mystery and death. The labyrinth makes the enemy lose his way and Bhaskar, because of darkness in the haveli, "stumbled against a hump in the carpet and returned to the sofa." (218) His act of stumbling more than once means straying from his married life towards mysteriously tantalizing Anuradha, and from his business activities to the shares of Aftab's losing company. It alludes, too, to the dark world of the past, the world of mystery, and the world of ancient kings and their mysterious structures. Bhaskar's return to Bombay is a return to the realistic world of commerce—the world of give and take. If Bombay were to be taken for business and commerce, Lal Haveli would be equated with the feudal past and its decadent world of dancing girls and multiple mistresses. Bhaskar's act of shuttling between the two worlds is between that of business inherited from his father and that of his love for women which is a part of his complex personality. To interpret the labyrinth only in relation to Lal Haveli would be to narrow down its meaning. Bombay reminds him of a different kind of labyrinth, so do Gargi's place and Manikarnika Ghat. The labyrinth, for him, then, "stretches to the Maya, to Geeta, to the very edges of this beach" (157) and Anuradha, his "dark and terrible love" (157) becomes associated with the labyrinth. When Bhaskar dreams of being "in a labyrinth" (82) he finds himself with her. A. Ramakrishna Rao calls Anuradha "a labyrinthine woman, at once young and old, ancient and modern, demoniac in her lust and divine in her love. She is every man's woman and no man's wife."[8] Hari Mohan Prasad, too, calls her "a mystery" whose "gaze has been forged for carrying out transactions of the soul."[9] For Devinder Mohan, Anuradha "is gifted with God's light" and "maintains the feminine principle in generating the power of divine love." Like her mother, she is not married to anyone but "she perpetuates her mother's spirit of prayer in spite of being possessed by utilitarian world of male narcissism."[10]

Anuradha—a human version of labyrinth—fascinates, baffles, makes miserable and almost drives to insanity both Aftab and Bhaskar. One can read Bhaskar in Aftab's words when he writes: "I cannot live without her

. . . endlessly I walk the mazes . . . night turns into day . . . day into night. . . . I knock my head against wall . . . cry out my love for her. . . . She does not listen. . . . I am finished." (222) Of the several labyrinths, the last one could be associated with Anuradha and with death, for she transforms both Bhaskar and Aftab into living corpses and then merges herself into the labyrinth.

The structure of the novel is also like that of a labyrinth. Joshi's novels are a departure from the popular form adopted by the Indo-Anglian novelists such as Anand, Narayan and Bhattacharya. Whereas these novelists adopted the traditional techniques of realism, Joshi adopts the flashback technique and consequently the forms of his novels become not only different from those of the pioneers but are closely related to the contents. Since the metaphor of labyrinth has been extended to the world, to Bhaskar's labyrinthine wanderings and to human beings in general, Joshi, as if to provide a fitting garb, has given to the novel a corresponding structure. The novel is divided into three parts, having eleven, three and five chapters—in that order. The setting of each chapter shifts almost as frequently as does the thinking process of Bhaskar. The absence of unity of place in the novel corresponds to the quick-changing decisions of Bhaskar. His shifting attitude is perfectly matched with shifting venues which, in the first part of the novel, are: Bombay, Delhi, Bombay, Benaras, Lal Haveli, Blue Room, Bombay and Benaras. Viewed on the level of Bhaskar's quest for a woman, it is like shifting from Geeta to Anuradha to Leela Sabnis to Azizun to Gargi and finally to Anuradha again. While the second part of the novel shifts between Bombay and Delhi, the third part goes from Bombay to the mountains to Benaras and again to Bombay. Like a lost person wandering endlessly in the labyrinth till the very end, the action of the novel shifts from one place to the other till the novel is concluded. The structure of the novel gives the appearance of a literary labyrinth in which the hero is shifting perpetually from one place to the other as if playing the game of hide and seek while the reader puzzlingly tries to locate him, trace his footsteps, visualize his moves and keep guessing. Bhaskar's tireless movement in the labyrinths at various places is a physical reflection of his character and attitude.

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NOTES

1. Arun Joshi, *The Last Labyrinth* (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1981), p. 23. Subsequent quotations from the novel are from this edition and page numbers are given in parentheses.
2. P.B. Shelley, "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills," p. 94.
3. Arun Joshi, *The Foreigner* (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1968), p. 68.
4. Arun Joshi, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1971), p. 8.
5. Sujatha Mathai, "I'm a stranger to my books," *The Times of India*, July 7, 1983, p. 8. Quoted by Thakur Guruprasad, "The Lost Lonely Questers of Arun Joshi's Fiction," *The Fictional World of Arun Joshi*, ed. R.K. Dhawan (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company), p. 156.
6. A. Ramakrishna Rao, "The Image of Labyrinth in Borges, Durrell and Joshi." *Glimpses of Indo-English Fiction*, ed. O.P. Saxena (New Delhi: Jainsons Publications, 1985), III, p. 22.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
9. Hari Mohan Prasad, "The Crisis of Consciousness: *The Last Labyrinth*." *The Fictional World of Arun Joshi*, p. 23.
10. Devinder Mohan, "The Language of the Splintered Mirror: The Fiction of Arun Joshi," *Commonwealth Fiction*, ed. R.K. Dhawan (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1988), II, p. 26.

The Use of Aggravating Language in Indian English Novels

Z.N. PATIL

The use of abusive and bawdy language is by no means a modern phenomenon. A casual look at the anthologies and dictionaries of insults will tell one that even in ancient times scathing language was used as a source of displaying power and command. Verbal abuse is probably as old as language itself. One can produce quotations of insulting language from the Bible and classical literature. Discourse analysts have unfortunately almost totally neglected what has variously been called rude, impolite, insulting, abusive and aggravating language. The following discussion will show that aggravating language exploits exactly those areas which are avoided in polite language. Polite language is used to avoid saying certain things where insulting language is employed to express those same things in their naked form. All that social padding and wrapping and circumlocution that is characteristic of polite language is discarded in impolite language. The former frequently relies upon euphemistic expressions with a view to neutralizing the 'nastiness', 'ugliness' and unpleasantness of certain natural but unwelcome events ('has gone' for 'is dead'), certain activities ('be intimate with the person of the opposite sex' for 'make love') and some parts of the human anatomy (the use of 'there' for the female sex organ); on the other hand, the latter full of instances of tabooed items: expressions related to sex, death, excretion, and bodily functions. It is true that every culture, every society has a set of social and linguistic taboos which are useful in maintaining social morality and solidarity. But it does not mean that aggravating language is detrimental to social cohesiveness. On the contrary, it is observed that such language serves the purpose of preserving social hierarchy and order. Neither does it imply that impolite language is irrational. It is noted that human rationality is operative both in the use of polite and impolite strategies. The processes of selection and rejection of strategies are at

work in polite and insulting language. This observation forces one to draw the conclusion that aggravating language is not a symptom of a backward or uncivilized society. It is used in all times and climes and the fundamental motives for its use remain the same—One uses abusive language to draw attention to oneself, or to express contempt, or to be aggressive or provocative, or to mock authority and very rarely as a form of verbal seduction. The factors that have been said to be operative in politeness strategies—the relative distance, power, and ranking of the participants—are at work in aggravating strategies as well.

The subsequent illustrations will show that one can study the aggravating language used in Indian English novels in terms of the socio-pragmatics of Indian English. It can tentatively be argued that American English makes an extensive use of words such as 'fucking' and 'bitch' and 'shit' whereas British English displays a wide range of the use of words like 'bloody' and 'bastard'. Indian English abusives abound in such expressions as 'rape-mother', 'rape-sister', 'rape-daughter' and 'brother-in-law'. This is probably an outcome of the interference of Indian languages with English. Basically these abusives are reflective of the emphasis Indian society puts on decencies of family life. A cursory reading of Khushwant Singh, Mulk Raj Anand, Chaman Nahal and Balraj Khanna will show dozens of 'ugly' expressions. Literal translations of Hindi and Punjabi idioms are the most notable experimental aspect of these novelists. It is often said that these translations of swear-words produce crude and ludicrous effect. The gravitational pull of the mother tongue works wonders. The main purpose of the use of the translations is to give the English language an Indian domicile. The aforementioned novelists inject the bawdy expressions to achieve the radiation of the liveliness, the mirth and the masculinity of the Punjabi culture and to impart a peculiar flavour to their prose. One has to be amphibious, both culturally and linguistically, to fully enjoy the aggravating language which reflects cultural overtones and undertones. Most importantly, the abusive expressions and swear-words make the dialogues scintillating and lively and the characters true to their soil. Characters in the novels of other novelists—R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi and Jai Nimbkar, for example—do not seem to be indulging in abusive language of the type found in Anand, for instance. There is hardly any bawdiness in the Indian terms of reproach in Narayan's novels as in those of Khushwant Singh's. Similarly, with Markandaya's characters, the use of abusives is characterized by decency.

It can be argued that no language is vital and complete unless there

are swear-words and abusive words. The use of salacious, licentious, scurrilous or lewd language is an aspect of the novelist's artistry and, surprisingly enough, literary critics and discourse analysts have left it in comparative neglect perhaps because of a feeling that anything scurrilous must be trivial. The Indian English novelist seems to be a discriminating user of the bawdy. He makes it one of the most potent weapons in his art. Yet it is still not the case that all his indecencies are artistically significant.

An important point to be kept in mind is that bawdiness of language has the intention to startle or shock. A medical textbook or a manual on birth-control will be much concerned with the sexual organs and their functioning but it cannot be described as bawdy for the simple reason that it lacks both the salaciousness and the desire to shock the reader. Some Indian novels in English, on the other hand, can be thought of as bawdy because they have the motive to startle the reader through the use of realistic abusives. Not only single words and expressions but even whole speeches, whole segments of narration in certain novels come close to being bawdy. Bawdy expressions are useful to a reader to assess mood, connotations, implications, dramatic circumstances and the nature of the person speaking. The selection of an item on the basis of its 'vehemence' content would normally be a function of the speaker's attitude to the referent but it could also be a function of his general mood at the time, regardless of his specific attitude to the referent. Novelists like Anand and Khushwant Singh have employed the bawdy as a significant element in characterization. The point that the language that is characterized by salacity is of so vital social and artistic importance has gone apparently unnoticed.

This study should serve to show that aggravating language is rule-governed like polite language—people swear and curse according to rules, though their abusive linguistic behaviour may appear unruly to the civic authorities. Even the interpretation or understanding of aggravating language gives evidence of observance of rules. Politeness is socially prescribed. This does not mean that one is or must always be polite, for one may be quite impolite to others on occasion. One could not be polite if there were no rules of politeness to be broken. Impoliteness depends on the existence of standards or norms of politeness.

Aggravation is noticed in situations that are characterized by social breakdown, affront, quarrel, and also in situations requiring urgency and efficiency. Aggravation finds manifestation in a variety of ways—direct complaints, open criticism, coercion, and interference without any effort directed toward mitigation. The 'victim' of aggravation is denied free-

dom of action and freedom from imposition. The self-image or social personality of the addressee is disapproved and even shattered. The mask on the hearer's social face is torn and the naked personality is exposed. Positive, negative and off-record politeness strategies are designed to safeguard the private image of the addressee: on the other hand, positive or negative aggravation attempts to expose the negative aspect of the addressee's personality. There is no attempt in impoliteness strategies to show any considerateness for the other person. The speaker's aim is to cause embarrassment and humiliation to the addressee, to ignore the positive side of the personality of the other person.

Positive aggravation strategies consist of expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, ridicule, complaint, reprimand, accusations, insults and dislike of personal traits and characteristics, beliefs, values, and possessions. Negative aggravation techniques comprise warnings, interferences, impositions, disagreements and contradictions. Positive aggravation is usually quiet, indirect, credible and full of underlying menace; on the contrary, negative aggravation is loud, angry, bombastic, and even fantastic. These strategies, like those of politeness, carry with them culture-specific forces and significances. Secondly, they are rational strategies in the sense that they are usable as suitable means to achieve certain ends. Thirdly, though their linguistic realizations differ from culture to culture, their basic structure and function remain to be universal—they are designed to hurt the addressee. But one thing that is worth noting here is that most of the aggravating strategies are extravagant and untrue in their semantic content, often absurd and bizarre.

II

Here a discussion of the special register of aggravating language will be in order. It is to be noted that generally animal names and their feminine counterparts are used as abusives. And occasionally 'son' is added to animal names:

(1) 'One son of a swine!' His Highness shouted. 'Aren't you ashamed of asking these sahibs for bakshish when you are going to be given something.' (PL, 211)

Certain verbs and noun phrases occur again and again in aggravating language. Here is a classification of all these word-classes:

Verbs and Verb Phrases:

disapprove, disagree, despise, hate, dislike, loathe, curse, kill, squash, smash, crush, wring one's neck, break your stupid neck, tear your tongue, make a simple bhurji and chutney of you, knock your teeth out, skin you alive, skin off your back, nip off your head, and so on.

Noun Phrases:

Cur, bitch, dog, swine, pig, monkey, donkey, snake, viper, cobra, owl, idiot, trickster, thief, villain, bastard, bugger, prostitute, wanton, shit, cunt, arse, penis, rape-daughter, rape-mother, rape-sister, so on and so forth:

All the four letter words occur in different Indian novels in English: arse (NF, 33); cunt (NF, 90); penis. (TP, 72) Similarly, compound nouns such as 'this rape-daughter train' (ABW, 71), 'that rape-daughter Ram' (ABW, 122) are found in plenty in these novels.

As some of these abusive noun phrases indicate, aggravating language is used not only in relation to human beings but also in relation to inanimate things such as fog, trench, train and so on. Similarly, they also indicate that parenthood is attributed not only to humans (sons of concubines) and animals (son of a bitch) but also to nonhuman inanimate things (son of chota hazri) and abstract things (son of don't know).

III

Before getting down to work, an analysis of the aggravating language used by characters in Indian novels in English, it would be appropriate to say a few words about blessings. The following examples will show that blessings are in fact prayers for the benefit of the addressee. One significant feature of blessings is that they are offered only by elders and never by young people to elderly people. Generally, longevity, sexual fertility, and some kind of success is the topic of blessing. It is normally thought to be a polite gesture to offer a blessing. Thus elderly men and women are found to be blessing young men and women. Here is a list of the various blessings classified according to their topics:

Fame and Prosperity:

(2) 'May your fame and honour increase. May your pen write figures of thousands and hundreds of thousands.' (TP, 23)

Power:

(3) 'May your government go on forever. May your pen inscribe figures of thousands—nay, hundreds of thousands.' (TP, 78)

Protection from Harm:

(4) 'May God preserve you from harm. . . .' (TD, 51)

Sexual Fertility:

(5) 'May you have eight sons.' (IH, 16)

Longevity for the Addressee's Husband:

(6) 'May you always wear red and live to see your great grandson.' (IH, 72)

Longevity for the Addressee:

(7) 'May you live a hundred years to enjoy the flowering of your children.' (TD, 71)

Happiness and Marital Success:

(8) 'May God keep you happy and make the marriage a success.' (TD, 81)

Help:

(9) 'May Allah help you.' (HS, 161)

Blessings are used when the addressee has shown a respectful gesture toward the speaker. For instance, when Geeta comes in and silently bends down and touches the feet of the veiled ladies, they say:

(10) 'May you always wear red and may your sons carry on the illustrious name of the haveli.' (IH, 161)

Blessings occasionally perform the function of expressing gratitude as in the following utterance:

(11) 'For God's sake, will you please fan my back, Anjum.' As she began doing so, Begum Jamal blessed her: 'May God keep you alive. . . . ' (TD, 44)

A cursory comparison of these blessings with the following examples of curse should suffice to reveal the difference between the two strategies. Curses generally express the speaker's ill-will toward the addressee. The speaker may curse the addressee with death, misery, pains, sexual barrenness, and failure:

Death:

(12) 'May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence.' (C, 128)

Sexual Barrenness:

(13) 'May thy womb be dead.' (HWRT, 223)

Blindness:

(14) 'May thine eyes go blind.' (HWRT, 223)

IV

The preceding discussion of the important aspects of impolite language leads one to the conclusion that aggravating language is not an inferior subsystem. On the contrary, the possibility of its being classified and discussed in a systematic way brings to light the rationality operative behind it. A point of vital importance to be kept in mind is the intention of the person using impolite language. Parents, close relatives, and friends sometimes employ aggravating language often without a serious intention to hurt the addressee's face. But if persons who are very close

resort to abusive language, it is an indication of some serious social breakdown. As has already been pointed out, aggravating language has its own social uses.

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Literature in the ESL Classroom: An Overview

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Introduction

Literature, in spite of it being "an expression of life through the medium of language," has today lost its original pride of place because of the shift of emphasis in language teaching goals towards communication and other practical purposes. The past few decades have seen an increasing emphasis on the teaching of practical English which could be used in day-to-day situations and in communicating with each other. With the change of needs, the significance of literature in language teaching has been replaced by more utilitarian objectives. Some of the teachers have started expressing their painful memories of attempting to teach English literature to undergraduate students. As a result, there have been many exchanges on the dichotomy between the use of language and literature in an ESL program. I intend to review some of the available views on the inclusion and exclusion of English literature from the ESL classroom. I would begin with a discussion of John Povey's (1967, 1979) views on the problem and then discuss the suggested alternatives for the teaching of literature in a second language program. I would then summarize the various refutations against the teaching of literature in the ESL classroom. Finally, I would review both sides of the issue and attempt to draw conclusions as to whether or not literature should be included in the ESL classroom.

The Issue

The best place to begin our discussion is the 1968 TESOL convention where the issue of language and literature was brought to the limelight. John Povey, the chairman of the section "Literature in the ESL

Program" at the convention, introduced the program as follows:

> The question of literature is a vital one for ESL teaching since literature is the most expressive function of language—yet its position in an ESL program has never been adequately defined because such consideration reaches into the most fundamental assumptions of language teaching, and we have too often accepted such fundamentals as received data and concentrated on thought and time and on methods—the hows rather than the whys. (1968:95)

From his own experience in Africa and Donald Bowen's experience in India, Povey realized that students are required to study the "classics" without the least attention to adequate language skills. Many language teachers who would see literature out of the ESL classrooms argue that the writing is too difficult, too specialized in language, and the subject has no practical relevance. Povey answers them by stating that literature can be useful because it can be used to teach "additional language and the cultural concepts required by the ESL student." (1979:41) Povey admits that the language difficulty for the ESL student "may have been exaggerated as a greater dragon than it really is" (1967:42) and sees that the problem lies in the method that a teacher may adopt to help the second language student learn English which would include an acquaintance with the literature and the language as well. He comes up with a series of aims in the teaching of literature:

1. Literature will enhance the basic skills by extending linguistic knowledge in the areas of vocabulary, syntax, and style.
2. Literature can serve as the link towards the cultural context.
3. It can inculcate self-awareness and human insight.
4. It may guide the gifted students toward their own creativity.

The task of the ESL teacher, according to Povey, is to emphasize the first two of these goals.

A little after a decade, in 1979, Povey, in his preliminary draft of a speech given to the English Academy of South Africa, Johannesburg, analyzed the question of the extensive role that literature can play in ESL teaching. Povey concluded that the task of the teacher was to act as an intermediary in guiding the student to the correct interpretation of the literary text and in leading the student towards an awareness of the intuition of the writer.

Arguments For

Povey's arguments were supplemented and supported by a number of writers. Their arguments can be narrowed down to three premises. The first premise is that of studying literature in the cultural context. Those who argue from this premise are Charles T. Scott, Arna S. Harris, and Allan C. Harris.

Even before the dichotomy of language and literature in ESL came to light in 1968, Charles T. Scott categorically stated that "the study of literature is one of the most obvious and most valuable means of achieving the goal of cultural orientation." (1964:490) He felt that students are capable of realizing the literary experience behind each literary selection because a majority of them, in spite of their linguistic unpreparedness, have a mental maturity that literature demands. A method that would allow for the linguistic unpreparedness and the choice of literary text could be arrived at by adopting the text with simplified grammar and controlled vocabulary. In this way it is possible to divert the attention of the students from the frustrating and complex problems of the language itself, and to form their interest on "the cultural content of the selection" which is the primary aim of teaching literature.

Arna S. Harris and Allan C. Harris have also emphasized the significance of the cultural context in the study of literature and have come up with a two-part annotated bibliography of literary texts, arranged according to the difficulty levels of the students. They have provided five kinds of information about each work: the chronological period of the work, the geographic area in which the work is set, the type of life described, the social stratification, and the major theme or points to be remembered within the work.

The second premise of arguments depend on the choice of appropriate texts and methods. The proponents of this category are Bradford Arthur (1968), Sharwood Smith (1971), Thomas Adayenju (1977), Sarat Kumar (1978), Widdowson (1981, 1983), Sandra Mackay (1982), and Rathindranath Chatopadyay (1983). They argue that the study of literature will enable the learner to know life better, to acquire proficiency in language skills, and to understand and appreciate the target culture better, if only the appropriate texts could be found and if the right method could be adopted. Just to give you one sample of this category, Sarat Kumar (1978), from his experience of teaching in India, has come forward with a new method of teaching the classics to students who learn English as a second language. In the Indian college curriculum, novels are prescribed

in the undergraduate courses with the belief that they are supposed to give enjoyment to the readers. But unfortunately, most of the students do not read the texts and manage to pass the final examinations by memorizing essays dictated in classes or taken from "ponies." The few students who manage to read through the books are left with unpleasant memories. The reason for this distaste in reading the text lies in the fact that it is thrust upon the students before they are linguistically prepared to receive it. To make such students read literary texts, it is necessary to prepare the background carefully. From his own experience, Kumar found that students, introduced to *A Tale of Two Cities* through an illustrated and dramatized version of it, followed by an abridged version, were able to read and enjoy the original version of the novel better.

The third premise incorporates the teaching of poetry in the ESL classroom. Some of the defenders of literature, such as the Harrises (1967), Erica Donen (1974), Jean McConochie (1981), and Susan Ramsaran (1983) advocate the teaching of poetry as an effective device in language learning by following four principles: select poems that would enhance self-understanding, start with the dramatic content of the poem, clarify the poem's underlying cultural values, and help the student see how the poet treats formal linguistic resources. The practice of these principles and techniques in the ESL classroom would certainly enrich the lives of students.

Thus the proponents of literature conclude that literature does advance language learning and since it expresses the most significant ideas and sentiments of human beings, it is the ultimate spirit in which it must be taught.

Arguments against

The arguments for the inclusion of literature in the ESL program have been considerably refuted by those who demand the outright dismissal of literature from the ESL classrooms. At least three writers are worth mentioning here. Donald M. Topping (1968) states vehemently: "Literature has no legitimate place in a second language program whose purpose is to teach language skills to a cross section of students who are preparing for studies or work in a variety of disciplines." (1968:95) Topping argues that reading literary works will have no effect, especially on one's speaking, listening, and writing skills. The idea that literature will "represent . . . the style that can properly stand as a model for the students" (Povey 1967:41-42) is unrealistic and erroneous. If it were to

be so "we could all become Joyces or Hemingways, or Faulkners—depending on one's particular literary idols. The fact remains that literary genius is not acquired by reading the works of the masters," and imitating literary masters would only lead students to imitate "those who practice artful violation of syntactic rules." (Topping 1968:97)

Povey's statement that "American literature will open up the culture of this country to a foreign student in a manner analogous to the extension of the native speaker's own awareness of his culture" (1962:42) indirectly implies that American literature reflects the culture of the country. This, according to Topping, is delusive because even the most recent American literature reflects a past tradition in the evolution of American culture, and a student need not dig up the "fossils of past eras" to learn American culture. (1968:99)

Next, Topping refutes Charles T. Scott's argument that the task of the ESL teacher is to help students realize the literary experience. Expressing wonder as to what is meant by "literary experience," Topping feels that it is highly unrealistic to expect students of various other disciplines to undergo some sort of "esoteric literary experience which should be left for those who seek it and not inflicted on reluctant students." (1968) If the aim of an ESL program is to enable the students to read beyond the sentence and paragraph level, the concentration should be on language. If the aim is to impart something about the target culture, they can read the works of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists. If the aim is to inculcate tradition, students can learn it from history texts. If the aim is to teach them values, they can go in for a course in moral science.

For Charles H. Blatchford (1972) the study of literature is a "luxury" that cannot be indulged in during the time allocated to English. Questioning the teaching of literature as a vital concern of the ESL program, Blatchford argues that language teachers are generally ill-trained to teach literature, and the second language students have a greater need to learn useful language and communicative skills than to puzzle out the human condition as revealed in literary texts. During a meeting of representatives from 15 Asian nations on September 1971, it was noted that except in Pakistan and Thailand, the study of literature in the schools is subordinated to a primary emphasis upon a functional command of the language and the abilities of the students to handle simple language situations involving the four basic skills (LSRW). Also, teacher preparation for a speciality in literature is an extravagance when the demand is not high and when the objectives do not call for its teaching. It is

ineffective to impose foreign literature upon students who may not have been introduced even to their own literature, whose formal education may be brief, and whose background in cultural understanding of the settings of literature may be deficient. If forced, students will "read" the assignments via "ponies," which ultimately defeats the purpose of introducing literature to students.

Alun L.W. Rees (1970) questions the assumption that the prime reason for studying a second language is to develop the ability to read and enjoy the literary masterpieces in the original. Many students do not have a literary bent of mind, and often do not read a "classic" even in their own language except for the purposes of passing the examinations. Teachers of literature often claim that the reading of the best examples of the literature of the foreign language is valuable for its cultural insights; this is doubtful, for mediocre literature is more representative of a culture than its more refined counterpart. Since the ESL teacher has to make the student read anything at all on his own initiative in the foreign language, it is better to make language task utilitarian in the hope that the student can be equipped to read professional journals or other materials that will be helpful to him in future studies or in his career.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, a review of the question on the inclusion of literature in the ESL program shows that the arguments between the proponents and the opponents are inconclusive and mutually contradictory. The major arguments for "banishing" literature from the ESL classroom posit that literature has no practical utility, has a disruptive influence in the language process, and is often misleading as a model because of unwanted complexity and lack of correctness. The major arguments of the supporters of literature are that the study of literature can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge, in increasing proficiency in the student, in enhancing a student's understanding of a foreign culture, and in kindling the student's creation of his own imaginative works. The arguments of either side have been considerably refuted by the other.

The advocates of literature argue that learning a language without having the opportunity to appreciate the literary works in that language is meaningless. They work under at least three premises: a study of literature would enhance the understanding of the target culture; the choice of appropriate literary texts and the proper methodology of teaching would make the study of literature meaningful and relevant; and

even a literary genre like poetry could be converted into a language learning experience. We make tall claims such as "literature is an investment of genius which pays dividends to all subsequent times," "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." While these assumptions may be true to a certain extent, the values attached to literature—the power to delight, to humanize, and to develop sensitivity—are rather vague and abstract and their relevance in the ESL classroom has not been adequately explained. I hope all of us would agree that the teaching of literature does not carry an iota of impact on students, for they do not have the time nor the inclination to know "the meaning of life" through a study of literature. It is time that literature teachers wake up to reality and change their attitude and methodology towards language teaching.

Those who argue for the banishing of literature question the practical value of literature for a second language learner. But they fail to realize that by emphasizing the utilitarian values of English and by eliminating literature from the ESL classroom, they are reducing English to the level of a "bazaar language" and thus hold the teachers responsible for the sad degradation of the richest and most powerful language in the world. They seem to proceed on the assumption that the second language learner would never use English for any other purpose than day-to-day affairs. Also, they fail to take into consideration that literature could be an effective input which would result in a rich output of language. After all, literature is "a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us," (Hudson) and it is through literature that the student learns the humane approach to examining thought and action.

However, I conclude that whether literature should be included in the ESL classroom is a question that would remain unresolved, especially because of lack of empirical evidence on both sides, and literature would continue to be in use in the ESL classroom in some form or other until applied linguists come up with some other suitable alternative to take the place of literature.

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The Tragic and the Religious Self: Yeats's "Vacillation" and Eliot's "Choruses"

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It would be interesting to compare two passages. The first from Yeats's "Vacillation":

> I—though heart might find relief
> Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief
> What seems most welcome in the tomb—play a predestined part
> Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.[1]

The second from Eliot's "Choruses from the 'The Rock'":

> Thus your fathers were made
> Fellow citizens of the saints, of the household of God, being built upon the foundation
> Of Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself the Chief corner-stone
> But you, have you built well, that you now sit helpless in a ruined house?[2]

The first passage is a conscious rejection of the comforts of Christian doctrine, the second sounds like a Christian sermon. Here lay an essential difference between the sensibilities of Yeats and Eliot. The first passage asserts the personality through a syntactically prominent placement of the first "I" and the repetition of the pronouns "I" and "my." In the second, the importance of the message and the final question posed through the personality of a saint eclipses the personality of the poet.

The clash and tension between freedom and authority (be it religious, moral, cultural, scientific), the romantic and the classic, the hellenic and the hebraic, can be seen as something eternal manifesting

itself in different guises in different ages. At a more fundamental level, it is the individual, the unique and the personal, asserting itself against the universal, the general and impersonal. The tragic spirit is the expression of such a confrontation. Tragedy is confrontation and heroic battle where destruction does not mean defeat. Alienation is a defeated and disoriented retreat into a private void.

Both in the tragic and the alien sensibilities, man is at the centre. God is at the centre of the religious sensibility. The personal will, the challenging spirit of man, is quietened, mellowed and perfected in the will of God. Solitude and calm replaces the agitated human self. The anguish, the lamentation, the hollowness and the loneliness of the alien spirit disappears in the peace, the tranquillity and the confidence of the voice that has been able to surrender itself to the pristine, original purity of God.

With these perspectives in mind let us turn to two nineteenth-century thinkers who illustrate a fundamental polarity similar to that between Yeats and Eliot. It is interesting to note that of the two early influences on existentialism, Nietzsche was not a believer in the Christian doctrine, while Kierkegaard was. The polarity emerges clearly from a juxtaposition of their statements:

> Could you create a God?—So be silent about all gods!—
> But you could surely create the Superman
>
> Nietzsche[3]
>
> Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but the fact that God has existed—
>
> Kierkegaard[4]
>
> The beauty of the Superman came to me as a shadow. Ah, my brothers! What are the gods to me now—
>
> Nietzsche[5]
>
> You have freedom of choice, you say, and still you have not chosen God—
>
> Kierkegaard[6]
>
> All feeling suffers in me and is in prison:
> but my willing always comes to me as my liberator and bringer of joy.
> Willing liberates: that is the true doctrine
> of will and freedom.[7]

It is out of the power, "the will to power" that the superman will be born, destroying everything that is weak and everything that is "born

of weakness."[8] Christianity, according to Nietzsche, being the religion of pity ("in our whole unhealthy modernity there is nothing more unhealthy than Christian pity"[9]) has a depressing effect on his principle of vitality, "the will to power." Thus he heralds the anti-Christ, the superman, representing power and violence. In Nietzsche's world, the ultimate of self-discovery can never be a revelation of the omnipresence of God and the realization of it within oneself. Total self-discovery is possible only through masks of what one is not—and it is something that happens continually: "Every deep thinker needs a mask; even more, around every deep thinker a mask constantly grows."[10] The larger the number of masks assumed and conquered, the greater the power of the Nietzschean self. Thus the wanderer and anchorite, after dwelling in the depths of a mask, cries for "Another mask! A second mask!"[11]

Kierkegaard too begins with freedom, choice and responsibility, and the rejection of systems, doctrines and crowd-mentality. But from here onwards his path is different. The difference can be perceived in their conceptions of "power." Abraham is Kierkegaard's hero of faith. It is a paradoxical faith, where Abraham is "great by reason of his power whose strength is impotence, great by reason of his wisdom whose secret is foolishness, great by reason of his hope whose form is madness."[12]

It is a power, wisdom and hope born out of the resignation of one's will to the will of God, blindly, totally, without doubts and skepticism destroying its purity. Abraham's test is such a test of faith. It is a living faith, not with an intellectual, but with a vital inner connection with God as person. It is from this point that Kierkegaard looks at the modern situation. He attacks the attitude of "playing Christianity" and the hypocrisy that prevails. His Christ, when addressing the modern Christian hypocrites, is not averse to using violence and strong words: " ye hypocrites, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers."[13] It is interesting to note that while chalking out the point of view of his work as an author, he mentions that a religious writer must "first get in touch with men" through "aesthetic achievement." "Pseudonyms" and "deceptions"[14] can be and should be used, all to the advantage of the religious writer.

Yeats's "Vacillation" and Eliot's "Choruses from 'The Rock'," very clearly indicate their distinct stands. Yeats's ideas of "death," "remorse" and "grief" drive towards the accepting of some faith that would release him from the "antinomies" of "day" and "night" and the "Vacillation" that comprises life. "Isiah's coal" and the "salvation" and "simplicity" of that "fire" would give him the eternity and purity away from "things that seem" and things that "pass away." But Yeats,

the artist, prefers the state of flux amidst clashing opposites, because otherwise he would be a "singer," "Struck dumb" and without "themes" for song. Here he parts amicably from "Von Hugel" who believes that art goes with the Christian faith. The poem begins philosophically, initially to create a mood of religious meditation. But only too soon the questioning spirit intervenes:

> But if these be right
> What is joy?

And the artist takes over in the very next stanza. Yeats's favourite symbols of the tree of life and the mask hanging on the branch are introduced. Through the images of "half and half" and "Attis' mask" which are "yet all in the scene." The symbols are developed to include within them the idea of division in youth between the body's lush sensuousness symbolized by "Abounding foliage moistened with the dew," and the spirit's passionate glamour symbolized by the "glittering flame." From this symbolic vision of romantic youth, we come to the practical worldly advice representing middle age. Here the clash is between an urge for "gold and silver" and satisfaction of "ambition" under the rational objective influence of the "sun," and the urge of the subjective artist for an idle life. Adding to this dilemma are an increasing awareness of time and age destroying the greenness of the earlier "Lethian foliage," and the anticipatory preparation for death. But overarching this plight is the integral belief in Yeats that a man who asserts his personality in the face of such forces, goes "proud open-eyed and laughing to the tomb."

The stanzas about youth and middle age with their elongated lines move in slow rhythm towards the culmination of life. The "tomb" of the stanza anticipates a sort of reverie on "death" that comes with old age. But Yeats's old man has still a lot to say, has still a lot of fight left in him. Thus in the fourth stanza, where the "fiftieth year had come and gone," the rhythm speeds up, and time and its deadening powers are mocked by the increased pace and zest of the artist defying time. Yet the refrain, "Let all things pass away," gathers its strength from the memory that already looks at life fading away with old age approaching death. All Yeats's favourite symbols of tree, mask, moon, sun, night and day spring from man's "blood-sodden heart" which passes away. Then, "what's the meaning of all song?"—because even songs pass away. This brings the old man to the basic debate and his choice. The form chosen is one of direct dramatic opposition of the soul craving for "salvation," purity and

freedom from the cycles of birth and rebirth (be it a Christian heaven or Byzantine "artifice of eternity"), and the heart heroically opting for life, its complexities, its passion, its death and rebirth—for without these the artist is without a "theme." The statements are cryptic, terse and potent. The heart has the last word, clearly indicating the old man's or Yeats's stance as an artist who believes in the affirmation and assertion of his personality rather than its subjugation. "Vacillation" not only exemplifies Yeats's position as an artist, it also presents a symbolic pattern of his life. Many important themes in his poetry can be traced to this poem. But primarily it establishes Yeats as a tragic rather than religious artist.

Very rarely does Yeats write a poem dwelling abstractly on the fate of mankind. When he contemplates mankind's fate it is through very concretely particularized representative figures. "Vacillation" begins philosophically, as if Yeats's intention is to study the course of mankind "between extremities." As the poem proceeds the focus narrows down to themes like youth and middle age in the life of man, and finally, by the time he starts talking about old age, it comes and rests on his own self and its destiny and choice. Eliot's "Choruses from 'The Rock'" begin with a look at configured stars, "seasonal recurrence," and the "endless cycle" of "birth and death." Individual man is lost in the vastness of this vision. When the poem does come down to mankind, it is an ironical historical progress that interests Eliot. A progress leading towards 'dust' and not towards GOD who is the centre of this infinite cosmic vision.

"The Choruses" begin with a perception of the "Soaring" heights of "Heaven," stellar harmony and eternity:

> O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
> O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
> O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying.

within which the "Hunter" with his dogs pursues his circuit "endlessly." It presupposes GOD as the creator, the master, the artist—designing the configuration and "determining" the "seasons." "Stillness," "Silence," "Wisdom" and "the Word" belong to that original pure moment of Christ's birth. They hark back to the words of God and the son of God and the description of creation in the Bible. The progress of man in the "Twenty centuries" has taken him further and further away. Now he has:

Knowledge of motion, but not of stillness
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the word.

Wisdom has deteriorated into "knowledge" and further into "information." Man has in these "twenty centuries" has gone "farther from GOD and nearer to the DUST" and this reminds one of God's words to Adam in the Genesis. The scriptural language has a certain solemnity. Eliot uses it to remind the reader (modern) of the "things that were done long ago" and to make his ironical comment on "things that are now being done." To this end he uses a variety of techniques. Sometimes it is the voice of a preacher sermonizing. Sometimes it is the voice of God addressing a modern audience. Sometimes it is the chorus leader introducing "The Rock." Sometimes it is the voice of modern unemployed man leading a meaningless existence. Sometimes it is the representative voice from the past of men who had lived meaningfully and built creatively. It is all juxtaposed into an effective dramatic presentation. The "Church": the symbol of meaningful creative building, of faith and love binding a community, of labour in the name of God:

does not seem to be wanted
In country or in suburb; and in the town
Only for important weddings.

The happy working chant:

A Church for all
And a job for each
Every man to his work

is in direct contrast with the glum:

Pocketed hands
And lowered faces

of the churchless modern world of the unemployed. "The Rock" is the symbol of the foundation of the church, its stability and strength. It is also associated with the desert and man's capacity for suffering, solitude founded on faith. Though the language has the gravity of the Bible and the voice is the voice of a Catholic priest and sometimes of God, the

images are concrete, direct images from contemporary life. The break-down of the family unit is described as:

> Nor does the family even move about together,
> But every son would have his motorcycle,
> And daughters ride away on casual pillions.

A God asks the modern man in typical Biblical solemnity:

> Will you build me a house of plaster, with corrugated roofing,
> To be filled with a litter of Sunday newspapers?

The only "monuments" the twentieth-century man will leave to posterity would be:

> lost the asphalt road
> And a thousand lost golf balls.

When just before death the stranger asks:

> Do you huddle close together because you love each other?

will this modern man answer?:

> We all dwell together
> To make money from each other

And all this is interspersed amidst

> And darkness was upon the face of the deep.

and:

> And the spirit moved upon the face of the water.

In the background we have:

> In the beginning GOD created the world
> Waste and void.

and the "predetermined moment"of the birth of Christ, a "moment not out of time, but in time" when "time" or history "was made" i.e. God came in the form of man. It is proper for such a poem to end in a selfless prayer:

> O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory!

"The Choruses" included within themselves the mystic, the religious, the abstract, the common, the concrete. They also use various types of voices and possess dramatic potentialities. Although Eliot's satirical observations concern mankind and its destiny, underneath it all lies a deep religious preoccupation. It establishes Eliot as a religious writer with aesthetic talents and potentialities. In other words, one feels that it is the one poem which expresses Eliot completely.

NOTES

1. W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 247. All quotations from Yeats's poem in this study are from this volume.
2. T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems* (1909-1982) (London: Faber, 1963), p. 166. All quotations from Eliot's poem in this study are from this volume.
3. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 110.
4. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Dorothy Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 291.
5. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 112.
6. *Journals*, ed. & trans. Alexander Dru (London and New York, 1938), p. 373.
7. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 111.
8. Nietzsche, "The Antichrist," *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), p. 570.
9. *Ibid.*, p.574.
10. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Marrian Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955), p. 47.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

12. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), pp. 18-19.
13. Kierkegaard, *Attack upon "Christendom,"* trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 120.
14. Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 25-26.

Logic of Metaphor: Hart Crane's Theory of Poetry

S. RAJASEKHARAN

The paper analyzes Hart Crane's theory of poetry briefly and makes a sample study of two passages from Crane's works in the light of his rationale of poetry.

Hart Crane uses the term "Logic of Metaphor" in describing the organic principle behind the creation of a poem, a principle that antedates our so-called pure logic and lays stress on associational meanings of words and their metaphorical inter-relationships enabling the writer to have a "stab at the truth."

Hart Crane's search for a new idiom in poetry was more a necessity than a pastime. The artist of his time had no unifying religious or ideological beliefs to hold on to. The stunning discoveries of the physical sciences and psychology, and the disillusionment of the war landed Man in bewilderment and alienation. The artist's response to the complicated spiritual and social situations was ambivalent. In grappling with these complex experiences of the modern civilization and expressing them in an adequate language, the poet, as Eliot said, had to be "more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language to its meaning."[1]

It was in this context that Crane attempted to free language "from the tyranny of logic" to unify disparate planes of experience, to bring them into an autonomous order of existence and to add expressiveness to literary work. In this attempt to achieve an organic synthesis, he preferred suggestion and ambiguity to transparent statement in poetry. As a poet who was conscious of the limits of logic, of the inadequacy of the steno language, and of the vital need for an expressive new idiom, he had no hesitation to swing beyond the traditional boundaries of grammar, syntax, and logic of language. The breach of logic, at this level, was not really illogical or irrational for Crane. For he believed that "that 'truth' which

science pursues is radically different from the metaphorical, extralogical 'truth' of the poet. When Blake wrote that 'a tear is an intellectual thing, and a sigh is the sword of an Angel King . . .' he was not in any logical conflict with the principles of the Newtonian Universe."[2]

Crane, in his quest of a new idiom, steered clear of Imagism and the Impressionism of the Dadaists, though he felt drawn to them for a while in the twenties. For, he felt that their attempts could only help express externals rather than the truth of imagination. It was then, writing on his own rationale of poetry, he said:

> It is my hope to go through the combined materials of the poem, using our "real" world somewhat as a spring board, and to give the poem as a whole an orbit of predetermined direction of its own. Such a poem at least is a stab at a truth; and to such an extent may be differentiated from other kinds of poetry and called "absolute." Its evocation will not be toward decoration or amusement, but rather toward a state of consciousness, an "innocence" (Blake) or absolute beauty. In this condition there may be discoverable under new forms certain spiritual illuminations, shining with a morality essentialized from experience directly, and not only from previous precepts or preconceptions. It is as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new *word*, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate but self-evident as an active principle in the readers' consciousness hence forward.[3]

The meaning so achieved through this process is not of the dew-on-the-grass-type expressed in logical statements. On the contrary, it is elimination of meaning expressed in logical statements. But the process calls for an active participation from the reader who must be involved in the creative process to make the poem meaningful to him.

A sample study of a passage in "Cape Hatteras" and of "North Labrador," a short lyric of *The White Buildings*, demonstrates Crane's concern for language and his rationale of poetry.

The opening lines of "Cape Hatteras" may appear bland at the denotative level. But their fusion with the ghoul-mound images repeated in the poem and with the aeronautical episode relates their metaphoric value in focussing on the protagonist's awareness of the discontinuity in American culture and his exploration of the possibilities of its essential regeneration

The title and the epigraph are suggestive. "Hatteras" in the title,

"Cape Hatteras," puns upon "Haters." It is implied that Cape Hatteras is in a way a cape of Haters. The description of the eastern cape in the opening lines of the poem as a sinking dinosaur and a saurian ghoul and the more overt presentation of the cape as a "Ghoul mound of man's perversity at balk/And fraternal massacre" support this reading. The scientific man sows doom on humanity as he knows only of hatred. Hence when the pilot, the representative of the materialistic society, is drunk with power, the imaginative man has to exhort him:

> Remember, Falcon-Ace,
> Thou hast there in thy wrist a Sanskrit charge
> To conjugate infinity's dim marge—
> Anew. . . !

Faith and Love alone can redeem man who abuses science in ignorance. It is for this reason that the poet's choice of epigraph from "Passage to India" becomes meaningful:

> Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achieved,
> The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,
> As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found
>
> The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

In this context, the deliberate repetition of the ghoul-mound metaphor in the poem assumes significance. At the denotative level the opening lines are bland:

> Imponderable the dinosaur
> sinks slow,
> the mammoth saurian
> Ghoul, the eastern cape . . .
> While rises in the west the coastwise range, slowly the hushed land—
> Combustion at the astral core—the dorsal change
> of energy—convulsive shift of sand . . .

It is possible to treat the passage as a mere description of "an observer on board a ship drawing" near coastline. It can be taken as a flat reference to the "immemorial processes of paleontological evolution by referring

back to the age of the giant reptiles and imagining their gradual extinction."[4] Against this background, "convulsive shift of sand" can be read merely as "convulsions in the external crust." But the evolution of the metaphor in the course of the poem is suggestive. Its occurrence for the second time as a ghoul-mound of man's perversity and fraternal massacre is an elaboration in specific terms of what is suggested in a metaphoric language in the opening lines. The rainbow-arched ghoul-mound in the concluding section is the earlier eastern cape transformed with love and faith. The evolution is traced in the employment of images. On its first occurrence images of darkness are employed. "Dinosaur," "mammoth saurian," and "ghoul," evocative of primitive brute power of gigantic dimensions, suggest the savage power of the man of science with his creed of violence. The image of sinking, however, anticipates the inevitable collapse of this brute power represented in the middle section of the poem in the "bunched" and "beached heap of high bravery." The fall of the "dinosaur" is juxtaposed with the rise of the "Coastwise range" and the "hushed land." While the image of rising points to hope and promise, the medial images of "coastwise range" and "the hushed land" by their fusion with other images of light connote aspirations and spiritual fulfilment. The images of "astral core" and "dorsal change" with their cosmic and religious associations prophesy regeneration. Therefore, the fall of the ghoul is inevitably linked with the rise of the coastal ranges.

The passage, thus, unobtrusively strikes a note of hope and faith in resurrection and regeneration. The image of "convulsive shift of sand" is significant in this context. "Sand" is invariably an image of darkness in Crane. Its employment in "Passage,"and "Cutty Sark," for instance, is suggestive of the miseries and flaws of the time-bound world. However, the image of "convulsion," with its associations of pain and suffering involved in spiritual transformation, points to the possibilities of spiritual experience through sacrificial suffering. Suffering and Whitmanian love and faith can transform the cape of man's perversity and fraternal massacre into a cape of shimmering rainbow arch.

North Labrador

A land of leaning ice
Hugged by plaster-grey arches of sky,
Flings itself silently
Into eternity.

"Has no one come here to win you,
Or left you with the faintest blush
Upon your glittering breasts?
Have you no memories, O Darkly Bright?"
Cold-Hushed, there is only the shifting of moments
That journey toward no Spring—
No birth, no death, no time nor sun
In answer.

The poem is variously interpreted. It is seen as an expression of the poet's desire to escape from himself and wish for personal oblivion;[5] it is also interpreted as a quest for universal reality ending in a nihilistic awareness of the Universe,[6] or as a poem of discovery of "the death of god,"[7] or as a representation of "The inhuman remorselessness of nature."[8] A close study of the images in the poem establishes that the poem is an expression not of nihilism but of the persona's wonderment at the land of ice merging with eternity. The occasion of the poem is a strange meeting of the persona with North Labrador. It is "The Hurricane" differently rendered. In "The Hurricane," the persona is on his knees, with his thoughts raised in prayer, heart trembling, at Elohim's "Hand of Fire." ("Ave Maria") In "North Labrador," the persona is the lover longing to merge with the land of ethereal beauty.

The image-pattern in the poem is such that even at the denotative level images do not suggest gloom and chaos. The only phrase in the poem that carries a gloom at the denotative level is "Journey toward no Spring—/No birth . . . nor sun." Though the images of ice, silence, cold, and grayness of the sky have a tendency to take a dark character depending on the context, they do not turn dark, here, even at the denotative level. The role of other medial as well as apocalyptic images such as "shifting of moments," "leaning land," "arches" of sky, faint "blushes," "glittering breasts," and hugging skies, at the denotative level, is calculated to strike a note of hope. And there is nothing really nihilistic about the description of the land of ice even at the expressive level. However, an arbitrary breaking of the last three lines of the poem might persuade the reader to perceive a gloom or even nihilism and force him to read the earlier stanzas in this light. Hazo makes such a reading when he argues that "What saves it ["North Labrador"] from being a mere description of arctic waste is the central stanza."[9]

The very title of the poem "North Labrador" is simple and direct like that of "The Hurricane." It is not, like the titles of "Legend,"

"Black Tambourine," or "Stark Major" infused with associations. Its very simplicity is striking. What begins like a poem of mere landscape description soon grows into a "quest for reality" and at the end leaves the reader awe-struck like the persona himself.

The images of "ice" and "silence," medial in character, merit analysis. The term "ice," is not always dark. "Ice," here, does not evoke either a sense of "arctic waste" or sterility for two reasons. First, Crane does not look upon the land of ice as a place of frigidity. Secondly, its association with "leaning," and its consequent merger with hugging "arches of sky" render not a state of gloom, but a cosmic union. The focus of the opening lines is, therefore, not on the fertility of the land; it is on its transcendental character. The "silence" here is not an anti-life muteness, but a spiritual eloquence as in "Legend." The land of ice loses its earthiness in its cosmic embrace and thus merges with eternity. The opening stanza, thus, crystallizes the persona's attitude to North Labrador.

The knowledge of stunning reality liberates the persona to sing of the unconquerable glory of the land. The visual, conceptual image of "Darkly Bright" suggests the character of the glacier-woman, the land-goddess. She is a mystery beyond human perception!

In this light, the last stanza evokes no gloom; it does not also persuade the reader to think that nature not only reveals nothing, but that it has nothing to reveal when it is asked for its meaning. On the other hand, nature reveals itself through its paradoxes and silence. Its silence is its eloquence. The last three lines of the poem that describe the journey are, therefore, not nihilistic, but a Vedic echo of the concept of eternity. It is not only a state where there is no spring and no birth; it is also beyond death, time, or sun, with a promise of knowledge of the Reality and eternal bliss. The journey to the sunless land does not imply soul-sickening darkness. On the contrary, it suggests that Reality is self-luminous. The metaphor in the concluding lines, therefore, is an expression of the persona's experience of consummation with nature. With image-patterns as the guiding principle, it is thus possible to look upon the poem as the persona's expression of stunned admiration of Nature than as Crane's statement of hopelessness or nihilism.

It is possible to treat the majority of the lyrics of *White Buildings* and *The Bridge* on these lines of analysis and consider them as independent works of art and not necessarily as mere autobiographical expressions of a promiscuous individual. In reading Crane, therefore, it is essential to keep in mind the complex social and spiritual conditions of his times, the

poet's ambivalent response to them, and his irresistible urge to challenge the complexity of experience and to experiment with language to add expressiveness to his works. The new idiom so invented, in spite of its violation of the laws of language, with its observance of a logic of imagination, is never beyond the reach of a persevering reader. A willingness to grasp the subtleties of the poet's management of language takes the reader to the core of the poem.

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NOTES

1. John Hayward, ed. *T.S. Eliot: Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 112.
2. Hart Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, ed. Brom Weber (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 30.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.
4. Normann Helge Nilsen, *Hart Crane's Divided Vision: An Analysis of the Bridge* (Norway: Haugesund Book and Offset IAS, 1980), p. 103.
5. Konrad Hopkins, "Make the Dark Poem's Light: A Study of Hart Crane's *White Buildings*," *Florida State University Studies in English and American Literature*, 19 (1955), p. 136.
6. Brom Weber, *Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study* (New York; Bodley Press, 1948), p. 43.
7. Sherman Paul, *Hart's Bridge* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 110.
8. Herbert A. Leibowitz, *Hart Crane: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1968), p. 32.
9. John Samuel Hazo, *Hart Crane: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Barner and Noble, 1963), p. 23.

Gary Snyder: The Poet of Wilderness

R.K. SHARMA

'For Americans,' says Synder, '"nature" means wilderness, the untamed realm of total freedom—not brutish and nasty, but beautiful and terrible.'[1] In Gary Synder, one of the important poets of the post-war period, nature emerges as a major theme. Rexroth calls him 'the most influential on the younger poets of his generation.'[2] It is his single-minded quest for values expressed in lyrical terms, especially in the context of nature, that gives him relevance. His poetry has the ring of authenticity because it issues from felt experience. He is, as a critic points out, a modern Thoreau, 'a sort of prophet of the essential in human life.'[3] Like Thoreau, he is a lover of the wilderness, if only to a greater degree, for while Thoreau was essentially a city man who made occasional forays into the wilderness, Snyder was actually born on a farm in the backwoods, and has passed much of his life away from the cities as a matter of choice. Since 1971 he has been living in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains of California, 150 miles away from San Francisco. He has been an avid camper and mountaineer; he has worked as a logger and a fire lookout in his native Oregon and in California. He works strenuously on his farmstead even now; farming, cutting firewood and planting trees. Referring to his first collection of verse, *Riprap* (1959) he once said that 'the rhythms of the poems come from the rhythms of the physical labour or riprapping.'[4] A majority of poems in *Riprap* as well as much subsequent verse has nature as its background.

Nature, in fact, is often present in the foreground too. Snyder, like Thoreau, is one of those writers who integrate writing with living. Much of his work, as a critic remarks, 'has the ring of impromptu living about it, he has . . . lived first and written second . . . the poems take their subjects directly from immediate experience.'[5] His friend and admirer Jack Kerouac presents a thinly disguised and highly complimentary portrait of his as Japhy Ryder in his novel, *Dharma Bums*. He appears there as a

sturdy, self-reliant man, living close to nature. 'Like a piece of oak he was,' says a biographer of Kerouac referring to Snyder, 'close-grained, balanced, strong and beautiful, his "peace and purposefulness" wondrous to Jack. Here at last was a hip, energetic man.'[6] His poetry gives 'the curious impression of being always outdoors—or creates the illusion that even when he is indoors, he never stops being also outdoors.'[7] And the sense of integration, of "peace and purposefulness" that we find in his life is reflected in his nature poetry. 'It is,' as a critic remarks, 'profoundly unsolipsistic. The separations which we often allow to creep into our lives (inner world/outer world; rational/irrational; subjective/objective; ego/id) are absent. Gary Snyder's poems . . . contain much joy.'[8]

While the choice of nature as a major theme is dictated partly by his style of living, it has also been conditioned by his religious orientation—Snyder has been much influenced by Eastern philosophies. He spent years in a Zen monastery in Japan and made a prolonged stay in India to study Indian culture and religious philosophy; and is a practising Buddhist. 'Poets,' he says, 'don't sing about society, they sing about nature. Class-structured civilized society is a kind of mass ego; to transcend the ego is to go beyond society as well . . . beyond society lies inwardly the unconscious. Outwardly, the equivalent of the unconscious is the wilderness.'[9]

The world of nature is thus a world where the ego is sublimated and purified of all that is merely petty or personal. No wonder Snyder himself is rarely present in his nature poetry. Even if he is, the personality never intrudes, but blends subtly with the background. He was influenced by the classical Chinese and Japanese poetry (some of which he translated) in his objective delineation of nature. An example is the short opening poem of *Riprap*, which may be quoted in full:

Down valley a smoke haze
Three days heat, after five days rain
Pitch glows on the fir cones
Across rocks and meadows
Swarms of new flies.

I cannot remember things I once read
A few friends, but they are in cities.
Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup
Looking down for miles
Through high still air.

Images dominate here and are precisely rendered. Snyder was much influenced by the 'projective' or open verse theory of Olson, as well as by Pound and Williams. Pound in an important statement of 1912 had advocated 'direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective.'[10] 'The natural object is always the adequate symbol,' he had further stated: 'Go in fear of abstractions.'[11] He went on to say, 'It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.'[12] The function of an image, according to him, was to create 'a sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.'[13] William Carlos Williams succinctly stated his poetic credo thus: 'Say it! No ideas but in things.'[14]

Coming back to the poem, while the first stanza presents a succession of objective images which fix the scene firmly in the mind, the second through more suggestive imagery creates that 'sense of sudden liberation' which Pound speaks about. A cold clean mountain air seems to blow through the poem, tonic and bracing. From his lookout atop a hill, he is able to see life as it were in a perspective, "through high still air," away from the "smoke haze" of the valley where most people live. Nature thus suggests possibilities of growth; a new clarity of vision is achieved:

> Mind solid and sharp; leaning on a stone.[15]

In the mountains, the mind, as he says in another poem which is a translation of the eighth-century Chinese poet Han Shan, is "no more tangled, hung up." [16] And to see clearly and truly is very important for Snyder:

> A clear attentive mind
> Has no meaning but that
> Which sees is truly seen.[17]

In an interview he said, 'The "real work" (for the poet) is to make the world as real as it is and to find ourselves as real as we are within it.'[18] Books do not help in the quest, authenticity comes only through direct communication with nature:

> Words and books
> Like a small creek off a high ledge

Gone in the dry air.[19]

Everything becomes crystal clear in the mountains:

Spring water in the green creek is clear
Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white
Silent Knowledge—the spirit is enlightened of itself.[20]

Such enlightenment brings with it a sense of fulfilment, a transcendence of the merely temporal:

A million
Summers, night air still the rocks
Warm sky over endless mountains
All the junk that goes with being human
Drops away.[21]

In this natural world there is always a sense of adventure, a feeling that spring is not far away:

And in this hazy day
Of April summer heat
Across the hill the seabirds
Chase spring north along the coast.[22]

Buoyant images of ascent crowd the poems:

a heifer clambers up
night hawk goes out
worlds tip
into the sunshine.[23]

The technique here, as elsewhere, is the same: what the poet feels is stated obliquely through the imagery, not directly. Snyder concentrates 'on the pure intensity of the picture.'[24]

While the world of nature is often presented in glowing terms,

Bronze bells at the throat
Bronze bells on the horns—the bright oxen
Chanting through sunlight and dust.[25]

his attitude to cities is often negative. 'Cities give not the senses room enough,'[26] Emerson had said, and Snyder would agree with him fully. Not only do they give little room for the senses, they cramp and paralyze the emotions too:

> . . . and all our lives
> Have led to this, this city
> . . . this
> Hopelessness where love of man
> . . . could matter
>
> None.[27]

While nature endures, cities have often been devastated, as the negative imagery suggests:

> The cities rise and fall and rise again
> From storm and quake and fire and bomb.[28]

Cities are associated with dust, a symbol of opacity of vision. The poet enters "cities of boiling red dust"[29] but fails to achieve liberation there. He is happy only when out of "the dusty world of cities."[30]

The cities also suggest an artificial world, highly cluttered with objects, the piling up of needless luxuries and crammed with the "gaudy apartment(s) of the rich."[31] Thoreau had said, "Most of the luxuries and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind."[32] Snyder is quite as explicit: 'True affluence is not needing anything,' he says.[33] Thoreau had further said that one can look at the human scene impartially only 'from the vantage ground of voluntary poverty.'[34] Snyder also believes that man's greed and possessiveness stand between him and 'a true clear liberated way of seeing the world.'[35] The important thing was to be 'aware and alive, to be free of egotism, to be in contact with plants and animals.'[36] To the great potential of wisdom and compassion which man had, owning things 'can add nothing of authenticity.'[37]

Cities further suggest bondage, being bogged down by social ties. The poet seeks to rise above them:

> Who can leap the world's ties
> And sit with me among the white clouds?[38]

A poet is, ideally speaking, a wanderer, with no permanent attachments, no roots anywhere:

> In and out of forests, cities, families
> Like a fish.[39]

Yet the wandering is there with a purpose, it is basically a quest and perhaps the solitude of the mountains may help:

> You down the snowfield
> To go on hitching
> clear to New York;
> Me back to my mountain and far
> far West.[40]

Even family ties, the cosy world of domesticity, would not finally stop the poet from seeking adventure:

> Out the door
> Icy and clear in the dark
> Once I had thought
> laughing the kissing,
> how cosy to be tuckt in bed—
> let them sleep;
> Now I can turn to the hunt.[41]

'It is life near the bone where it is sweetest,'[42] Thoreau had said, and Snyder in "turning to the hunt" seeks precisely that.

As Snyder has become more widely accepted as a poet, especially with the award of Pulitzer Prize (1975) to his *Turtle Island*, he has taken a public stand on some of the issues he feels deeply about. One of these is ecology, the need for conservation of the natural environment. He stated in an interview that on one level, he sought to inculcate an awareness of the natural environment. 'It is a problem of love . . that extends to animals, rocks, dirt, all of it,' he said.[43] Here his affinity with Indian thought becomes clear enough. He underlines this himself: 'The Buddhists teach respect for all life and for wild systems. Man's life is totally dependant on an interpenetrating network of wild systems,' he says.[44]

We have tended to consider economic and industrial growth in isolation, and the result has been a wanton destruction of the natural environment. 'A continually "growing economy" is no longer healthy, but a cancer,' he believes.[45] Economics, ideally speaking, should be seen as a sub-branch of ecology, but both capitalist and communist systems are harmful because they are 'crude notions of conquering or controlling nature.'[46] The consequences of such a one-sided view may be fatal, he believes. The central problem is how to turn `the magnificent growth energy of modern civilization into a non-acquisitive search for deeper knowledge of self and nature.'[47]

With his clear and incisive grasp of basic issues, Snyder belongs with such native American writers as Emerson and Thoreau, or with poets like Whitman and Frost, in whom poetry 'begins in delight but ends in wisdom.'[48] He has led a simple contemplative life, far off from cities and close to his beloved mountains, and his poetry, as he suggests, is 'a riprap (steps) on the slick rock of metaphysics.'[49]

He writes with precision to 'enable the traveller to ascend—to ascend on earth, not to slide back nor to fly.'[50] He sees nature, the wilderness, as a corrective to the influences of a predominantly urban and highly mechanized civilization. Only a rapport with it can bring us back to health and sanity. A fellow poet and critic considered Snyder as one of the 'most thoughtful and most articulate of his colleagues,' one who had a 'clear, carefully thought out philosophy in which the ecological concept of all life as community . . . the Buddhist love and respect for all sentient creatures and the primitive animist's organic identification with living things are merged into a coherent pattern, relevant to the contemporary situation.'[51]

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NOTES

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An Unavoidable Literary Obligation: *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*

MADHU JOSHI

"If the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was like an unavoidable explosion and the writing of *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* like an unavoidable argument, the next book in the series, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, took the form of an unavoidable literary obligation,"[1] writes John R. Adams. It is doubtful if Mrs. Stowe herself ever thought of *Dred* (1856) as the mere fulfilment of a literary obligation. For her *Dred* was, as much as its illustrious predecessor *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an attempt to act according to the still small voice of her conscience. Referring to this she wrote to one of her publishers that "her whole mind was wrought up in the story."[2] The fact, however, remains that in spite of Mrs. Stôwe writing *Dred*, as she herself claimed, "with her heart's blood,"[3] it could never really reach the heights attained by," *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The reasons for this are not hard to find.

Mrs. Stowe introduced *Dred* to her readers by writing in its "Preface":

> The author's aim in this book is to show the general effect of slavery on society; the various social disadvantages which it brings, even to its most favored advocates. It is also an object to display the corruption of Christianity which arises from the same source—a corruption that has gradually lowered the standard of the Church, north and south, and been productive . . . (great) infidelity.

The inspiration behind this novel was the Nat Turner insurrection in Eastern Virginia in 1831—one of the principal participators in this rebellion was called Dred. Some years later Mrs. Stowe changed the title of the novel to *Nina Gordon* in honour of the heroine who, incidentally, dies at the end of Volume I. The original title was, however, restored after

a few years.

As in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, so too in *Dred*, the story revolves around two groups of characters. On the one hand, there are Nina Gordon, her lover Edward Clayton and his sister Anne, all of whom hope to educate and eventually emancipate their slaves. On the other hand, we have Dred, son of the Black insurrectionist Denmark Vesey and a Mandingo woman. Dred, a mysterious and foreboding character, takes refuge in the swamps after killing an overseer who used to ill-treat him when he was sent to a distant plantation after his father, Denmark Vesey, had been executed for his role in a slave-rebellion. The connecting link between the two groups of characters is Harry Gordon, slave-son of Nina's father Colonel Gordon. If one were to put the story in a nut-shell, one could say that it focuses attention on, what Alice C. Crozier terms, "Harry Gordon's dilemma, the desperate difficulty for him of choosing between Dred's call for vengeance"[5] on the one hand, and forbearance and patience which would be expected of him if he were to be faithful to his mistress and half-sister Nina, on the other. However, by the time she got down to writing *Dred*, Mrs. Stowe seemed to have lost the magical touch which had made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a masterpiece, in spite of all its melodramatic excesses and anomalies. She often allowed the plot, the characters and the situation to run away from her and thus, as George F. Whicher says, "the novel alternates between scenes of fantastic melodrama and stretches of too-conscious homily."[6]

The quadroon Harry Gordon is introduced to the readers as an efficient manager of his half-sister Nina's plantation, in such a way that "everybody for miles around knows and respects him." (I, 42) In spite of all his worth and efficiency, Harry is helpless before his younger White brother Tom who hates his half-brother even more than he hates his other slaves. Harry, at last, flees to the swamps in order to protect his wife Lisette from Tom's vengeful lust. After spending some time with the defiantly aggressive Dred, who is killed while trying to rescue a runaway slave, Harry finally, as would be expected, escapes to Canada. Meanwhile, through Nina Gordon and Edward Clayton, the author introduces the readers to a plan of education and eventual emancipation of slaves. Clayton goes so far as to plead the case of a Black woman Milly against her White master and, predictably, he is defeated in a court of law. Nina loses her life while doing her duty to her slaves during a cholera epidemic but only after she has told Clayton, "God calls you to some work—don't shrink from it." (II, 479) After her death, Clayton migrates to Canada and forms an ideal settlement there, with Harry as one of his head-men.

On reading *Dred* just once, one realizes that "it lacks the pathos and sweep of earlier works . . . (and that it has been) written with a reformer's zeal, more concerned with urging emancipation and denouncing `the great Christianizing institution than with recreating social reality."[7] Mrs. Stowe takes the first step in this direction by showing how the so-called 'patriarchal institution' affects all the members of the 'family,' slaves as well as masters. In the parade of demoralized and corrupt masters one first meets Tom Gordon, whose 'dilemma' Mrs. Stowe sums up by writing that,

> with due training (he) might have formed an efficient and eloquent public man; but brought up from childhood among servants to whom his infant will was law, indulged during the period of infantile beauty and grace in the full expression of every whim, growing into boyhood among slaves with but the average amount of plantation morality, his passions developed at a fearfully early time of life; and before his father thought of seizing the reins of authority, they had gone out of his hands forever. (I, 42)

The readers often encounter Tom Gordon—abusing Harry and making lustful advances towards Harry's wife Lisette; trying, with Jekyll's help, to reclaim Harry's sister Cora (who, along with her children, had been emancipated by her husband, Colonel Gordon's nephew Mr. Stewart), by trying to prove that her emancipation-bill is fake; whipping and torturing Father Dickson for "putting devilry in the heads of our niggers" (I, 121); finally, slaying his fugitive slave Jim and mortally wounding Dred—playing the wicked master to the hilt.

Tom Gordon is not the only brutal master in the novel. Milly, a slave belonging to Nina's aunt Mrs. Nesbit, has to deal with more than her fair share of such masters. Five of her children are sold by Nina's mother's father, Mr. Campbell. After she is given away to Nina's aunt Harriet, she has fourteen more children who are sold away, one after the other. In spite of promises to the contrary, Miss Harriet sells Milly's youngest son Alfred to Mr. Jones, another heartless master, whose son shoots Alfred dead for disobeying an overseer. Milly raves and rants and is deeply and seemingly irrevocably depressed for some time until "Christianity . . . (enters) as it often does with the slave, through the rents and fissures of a broken heart." (I, 58)

The role of the church is also discussed in *Dred*. Whereas in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* this discussion was mild and often veiled, in *Dred* Mrs.

Stowe attacks the clergymen more openly and vociferously. Since she had warned her readers in the "Preface" that she planned to place "all the dreadful realities before them," (I, xiv) she does not hesitate in pointing out to them that she considers the church to be guilty of a dereliction of duty. She first refers to this when she tells the readers about Aunt Nesbit and her preacher "crooning together as they always do . . . 'what a blessed institution it was to bring these poor Africans over here to get them Christianized'." (I, 188) One also hears of Father Bonnie the priest who, even as he invites the congregation to come unto the altar of God, discusses the purchase of a slave with a trader. Even the clergymen gathered for the Clerical Conference (Vol. II, Chapter XLI) absolve themselves of all responsibility by blaming the tone of the 'abolition fanatics' for the evils of slavery.

Amidst such callousness and blissful ignorance, Father Dickson appears to be a rarity, the sort of conscious and conscientious clergyman Mrs. Stowe thoroughly approved of. He feels, as does Mrs. Stowe, that "the buying, selling and trading of human beings, for purpose of gain, is a sin in the sight of God," (I, 335) and has the courage of conviction to stand steadfast by his ideals even when he is attacked by an irate mob. On the whole, however, priests like Father Dickson are found to be the exception rather than rule. Judge Clayton makes a very apt remark about the state of the church when he says, "About half of them defend the thing from the Bible, in an unblushing, disgusting manner. The other half acknowledge and lament it as an evil: but they are cowed and timid and can do nothing." (II, 76) Since Mrs. Stowe was convinced that the Church would have to play an indispensable role in the abolition of slavery, it is not surp ising that she was aghast when she saw how things actually stood and, therefore, decided to speak out vehemently against the existing state of affairs.

Dred, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, also has an interesting array of Black characters. Besides the trio Harry, Milly and Dred, who dominate most of the novel, there are other minor characters who play an important role in the development of the plot. Moreover, through them one gets an insight into the development that had taken place in Mrs. Stowe's views on slavery and the Blacks, since the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Tiff who prides himself on being a Peyton—his mistress's maiden surname—and can think of nothing else besides taking care of his motherless 'wards', his late mistress's children, is one such example. Incidentally, it is through Tiff and his 'family' that Mrs. Stowe introduces the readers to some 'poor white trash', apparently in an attempt to show that there are

some Whites, as well, whose lives are as miserable as those of the Black slaves. Old Hundred the coachmen, Topsy's counterpart Tomtit, the clownish house-servant Jim who is slain while trying to escape, and Hannibal are some of the other interesting Black characters.

However, none of these characters can rise to the heights that some of the immortal characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had attained. At best they are sketchy and never really come alive. While their portraiture makes it clear that no radically drastic change had taken place in Mrs. Stowe's general attitude, the fact remains that she had been shocked by what she had heard and read while gathering material for the *Key*. Beginning from a purely moral and religious point-of-view, as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mrs. Stowe was now becoming familiar with the social, political and legal aspects of slavery. It is obvious that what she saw horrified, grieved and confused her a great deal.

For Mrs. Stowe, slavery was no longer a regional matter. With a sense of shock and disbelief, she realized that North or South, slavery always brought out the basest qualities of man. As she portrays Anne and Edward Clayton, who treat the Blacks like spoilt and wilful children, one can detect a note of condescension that still lingers on in her own attitude—she obviously felt that Clayton's plan for education was an admirable one. At the same time, Mrs. Stowe was beginning to realize that there was something inherently wrong with the system in which a Barker could wound Milly and escape punishment since he "hadn't really exceeded his legal limits, because . . . the law gives to the hirer all the rights of the master." (I, 375)

Mrs. Stowe has often been criticized for not offering a clear-cut solution to the problem of slavery. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that *Dred* is, at its best, a mediocre "literary obligation." So confused and bewildered was the religious and pious Harriet Beecher Stowe by the stark and confounding reality that confronted her that, try as she might, she could no longer deal with the issue of slavery logically and comfortably. While she was gathering material for the *Key*, the enormity of the problem had struck her with unrestrained force. Yet, when she wrote *Dred* she was still not willing to admit openly that she had been mistaken or, at least, overly optimistic, and that the path of Love, which she had initially thought would lead towards the eradication of slavery, was neither very smooth nor very practical. Thus, even though at one point in *Dred* it seems as though she is actually advocating or, at least, supporting open insurrection, she soon retraces her steps discreetly, religiously and, one might even say, disastrously to the Christian fold. It is this shying

away from the bitter and chastening truth that goes a long way in making *Dred* an insipid and platitudinous work. Consequently, it is not difficult to understand why Leslie Fiedler is of the opinion that *Dred* is "a failure— mythologically inert, structurally confused, moving to no one. . . ."

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NOTES

1. John R. Adams, *Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New Haven, Conn: College and Univ. Press, 1963), p. 67.
2. Ibid.
3. Annie Fields, ed., *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1897, p. 149.
4. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1896), p. viii.
5. Alice C. Crozier, *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 37.
6. Robert E. Spiller et al., *Literary History of the United States: History* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 584,
7. Sterling A. Brown, *The Negro in American Fiction* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), pp. 38-39.
8. Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Inadvertent Epic: From 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' to 'Roots'* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 38.

The Amreindian Woman Who Owned the Shadows

NILA DAS

Paula Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* is said to be one of the first novels written by an American Indian woman, that probes into the dilemma of the contemporary Amerindian woman in ascertaining her identity and role in the multi-ethnic, racist and resistant, individualist and uncaring post-war II America, which in itself is in turmoil with the collapsed values, family units, cultural roots.

Introducing Paula Gunn Allen, the Laguna-Lakota-Lebanese-American poet, essayist, novelist, Kenneth Lincoln writes, "Paula Gunn Allen measures the shadows between Indian and non-Indian, that thresholding where the majority of Native Americans now live and ponder their Indianness."[1] In fact, for the last two decades—the decades that have witnessed the Amerinidan activist movements for self-determination and Red Power, the Reservation and off-Reservation hardships, a large section of the Native men going jobless and the women getting into work in the White domestics, offices, hospitals, schools to make quick the transplantation in the cities, the Native family-patterns disintegrating, the women drifting towards the majority culture and inter-marriages—one predominant concern for most of the Amerindian women writers has been a redefinition of American Indian womanhood across the Native past and the Westernized present, usually in terms of mutual confrontation.

The tribal image of womanhood had been richly nourished by the Native mythology and folklore. In a number of myths and emergence stories (Spider Woman, Sky Woman, Changing Woman, Mother Corn, White Buffalo Calf Woman), woman has been depicted as the Creator and Preserver of life and culture. Retold across the ages (some myths having had turned into creation rites), these tales had been accepted in the Native tradition as the "absolute truth" and the mythical characters became the exemplary and repeatable models for the Native woman's behaviour and

life. In a spiritual sense, every sacred myth has been a symbolic process of unending reincarnation.

In *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*[2] Allen uses a large number of Native myths and legends. The novel explores whether and how far a contemporary educated mixed-blood middle-class Amerindian woman succeeds in owning the multi farious 'shadows' in her life, cast by her mythical cultural heritage, her Native history and the fragmented present, built up on her contacts and confrontations with the dominant culture as well as with the other American ethnic groups. The interest is in whether she is able to absorb the contrarieties of her experience and emerge as a New Woman, self-confident and whole.

The novel is divided into four parts (four a unifying number in tribal tradition), each constituted of several sections mostly sprouting of the memory, thoughts, emotions and imaginings of Ephanie Atencio. Each part begins with a prologue, calling up one or the other Amerindian myth on woman as the Creative Spirit. The myths suggest a study of the contemporary Amerindian woman's situation in terms of opposites.

The first part of the novel evokes the familiar myth of the Spider Woman, the great grandmother of earth and all living things. In the tribal tradition, the Spider Woman's Web, her creation and preservation of the life-pattern, symbolize the organic wholeness of Native life, sensibility and culture. It is a pattern that may expand itself without altering the basic design.

In contrast to the prologue, the first section begins with Ephanie in the midst of a severe psychological breakdown which has presumably reached its peak with her broken marriage with an Amerindian.

Ephanie remembers how as a child she had jumped down an apple tree just to have "the feel of soaring." She tries to sort the parts of her life through a process of remembering, half hoping that memory would act the catalyst. Her memory comes by way of quick, unexpected, at times unwanted shots. She recollects her first cultural shock at the government boarding school and her early confrontations with the dominant culture. "Stand up for your rights, they had told her, she had told herself, someone was always telling someone." (13)

The shadows of her private past haunting her, and having lost grips on her present, Ephanie seeks to re-affirm herself through her Native cultural roots. She meets her grandfather at the village. Though not an Indian, he has spent his lifetime with the Natives:

> They had lived together . . . worked with each other. Shared food,

shared anger, shared joy, shared grief. Shared life and shared death with one another. . . . They never talked of division. May be their bonds were more important. . . . Who knows? (41)

The Native and the non-Native cultures did meet, even if at the elementary level. Ephanie does not feel herself a part of the pattern: "My life is its own echo. I can't find the source of the sound." (45) Does her Western education raise the barrier or the too individualistic modern times?

Trying to evade the increasing complexity of her life and circumstances, Ephanie flees to San Francisco, leaving her children to her parents. "Somewhere west . . . west of yesterday . . . where everything was opposite. . . . Step into the under world, the undeclared world." (46) She imagines that she is delving into the abyss, like the mythical Sky Woman, who went down and created the earth. The identification stupefies her. She looks blindly at her own face. The mythical archetype no longer sustains the modern mind.

The prologue to the second part is a rite of Exorcism with the Singer sweeping away the sickness through the door of the "healing place."

Ephanie makes for the North-West urban life. She joins a therapy group of which most of the members are White. She imitates the money-status-success oriented White life, trying to believe that "the world was like they described it to be, mostly safe, within her control. That kind of thinking comforted her." (60) The White community does not accept Ephanie, either as its own, or as an Indian. "She wasn't what they wanted. She wasn't noble . . . not exotic." (66) A college-educated Indian woman of the new generation, who had involved herself in the struggle for Civil Rights, had smoked dope, worn miniskirts, she has been neither a rebel nor a compromiser. Outsider in both the communities, Ephanie has to face the problem of belonging all on her own. She feels ashamed that she once had a dream to grow up as a traditional tribal woman, "bronze and slim with long raven hair and lithe limbs." (68) She is also ashamed that her own mother-tongue is unfamiliar to her. The bleak history of Euro-American settlement, the massacre of the Native culture make her seethe with rage; the white optimism and positivist outlook inspire her spirit.

Ephanie's hyphenated existence becomes the more complicated as she marries Thomas Yoshuri, the Japanese-American, who himself suffers from identity dislocation. To Ephanie's surprise, Yoshuri tells her of his bitter experiences at the relocation camp "quietly detached like a scientist talks about a project, an experiment on his past that failed." (93) Yoshuri has developed detachment as a mode of response and a philoso-

phy of life. Perhaps this is part of his Japanese heritage, a shadow of the Buddhist culture, Ephanie hardly understands.

Ephanie soon discovers that Yoshuri and she do not share each other's thoughts and dreams. Yoshuri is indifferent to and often denies "all that she knew and based her life upon." (97) He would not make 'her real.' The relationship with him is not the relatedness she craves for. The extremely individualistic Age hardly permits one to open up to the other or to bridge the distance between two isolated consciousness. One of Ephanie's twins by Yoshuri dies. Yoshuri's relatives perform the burial rites in the traditional Japanese way. Ephanie feels hardly associated with the rites or the community. Unlike her grandfather, she has not really sought any entry-point to a different culture.

Yoshuri, the 'wanderer,' leaves for the city. Ephanie is obsessed with the idea that "whatever he had done to her, he had one . . . but of forbidden rage . . . tormented into isolation. . . . He was kin to the alien spirit that had grown over the land as the fog grew over the forests." (108) No less an alien in her own spirit, Ephanie refuses to go the traditional Indian way of keeping the family together. She brings the divorce suit. The door to the "healing place" undiscovered, the sickness remains in her mind. The rite of psychic exorcism is yet to be performed.

In part three, the prologue recalls the legend of Iyatiku, the mother of the Indian tribes, who gave each daughter born to her the name of a clan, "teaching them as the Spider had taught her so long before." (126) It is a myth on the continuity of the life-process.

Unable to identify herself with any of her roles, Ephanie ponders, "who am I here. . . . They have taken away my body. They have taken away my mind. . . . I don't live here in me . . . I have nowhere to go." (134) A mixed-blood Amerindian, she has a feeling that even her ethnic identity is mostly a golden dream. "Her own body had come to her from people who were not her . . . even her flesh was not her own." (135) At a loss, Ephanie cries out, "How will I know which is me and which is the other, the others not me?" (136) It is said that self-realization comes when the self expands itself so as to include the 'other.' In Ephanie's mind, the 'I' and the 'other' remain ever-warring opposites.

Ephanie thinks of her grandmother Shimanna, who, for all her White education and marriage to a White man, had been able to bring the two seemingly discreet cultures into accord in her life. She had waited all her life through. "She did not tell Ephanie what she waited for, only that waiting and watching was for her." (145) Waiting has been her way of coming to terms with her life and the self, a mode the granddaughter has

failed to inherit.

Herself rooted yet unrooted, incapable of either owning or resisting her own paradoxes, Ephanie tries to hang herself, but stops at the last moment. "Thanks Grandmother. I think I am going to be alright," (168) she whispers by herself. It is a Native belief, that the kinship bonds between grandmothers, mothers, daughters tie individuals in succeeding generations to the core of Native cultural tradition and continuity.[3] Ephanie, the granddaughter, accepts the traditional responsibility of continuity, Iyatiku's 'message.' As it is, Ephanie's decision is unexpected, if not unwarranted. How far her choice for the physical continuity of the tribe is matched with the psychical continuity of the tribal spirit is of course an open question.

In part four, the prologue returns to the myth of the Spider. Those who reach her are "forfeit to her." Those who co-operate with her design, serve her, and through her, the Creative and the Life-restoring Power. "The song she sings will draw you in . . . She will never set you free. Thus it is said." (167)

Ephanie visits her grandmother, who passes away. Her "true name, they said, was Yellow Corn Woman . . . (who makes) bright and nourishing the day." (173) Ephanie yearns to brighten her own spirit up, to have reassurance surging through her veins:

> I have been too long alone, inside. I need to open the windows. . . . To become whole, entire. In . . . thought, in . . . mind. Separation was against the Law. Inside and outside must meet. (179)

She realizes the value of coherence:

> Thought and Memory
> Sunlight and shade
> Town and country
> Home and away
> Mind and flesh
> Me and They. (174)

Her body gives way. Her once sturdy frame grows birdlike, her eyes turn dark and huge. Ephanie feels as though she is dying. Much of the time she reads, muses, sings mindlessly, prays, feeds the birds.

Then wisdom dawns within her "like a sun . . . steadily and serene." (179) It is a miraculous awakening rather than a disciplined growing

towards a new level of consciousness. No longer resisting, Ephanie accepts and learns to "Love her isolation." (181) Native wisdom resurrects her. The Idea of eternal recurrence makes her view her own experiences in terms of the old tale of the Sky Woman. Her individual destiny merges in the eternal:

> And not so different at that, she thought. A tree of life. A blooming apple tree. A woman who was pushed into another life, one she did not choose . . . who entered a new world and upon it planted her seed. Who from death made life. Who knew nothing was ever ended. Who went on. (191)

For once Ephanie becomes self-critical. Since her own fall from the apple tree, she had chosen a directionless incoherent existence. "I abandoned myself," "I left me," she sighs.

Then she remembers another Native wisdom. Life is dynamic. Dualism, opposition, isolation make life an integral whole. Her own experiences too, incoherent as they have been, form the part of a pattern. She imagines she is hearing the mythical Grandmother telling the granddaughter of the eternal cycle of the change and the changeless, "my granddaughter . . . we go on. The others come behind us. . . . Others will replace them. For that is the law of the universe. . . . The story of life is the story of moving. Of moving on." (209) Life is everlastingly recreated. The tales of Utset, Iyatiku, the Spider, the Sky Woman, the Feminine Principles of Creation, are the tales that are ever repeated, that are 'true.' The "Shadows" of those mythical women remain and always reassert themselves. It is a traditional Native faith and the faith revitalizes Ephanie.

A poet's novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* ends with a poetic vision of the patternless patterns of life, that are ever moving and forming a bigger balance or order. Commenting on Silko's *Ceremony*, Allen wrote, "Tayo's illness is the result of a separation from ancient unity of person, ceremony and land and his healing is a recognition of this unity."[4] Ephanie too has her self-realization when she re-discovers her roots and re-establishes her relations with the myths of her own culture, those "Strong, viable, subtle, pervasive forces that operate behind each person's relationship with the world."

It is said that a spiritual participation in the myths is a "total experience which requires an awakening of the whole consciousness, when the participant succeeds in living the universal."[5] The whole

process depends upon a prior disciplining of the mind. The four parts of the novel, the four phases of Ephanie's life and consciousness, do not prepare her for the final 'ceremony,' or unification. Her visionary excursion to the mythical world and the mystical awareness does not bridge the contradictions of her life either. The conflicting forces of history, heritage and contemporaneity that wreck her Native roots, their psychic stability and her social life remain as gnawing at the end of the novel as at the beginning. The "shadows" of her life are not really owned. In fact, throughout the novel, Ephanie's mythical consciousness and her contemporary experiences operate at two entirely different scales. Perhaps it is not for the poetic imagination or vision to discover the harmony. It needs a larger disciplining of the mind.

The experiences may act the catalyst and the shadows may tell an Amerindian woman who she is, if she is able to own the shadows, to reach beyond the limit-situation and place herself in a larger reality. The attempt to go back to the mythical image and consciousness is a new direction or dimension to the contemporary quest for New Womanhood. For an Amerindian woman—for every woman—perhaps the way to be new is to re-new oneself. The woman who has owned the shadows is the woman who has found herself.

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NOTES

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2. (San Francisco: Spinsters' Aunt Lute, 1983).
3. Ref. Helen Bannan, "Spider Woman's Web: Mothers and Daughters in Southwestern Native American Literature," *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980).
4. "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony," *Studies in American Indian Literature*, p. 128.
5. Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 19.

failed to inherit.

Herself rooted yet unrooted, incapable of either owning or resisting her own paradoxes, Ephanie tries to hang herself, but stops at the last moment. "Thanks Grandmother. I think I am going to be alright," (168) she whispers by herself. It is a Native belief, that the kinship bonds between grandmothers, mothers, daughters tie individuals in succeeding generations to the core of Native cultural tradition and continuity.[3] Ephanie, the granddaughter, accepts the traditional responsibility of continuity, Iyatiku's 'message.' As it is, Ephanie's decision is unexpected, if not unwarranted. How far her choice for the physical continuity of the tribe is matched with the psychical continuity of the tribal spirit is of course an open question.

In part four, the prologue returns to the myth of the Spider. Those who reach her are "forfeit to her." Those who co-operate with her design, serve her, and through her, the Creative and the Life-restoring Power. "The song she sings will draw you in . . . She will never set you free. Thus it is said." (167)

Ephanie visits her grandmother, who passes away. Her "true name, they said, was Yellow Corn Woman . . . (who makes) bright and nourishing the day." (173) Ephanie yearns to brighten her own spirit up, to have reassurance surging through her veins:

> I have been too long alone, inside. I need to open the windows. . . . To become whole, entire. In . . . thought, in . . . mind. Separation was against the Law. Inside and outside must meet. (179)

She realizes the value of coherence:

> Thought and Memory
> Sunlight and shade
> Town and country
> Home and away
> Mind and flesh
> Me and They. (174)

Her body gives way. Her once sturdy frame grows birdlike, her eyes turn dark and huge. Ephanie feels as though she is dying. Much of the time she reads, muses, sings mindlessly, prays, feeds the birds.

Then wisdom dawns within her "like a sun . . . steadily and serene." (179) It is a miraculous awakening rather than a disciplined growing

towards a new level of consciousness. No longer resisting, Ephanie accepts and learns to "Love her isolation." (181) Native wisdom resurrects her. The Idea of eternal recurrence makes her view her own experiences in terms of the old tale of the Sky Woman. Her individual destiny merges in the eternal:

> And not so different at that, she thought. A tree of life. A blooming apple tree. A woman who was pushed into another life, one she did not choose . . . who entered a new world and upon it planted her seed. Who from death made life. Who knew nothing was ever ended. Who went on. (191)

For once Ephanie becomes self-critical. Since her own fall from the apple tree, she had chosen a directionless incoherent existence. "I abandoned myself," "I left me," she sighs.

Then she remembers another Native wisdom. Life is dynamic. Dualism, opposition, isolation make life an integral whole. Her own experiences too, incoherent as they have been, form the part of a pattern. She imagines she is hearing the mythical Grandmother telling the granddaughter of the eternal cycle of the change and the changeless, "my granddaughter . . . we go on. The others come behind us. . . . Others will replace them. For that is the law of the universe. . . . The story of life is the story of moving. Of moving on." (209) Life is everlastingly recreated. The tales of Utset, Iyatiku, the Spider, the Sky Woman, the Feminine Principles of Creation, are the tales that are ever repeated, that are 'true.' The "Shadows" of those mythical women remain and always reassert themselves. It is a traditional Native faith and the faith revitalizes Ephanie.

A poet's novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* ends with a poetic vision of the patternless patterns of life, that are ever moving and forming a bigger balance or order. Commenting on Silko's *Ceremony*, Allen wrote, "Tayo's illness is the result of a separation from ancient unity of person, ceremony and land and his healing is a recognition of this unity."[4] Ephanie too has her self-realization when she re-discovers her roots and re-establishes her relations with the myths of her own culture, those "Strong, viable, subtle, pervasive forces that operate behind each person's relationship with the world."

It is said that a spiritual participation in the myths is a "total experience which requires an awakening of the whole consciousness, when the participant succeeds in living the universal."[5] The whole

process depends upon a prior disciplining of the mind. The four parts of the novel, the four phases of Ephanie's life and consciousness, do not prepare her for the final 'ceremony,' or unification. Her visionary excursion to the mythical world and the mystical awareness does not bridge the contradictions of her life either. The conflicting forces of history, heritage and contemporaneity that wreck her Native roots, their psychic stability and her social life remain as gnawing at the end of the novel as at the beginning. The "shadows" of her life are not really owned. In fact, throughout the novel, Ephanie's mythical consciousness and her contemporary experiences operate at two entirely different scales. Perhaps it is not for the poetic imagination or vision to discover the harmony. It needs a larger disciplining of the mind.

The experiences may act the catalyst and the shadows may tell an Amerindian woman who she is, if she is able to own the shadows, to reach beyond the limit-situation and place herself in a larger reality. The attempt to go back to the mythical image and consciousness is a new direction or dimension to the contemporary quest for New Womanhood. For an Amerindian woman—for every woman—perhaps the way to be new is to re-new oneself. The woman who has owned the shadows is the woman who has found herself.

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NOTES

1. "Native American Literature: Old Like Hills, Like Stars," *Three American Literatures*, ed. Houston Baker Jr. (The Modern Language Association of America, 1982), p. 127.
2. (San Francisco: Spinsters' Aunt Lute, 1983).
3. Ref. Helen Bannan, "Spider Woman's Web: Mothers and Daughters in Southwestern Native American Literature," *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980).
4. "The Feminine Landscape of Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony," *Studies in American Indian Literature*, p. 128.
5. Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 19.

Dreams to Nightmares: An American Journey

A.A. MUTALIK-DESAI

> Our national birth was the beginning of a new history . . . which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only.[1]

> The people who came to the American shores felt intensely about the American experience because for each of them America was the wall broken down, door broken down.[2]

One of the quint-essential aspects of the American ethos and cultural heritage is best summed by the New England poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Let the dead past bury its head," ("The Psalm of Life") and in ways perhaps not entirely envisioned by him, his words became deeply rooted in the cultural and philosophic lexicon of the new people of the United States of America, symbolizing their spirit of determination as well as their zealous, infectious optimism. In this essay I will try to posit that from Puritan historians and scholars like William Bradford and Cotton Mather in the seventeenth century, poets and idealists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthrone in the nineteenth to representative creative writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Norman Mailer and Paul Theroux in the twentieth, this observation by Longfellow is readily embraced. In the work of these and others, spanning almost the entire course of the American literature, there is a continuing moral, intellectual and literary legacy. While the distinctive vision and perspective of each one of these writers varies, as it must (be it reverent, sceptical, sarcastic or cynical), one sees in them an intense awareness, a shared consciousness concerning the past.

Here, at this stage, I will permit myself a look at the very beginning in order to try to establish a perspective through the centuries. In 1620,

the ship *Mayflower* crossed the Atlantic to reach the shores of the new land. It had brought a cargo of humanity, namely, the Separatists, escaping from the religious persecution in an England dominated by the Anglican Church. The landing of these Separatists (soon to be renamed the Pilgrim Fathers) symbolized the beginning of the struggle for survival against a wild and primitive frontier,[3] which continued during the equally turbulent days of exploration and expansion in the nineteenth century. From those early days to the present is heard an oft-repeated injunction, "Go west, young man!" which points to one of the sustaining forces of the mainstream of life in the U.S. The underlying assumption is that if you don't succeed in one place or venture, if somehow, for reasons social, political, economic or even purely personal, you don't seem to make sense out of your life, if you are overcome by some *ennui* or *angst* in one place, you simply gather up your family and your possessions and head for another place, as far away from the first as possible, and make a new beginning . . . even as the Pilgrim Fathers did in the early seventeenth century. That one can undertake such a radical measure or even contemplate it and hope to succeed ultimately is itself part of what is called "The American Dream." What is paramount in all this, however, is a faith, an unquestioned optimism, that if one makes a clean break from the past and starts all over again there is a rainbow beckoning, leading one on, even instigating one to cross yet another frontier in virgin land with its limitless opportunities and its seemingly never-ending horizon. Consider in this instance the concluding scene from Fitzgerald's classic novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925):

> . . . as the moon rose higher . . . I became aware of the old island here that flowered once . . . a fresh, green breast of the new world . . . that had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. . . . Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning—So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.[4]

Such a thought has teased and preoccupied the American common

man as much as the intellectual and the creative artist, the first literary and imaginative expression of which can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century transcendentalists, and among them prominently is Henry David Thoreau.

Early in the nineteenth century, New England intellectuals like Noah Western and Edward Everest had confidently prescribed a *separation* from Europe, a cutting off from the last apron string with the old world.[5] In 1839, the *Democratic Review*, then an influential journal, declared triumphantly that Americans were uncluttered by their European roots; and that sentiment met with Emersons's approval when he said that Americans were "unsullied by the past."[6] In 1844, Hawthorne wrote a fantasy called 'Earth's Holocaust,' in which at some American western prairie people gather for a bonfire and burn all the symbols and paraphernalia of aristocracy, royalty, every autocratic and repressive social or political institution. Even the literature and philosophy of Europe were to be jettisoned, destroyed! Later in 1850, Hawthrone was yet again to lament in his *The House of Seven Gables* "Shall we never, never get rid of this Past?" Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) seems, nevertheless, to have the last word on the subject.

Thoreau writes most approvingly of this peculiarly American fascination. He cites telling examples. He narrates graphic anecdotes. He admires the American Indian practice of periodically destroying their dross in order to begin afresh. He recommends the Mexican purification rite observed once every fifty-two years. From animal and insect life, too, he refers to creatures that hibernate and reemerge within a precise cyclical fashion. Doesn't the Walden pond itself, season after season, refurbish, illustrating thus the need for ending and beginning? So, in *Walden*, Thoreau projects the need for the ritual burning of the past in the most varied and captivating metaphors.

That idea, the ritual burning of the past, has permeated American literature and thinking ever since and has found its way into successive generations. Charles Brockden Brown's supernatural themes, James Fenimore Cooper's delving into the American psyche, Walt Whitman's panoramic claims on behalf of his burgeoning land, William James's pragmatism, to mention only the most outstanding examples, are at least partly rooted in the felt need to abolish the past.

Now, however, there is a visible change in recent decades. In the post-Second World War period, in particular, under the onslaught of much that has happened (namely, the trauma of war itself, the slow realization that there *is* no frontier any more to conquer, the nuclear

reality, the racial bitterness, the defeat in Vietnam of the Theodore Rooseveltian concept of manifest destiny, the drug crisis, the youth revolt of the sixties, the sobering conclusion that there are limits to political power and military might and even to economic expansion and economic hegemony), there is arguing acceptance that the rainbow has all but disappeared. Perhaps, in this age of scepticism, the near religious faith of the Founding Fathers (namely, the need to discard the old and to search for the new) may be waning. The philosophic as well as aesthetic concerns that grew out of a different kind of America may now appear too simplistic. After all, so late in the twentieth century, the nation's creative and critical faculties are focussed on a radically new set of challenges. The assertive, breezy optimism (which cheerily stated, 'The difficult we will do right away, the impossible takes a little longer') of just yesterday is slowly being replaced by a sceptical, even cynical attitude. So, one might conclude that an idea or a way of life which was in essence a testament of hope, a covenant, may have become, in recent times, irrelevant, passe or at least inadequate.

In 1965 Norman Mailer published his *tour de force*, *An American Dream*, a landmark novel in which all the cherished traditional values are shown to be outmoded, invalid and therefore to be eschewed. In it is the portrait of a society in which the cancer of the body matches the cancer of the soul. Murder and mayhem have reached the highest and even the usually unimpeachable echelons of society. Death and insanity take on new meanings. The moral centre has obviously fallen apart. It is such a dark vision that evil is the norm and good a mere incongruous aberration. The hero of *An American Dream*, Stephen Rojack, is, it would seem as the novel begins, the very embodiment of success in America: a Harvard graduate, a war hero, a professor at a university in New York city, a successful author, host of a popular television programme; he was once elected to the U.S. Congress; he is now married to a rich and beautiful heiress! Fame and fortune are his. The American dream has come true to him. But all too soon, the dream is turned into a nightmare.[7] Driven by evil passions within and without, Stephen Rojack murders his wife; makes shambles of the due process of law; undertakes a journey of penance and expiation travelling through the hot, parched lands of the American south-west (a kind of purgatorial interlude)[8]; sees once more, among the gamblers and the prostitutes of Las Vegas, how demeaning life has become (a last glimpse of evil, as it were); and, then, even as the calender shows that it is the beginning of April, heads for Yucatan in Mexico, a seat of ancient culture, a symbol of life serene and whole.

Thus the new *milieu*, a new sardonic vision of life in the United States where for the sake of peace and tranquillity the hero must run away from the Promised Land. Has the rainbow ceased to exist? Even the realization of the national dream will no longer suffice, apparently!

If Norman Mailer's indictment struck a new path in 1965, in 1981, with Paul Theroux's novel, *The Mosquito Coast*, it would appear that the debate has become full-fledged.

The Mosquito Coast is at once a symbol and a statement. It symbolizes the American quest for breaking with the past and starting afresh on an unexplored, virgin land to build a new civilization and a new way of life. It makes the statement that America is foundering. From the lofty and theologically inspired vision, it has now become a haven for crooks and drug addicts. An atmosphere of moral and spiritual decay pervades the land. What is one to do when one's country is "bleeding to death," asks the protagonist, Allie Fox, "what kind of a country is it that turns shoppers into traitors and honest men into liars?"[9] This is only one of numerous reasons for his disillusionment. In American life, he contends, introspection is suspect. Solitude is shunned. Vicarious and instant gratification have replaced creative regeneration. There is a pervasive atmosphere of intellectual, moral and spiritual irresolution. What is one supposed to think when one reads a slogan put up by a commercial enterprise (supposedly as a kind of inspirational thought to its salesmen) which says, "if you have sold a customer exactly what he wanted, you haven't sold him anything. . . . Don't sell a man what he wants—sell him what he doesn't want."[10]

Paul Theroux's hero has an answer to all this: pack and leave! "No one ever thinks of leaving this country."[11] "Americans think that leaving the States for good is a criminal act, but I don't see any other way."[12] That's one of Allie's characteristic outbursts. So, he abandons the sickness that America has become, he gathers his family, and off they go in search of an untainted land: as far away as possible from America and whatever reminds them of it—in fact to the remote wilderness of the South American country of Honduras. There, free from civilization's decrepitude, they will begin again. They will build a life based on the ethic of work, sharing, caring, and harmony between man and man and between man and nature. In other words, they will build America all over again. This time, this second time around that is, they will not let the dream sour into a nightmare. The nineteenth-century educator Edward Everett would have found this quite satisfactory.

Once in Honduras, in the midst of the most primitive and forbidding

landscape, Allie and his family soon build a self-sufficient homestead complete with modern amenities (Like a toilet, running hot and cold water, an ice-making machine, etc.). Allie boasts that this accomplishment is no miracle, no heavenly creation! With nothing more than imagination and hard work he brings, as he says, civilization to wilderness.

And there's the rub. Allie Fox and family coming to Honduras represent to the native folk not civilization *coming* to a primitive land but rather civilization *invading* their territory and their ways. The newcomers are, therefore, intruders. Their simplest applications of technology create in the natives superstitious awe and dark misgivings. To Allie it is only a case of using the known laws of science. To the inhabitants it raises the spectre of god-like force that can hold fire and ice together, and, so, sharing the same natural habitat becomes incompatible and in the resulting inevitable elemental struggle the Fox family's homestead is destroyed. They set out for yet another location and yet another beginning. But their second effort too is foiled.

So, in the hands of Paul Theroux, the ritual burning of the past and plunging into the future is still a valid literary theme. But given the changed reality of the 1980's, the outcome has to be radically different too. The protagonist and his family are engaged in an elemental struggle for survival and for establishing a new America. But at every step they are thwarted, beaten back and forced to give up. In this fictional account of bringing civilization to wilderness, man and nature conspire to defeat the crusading American family. Allie Fox dies a gruesome death as vultures swipe away his flesh; crushed and demoralized the rest simply limp home. Paul Theroux's plunge into the darkness of the Honduran jungle, therefore, gives a new and ironic twist to the old Waldean thesis concerning the need for ending one's ties with the past.

But, will these fictional pioneers thus defeated, simply resume their erstwhile way of life in America? Will that resolution satisfy the novelist's sense of aesthetic verisimilitude? When one is engaged in such an epic struggle (which in this case is no less than eschewing one civilized order and the founding of another), does one accept compromises—which, after all, belong to the sane but distinctly prosaic order of things?

There are obvious parallels and contrasts between the efforts and the struggles of the early seventeenth-century American pioneers and the fictional pioneers of Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast*. Out of despair and disgust, out of moral and practical convictions, the conscious and deliberate uprooting of oneself from a land and its civilization one has

always known in favour of pursuing one's own dreams and designs in an altogether new and strikingly different land is of course a common strain. So is the willingness to pay for one's choice. Much like the real life Pilgrim Fathers risking their lives to the hazards of crossing the Atlantic (to say nothing of the greater hazards they faced after landing at the hand of the native Red Indian), the Fox family travels on a makeshift boat 'ploughing thro' [the] dark water with black jungle on one side and deep sea on the other, and moonless night above.'[13]

But, on the one hand, the American pioneers made peace (in their own manner!) with the native inhabitants. They were steeped in an abiding religious faith. Despite countless early setbacks (natural as well as man-made), there was a characteristic perseverance. On the other hand, their twentieth-century fictional counter, Allie Fox, is too consumed by his personal egotism to heed others, to make rational choices; while on the road to realizing his own utopia, the new Adam fails—being unable to bridge the chasm between the dream and the reality.

Is, therefore, an attempt at the ritual burning of the past still a valid American experience? Has the ancient Mexican purification rite any validity in the last quarter of the twentieth century? Can we re-enact, as it were, the rhythmic death and rebirth cycle of nature's seasons? Or, is the nexus to modern reality such that dreaming and hoping, adventure and even a stride towards perfection merely illusions?

So, now, very nearly on the threshold of yet another millennium, there are these and many other more questions that need to be posed: Has the sanctity or even the need for values and myths held precious only yesterday vanished? Has the American dream, so strained and stretched, run its co rse? Why the fading optimism? Why sobering, and, at times (as in Norman Mailer) self-flagellating mood of pain and disquiet? Why the dark and sardonic vision of *The Mosquito Coast* so unlike the exuberance and the unshakable faith of *Walden?* Is there no geting-up-and-going-away anymore? Is the horizon reached? Having cleared the frontier, has the American civilization arrived at the end of the road? Such concerns seem to be on the mind of Norman Mailer, Paul Theroux and other contemporary writers. The debate, undoubtedly, is only beginning.

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NOTES

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Democratic Review*, 1839, quoted by R.W.B. Lewis in his *The American Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 5.
2. Max Lerner, *America as Civilization* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH, 1988), p. 23.
3. The native Red Indian who had preceded the first white European settlers by many centuries was to the newcomers a part of the inhospitable landscape.
4. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 159.
5. "The Slaying of the European Father," as Max Lerner puts it, p. 23.
6. Emerson, quoted by Lewis, p. 7.
7. Norman Mailer, *An American Dream* (New York: Dell, 1965), p. 15.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251: "... lungs breathing up the bellows of the desert, that hundred-and-ten air, hotter than hot flannel on the lining of the throat ... the heat would swell some hinge of the brain, and madness would burn up out of that rent in the hinge ... that heat, that desert bake, hot as the radiation from a hardwood fire."
9. Paul Theroux, *The Mosquito Coast* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 14.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 84
13. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

The Invasion of "Theory": An Indian Response

MAKARAND R. PARANJAPE

In this essay, which is both a personal narrative and a polemic, I have tried to advocate a sort of intellectual nationalism[1] in Indian academia, using as an example, the reception in India of recent developments in post-structuralist critical Theory. Though the particular emphasis is on "Theory" here, my real concern is with broader questions of cross-cultural intellectual relations between India and the West.[2] My argument originates in my distress over what I see as the easy capitulation of the Indian intellectual to Western academic combination: Our often blind and uncritical acceptance and imitation of the latest critical fads that are spawned in the West, and our incredible naivete in ignoring history, culture, and the Indian traditions of thought in our attempt to position ourselves favourably in this transaction.

Let me illustrate my rhetorical problem a little. My using the English language, with the apparatus and terminology that come with it, may itself seem self-contradictory in this context. But I would argue that contradictions are a part of the game, that, further, no Indian language today is completely free from Western influence or has escaped a reconstruction of itself after the Western impact on India. So we are in a confused world where things overlap and merge into one another, not a world of clear-cut laws of cause and effect. There is nothing "pure" or "unsullied" left in culture, nothing that has totally escaped the "vitiating" contact with the West.

It is in this sense that the ground that this polemic occupies is somewhat strident, factional, and unpopular. It is not the ground that I would like to occupy forever, thrust as I am into it by historical and ideological compulsions. But, having said my say, I hope I can withdraw from it, gratefully and eagerly, as one departs from an unpleasant dream into the comfort of waking reality.

"Knowledge is Power" is an old dictum that the Orientalists understood only too well.[3] However, the pursuit of knowledge in English Studies in India has, I tried to show, paradoxically the opposite effect. The pupil comes to English from a mother tongue in which he is conversant and which he has to abandon. Hence, instead of empowering the student, English deposer—castrates—him. Or, to use a non-sexist metaphor, such a study neuters or desexes the subject.

We modify and restructure the profession so that we are not all that powerless by stressing Commonwealth literature or Indian English literature. Or we try to apply the standards of Indian aesthetics to English literature, though few such attempts have proved fruitful. The response to such efforts not only in the West, which simply ignores them, but in India too, where they are regarded with scepticism, ironic amusement, or dismissal, merely underscores their underprivileged status in the field. It would appear that the Western critical discourse is a tradition in which we have no natural place. Given this, how would Theory, a new frontier, relate to the struggle of the colonized mind for liberation or independence? Would it be merely a new burden, another imposition or an exciting tool for decolonization?

Coup de Theory or How I Missed the Bus

University of I. is a large Mid-Western school where I studied as a graduate student. The year I joined, 1980, was somewhat significant. The impact of Theory which had begun to make itself felt during the 1970's, chiefly at Yale, now started shaking the establishment all over America. As its tremors began to upset the complacency of the older, descriptive, and judicial modes of criticism, there was something of a mad scramble in academia to keep abreast. The Department of English at University of I. was no exception to this trend. About a year after I joined, the School of Humanities constituted a Unit for Criticism and Interpretative Theory, an interdisciplinary centre to study and propagate the new learning.

In 1984 when I was just beginning to write my dissertation, the Unit organized a large conference on Marxist Critical Theory. It was attended by "big names" like Frederic Jameson, Stanley Cavell, Gayatri Spivak, and so on. I did not attend a single session. The main reason was that I thought that there was one big flaw in the pursuit of Theory. Theory still went on in the domain of the mind. And my reading in mysticism, in which I was then immersed, *showed* me the limitations and transitoriness of the mind. However, Theory, no matter how hard it tried, was still enmeshed

in the mind. It was still chasing, albeit with deep anguish, the illusion of complete description or total explanation.

On a more mundane level, I had another grouse against our Unit. Its name suggested the universal, but its concerns were parochial. Surely there is critical Theory outside Europe. But they knew or did nothing about it. Not a single one of their weekly seminars considered, say, Indian theories of meaning and interpretation—Bharata, Nagarjuna, Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta—none was ever mentioned or discussed. As I passed their door, I often felt like barging in and demanding: "But what about non-Western criticism and interpretative Theory?"

But I never asked the question. The moment you advance your claim for recognition, you already put yourself in a subservient position. The burden of proving the worth of your tradition is upon you; they become the sanctioning and licensing authorities. It is as if we come into academic existence when they accord us the right to exist. Until then, even in our own eyes, we don't exist. I laughed to myself and kept quiet. Now the burden was on *them:* my very existence as someone who was the repository, the torch-bearer of non-Western theory was a proof that they didn't know everything, that their claim to universality was false and self-deluding. In any ideological battle, remember to play the game on your own terms and by your own rules. Attack not the conclusions of the opponent, but the assumptions. Strike at the root, not the branch.

I did not attend a single session of the Unit. My boycott, which went totally unnoticed, however, was not without its significance, at least for me. After all, we don't live to be noticed by *them;* we live for ourselves, to do what we value and cherish. If we believe in ourselves, we will never give another the power to tell us what we are. I was saving myself for the opportune moment when a fitting response might be possible on my own terms. Meanwhile, the mystics kept me company and I was lost to myself.

A Seminar at the ASRC or "I have seen the future, and baby, it works!"

The participants were youngish and somewhat wide-eyed—the Americans know the value of the adage, "Catch them young." They had been chosen from among many applicants. The purpose of the workshop was to acquaint them with the *latest* developments in Theory. They were college teachers and graduate students who were longing to be initiated into the secret rituals of the field. Moreover, their lodging, boarding, and first class train fares had been taken care of by the hosting institution. Some "senior" Indian professors were among the teachers of the course.

There were many lectures, some good, most mediocre, a few positively bad.

Theory was the new Goddess and the participants had come to worship at Her altar. Like all self-motivated worship, the goal was very this-worldly: knowledge, power, money. I could not blame the participants. Many of them submitted to the profession merely to earn a livelihood. The conditions in which they taught and lived were, perhaps, not the most attractive and conducive to the quest for Truth. They were compromised by their positions in the system.

But what about the senior professors, the teachers of the workshop? Consider their ideological roles. They were the transmitters of the new knowledge from overseas as the participants were the recipients. The institution was the conduit, the go-between agency in this transaction. Not one of the Indian professors who were present had made an original contribution to Theory. They had been hired for their abilities to simply read, summarize, transmit.

So we go to such seminars for our half-yearly dose of the latest from the West. Who's in, who's out; what's true, what's not—we wait patiently to be told, to find out, to receive. How glibly the rhetoric of indoctrination flows: as I.A. Richards has shown; as Levi-Strauss suggests; as Derrida has proved. . . . On marches Logos, constructing, deconstructing, reconstructing—coiling and uncoiling itself, python-like. We, the marginalized, neo-colonials watch with profound awe—that is, until we discover that we are in the belly of the python.

An Essay in "Oxford Literary Review"[4]

It is an interesting example of the attempt by a third world intellectual to use the available forums in the West to state the anti-colonial case. A student of one of the most eloquent critics of Western imperialism, the author has the right tutelage to find a place in *OLR*. The journal itself, with another scholar of Indian origin on its editorial board, has become a kind of oasis for power-thirsty third world intellectuals, a rallying point for a new nucleus of criticism. This nucleus is, supposedly, on the "right" side of things ideologically.

The article is, in main, a narration of by now well-known historical events—my purpose is not to analyze its content so much as to suggest that its *placement* vis-a-vis India undercuts its central argument which is to show how the institutionalization of English in India was an outcome of the *political* designs of the British in India. To whom is the author trying

to tell this? To the Indians or to the British? Is she addressing the descendants of those Britishers who instituted English in India, an outcome of which system she herself is? On whose behalf is the article written? On behalf of her compatriots, to espouse their cause in a post-colonial world? If so, can this be done by addressing it to that very system whose discourse now rules over their minds—that is, Western academia? This audience, as all powerful groups do, quickly co-opts and appropriates the author and her likes, according them a subsidiary place within its own system. The compatriots on whose behalf she has raised her voice remain where they are—looking on from the margins.

Where one lives is one's conscious choice. And by choosing to live and work in the West and by using the benefits of its system, such an intellectual forfeits, at least partially, her or his right to speak on our behalf. Only those who live and work in and for the third world, strictly speaking, have this right. That is, by merely living in the third world, sharing its day to day struggle for selfhood and dignity, an intellectual participates and thus represents this struggle; the expatriate intellectual, on the other hand, best represents his own cause, but, unless he has been forced into exile, may not be accepted as the voice of his people. It is given to the former type of intellectual to build the counter-imperialistic discourse. Our expatriate brothers and sisters who have settled down in the West are really fighting for themselves, not for us. They are fighting for their own survival with all they have got. For them their ethnicity or colonial background becomes a pretext, a handle by which they can manipulate the system which would otherwise finish them. We can give them our sympathy and support but not the authority of speaking on our behalf. Their concern is with finding a legitimate place for themselves within the West, while our struggle is with finding an *alternative* to it.

And now, the frontal attack or, at least, some joltings thereof

There comes a time, alas, in the course of such harangues when one must stop using decoys or firing from behind sandbags; one must come out into the open, even if it is to expose oneself to attack from all sides. It is a sort of last stand or last ditch effort. . . . So here goes.

1. An Indian View of Post-structuralist Criticism

I see post-structuralism to be as relevant or irrelevant, broadly speaking, as structuralism or, prior to that, new criticism. Relative to

India, they have essentially the same effect—they all tend to be oppressive.

2. The Trap of Dialecticism

The West is tired, fatigued with itself. Caught in the trap of dialectics, it does not know how to get out. Even when Robert Ornstein, for instance, talks of the left brain and the non-discursive, non-dialectical, or intuitive mode of consciousness, he is doing so in a very right-brained way.[5] His very class identification is dialectical. Derrida comes closer to the mystical position by admitting that his own text is open to continual deconstruction. This brings us to *aporia* or "the impassible path"—because language offers no fixed position, no stable observation post or centre of gravity from which we may formulate or codify the rest of the universe.

3. Europe and Parricide

It is an ancient myth that illustrates a fatal flaw in Western thought: Cronus kills Uranus, his father, and usurps the overlordship of the Titans; he in turn, is overthrown by his son Zeus or Saturn. This myth illustrates how the Western intellectual enterprise works. A modern version of the myth is Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* in which one strong poet misreads (or castrates) his predecessor to find his proper space in the canon. In India, we worship our fathers (or mothers); in the West they kill them. This parricide I see as a powerful motif in the intellectual history of the West: each generation denounces its forbears in order to supplant them. This is like baboon raj—the strongest of the male rules the herd until he is displaced by a younger, still stronger male. That is why the West is merely rewriting itself, generation after generation. The structuralists are rethinking everything in terms of deconstruction.[6] It is an endless process of dialectical substitution, all within the confines of the mind. Because Western thought is a quest, essentially, for power, not Truth, it is violent and usurpatory. It preys on its predecessors.

4. Criticism and the Quest for Power

The Western critical enterprise resembles a medieval battlefield today, with several special interest groups, ranged like armies, vying for control. Or to use a more capitalistic discourse, it resembles a stock

exchange with several brokers trying to out-shout and out-bid one another in an attempt to corner the market. Behind the special interest groups or lobbies are individuals, each working for more power and money for herself or himself. It's the perfect marketplace for ideas.

Such is the patrimony of Western civilization. The West, despite professing Christianity, knows nothing of compassion and power-sharing. They understand only brute force. That is why the disenfranchized minorities even within criticis have to fight for their right, whether they are blacks, females, or other minorities.[7]

5. The Trap of Eurocentricism

Europe is not the world. Why must we persist in letting them think it is? Worse, why do we think so ourselves? The space that Europe and North America occupy in our consciousness is so immense that very little room is left for the other countries and regions of the world. It is a very old seduction that the intellectual faces: the seduction of power, and very seldom can he resist it. So he begins to Europeanize in order to empower himself, to share the spoils of Europe's intellectual conquests. In a sense, this is the moment of self-betrayal. The intellectual is turning away from his roots, exchanging his inherited *swadharma* for another more alluring and lucrative one. Paradoxically, at this very moment, the Indian intellectual loses power because he has capitulated, because he has accepted the superiority of Europe and admitted his own inferiority. In looking for his own place under the European sun, he allows himself to get indoctrinated and *becomes* Westernized. Once converted, he chafes and complains. Guilt, shame, rage—these are characteristic responses of the decultured, denationalized third world intellectual to his condition as a hireling of the West.

Does power confer superiority? The moment we accept this, we have lost our battle for intellectual equality and self-respect with the West. To generate our own counter-colonial discourses from our experience, tradition, and imagination, to not regret our powerlessness in the world given to us, but to fight from this position to one of greater self-determination and self-respect—these are the challenges for the third wold intellectual. The radical response to the West is the response from a different, non-European centre.

Conclusion

Even as I write all this, I realize that the way I have recommended above is not the only way. Often, we must capitulate, give in, convert— in the face of overwhelming force. This too is sanctioned in our *Shastras* as possible option under extreme duress. Hence, we must accept imitation, conversion, and Westernization as valid and inevitable types of response to the West. Such crossings are as old as the clash of cultures. And, yet, while we must show our compassion to such of our brothers and sisters who have laid themselves open to Western penetration and while we accept our kinship with them, should not some of us in the forefront resist openly and consciously? Should we not create room for such resistance and self-assertion?

I had said earlier that I did not feel comfortable in the narrow ground that I had chose to occupy in this paper. At the end of my polemic, I can afford to withdraw from it, even to demolish its manichaean oppositions. The West is not really separate from us. In a sense, we are the West—we are our Other. There is no room for a separate identity for any of us. We are compelled to own up to the history of the entire world, to all its trails and suffering, its achievements and triumphs. We are not entitled to a selective appropriation of life. The confrontational framework that I have adopted has this function only—to disavow any claims of superiority or inferiority vis-a-vis the West and India. It is like the proverbial thorn used to remove another thorn. To understand this is to arrive, allegorically speaking, to a state from which there is neither any escape nor advancement.[8]

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NOTES

1. By nationalism I have in mind concepts like *Swatantra, Swarajaya, and Swadharma;* but a more appropriate expression for intellectual nationalism might perhaps be *Swadeshi*—home-made.
2. By "Theory" I mean the various strands of post-structuralist criticism such as deconstruction, Marxism psychoanalysis, feminism, etc. See Ramon Selden's *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Harvester Press, 1985) for an overview.

3. Said's argument in *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) is too well known to need elaboration.
4. The essay in question is Gauri Viswanathan's "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," vol. 9, Nos. 1-2 (1987), pp. 2-26. I chose to use it as an example because it was hot property when I wrote the first draft of this essay in 1988. I believe it is part of a larger work which is about to be or already has been published. However, I have not yet been able to get hold of this book.

   A friend who read my paper asked me to tone down my "attack" on Viswanathan. He said, "After all, she needs our encouragement." I replied, "Not for an article that is not addressed to us." I admit that my attitude to her article is not positive, and perhaps that's not nice. Well, I'd like to meet her and have a dialogue about the point I am making here.
5. See *The Psychology of Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977). This book created quite a storm when it first appeared and it still has its adherents.
6. Let me try to define this transcendental signified that I have dared to use with a capital "T" here: there have been many ancient ways of trying to define Truth in a manner which is not oppressive, which does not "other" something else. Let me just say here that Truth is where *you* are not.
7. Here I employ a common strategy for decolonization—that is to deglamorize and demystify your opponent. I want to show that the West isn't all that great after all, that we needn't buy their idea of who they are and what they stand for.
8. This is, really, a paper in progress, which I am abandoning at this juncture. It has changed considerably since it was first written in 1988 and so have I. I find myself actually promoting post-structuralism in some contexts, while I oppose it in others. Certainly, it has made a great difference in the way I approach texts in the classroom and also in my teaching style and aims. I consider my attitude to post-structuralism to be ambivalent—as a visiting Professor from Italy once told me, "I like Derrida, but hate Derridaians."

Shakespeare and Ben Jonson: An Approach

K. VENKATA REDDY

"He (Shakespeare) is not of an age, but for all time."

Ben Jonson

The conversation between Mitis and Cordatus, the presenters of Ben Jonson's play, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, puts before us two traditions of drama that the Elizabethan dramatists had before them:

MITIS: the argument of his *Comoedie* might haue beene of some other nature, as of a duke to be in loue with a countesse, and that countesse to be in loue with the dukes sonne, and the sonne to loue the ladies waiting maid: some such crosse wooing, with a clowne to their seruing-man, better then to be thus neere, and familiarly allied to the time.

CORDATUS: You say well, but I would faine heare one of these *autumne*-judgements define once, *Quid sit Comoedia?* If he cannot, let him content himselfe with CIGEROS definition (till hee haue strength to propose to himself a better) who would haue a *Comoedie* to be *Imitatio Vitae, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago Veritatis;* a thing throughout pleasant, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction of manners: (III, vi, 195-209)

The comedy described by Mitis has a romantic rather than critical emphasis. Its principal characters are of blue blood, its theme is love, and its aim is entertainment. But, the comedy described by Cordatus in Ciceronion terms has a critical rather than romantic emphasis. Its sphere of observation is the real life of ordinary men and women. Its attitude is satirical, its means pleasurable and its aim corrective.

However, the essential difference between the two modes of English

drama—the Romantic and the Satiric—is not so much of realism as of attitude and tone.[1] The emphasis is on an altogether different set of human motives. The emphasis in the Romantic drama is on the poetic longings for love and adventure, whereas in the Satiric drama it is on the grosser appetites for wealth and women. And, the defining difference of tone is the difference between lyrical sentiment sympathetically expressed and critical satire unemotionally conveyed.[2]

Any dramatist in Elizabethan England, could choose between these two basic traditions of drama. And, "faced by a choice in such matters, a writer is wise if he follows his temperament. . . . Shakespeare reached for his Chaucer. . . . Ben Jonson knotted his cat-o'-nine-tails."[3] Thus, if Shakespeare exemplifies the Romantic tradition, Jonson illustrates the Satiric tradition of the Elizabethan drama.

Shakespeare, with a largeness of vision and flexibility of technique, worked upon the popular dramatic tradition of his time and produced an English poetic drama which developed out of the pressure of its own vitality and its own kind of form and unity without owning much to an external doctrine of correctness. Shakespeare was endowed with such rare dramatic genius that he gave full concession to the popular taste and to the requirements of the Elizabethan theatre, "yet transmuted in the giving, so that what might have been mere connivance in baseness becomes a miracle of expressive art."[4]

Jonson approached his art from a quite different point of view. Notwithstanding the initial romantic play of his genius and his mastery of that romantic style, Jonson stood apart, as an example of that 'rare avis,' with a diverse object and principle backed by his solid classical training and stirred by zeal for reform.

While Jonson, dewelling apart from his fellow-dramatists, challenged the judgment of his times, Shakespeare accepted the conditions of the stage of his time. He was quite aware of its shortcomings and defects, but seemed to have resigned himself to them with good humour. Jonson, on the other hand, registered his protest against the dramatic practice of his age, against its extravagance and its carelessness. And, in angry defiance of the accepted traditions of the Elizabethan stage, Jonson set up his own tastes, ideas and theories, assimilated from the ancients, against the popular taste. In the midst of that luxuriant romanticism which culminated in Shakespeare, Jonson emerged essentially as a native classicist with the definite purpose of effecting a reform of theatrical taste and convention both by his precept and example.[5]

The most significant factor that contributes to Shakespeare's great-

ness is his universality which alone can give permanence to literature. Shakespeare's plays are a great river of life and beauty, and whoever has thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tragic, the serious or the jovial, the satiric or the didactic, the tender or the ecstasy, can stop for a while and drink to the lees from its sweet and charming waters. For, as Dryden says, of the ancient and modern poets, Shakespeare had the largest and most comprehensive soul.

Shakespeare's work alone can be said to possess that organic strength, that infinite variety, that throbbing fullness, that vital complexity and that breathing truth of nature herself. It is Shakespeare's unique distinction that he had an absolute command over all the complexities of human thought and feeling that prompt us to action.

Shakespeare's plays have a permanent appeal to the human heart because his pen covers the whole gamut of human experience of all kinds, with a sureness of touch and a truth of life. He sweeps with the hand of a master the varied experience of human life, from the lowest note to the highest, from the children acts of Mamilius, from the boyish tones of Prince Arthur, to the haunted terrors of Macbeth, the tropical passion of Othello, the agonized sense and tortured spirit of Hamlet and to the titanic force and tragical pathos of King Lear.

Ben Jonson's chief merit as a dramatist lies in drawing comedy from the improbable realms of romantic flights to the levels of ordinary existence—"deeds and language such as men doe use." He breathes an air of realism into his comedy by making the setting, incident, character, and dialogue contemporary with the times. None the less, Jonson is not a literal-minded transcriber of mere fact. In his plays there is an interplay of realism and fantasy which gives them the unity and universality of great art.

More than any contemporary playwright Jonson brilliantly succeeds in projecting 'an image of the times'—the theatrical world, the non-dramatic poetry, the court life, the scholarship and the spirit of the Renaissance, besides the variegated aspects of daily life—in his comedies. Yet, his vigorous intellectual grasp of the pageant of life combined with a trenchancy of language and control of dramatic form makes his comedies appeal to all times. His plays, with all their powerful symbolic suggestions, come alive, or gain new life once they are experienced aesthetically.

Jonson also succeeds admirably well in his endeavour to make his comedy convey serious thought intermingled with an intelligent type of laughter, if not completely in his early plays but almost perfectly in his

mature comedies. Achieving a harmonious fusion of 'profit and delight,' comedy in his hands becomes a perfect communication between the author and the audience. However, Jonson is neither a doughty champion of didacticism nor a conventional moralist, but essentially a comic dramatist using didactic theory for literary and dramatic purpose.

In keeping with his didactic attitude, Jonson is determined to "sport with humane follies" in his comedy. With his conception of satire as a medium for the essential dramatic art, Jonson stands apart from the formal satirists. Satire in his early plays is levelled mostly against individual vices and affectations. But, broadened in scope and increased in intensity, the satire in the middle and later plays is émployed mainly against social vices—avarice, lechery, witchcraft and hypocritical puritanism—that were eating into the vitals of society of the day. Though all these vices are more vigorously and thoroughly satirized by Jonson than by others, he is unmistakably a comic artist. He works his satire into the character and the character into the plot so ingeniously that to remove satire is to remove plot and character. Jonson's relentlessness is, therefore, born of his intellectual uprightness as well as of his artistic integrity.

The most common charge that is levelled against Jonson is that his characters are not full-blooded, complete men and women but mechanical types especially when compared to those of Shakespeare. Hazlitt says: "Shakespeare's characters are men; Ben Jonson's are more like machines."[6] Coleridge concludes that "Ben's personae are too often not characters but derangements—the hopeless patients of a mad doctor rather."[7] Our immediate answer could be that it was not in Jonson to body forth such figures as step out of the pages of Shakespeare and live with us as familiar acquaintances. It is neither his intention nor his endeavour to present full-blooded, life-like characters, or dynamic living individuals who can exist independent of their settings, but only 'persons' as are required by his characteristic comedy. There is no point, then, in condemning Jonson for what he never set out to do. We have, moreover, no right to demand of Jonson to give us complete human beings. Jonson, the satirist and the censor, did not require for his purposes the creation of complete men and women. We should also remember that when the main end is the satirical portraiture of social types, complete human beings demanding sympathy are out of place. However, Jonson's abundant wit and inventive resourcefulness succeeded in keeping his characters human and interesting. Thus, in their own way, Jonson's characters are as effective as that of any other great dramatist.

It is no easy matter to pass an impartial, final judgment on the

dramatic achievement of Jonson. However, we may say that Jonson, on the whole, did what he had set out to do. He succeeded well in his attempt to make English comedy realistic and purposeful. None the less, led by his artistic sense, he did make departures from his critical tenets now and then. But, this does not necessarily mean that his critical utterances were insincere. It only means that his theory was not complete enough to cover all his practices.

There is no point in finding fault with Jonson for things he never intended to do. He deliberately imposed, though not always bound by, a great many limitations on his art as a dramatist by his insistence on the preservation of the three classical unities as well as the unity of tone, by his advocacy of realism in setting, character, and speech, by his acceptance of the theory of 'humours' as the basis of characterization and by his purpose of moral elevation through satire. Hence the so-called deficiencies—absence of charm and colourful portrayal of characters, lack of appeal to sentiment or emotion, as critics generally point out—are not, in truth, deficiencies at all, but the outcome of a principle of deliberate exclusion.

Nevertheless, the frequent comparison of Jonson with Shakespeare has got in the way of a full appreciation of his success as a practitioner of the 'Comedy of Humours.' He has been, more often than not, compared with Shakespeare—invariably to his disadvantage. This method is essentially unwholesome inasmuch as the schools of art which Shakespeare and Jonson represent are so thoroughly incompatible, although each is a master of his chosen type. Though the accident of history placed Jonson in the same period as Shakespeare, Jonson's mode of drama is properly and intentionally different from Shakespeare's. One must necessarily grasp this point to begin enjoying Jonson.

It is, therefore, not with Shakespeare that Jonson must be compared, but with Aristophanes, Menander and Terence among the ancients, and with Moliere among the moderns. With his highly stylized and disciplined writing, Jonson is not in the tradition of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Browning and Dylan Thomas, but in the more critical and satirical one of Congreve, Pope, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw and T.S. Eliot.

To conclude, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson are not to be compared with each other in any critical appreciation of their dramatic art, inasmuch as their chosen modes of drama are entirely different from each other. Instead, one would do well to be alive to their complementarity to gain a full appreciation of their achievement as Elizabethan dramatists. Shakespeare and Jonson are greatly complementary to each other as

dramatists. Each is great in his own chosen sphere of drama. Each completes the other and is completed by the other. It is their rich complementarity, perhaps, that has resulted in the rise of a drama which is at once romantic and satiric, the kind of drama that has been attempted later by playwrights like Ibsen, Granville-Barker and Beckett.

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NOTES

1. See Nevil Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy," *Essays and Studies* (1950), pp. 3-9.
2. See Madeleine Doran, *Endeavours of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1954), p. 149.
3. Nevill Coghill, p. 9.
4. Walter Raleigh, *Shakespeare* (London, 1907), p. 27.
5. Jonson's disciplined, reasoned and restrictive art was, perhaps, precisely what was needed in his day to check the exuberance of the romanticists.
6. Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (London, 1819), p. 48.
7. S.T. Coleridge, *The Complete Works of Coleridge*, ed. W.G.T. Shed, Vol. IV, p. 187.

The Bond that Becomes Bondage: Parents and Children in the Plays of Peter Shaffer

B. CHANDRIKA

It is a fact beyond dispute that the parental bond is the backbone of the stable institution of the family. To quote Joseph Kirk Folsom, "If we believe in Democracy, we shall seek to promote freedom in and through the family and to help parents build young personalities which will not sabotage Democracy in the large world through their frustrations and pent-up hostilities."[1] But in post-war times we see a young generation swayed by the jazz and narcotic culture, discarding traditional values and finding life utterly meaningless. Though many causes can be found to explain this tendency, the main cause seems to spring from nowhere but the family. To be precise, from the parents. "The primacy, the intimacy and the extensive protraction of parental influences are likely to render them crucial to the formation of personality tendencies among children."[2] Environmental influences have the greatest effect during the most rapid periods of growth and the destiny of the child is shaped at home.

This paper attempts a brief analysis of the treatment of the parental bond in the plays of Peter Shaffer, an eminent post-war playwright. In Shaffer the parental bond becomes a bondage from which children try to break out. The main reasons given in the plays for this tendency seem to be the marital conflicts and maladjustments, and, what can be termed the generation gap, a cliched phrase. It means, in this context, the clash of opposing interests, tastes and talents between parents and children. These, in turn, are born of the turbulent society of the time characterized by industrialization, urbanization and the spirit of alienation.

In *Five Finger Exercise* (1958) the parental bond is disrupted mainly because of the marital conflicts between Stanley Harrington and Louise. Prompted by the feeling that she had married beneath her, Louise is always engaged in hurting Stanley and creating problems in the family. The obsession with the social class is one that is shared by the mothers

in Shaffer. It recurs in *The White Liars* (1968) and *Equus* (1973). In the first it does not create problems in the married life, but only in the parent-child relationship, for the son, Tom, denounces the upper-middle class to which he belongs in order to become a pop-singer.

In *Equus*, when Alan Strang, the son, becomes a criminal and is taken to an asylum, Frank, the father, tells the doctor that it is the mother who is to blame, for she had created problems. "She thinks she had married beneath her," he tells Dr. Dysart. (*Three Plays*, 225)[3] All her talk about the "horsey family" she had had, about her grandfather all dressed up in bowler hats and jodhpurs, have only irritated Frank. The women never fail to hurt their partners by always reminding them of their social inferiority. The clashes that occur thereof help to shatter the parental bond, for the child is the one most affected by the quarrels between the parents.

Children become the ground on which marital warfares are fought out in two of the major plays of Shaffer—*Five-Finger Exercise* and *Equus*. Stanley Harrington and Louise are termed "impossible parents" by John Russell Taylor.[4] Claiming a seemingly false descent from French Aristocracy, Louise is always taunting her husband, a self-made business man. She encourages the children to hate their father and go against his will, all this to spite him. The natural victims are the children themselves—Clive and Pamela. The effect on Clive is rather shattering, for it has led him to disbelieve in the family itself; his own family he considers as "a tribe of wild cannibals." (*Three Plays*, 25)

The alienation Clive suffers from is revealed when he refuses to go out with his father for a walk. Louise, in her desire to be the bee-queen tries to win love and admiration from Clive by over-indulgence. This forces Clive to suppress his anger, but not for long. The rebel is released and he refuses to be the cossack attendant to the Empress; he even accuses his mother of competing with her own daughter for the affections of Walter, the young German tutor. He denounces having any moral obligation to the parents. He gets drunk and accuses his parents of never trying to understand him:

> Yes, you think you can treat me like a child—but you don't even know the right way to treat a child. Because a child is private and important and itself. Not an extension of you. Anymore than I am. (*Three Plays*, 52)

Alan Strang in *Equus* lacks the courage of Clive to explode

outwards; his explosion is inward and it makes him a criminal. Like Clive, Alan was the field on which the marital warfare was fought. Frank and Dora had been an incompatible couple—he a printer and she an ex-school teacher, he an atheist and she deeply religious. Like Louise, she also encouraged her son to hate his father. Feeling she had married beneath her, being proud of her 'horsey family', she is always at conflict with her husband. Frank does not allow his son to watch television, but she encourages him to do it. She instils fear of God into the heart of young Alan, but Frank wants him to grow up fearless. The inevitable result is that Alan becomes a mother's boy. And then came the turning point in his life. Dora presented her son with a picture of Jesus on his way to Calvary and taught him to kneel before it and pray. After a tiff about religion Frank destroyed the picture. Alan went quite hysterical and cried for days without stopping, but recovered when he was given a substitute—it was the picture of a horse. He knelt before it in prayer and continued the practice in secret till he evolved his own private mythology of the horse-god—*Equus*. Later when Jill tries to seduce him in the stables where he worked, he felt the eyes of the horse-god on him.

> The Lord thy God is a Jealous God. He sees you. He sees you for ever and ever. (*Three Plays*, 297)

Wishing to close that pursuing eye, he blinds the six horses in the stable with a metal spike. He is branded a criminal and is sent to Dr. Dysart's asylum to help him tide over the mental problem.

The turbulent situation is a result of the parents' incessant quarrels, but Dora is at a loss to see how it can affect the child, for both the parents loved him.

> We've done nothing wrong. We loved Alan. We gave him the best love we could. All right, we quarrel sometimes—all parents quarrel—we always make it up. (*Three Plays*, 270)

To quote E.A. Johns, "Criminological studies of delinquent boys, however, have found that parental separation was even more crucial than parental death."[5] In the case of Dora and Frank, though the separation is not affected they live on opposite poles. The fact that they don't even have sexual relationship is hinted at by Alan when he expresses his shock at seeing the righteous father at the blue movies:

> She [the mother] doesn't give him anything. That's right... That's really right.... She likes Ladies and Gentlemen. Do you understand what I mean? (*Three Plays*, 288)

The mother being frigid and the father being extremely righteous, Alan has been forced "to suppress and so divert his normal sexual drives."[6] Hence the terrible feeling of guilt in Alan which forced him to commit the crime:

> The net result of the clash between strong physiological urges demanding release, and even more substantial social prohibition is a high degree of conflict, frustration, anxiety and diffuse tension.[7]

Thus Alan's problem is entirely due to his parents' fault.

Jill, his girl friend, has also got a somewhat similar problem. Her father had quite abruptly left them and the mother was forced to earn her own living. Since the mother's sex-life is curbed, she does not approve of her daughter's dates. Jill is not allowed to bring her boy friends to the house:

> All my dates have to be sort of secret. I mean, she knows about them, but I can't bring anyone back home. She's so rude to them. (*Three Plays*, 281)

The curbing of the natural urges and inclinations creates deep psychological frustration in the adolescents. And it helps greatly to break the parental bond.

The two sets of parents discussed here try to dominate their children with their ideas and ideals, but fail to do so. In *Shrivings* (1974) we meet a father who tries to dominate his son by sheer force and brutality. Mark Askelon is a sadist who cannot love any human being, be it wife or son. As in *Equus* the wife had been extremely religious, seen always with a prayer book in hand. In *Equus* Frank had resorted to the blue movies but Mark resorts to other ladies, and that too, right in front of his wife, in order to provoke her. The wife had died and now he carries her effigy with him wherever he goes. At one minute he kneels in front of it in prayer and the next minute he shouts obscenities at it and throws liquor on its face. He is a person of terrible contradictions. When he asks the effigy,

> Can't you ever cry? Can't you ever fight me like a woman, not

fucking saint? (*Three Plays*, 127)

it speaks volumes of his married life.

David, the son, had to put up with this from his early days. The jealous father did not even allow him to visit the dying mother. David is deeply affected by the attitude of the father; he becomes a dropout—of two public schools and Cambridge University. He takes refuge with Gideon Petrice, Mark's friend, an international figure who works for world peace. Gideon can be deemed as the father surrogate and his home is a peaceful haven, a surrogate family, for David till the jealous Mark makes his entry. In his extreme jealousy, Mark tries to win back his son by wrong means. He even accuses him of having homosexual relation with Gideon. But David refuses to yield; the rift is complete, the bond passes from bondage to destruction.

Clive, Alan, Tom and David are all rebels, and they are rebellious adolescents taken out of post-war British society. Shaffer pictures another rebel in Walter, the young German tutor in *Five Finger Exercise*. He has run away from his Nazi parents as David had from his father. And just like David, he takes refuge with the Harringtons, hoping to find a surrogate family; where David succeeds, Walter fails. In the game they play in *Shrivings*, David presses the "death apple," revealing his desire for the death of his father. Walter pretends that his parents are dead whereas they are very much alive in Germany. Walter's father, a faithful disciple of Hitler, had worked at the concentration camps. He used to hit his son when the son failed to recite the slogans of Hitler; the mother never came to his help:

> She used to smile at him, stare at him—as though he owned her. And when he used to hit me, she would just—just look away as though what he was doing was difficult, yes—but unavoidable, like training a puppy. (*Three Plays*, 71)

Walter and David are both unhealthy products of non-understanding parents who try to dominate their children by sheer force and brutality.

The last play of Shaffer to be discussed here—*Amadeus* (1979)—is not centred on post-war Britain. It is the story of the great musician Mozart, and his competition with Saliery. Mozart as father is not highlighted, but it is the relationship of Mozart to his father that comes into the limelight. Like all other such bonds, this one is also a love-hate

one. When Mozart married without his father's consent, the estrangement began; the father refused to help him when he was struck by poverty and misfortune. In bitterness, Mozart reaches the conclusion that his father is jealous of him for being cleverer than him. But when the news of his father's death reaches him, he is struck by remorse:

> He watched for me all my life—and I betrayed him.
>
> I married where he begged me not. I left him alone. I danced and played billiards and fooled about, and he sat by himself night after night in an empty house, and no woman to care for him. (*Amadeus*, 81)[8]

During his last moments, Mozart calls his father— "Take me, Papa. Take me. Put down your arms and I'll hop into them." (*Amadeus*, 101)— revealing the strength of the bond.

This strength is absent in the parental bond of post-war Britain as found in the plays of Shaffer. It is possible to trace a pattern in his depiction of the parental bond which passes through bondage to destruction or decay. In the first play, *Five Finger Exercise*, the children rebel against the parents but do not break out. In *White Liars* the son has moved out but does not stop from visiting the parents though he claims to have abolished them. Alan Strang in *Equus* becomes a criminal and lands at an asylum, and there is possibility that he may be restored to the family by the effort of the psychologist Dr. Dysart. But in *Shrivings* the father and son are completely estranged; the bond falls into decay. The final kiss need not be taken as a token of love. David was full of burning emotions at the time when he raised his hands to hit the father, and in helpless anger he kisses his father instead. It reminds us of a similar scene in Pinter's *A Night Out* where Albert raises the clock to hit his mother but does not do so. The fact that he does not do it or that he returns to his mother does not mean their relationship is smooth or healthy.

In Shaffer's plays, the parents try to dangerously dominate the lives of the children and bring about desolation and ruin in the family. They never hide their true emotions regarding the children, but openly state their hatred, anger and venom. The mother's claim to the sacrifices they make are entirely false; often by imposing their ideas on the children they curb the development of their personalities. Very often children are the ground on which they fight out their tensions. As a result, the children become rebels, introverts, misfits in society. The association of delin-

quent children with broken homes stresses the necessity of strengthening the parental bond which in turn will beget a healthy young generation, not easily swayed by jazz and narcotic culture.

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NOTES

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3. *Three Plays* (1976; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).
4. John Russell Taylor, *Peter Shaffer* (London: Longman for the British Council, 1974), p. 5.
5. E.A. Johns, *The Social Structure of Modern Britain* (Oxford: Pergaman Press, 1975), p. 66.
6. Peter Shaffer, p. 30.
7. Albert Bandura, "The Stormy Decade: Fact or Fiction?" in *Family and Human Development*, p. 84.
8. *Amadeus* (1981; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

Book Reviews

Rise of the Indian Novel in English: **K.S. Ramamurti, Sterling, 1987, Rs. 150.**

Sustained studies on Indian novel in English, tracing the origin, development and continuity of this most important literary genre in India are few and far between. The ones that have preceded (by Iyengar and Raizada) do not fill the vacuum in terms of relating the historical with the creative. The originality of K.S. Ramamurti's approach to Indian Fiction in English lies in dispelling the belief that fiction writing was a gift of the British to India. The British fiction may have provided varieties of models but its genesis lay in the national self-expression seeking simultaneous manifestation in all the languages of the country, consequent upon the collective reawakening threading through the social cultural changes building up at the end of the 19th century. Such an approach invites a totally new interpretation of the nature, form and structure of the Indian novel in English, thus making it a part of the Indian sociological response in literature. This nativization makes both for the originality of Ramamurti's insight and foresight. Writing in English was just one more choice of another medium. His insight gains foresight when he emphasizes continuity in the creative process which shapes the Indian Novel in English.

Through his meticulous research, exploration and analysis Ramamurti disproves yet another fallacy that the novels written between 1856 and 1920 were poor in conception and inconsequential in execution. He, therefore, presents an elaborate critique of Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta* and assigns it the same importance as held by the fiction of Defoe and Richardson in the English novel. He also credits it with the rise of realism and individualism in fiction. More than this, Ramamurti regards it as a "forerunner of that species of fiction written in English by Indians in which Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* stands foremost." He like Toru Dutt, Mrs. Ghosal, Sorabji Cornelia, Krupabai Sathianthan and Shevantibai M. Nikamba is yet another factor in the emergence of a feminine sensibility enriching Indian novel in English and projecting the image of the "new woman," changing the aesthetics of perception and art. In Mrs.

Ghosal's *An Unfinished Song* he traces the beginning of lyricism and the use of the stream of consciousness technique in Indian novel in English leading to its flowering in Mulk Raj Anand and Anita Desai.

A parallel historical situation and literary merit, as in the 18th century England, is traced to the writers of sketches like Behramji Malbari and Nagesh Vishwanath Pai. In the trenchant prose of Nirad. C. Chaudhari the author observes a direct forerunner of the fiction of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Nagrajan. Though the book notes in romances like *Sarla* and *Hingana* by Chakravarti Khetrapal and *Padmini* and *The Dive for Death* by T. Ramakrishna Pillai a stage of transition of going over to realism, it discounts the overrated praise of the later romances by the British critics, thus correcting our perspectives not only on Indian novel in English but also on the criteria of library judgement to be applied independent of the British myopia or indulgence in critical opinion. This independence and objectivity in literary evaluation of our own works of art sets this book as a model in evolving critical perspectives which are native to be genuine.

Accepting the position that since Indian philosophical background does not permit the character of the hero to be ego based, K.S. Ramamurti emphasizes the need for developing a novel which is Indian both in form and content. And he finds its first models in A. Madhaviah's *Clarinda* and *Thillai Govindan*. As for the beginning of theme of east west encounter in novel, he traces it to the novels of S.M. Mitra and Sarat Kumar Ghose, thus extending its geneology backwards and providing new bearings for research and evaluation in comparitivistics. Similarly, the author devotes a very fruitful and enlightening chapter on the growth and development of the historical novel starting from Bankim Chandra to Romesh Chunder Dutt, Sardar Joginder Singh, Kali Krishna Lahiri, Vimala Raina and G.D. Khosla. And he regards A.S.P. Iyer's *Baladitya* as "the best historical Indian English novel ever written." The study rightly stops at 1920 which marks the beginning of a new era, a new milieu and therefore a new direction in Indian novel in English, deserving a matching literary history of merit, which a scholar like K.S. Ramamurti alone can rightly venture upon. For its painstaking and critical historiography the book could well be taken as a model in writing the literary history of Indian writing in English as a whole. The book also has an exhaustive and highly useful bibliography appended for prospective researchers. It is a book of rare merit to come out in recent times.

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William Golding, *Fire Down Below*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989. 313 pp. $17.95 London: Faber and Faber, 1989. £11.95.

William Golding's *Fire Down Below*, not only concludes a great fictional voyage, but with it the nobel laureate completes the trilogy he began in 1980 with his Booker's Prize Winning novel *Rites of Passage*. Here, we meet an elderly Edmund Talbot, divested of the arrogance and vanity of his youth, looking back on the voyage with mature eyes—much as one would look back on life with self-questioning and self-understanding.

In *Rites of Passage*, Edmund Talbot starts recording details of his voyage aboard an Australia-bound ship, for the benefit of his aristocratic patron. He hopes to complete his journey smoothly, "without a tempest," as he visualizes nothing much colourful or interesting within the confines of the old man-of-war, *Britania*. But soon, events aboard give him ammunition and the journal becomes "deadly as a loaded gun." Byronic as he poses to be, Talbot is young, vain and unwitting. He enjoys portraying his co-passengers as caricatures and the situations as farcical. His vein throughout the narrative is comic, as his professed aim is to write in a light manner for the amusement of his godfather.

Ironically, the journal presented by his eccentric godfather finishes, but not the voyage. So, Edmund Talbot, now intoxicated by the art of writing and the possibilities it places at his disposal, buys a new journal from the ship's store and writes purely for "personal pleasures." The end-product is another volume, *Close Quarters* (1987). While the ship charts its perilous journey, life within its folds takes a different course. A drama with love, dance, revelry and finally death, is enacted. At the end of *Close Quarters* we have two revelations: that Talbot is mature enough to shed "tears of understanding," and that he has reached Sydney Cove safely.

But, Golding has a penchant for surprises; he and his Talbot open a bagful of reminiscences for the readers. There have been more incidents aboard the dilapidated ship that Edmund did not record in *Close Quarters*. As an elderly man, well-settled in life, busy with his administrative duties, but nostalgic all the same, he opts to ruminate and a sequel to the previous two novels is born, *Fire Down Below*, the finale to the trilogy.

The new novel takes the outworn ship through several difficulties. There have been storms, a trying time labouring out of the doldrums and finally, the safety of Sydney Cove. The travails of the ship match the landscape within. The ship reeks and cracks, so do human actions. They are fetid and sick. One encounters jealousy, anger, ambition and suppressed desires. The journey of the ship runs parallel to the journey of life.

The inmates show themselves in their true colours—some are elevated, some degraded. Behind Summer's placid exterior, there is a volcano ready to burst. Mr. Prettiman is not the "comic philosopher." And, Talbot, we realize, is not the vainboaster of his earlier days, but a mature man, who learns to see others as fellow-humans.

The title of the novel is symbolic and the image of 'fire' runs through it. The fire down below is the fire which may ignite the timber if red-hot iron rods are pierced through the foremost base; it is the fire in human heart; it is the heatedness smouldering in human personalities; and ultimately, it stands for human beings— "the fire down below here—sparks of the Absolute—matching the fire up there." In the novel we see Benet and Summers inflamed in anger; desires flaring up; and factions leaving behind them sparks and ashes. We can also discern suppressed desires and sexuality, aglow.

It is all Talbot's narrative from which the author cleverly dissociates himself. The narrator enriches his work with archaic expressions to keep intact the sense of the times, which we know is Napoleonic. Profuse references to Austen, Smollett, Fielding and Napoleon, "the Corsican tyrant," garnished with 'tarpaulin' give authenticity to the period but too frequent a use of the 'tarpaulin' weakens the descriptions. In *Close Quarters*, Edmund is "taken aback" by the "direct indirection" of the nautical expression. In *Fire Down Below* he tries his hand at the pithy, edgy but polite expressions of the 19th century atmosphere.

Edmund, the ostentatious young man of the first novel of the sequel, undergoes considerable change by the time he writes his third book. He is a self-questioning man, who looks back at the pleasures and pains of the voyage, at the regrets and hilarity of life, and at the inner voyage man takes to maturity. For him it has been a voyage of self-discovery. But, Golding's Talbot is not a Ulysses nor is his voyage an Odyssey. One character remarks, "It was not Odyssey. It is no type, emblem, metaphor of the human condition. It is, or rather it *was*, what it was. A series of events.

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List of Abbreviations Used

ACM	*The Aligarh Critical Miscellany*
AN	*African Newsletter*
BSIE	*Bulletin of the State Institute of English for Maharashtra*, Aurangabad.
CF	*Creative Forum*
CLB	*The Charles Lamb Bulletin*
CR	*Criticism and Research* (Dept. of English, B.H.U.)
CQ	*Commonwealth Quarterly*
DUJES	*Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies*
ESI	*English Studies of India*
ET	*English Today*
Fl	*Front-line*
IA	*India Abroad*
IAu	*Indian Author*
IH	*Indian Horizons*
IJAL	*Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*
IJES	*Indian Journal of English Studies*
IJDL	*Indian Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*
IL	*Indian Literature*
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JCL	*The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*
JEFL	*Journal of English and Foreign Languages*
JELT	*The Journal of English Language Teaching*
JIWE	*Journal of Indian Writing in English*
JJCL	*Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*
JLS	*Journal of Liteary Studies*
JSAL	*Journal of South Asian Literature*
JTaS	*Journal of Tamil Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Telugu Studies*, Telugu University, A.P.
KB	*Kavya Bharati*
LA	*Literature Alive*
LC	*The Literary Criterion*
LE	*The Literary Endeavour*
LF	*Language Forum*
LHY	*Literary Half-yearly*
MET	*Modern English Teacher*

MJCL *Meerut Journal of Comparative Literature and Language*
MRES *The Madras Review of English Studies*
NLH *New Literary Horizon*
NQ *New Quest*
PJES *Punjab Journal of English Studies*
PURBA *Punjab University Research Bulletin* (Arts)
Psy *Psycholingua*
RUSE *Rajasthan University Studies in English*
SJS *Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Regional Institute of English, Bangalore.
SN *Sangeeta Natak*
Str. *Strategies*, Los Angeles
WLT *World Literature Today*
YR *Yearly Review*

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