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Void and Plenitude: A Comparative Study of John Keats and J. Krishnamurti

JAGDISH V. DAVE

Keats's greatness is directly felt in his poetry. Even fastidious Matthew Arnold had to admit: "No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness. 'I think,' he said humbly, 'I shall be among the English poets after my death.' He is; with Shakespeare."[1] But critics are baffled as to wherein exactly lies the charm that elevates him so much. The kind of 'truth and seriousness' that Arnold looks for in a classic are perhaps wanting in Keats. Symons writes: "With Shelley, even though he may at times seem to become vague in thought, there is always an intellectual structure; Keats, definite in every word, in every image, lacks intellectual structure."[2] It would be incorrect to say that in Keats's poetry, is discernible the 'dissociation of sensibility' which, to Eliot, appears to be the general character of all poetry after Milton and Dryden, for Keats does not either 'think' in ordinary sense or 'overflow' with an upsurge of purely personal passions and emotions. There is, moreover, a rare fusion of faculties with a powerful spiritual ingredient (not reckoned by Eliot) in his integral vision of life, which in fact, makes it much more than what 'unified sensibility' betokens.

That Keats is overwhelmingly 'sensuous' cannot be denied. Hence, baffled by this ostensible character which alone cannot make a poet truly great, and intrigued as much by the immediate feeling of an unmistakable spiritual factor which he could not name or describe or explain in terms of any concepts known to him, Arnold had to admit: "The truth is that 'the yearning passion for the Beautiful,'which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the master-passion, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental man, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion." (51)

Subsequent critics, too, with little success, have attempted variously to define or describe the subtle intellection or imperceptible spirituality

that sublimates Keats's sensations. John Jones, for example, distinguishes between the Romantic 'feeling' which "drags a 'what' or 'how' or 'why' in its train and Keats' end-stopped feel which bears the universal Romantic stamp of heart-certainty, but stands alone in being a heart-certainty about nothing beyond itself."[3] Jones supports his position with Keats' own concept of 'Negative Capability' "that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." (16) But this still does not hit the nail on the head.

F.R. Leavis reads particularly in *The Fall of Hyperion: A Vision* and "To Autumn," the profoundest kind of impersonality, and observes: "It was in the Romantic period, the aesthete who achieved so un-Byronic and so un-Shelleyan a note in the contemplation of human suffering—the aesthete no longer an aesthete. There is no afflatus here, no generous emotionality. The facts, the objects of contemplation, absorb the poet's attention completely; he has none left for his feelings as such. As a result, his response, his attitude, seems to us to inhere in the facts, and to have itself the authenticity of fact." (334) The two do not remain different. The moral and philosophical wisdom of the poet forming his response or attitude, concretizes in the objective facts themselves. Leavis, always a perceptive critic, makes no mistake in recognizing Keats's achievement, but fails, or perhaps does not try to identify the spiritual factor which achieves the result.

Gerald Bullett appears to be nearer the mark when he observes: "That his 'life of sensations' meant the very reverse of confinement within the senses is abundantly clear from his general drift, as well as from particular passages 'The setting sun will always set me to sights or if a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.' This was the kind of 'sensation' that Keats chose to indulge in. The saints and mystics have done no less—and no more."[4] But Bullett is still descriptive of the effect of Keats's poetry. He likens him to saints and mystics, but fails to realize the source from which Keats's spirituality flows in view of Keats's indifference to religion and belief in God of any kind.

The fact is that Keats's perception which lends unique charm to all phenomena is incomparable in the Western tradition of mysticism and poetry. Here the feeling is there. The feeler is absent. The experience is there. The experiencer evaporates. All things appear to be bathing in the light and delight that flow from the eyes that are Keats's and yet not Keats's. It is as if he is a hollow flute from which flows a melody played by Cosmic Consciousness in love of its universal beauty which is blissful truth. Individual ego that turns the impersonal harmony of the

real into a sorrowful strife of personal existence and thus obstructs the outflow of divine music, as in a stuffed reed, stands dissolved here, and the universe's awareness of itself rushes out through the vacuum. This appears to be the meaning of Keats's soft-quoted letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27th October 1818:

> As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime, which is a thing *per se* and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing. It had no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other body. . . . If then he has no self, and I am a Poet, where is the wonder that I should say that I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess, but is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as opinion growing out of my identical nature—how can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of everyone in the room begins so to press upon me that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of children.[5]

This does not happen in every poet. It seems to happen in the most objective literary artists like Homer and Shakespeare. Nevertheless, the presence of the artist, viewing with remarkable detachment all creation, and watching his own creations as they grow into themselves free from his own subjective lights and shades, is not altogether unfelt in each one of such artists. There are rare moments when the world is lifted up to spiritual light and beauty. The rest of the narrative recreates our own world with the stamp of verisimilitude with occasional flashes of beauty and ugliness, a mingled human lot of pain and pleasure, the vicissitudes of time and fortune, and at last human rest and peace.

But what happens in Keats is something different. His identity, his

ego-presence stands annihilated. There is no authorial nature to control his creation in detachment. It merges into the natural creation which joyfully plays through him. The dissolution of the identity does not mean that the poet is dead. Quite on the contrary he becomes more sensitive and alive than the living. But there is now a being within him which is not a normal human being. It is like water which has no form of its own, but assumes the shape of that which it fills—a pot or bowl or jug or glass. There is complete oneness in each one of the changing forms. Apartness does not exist. That is why in his work we find men and nature not unlike themselves but aglow with beauty and bathing in love that is no man's love, almost consistently. The world still looking ours looks totally transformed into 'a thing of beauty' which is 'a joy for ever.' The joy and beauty flow not from Keats who truthfully says that his identity is annihilated, but from the supernal light that occupies the void.

Herein lies Keats's mysticism. All mysticism is communion with the Divine Principle or any of its personalized forms which is more than real. Beauty and bliss are the characteristics of the concrete experience. Spontaneous humility and love born of submission to the higher being is the hallmark of the authenticity of experience. Actual behaviour of the mystic must bespeak all this, not merely his words which if uninformed by experience are empty. Keats passes this test. Therefore, his mysticism is genuine. But it is not Christian mysticism. Keats never loved a personal God or any divine principle external to himself. Hence, there is no question of his submitting himself to any such presence.

Keats's mysticism looks similar to the Buddhist one which consists in ego-annihilation or Nirvana which literally means blowing out of the flame. But Buddhist mysticism is the mysticism of life-negation, for it discerns no beauty in life, revolts against its change and suffering, and realizes peace by bowing out from its stream. What follows is metaphysical nihilism to be accomplished by the moral discipline of Noble Eightfold Path.

As against this, Keats's is the mysticism of inner void and fullness of existence. He sees peace and plenitude around. In all this he resembles almost entirely J. Krishnamurti, who, too, stands distinguished from the Buddha in the same way as does Keats. Sanjiva Rao writes about Krishnamurti: "He is and says he is nothing, and yet to be nothing, is that not the height of spiritual attainment? For when one is nothing, one is all things."[6] Then Rao reports Krishnamurti's explanation of self-annihilation as liberation which looks like a commentary not only on Krishnamurti but also on Keats's experience of the inner void and outward plenitude.

> It is wrong, he said, to regard liberation as annihilation. . . .
>
> Formerly there was (or seemed to be) an Ego, and growth appeared as the unfolding of this. Now there is no longer an Ego; it has disappeared for ever at liberation. What we have therefore to grasp, if we can—and it is no easy matter—is the idea of a universal life building up fresh instruments for its self-expression; those instruments being in the world of form and so having, in that world, the outward appearance of individuality. The chief mark of post-liberation activity will be that it is absolutely natural, effortless, spontaneous, unselfconscious. The life thus manifested in the material world will have its roots in the Eternal. It will have realized its own universality. And, because there is no longer any sense of separate "I-ness" to obstruct things, its activity will be as simple and as natural as that of a flower. . . .
>
> To put it another way, the Ego dies in order that Life may live.
>
> The old saying, 'Thou must die in order to live,' still remains true. (59-62)

In the light of the above could clearly be understood Keats's statement: "That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all." (258) This is no Romantic afflatus filling like inconstant wind the sails of the poet's barge and falling off as suddenly leaving him, motionless. It is constant work of nature or the poet's natureless nature which bears poetry like a tree bears as effortlessly in slow process its leaves and flowers. And such "Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject. How beautiful are the retired flowers! How would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, 'admire me, I am a violet!—Dote upon me, I am a primrose!'" (257-58)

Keats calls his peculiar perception 'Imagination.' There appears to be little difference between 'sensation' and 'Imagination' in his usage and they occur almost as synonymous in the same passage: "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream,—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it may be, 0 for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" (256) He prefers direct feeling of the real called Sensation to conjectural truth of Philosophy that may be described as abstract knowledge. 'Imagination' is the name of a unique perception that qualifies normal

sensuousness. It endows the real with a light divine. It has no further aesthetic or mimetic or inventive meaning. What the poet envisions becomes true. The true is what he envisions. But something from his supersensitive soul transforms the 'vision-truth' into a thing of beauty. All this is quite unlike a purely sensuous man's pains and pleasures of sensations.

And this 'sensation-imagination combine' excludes nothing. It choicelessly shines upon Iagos and Imogens, upon the good and the bad alike. Spring does not bring to the poet a special delight and winter's dreariness does not make him long like Shelley for the past season. Both alike look beautiful to him:

> Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
> Think not of them, thou hast thy music, too![7]

There are no self-forged reactions here. There is only the fully responsive and joyful sensitivity of Identityless consciousness. This is the spirituality akin to Krishnamurti's: "Until we have got rid of the Ego, most of our conscious life is made up of reactions. Take love, for example. This is, in most cases, a reaction set up within us by some person who happens to attract us. A person who does not happen to set up this reaction, we do not love. But after liberation, when pure life is at work, what occurs is quite the reverse. Then love becomes a life-force going out from ourselves. It may be compared to a searchlight, which renders lovable all on whom its beam may happen to fall. It is thus independent of its objects, since the light can be turned just as easily upon one as another." (Rao, 62)

Northrop Fry's generalization that Romantics are escapists, does not apply to Keats, for he seeks to evade nothing and faces all things sweetly. Moneta in *The Fall of Hyperion* tells the poet that the truly great poets:

> Who love their fellows even to death,
> Who feel the giant agony of the world

are not found in heaven, for

> . . . they are no dreamers weak;
> They seek no wonder but the human face.
> No music but a happy noted voice.[8]

They remain content with the rough and tumble of life. They do not seek

to run away from the earth into a world of dream. In fact, they, not the dreamers are true poets:

> The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
> Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
> The one pours out a balm upon the world.
> The other vexes it. . . .

F.R. Leavis is right in his comment upon such passages of this poem:

> What the strength of influence, the intensity of the effect, shows is how much the study was part of the discipline and self-searching with which Keats met the disasters, the blows of fate, that were making life for him overwhelmingly a matter of 'the agonies, the strife of human hearts.' The immediately personal urgency of the preoccupation with suffering and death comes out plainly in the passage describing his nightmare race against the burning of the 'gummed leaves.' But this personal urgency is completely impersonalized; it has become the life, the informing spirit, of the profoundest kind of impersonality. There is no element of self-pity—nothing at all of the obliquely self-regarding—about the attitude of the famous lines:
>
> 'None can usurp this height,' returned the shade.
> 'But those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.'

But this "profoundest kind of impersonality" does not come from "study" of books and thinking in ordinary sense. It springs from the kind of consciousness that Krishnamurti calls Intelligence. Krishnamurti, too, dismisses the artists, the writers, the painters and the whole tribe of them who are constantly building utopias before us, "the dreaming kind of artists, as mischief makers." (Vas, 56) He writes: "Intelligence is sensitive awareness of the totality of life; life with its problems, contradictions, miseries, joys. To be aware of all this, without choice and without being caught by any one of its issues and to flow with the whole of life is intelligence. This intelligence is not the result of influence and environment; it is not the prisoner of either of them and so can understand them and so be free of them."[9]

All this does not mean that Keats had been all the time choicelessly aware. No mystic, not even Christ or Buddha or Krishnamurti, remained always unflickeringly in a blissful condition. Perpetual blissfulness is denied to anyone living in body. That is why Buddhist philosophy dis-

tinguishes between the state of *Nirvana* realized in the life-time, the light of which fluctuates. And *Parinirvana*, which is a permanent beatitude, and which one who has attained *Nirvana* reaches on the fall of the body. *Advaita Vedant* has similar concepts of "jivan mukti" (liberation while the body is still alive) and "videha mukti" (absolute liberation after death).

Keats's consciousness appears to be fluctuating within five different states: (l) sleep (2) normal wakefulness (3) egoless awareness which means very sensitive seeing of the Intelligence (4) more intense form of this awareness which may be called ecstasy or trance, and (5) the desire to realize a consummation and permanence of this ecstasy in death.

The normal wakefulness, the second of the above states, is the condition of personal pain and misery, "The weariness, the fever and the fret." All men groan under the weight of life. It is the common condition of mankind. Keats's lot was heavier, and he had more reason to complain than most men. That is why when he cannot rise higher, he craves to sink lower into the first state or sleep for a riddance from pain:

> O magic sleep! O comfortable bird
> That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
> Till it is hush'd and smooth![10]

Such longing for sleep continues to recur in Keats's poetry. And there is a big poem captioned "Sleep and Poetry" which fully exhibits the states lower and higher than ordinary wakefulness of personal suffering.

Higher than normal consciousness is Keats's 'identityless awareness' or what may be termed Intelligence. Keats's life ran largely in this state. This is what enabled him to bear peacefully and self-forgetfully the pains of his personal life.

But there is a state higher still. Krishnamurti calls it 'benediction.' In Keats it may be called, borrowing a phrase from his *Endymion*, "a breathless honey feel of bliss," an ecstasy such as one he realizes in "Ode to a Nightingale." It is, as it were, choiceless awareness become most intense inspiring oblivion of the whole existence. This state is akin to 'Samadhi' or trance of a liberated individual in Vedant philosophy. Fall back from the ecstasy to Intelligence, could be likened to 'Vyutthana' or waking up from trance. The characteristic of Intelligence is peace, that of trance is bliss.

Then in such a state Keats exhibits longing for death which is different from the longing for sleep and inertia. The first seeks to turn ecstasy into everlasting trance, the latter is a wish for anaesthetization of senses. The former is supposed to be the fullest sensitivity, and the

highest degree of joy, while the latter denotes total insensitivity. Hence, F.R. Leavis's contention that 'Ode to a Nightingale' "moves outwards and upwards towards life as strongly as it moves downwards towards extinction" (315) does not appear to be correct. Here "drowsy numbness" indicates forgetfulness of all things on account of an excess of joy that culminates in a trance, not ordinary numbness or insensitivity. Consistently the poet seeks further consummation of ecstasy alike in "a draught of vintage" and "the viewless wings of Poesy." There is only ceaseless upward movement towards "easeful Death" that is supposed to be the fullest possible life free from fluctuations and when the vision is fled, it is difficult to decide whether the poet has fallen back upon the state of Intelligence or the ordinary wakefulness. He is not sure if he is asleep or awake. One thing certain is that the intensity of the trance is past.

The values of religious and mystical thought are all enshrined in Keats's poetry. He himself says and shows that truth is beauty, beauty joy, the joy of love, and love spontaneously realizes goodness when it flows out egolessly to shine upon all beings without discrimination.

NOTES

1. Matthew Arnold, *John Keats: Odes*, ed. G.S. Fraser (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 52.
2. F.R. Leavis, "Keats," in *English Critical Texts*, ed. D.J. Eignright & E.D. Chikera (London: Oxford, 1970), pp. 314-15.
3. John Jones, *John Keats's Dream of Truth* (London: Chatto, 1980), p. 10.
4. *John Keats's Poems*, ed. Gerald Bullett (London: Everyman, 1969), pp. ix-x.
5. John Keats, *English Critical Texts*, ed. Eignright and Chikera, pp. 258-59.
6. Sanjiva Rao, *The Mind of Krishnamurti*, ed. Luis S.R. Vas (Bombay: Jaico, 1980), p. 12.
7. John Keats, "To Autumn" in *Keats: Poetical Works*, ed. H.W. Garrod (N.Y.: Oxford, 1956), pp. 218-19.
8. "The Fall of Hyperion" in *John Keats's Poems*, ed. Bullett, pp. 278-79.
9. John Keats, "Endyminon" in *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, ed. Andrew Lang (London: Ward Lock), p. 17.
10. J. Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (Madras: Krishnamurti Foundation), pp. 96-97.

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Poems of Harold Pinter as an Expression of His Dramatic Patterns and Meaning

P.V. PANDE

Harold Pinter is one of the most difficult dramatists on the modern British theatrical scene whose plays have puzzled the audiences and the critics alike ever since his first major play *The Birthday Party* was performed in 1958. But his reputation has increased with every play that he has written, even though they still continue to puzzle. It was very natural, then, that a host of critics have chosen to 'interpret' the dramas of Pinter in all possible ways and manners. A large number of articles and full-length studies have been written, highlighting all the possible angles and aspects of Pinter's dramaturgy. Martin Esslin, Walter Kerr, John Russell Taylor, Louis Gorden, John Lahr, Ruby Cohen, Austin Quigley, James Hollis and a number of other critics have contributed to the Pinter criticism by providing thematic, symbolic, philosophical, ritualistic, psychological and existentialistic interpretations of Pinter's plays. Hollis, Brown and Quigley have devoted their attention to the language, dialogues and silences in the plays of Pinter. While taking cognizance of all these studies of Pinter's plays and his dramaturgy, it is felt that though these excellent attempts by all those renowned critics are aimed at 'explaining' enigmatic nature of Pinter's plays and their meanings on thematic, philosophical, psychological, sociological as well as linguistic levels, the satisfactory 'understanding' has still eluded both the critics as well as the audiences/readers.

J.R. Brown has tried to interpret the action of Pinter's plays in terms of the language of the dialogues that his characters use. James Hollis has made a full-length study of the silences of Pinter's drama and attempted to provide an understanding of the 'puzzling and enigmatic' plays. Austin Quigley, rejecting all the interpretations including the one afforded by Hollis and Brown, has tried to 'explain' the plays of Pinter in terms of 'Interpersonal relationships' between the characters of several of the plays.

All these critics have, also, drawn very heavily on various comments and statements that Pinter has made in several of his talks and interviews, regarding his own dramaturgy. John R. Brown while commenting on the dialogues of Pinter, has made a very pertinent comment: "Pinter not only writes dialogue that presents both conscious and unconscious thoughts behind the words, but he is also adept at keeping several flows of consciousness alive in a single conversation and making them apparent to the audience. Again, he is in company with Chekhov. He is also asking actors to sustain a kind of illusion that has been considered radically by Stanislavsky. (The help it gives in identifying sub-text beneath the words of a play is one of the reasons why "the method" has become so ubiquitous in twentieth century theatres.)[1]

The "Stanislavsky method" of using text and sub-text, to delve deep into the meaning of the dialogues of the characters in Chekhov's plays has fired the imagination of many actors and directors and dramatic critics all over the continents. Brown's application of this 'method' to Pinter's language of the dialogues was a pioneering step in the linguistic criticism of Pinter's plays. Austin Quigley, in his seminal work *The Pinter Puzzle,* has taken note of this approach of Brown, but disagreed with the setting up of the "two-way" interpretation in terms of 'text' and 'sub-text,' as it did not 'resolve' the problem that puzzled the audiences, nor did it provide "understanding" of the plays of Pinter. He says: "What begins as an attempt to cope with the unexplicit in Pinter's plays slides almost imperceptively into means of avoiding it. The danger of words like "behind" and "underneath" is that *they deflect the intended contrast between the two levels of language into a contrast between language and something else. Control of something else is then lost by contrasting it with anything that is available as evidence.*"[2] (italics mine)

Both Brown and Quigley have assumed that language used by Pinter's characters is always a means of avoiding what they want to say or 'mean.' But it is felt that there is also a third assumption, which Pinter has identified, though not so frequently, nor so clearly, and it concerns with that language by which people really do say what they mean. This type of language is rarely employed and people work hard to keep it concealed beneath their "spoken silences" and "buried in the unspoken silences,"[3] but sometime or other, they do use it. Pinter has himself stated very clearly in his speech on the occasion of Seventh National Students' Drama Festival, Bristol: "I am not saying that no character can ever say what in fact he means. Not at all. I have found that there invariably does come a moment when this happens, where he says something, perhaps, which he has never said before. And when this happens,

what he says is irrevocable and can never be taken back."

As this statement is quite in contrast with the premises presumed by Brown and Quigley, it becomes necessary to have a fresh look at the language of Pinter's dialogues and also his silence. The conceptual framework provided by Stanislavsky's method of text and sub-text, suggested by Brown for the understanding of Pinter's plays, very much on the line of that of Chekhov, does not find favour with Austin Quigley, and he is reluctant to accept the theory of text and sub-text on the grounds that there is a 'dichotomy' between the two, whereby no satisfactory solution to the problem of 'unexplicit' in Pinter's play can be provided.

This dichotomy of text and sub-text in the case of Pinter's plays, as posited by Quigley, needs to be resolved so that the enigma that Pinter's plays are, can be 'explained' or 'understood,' and in this connection, Pinter's own statement, made in 'The Bristol Speech,' had to be taken a serious note of. During this speech, Pinter has suggested a "two way" difference between the silence of his plays: the "spoken silences" and the "unspoken silences," which conflict with each other and thus exteriorize the inner fears of characters into outer menaces.

This exteriorizing of inner fears of the characters into outer menace is the outcome of the conflict between the spoken and unspoken silences of Pinter. Similarly if text and sub-text dichotomy does not yield the 'explaining' of the inexplicit in a Pinter play, then some other dimension needs to be given to these two linguistic levels, which would help resolve this dichotomy and make the inexplicit explicit. Hence, this third dimension can be that of a 'conscious-sub-text' which would yield the "hidden meaning" of the "irrevocable word" or "the dislocated word," by fusing the text and sub-text as well as the spoken and unspoken silences. When these two silences fuse, something has happened and something has, perhaps, been achieved.[4] This "something happened" has also "twenty three other possibilities," which operate on the twenty fourth one, and once again the "process of modification begins all over again."[5] Hence a triadic concept of the language levels of text, sub-text and conscious sub-text can be employed which may provide some consideration about the 'abundance of possibilities' which the characters and the playwright himself have to confront in any given situation. At the same time, it can be highly theatrical in its creation of suspense, as tension mounts to crisis in which the confrontation between the spoken and unspoken silence takes place. The unspoken silence yields its "momentary and fragmentary secret" to the spoken silence and then "something has happened."[6] Once more the characters assume their postures and the game of dominance, and mastery-subservience be-

gins all over again. The characters who are initially in paralyzed and static postures, create 'possibilities' for themselves to assume fluid but enigmatic postures at the end of a play. And this is done by the development of characters from the triadic levels of language (text), by language (sub-text), and into language (conscious sub-text).

This third dimension of conscious sub-text can be provided by the insights offered by Pinter's poems, into the themes and techniques that he has shaped so superbly in his dramaturgy right from his first play, *The Room* (1957).

Many of the poems of Pinter anticipate the structural patterns of Pinter's dramatic writing, and as such, can be considered as primarily significant, particularly in their revelation of Pinter's developing linguistic facility and the 'meanings' or "possibilities for meaning." These "possibilities of meaning" are the "conscious sub-text" in the poems, which in his plays are concealed by the text and buried in the sub-text, therefore, we can focus on the poems of Pinter as the 'conscious subtextual' material of the plays. The spoken and unspoken silences of Pinter, the one surrounding the other in an effort to keep it in its place or both conniving at to keep locked the real language—(the conscious subtext), are the beginning, the middle and the end of a typical Pinter play. His poems can be seen as his early efforts in the direction of the poetics of his plays. Pinter's poems embody almost all the qualities of Pinter's language: repetition, objects, hard surfaces, music, sculpture, choreography and even his silences. These are expressed through the poetic image with the dramatics of plot, character and dialogue playing an important though secondary part. The poems of Pinter are largely about people. They are dramatic in the sense that "something happens or something has happened" to the person in the course of the poem. The hallmark of his poems is that they also have the abstractness and the hard physical language as do his plays, but there seems to be no aesthetic unity in these poems. The meaning of these poems also, most of the time, seems to be rather private, than, perhaps, they really are, because the images or clusters of images employed look very dense.

By particularizing the characters and actions in the plays and by aligning them into dramatic perspective by employing pauses and naturalistic conventional conversational rhythms, Pinter has tried to distance the images of these poems from each other in varying degree of silences, thereby giving them a naturalistic dimension. Therefore, the poems of Pinter divulge the patterns and also 'meanings' of Pinter's plays more fully, when we juxtapose them with his plays.

Pinter's poems were mostly written before he had begun writing his first play *The Room* and are published in one collection which was pub-

lished in 1968. When we read these poems in the perspective of his plays, we feel that their meanings by image find a satisfying expression in the text and sub-text as well as the conscious sub-text that Pinter's silence affords in his dramas. Of the nineteen poems which were complied in the collection of poems edited by Alan Clodd and published in 1968,[7] sixteen were written before *The Room* was published and three poems afterwards. These poems can be grouped in such categories as dramatic poems, poems of thematic importance, brothel poems and symbolistic poems. The present paper has been devoted to analyze some of the poems from this collection which are primarily dramatic and also thematically important for the better understanding of the plays of Pinter.

The earliest of the collected poems of Pinter 'Kullus' is a very good example of a finished dramatic sense evidenced by a nineteen-year-old poet. Here we know what happens but we are not told how or why, and have to deduce and derive the bits of meanings from the images of light-dark and cold-warm. The "finished-unfinished" quality of this poem is also responsible for the enigmas in all of Pinter's writing. All the characteristics of the Pinterian language are present, there are contradictions, paradoxes, repetitions of syntax, and also the absurdity of the non-sequitur dialogue that abound in his plays. We feel the uneasy pace of the dialogue grow to a climax which is expressed in one word: "I!" and "Oh!" The finished action and the unfinished meanings of this poem greatly anticipate the later dramatic writing of Pinter. 'Kullus' contains basic situation of almost every play of Pinter, the narrator and Kullus in a "Room," and at the end both displace each other; the narrator takes the girl from Kullus and Kullus displaces the narrator from the room. The poem also contains Pinter's most basic poetic and dramatic theme: unverifiability, for we do not know why the actions happen in the poem. The skeletal form of every Pinter play is contained in this shadowy, lyrical-dramatic poem. Another poem, "The Task" (1954) also presents a curious reworking of 'Kullus,' but the emphasis in this poem is shifted from dialogue and the dramatic movement of characters to enigmatic displacements of the images. It is a sharply drawn dramatic poem with enigma, displacement and non-information contained among and around, but also "in" "spoken words," which reflect a fusion of text, sub-text and conscious sub-text, which Pinter achieves so masterfully in his plays. "The Task" contains a kind of arbitrary formula of text, sub-text, seen so variously in his plays, which includes a room, a trio of characters, usurpers, inner fear, outer menace, struggle for dominance, identity crisis, as well as spoken and unspoken silences or the "language locked beneath another language."

Another poem, "A View of the Party," is extremely significant in

the sense that it not only outlines his first full-length play *The Birthday Party*, but also features Goldberg and McCann as "thoughts" or exteriorized images of inner fears. Pinter's every 'usurper'—Riley, the Match-seller—is wholly or partially expressionistic in his representation of psychic threats—real or imagined, as are Goldberg and McCann. On the basis of Pinter's identification in this poem of Goldberg and McCann as thoughts, we can conclude that the menace intruders, in his other work including the Dwarfs in *The Dwarfs,* and the mysterious personage in *The Dumb Waiter*, are externalized inner fears.

All these three poems contain the skeletal structure as well as the most basic themes of Pinter's plays. The remaining poems in the collection are also significant in their thematic relationship with the plays, but in addition, they reflect a developing linguistic control in the direction of the dramatic use of language and silence in Pinter's plays. Of these, mention has to be made of poems, such as "New Year in the Midlands" (1950), "Chandeliers and Shadows" (1950), "Afternoon" (1957), "The Anaesthetist's Pin" (1952), "I Shall Tear off My Terrible Cap" (1951), "The Midget" (1950), "A Walk by Waiting" (1953), "You in the Night" (1952), "The Stranger" (1953), "The Error of Alarm" (1956) and "The Table" (1963). The close analysis of these poems reveals not only a variety of thematic concerns and language styles of Pinter at the age of twenty, but also anticipates even a greater variety of the plays. Motifs remain constant both in the poems and in the plays. But the intriguing variations and tensions between rigidity and fluidity, paradox, shifting image patterns, repetition, language stratagems mark the plays as something emerging out of the poems, but enlarging into larger enigmatic, puzzling structures.

Pinter's poems also show another very important characteristic: the resolution of his warring linguistic urges, Pinter's fascination with words and his nausea at their torrential-flow. "The New Year in Midlands," "Chandeliers and Shadows" are the poems, in which forceful, but extravagant sounds of words are used in utter abandon. There are poems like "I Shall Tear Off My Terrible Cap," in which this abandon asserts itself. And there are poems in which the discipline seems to be so complete that essence and language exist in near irreducible form. Such poems are, "A Walk by Waiting," "The Stranger," and "The Error of Alarm." Here in these poems we see the typical Pinterian 'dialogue' that used in his plays like *Landscape, Silence* and *Night*.

As a conscious sub-text, the language of the poems contains the subject matter which is enlarged in the plays by the poetics of the drama. Exteriorized menace, inner fear, intrigue, puzzle, displacement, master-servant like dominance, unverifiability, possibilities, isolation of

the individual, crumbling of the Old Gods, horror, violence, sex—all are truths contained in the images of these poems, which Pinter has later on made use of in his dramatic canon. In verbal imagery, tightly packed for the most part, so as not to yield meanings satisfyingly, Pinter utilizes the conscious sub-textual level of language, in which what is meant is really said. By means of text and sub-text poetics of the plays, the conscious sub-text of the poems has been given its needed context. And in their interaction with each other these three linguistic levels become the three language stratagems which are the essence of Pinter's poetics.

NOTES

1. J.R. Brown, "Dialogue in Pinter and Others," *Modern British Dramatists* (Prentice-Hall, 1980).
2. Quigley Austin, *The Pinter Puzzle* (Princeton University Press, 1970).
3. Harold Pinter, Speech delivered at Seventh National Students' Drama Festival, Bristol, published as "Between the Lines," *The Sunday Times* (London, March 4, 1962).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Poems of Harold Pinter*, ed. Alan Clodd (London: Enithorton Press, 1968).

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Indian Poetry in English: The Initiator

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Many an Indian wrote principally in English for their creative literary pursuits. Such a trend became manifest since the later part of the 18th century. However there remains a nebulous aspect as regards the true identity of Indian-English literature as a specific literary genre. Controversy holds sway. Much of the indigenous literature created in various rich Indian languages had also been copiously translated into English, and there appears to be a propensity in a certain section of the Indian scholars and critics to include these translated pieces in the fold of Indian English literature. In brief, it may be pointed out that in the fitness of things Indian Writing in English should exclusively stand for all those creative writings by the Indians, written primarily in English, and not indeed translated from any of the assorted Indian or, for that matter, foreign languages. The learned critic V.K. Gokak sought to interpret the term 'in the sense of the original English writings by the original Indians.'[1] Because, as B. Rajan has very intelligently put it, "at a deeper level we know that living in India is not necessarily Indian life. Some Indian writers in English mistake the first for the second."[2] The issue may be clinched if we accept this proposition that all those creative writers—poets, critics, playwrights, novelists, reviewers, story-tellers, who are Indians by themselves and chosen to attempt at their creative writings primarily and principally in English, should be fairly recognized as Indian writers in English or Indian English authors.

In this brief essay we will talk about the initial poetry created originally in English. The chronicle of Indian poetry in English dates back to around a little less than a couple of centuries now. The Oxford University Press brought out a collection of poems in 1920, entitled *India in Song: Eastern Themes in English Verse by British and Indian Poets*, in the "introduction" to which the then British Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division of Bengal Theodore Douglas Dunn expressed his dissatisfaction with the Indian poetry in English: "It is not generally known that during this century much good English verse was produced by Indi-

ans." Should the remark be taken as an indignant, high-browed apathy towards a dwarfish colonial sub-culture? Or could it be said to have any merit? It may incidentally be recalled that after having gone through the poem *The Captive Ladie* (1849), an original creative writing in English, composed in two parts by Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) the then Bengal Director of Education John Drinkwater Bethune turned a cold shoulder to the work and advised the poet to write instead in his native language. So it may not be easy to see eye to eye with the two British bureaucrats Dunn and Bethune, especially under the circumstances of the official British raj arrogance and a cultivated indifference to the literary excellence of a colonial India. How dare a black native Indian aspire to create literature in the language of the superior blue-blooded Masters!!

However, it becomes also imperative to point out with regard to Indian English poetry of this period, that in colonial India writing verse in English by itself was considered to be an unsavoury act and was looked down upon, heavily shadowed by a severe social disavowal. English was symbolized as the ogre of the tormentors, the alien conquerors who subdued the Indian sub-continent by pelf and power. It was a psychological issue governed by the factor of association. English language represented and reeked of a despotic alien rule. Inference is obvious. The dazzling beauty of a full woman from the enemy camp could be comparable only to the wanton beauty of a lascivious la belle dame sans merci, and could hardly be approved as that of a debonair Shakuntala, Miranda or Desdemona. Even flowers that bloomed in an enemy garden did not smell sweet enough, their rich colour seemed to have been dyed in the vampire-sucked blood of the luckless indigo planters. It should therefore be borne in mind that the initiators and the pioneers of Indian poetry in English ventured to work in English at a particular time-frame when English was taken to be a whore and not at all a tender housewife—attractive, beguiling but publicly untouchable.

It was only after India wins freedom that the Indian psyche, poised comfortably on an independent sovereign pedestal, approved, by degrees, the charter of accession of the Indian writing in English through an impartial evaluation of the genre. Although Indian English poetry is comparatively too young for the indigenous literatures, yet it has already established its own identity having received popular support, with claims on a checkered history. From the standpoint of expression, idea, imagery and technique, for an evident buoyancy, Indian poetry in English is Indian in letter and spirit, expressed in an Indianized, well-percolated English. The fact should no longer be fought shy of that English has not only been recognized as one of the major official languages of

India, but also this language has got immersed and saturated into the earth, water, and air of India, in fine, into the Indian intellectual diaphragm. English has been accepted as one of the forceful, rejuvenated medium of expression.

Yet there remain a few basic questions to be answered. Any literature becomes successfully relevant when it is attained through the Tagorian "satya mulya"[3] or truth-value. Literary expressions depend mostly upon a sense of immediacy and spontaneity. Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), one of the major twentieth century Indian poets of Bengal, refers to an embarrassed wonder ("Bipanna Vishmoy") which is at play within our very own blood veins ("Antargata rakter madhye"). This could very well happen owing to an indeterminate perturbation in a poet determining his urge to express. Language is the carrier as well as the courier of a poetic expression. A poet hankers after the ungrasped incense of the verdurous gloom of an idea, if at all it can be arrested by his word-net, the lingual noose he could weave for himself. The silhouette of an impression on the poet's mind gets gradually manifested brightly to the readers by means of the ideal lingual idiom to be mastered by the poet. The moot question is: in what language does an idea get an entry into the island of the poet's sensibility. If such an entry is made through the gateway of a native language, the poetic expression has to willy nilly pass through the process of conscious or unconscious translation. Here's the rub. To a question why he writes in English, and not in Marathi his mother tongue, the renowned Indo-English poet Nissim Ezekiel (1924-) replied: "I write in English, because the idea comes to me in English."[4] Indian English poets, at one time or the other, have to address themselves to this tricky question, and bear the brunt. English, they choose to write in, should come up to be an Indian medium of expression in tone and timbre. Such a language, then, would put forward a modest claim to be the sine qua non of Indian poetry in English, and poets too will find their root and identity. English is no longer a Master's voice to record; its accession to the Indian psyche has been absolute and complete to the extent that by this time English has been absorbed into the spectrum of the composite Indian culture. English should have learnt, as it has in the works of Raja Rao (1909-) and Nissim Ezekiel, to "accommodate the weight and the penetrative power of a cultural tradition considerably older than English . . . a metaphysical tradition that uniquely combines the precision of philosophy with the passion of literature."[5] Incorporating Indian words and expressions will not make Indian writing in English any rich: it ought to imbibe the spirit of the national cultural conglomerate.

Raja Rao himself has very significantly observed: "The point is that

language is a way of saying which shapes the nature not only of the thing said, but eventually of the thing seen. Language gives access to an ultimate reality and it is the *kind* of access given which can legitimately have national characteristics and which can meaningfully be described as Indian or something else."[6] Language as such should grow out of the matrix of the national myth, legend, visions and heritage which an Indian English author, like his/her peers in the field of Indian literature, must inhale and exhale effortlessly. What is important is that the basic and quintessential rhythm of the Indian merry-go-round of palpitating life with the backward and forward movement should get reflected and felt in its own measure and spontaneity in Indian writing in English. After the readers read the literary piece they should perceive the vibration of what they have perused in their vital midriff. For this is what happens when we read a Tagore, a Nirala, a Bharati in the context of our indigenous literature, let alone Sarat Chandra, Munshi Premchand and their ilk in the pasture of Indian fiction.

Accordingly, for an Indian English poet what is important is that for the sake of the creative interplay of his imagery, he should discover the significance of the language he is writing in, Jingoistic application of native scenes, sounds or lingual idiom will not serve the purpose until he/she becomes capable of finding the right number of the combination lock that helps in permeating the Indian ethos and recovering an Indian, repeat Indian, experience. The author/poet is not merely using a language with caution, but using the flora of universal expression of love, life, deep appreciation or intense animosity by means of a known and mastered lingual device. Indian English literature should flourish within the perimeter of our national identity and totality of experience. Kamala Das (1934-) superbly writes:

> The language I speak
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
> All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
> Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest
> It is as human as I am human, don't
> You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
> Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
> Is to crows . . . it
> Is human speech, the speech of the mind . . .
> a mind that sees and hears and
> Is aware.[7]

What is encouraging today is that Indian English poetry has been con-

tinually striving to achieve its fulfilment by dint of an honest tenacity.

Right from the early nineteenth century when the young Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31) ignited the flame of an effective and meaningful Indian English poetry, his footprints were followed by such Indian English poets as Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73), Toru Dutt (1856-77), Manmohan Ghose (1869-94), Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)—to be followed again by such illustrious Indian English poets as Shiv K. Kumar (1921-), Nissim Ezekiel (1924-), Jayanta Mahapatra (1928-), A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1996), Kamala Das (1934-), Keki N. Daruwalla (1937-) and R. Parthasarathy (1934-) along with a few more.

All of these Indian English poets found easily attainable and conveniently accessible idioms for expressing themselves poetically the way they wanted to. What is noteworthy is that the Indianness of these authors has in no way been impaired, and at the same time their language has perfected itself by having fused the content into the form achieving thereby an objective correlative. Indian English literature is able to record the Indian way of thinking, believing, observing, analyzing and experimenting similarly as does an Indian literature. Indian English poetry too sheds iridescent soft and serene light from its chandelier.

Remarkable spirited attempt at a genuinely initial creative poetic exercise, for the future Indian writing in English, was made by the controversial young teacher of the then Hindu College of Calcutta Henry Derozio, son of an Indo-Portuguese father and English mother. His poems came to light in 1823 in the *Indian Gazette* published by John Grant. Like the illustrious English romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821) Derozio too had to have a quite early tryst with the good old Death. This young Indian talent could publish only two issues of his collected poems in his life-time: *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Tale and Other Poems* (1828)—replete with protesting resentment against the inert medieval prejudices around him and full of Byronic echoes. In Derozio's poetry we notice, observes the Russian author Kalinnikova, "a proud, heroic personality with lofty spiritual impulses, unusually powerful passion, and aspirations for freedom."[8]

In Derozio's poetry Keatsian characteristics have a free run, and what more is recorded in his poetry may be said to be disillusionment, detachment, gloom, yearning to cut the net of the stern reality where, as Keats heard, men sit and hear each other groan, as well as a Shelleyan romantic death-wish born out of the bitterness of suffering and agony. Derozio writes:

Where are thy waters, Lethe? I would steep

My past existence in thy source, and sleep.[9]

The lines may as well be mistaken with those from Keats's pen. The English critic E.F. Oaten studied the similarities between the poetry created by both these two young fragile poetic genius, who were close contemporaries, and rose meteorically in the West and the East, and aptly commented: "What English literature lost through the early death of Keats, Indian literature in English lost, in lesser degree when Derozio died; for in both men there was a passionate temperament combined with unbounded sympathy with nature. Both died while their powers were not yet fully developed."[10] What we should call to mind in this regard that while Keats breathed his last at the age of 26, poor Derozio was summoned by Death at the age of 22 only, proving ironically how the poet himself painted death in his poem entitled *Sonnet: Death, My Best Friend.*

Derozio came under the spell of English romantic poetry as is evident in many of his poems like: *Sonnet: To the Moon*; *The Golden Vase*; even the lengthy narrative poems found in *The Fakeer of Jungheera* woven around the sad life of Nuleeni the high-born Hindu widow. Derozio's poetry recorded the note of such a spirited nationalism as was startlingly unexpected so very early in the 19th century. It was also, as M.K. Naik considers: "Somewhat surprising in a Eurasian at a time when the average representative of his class was prone to repudiate his Indian blood and identify himself with the white man. . . . Poems like 'To India—My Native Land,' 'The Harp of India,' and 'To the Pupils of Hindu College' have an unmistakable authenticity of patriotic utterance which stamps Derozio as an Indian English poet who is truly a son of the soil."[11]

Derozio's poems encapsulated the smell of the Indian earth, a perceptible nationalist overtone and allusions to the Indian myth, legend and folk-lore. It is no less important to point out that prior to Michael Madhusudan Dutt's efforts, it was Derozio who introduced sonnet form into Indian poetry in English. His sonnets with a melancholy note and brooding seriousness may be read in "Poet's Grave" and "Dust." Derozio's lyrical poems are "Aspirations," "Leaves" and "Evening in August." Indian English poetry will ever remain grateful to this noble and illustrious initiator of the genre. Though he could hardly create much and died of cholera at 22, whatever meagre poetic creation he could leave behind stood effectively as a cornerstone. He lies buried in the lack-lustre Park Circus cemetery in Calcutta. A marble tablet, having stood the test of time, displays the poet's self-composed epitaph that reads:

There all in silence, let him sleep his sleep. . . .
There nothing over him but the heavens shall weep
There never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,
But holy stars shine their nightly vigils keep.[12]

NOTES

1. *English in India: Its Present and Future* (Bombay: Asia, 164)), p. 64.
2. "India," *Literatures of the World in English*, ed. Bruce King (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 80.
3. Tagore's famous poem "Oikotan."
4. Personally spoken in the presence of the author.
5. B. Rajan, *Literatures of the World in English*, p. 80.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
7. The poem "An Introduction" in *Indian English Poetry since 1950: An Anthology*, ed. Vilas Sarang (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1990; rpt. 1995), p. 76.
8. Elena J. Kalinnikova, *Indian English Literature: A Perspective*, trans. V.P. Sharma (Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1982), p. 12.
9. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *The Indian Contribution to English Literature* (Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 1945), p. 12.
10. E.F. Oaten, *A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1908), p. 59.
11. M.K. Naik, *A History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982), p. 23.
12. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay: Asia, 1962), p. 34.

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Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*: A Perspective

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When we first see a new form of painting or listen to a new kind of music, we realize that we have to make an adjustment in ourselves and our attitude if we are to get out of the experience. So it is with the plays of Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett. Harold Pinter offers a different variation of modern human beings. Modernism involves both the conviction and practice that to be modern is to be, in many important ways, different from anyone who ever lived before. This does not mean that man has changed; human nature is same, but man's way of looking at himself has changed in a way that is significantly new. It is this new view of man that creates the problem for the dramatist.

Pinter traces human frustration to the nature of human relationships as contingent upon independent human possibilities being joined together by simple, elementary human needs and hopes common to all. He portrays the human situation as it affects individual lives in all its unflattering starkness and complex terror; but he nevertheless invests the humblest and most painful of human experience with a quality of accommodating grace, almost elegiac in its compassion.

Pinter's interest in the human problem is altogether different. He deals with the human relationships together with the failure to communicate between persons and thereby imparts a psychological depth to his portrayals of the man in a man's society struggling to recover the loss of self in a world full of unapprehended terror and impersonal menace.

When Pinter takes up the subject of the caretaker, he works once again in terms of a private myth and he also goes a step ahead in gaining greater richness and complexity by showing the occupants of the room as real people, not only endeavouring to make their own decisions and creating their own circumstances, but also successfully driving the menace out of the room.

The Caretaker is a three act, three character play. Mick and Aston are brothers, the younger in his late twenties, the older Aston in his early thirties; the third character is the tramp Davies. "Pinter has created

three highly idiosyncratic characters who yet aspire to a mythic, universalized status."[1] The play changes the picture of the man, who has been hitherto menaced, trapped, insulted and mishandled, into that of one who bravely and successfully order the menacer out of the room. A cunning ungrateful tramp enters the household of two brothers, in the garb of a meek, poor and needy soul. Very soon he not only gains an upper hand over the heart of the introvert brother but also proves repulsive and vicious in his comments and behaviour. The other cunning brother traps him with the practical trick of gaining the tramp's confidence first, and betraying him afterwards. It is the tramp who has to leave the room letting the brothers continue their uneventful lives.

Aston, the idealist dreamer, performs the Good Samaritan act of offering shelter to Davies only to procure for himself a good caretaker companion. Davies, on the other hand, agrees to stay in the junk cluttered, shabby room specifically because he has no hopes of getting better comfort and stability anywhere else. Mick plays the shabby trick of deliberate double talk on the tramp because he does not want to share his brother with anyone else. He maintains an attitude of odd protective devotion towards him and asks: "Did you call my brother nutty? My brother, that's a bit of . . . that's a bit of an impertinent thing to say, isn't it?"[2]

The Caretaker is a study of the human condition, which is both tragic and funny, baffling and plausible. When Davies is left alone in the room Pinter has again succeeded in establishing out of Davies's lack of self confidence and his nervousness about the menace of these objects, an atmosphere of threat, mystery and terror. Davies the tramp is not only garrulous and mendacious but pitiable and humane as well. Through his grumbling and groaning he expresses the tragic condition of old age. When man has to fight for his stability, sometimes even going to the extent of using arrogance and hatred as his weapons: "Why do you invite me in here in the first place if you was going to treat me like this?" (67) It is for this reason that Davies tries to worm his way and turn the brothers against each other. By winning the heart of moody Aston he hopes to demand kind favours in the form of shoes, food and money. And later on by turning to the laconic Mick, he plans to send Aston back to the mental asylum and take his place: "He's no friend of mine. You don't know where you are with him. I mean, with a bloke like you, you know where you are." (67)

Davies has neither the necessary references nor the identity to command any attention; still he flaunts his self importance, and hankers, with a cheerful bravado, after comfort, hospitality and respectability. When he keeps on referring to his trip to side up, he vainly hopes that it

may build for him some sort of status and also avoid humiliation. "If only the weather would break! then I'd be able to get down to side up!" (19) Davies provokes himself into surges of comedy and sorrow, only to delude the two brothers who are his last hope of sustenance. When they ultimately drive him out of their house, he pathetically asks: "Where am I going to go? . . . Would you . . . " (78)

Aston, who is a lonely, retarded person, is sometimes carried away by the hypnotic repetitions of Davies. Aston stands for the human need of companionship, Mick with his laconic pranks stands for the unnamed destructive forces of society. He acts as the caretaker of Davies only to destroy him. The way in which the characters of the two brothers complement each other also suggests, however, that ultimately Mick and Aston like Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot*, could be seen as different sides of the same personality. Mick could then stand for the worldly, Aston for the deeper emotional aspects of the same man.

The play offers psychological realism. It paints the eternal struggle of man to obtain peace and safety at any cost. It is a compelling study of human vulnerability in face of world's cruelty. It is also a study of three characters whose minds are fragmented. In their distinctive ways they give the account of life which is packed with frustrations and estrangements. The way Davies tries to win the brothers and establish his own position in the household is a study of the old age senility and physical and psychological impoverishment it entails.

Pinter proves that the sight of the tramp like Davies may repel us and we may ignore his plea of having left his references behind, but we are in no way better than he. The modern world is governed not by charity but by politics, and man is so conditioned by his one-dimensional world that he tends to be Everyman Anonymous, which Davies is in a sense—without self reference and identity.

NOTES

1. Trussler Simon, *The Plays of Harold Pinter* (London: Victor Gollanc, 1973), p. 88.
2. Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker* (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 73.

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Women in Pinter's *Party Time, Mountain Language* and *One for the Road*

CHITTARANJAN MISRA

In Pinter's plays there is no dearth of perverse and adulterous women. Woman has been presented as bone of contention between male rivals in most of the plays. But at the same time she is not powerless and passive; she shows an independence in exercising her choice and preference. In the behavioural surface each woman is a combination of a tart and a wife but the words and actions controlled by deeper non-rational motivations make her elusive and unknowable to a large extent. The background factors do not offer adequate clarification. In the early plays we do not know much about the past of a woman except that she is the wife or sexual partner of a certain man. Till the end of a play, no sense of finality evolves so as to enable us to confidently pronounce on the character. Still then the realism of the presented action, in spite of the obscurity of the beginning and the end of the plays creates the illusion that they are sufficiently real and living characters even though they do not shed the sense of mystery around them. This is true of Flora in *The Matchseller*, Stelle in *Collection*, Rash in *The Homecoming*, Wendy in *Tea Party* and the major female characters of the memory plays.

Women in some of Pinter's latest plays like *One for the Road, Mountain Language* and *Party Time* are equally mysterious but convincingly perverse. Compared to the earlier plays written before 1980, it is easier to contextualize the characters. Since the context is political terrorism, these women appear as victims and vitimisers. They inhabit a world of acute suffering and fear. They equally suffer and torture like their male counterparts. The torment is effected through verbal and non-verbal methods. Women are exposed to more of obscene utterances and postures in these plays than any other plays of Pinter. They also offer males and females as instrumental to the coercive game played by an organization\establishment. The "key figures of oppression in *One for the Road* and *Mountain Language* are men." [1]

Nicholas in *One for the Road* declares that he works for "the man

who runs the country."[2] His job is to interrogate the victims of a totalitarian state. He can rob a man of his sanity in a moment. He tortures and threatens not only Victor but also his wife Gila. All those who protest against the regime are brought to his place where the women are gang-raped and the men tortured in various ways by a hired body of tarts. The female victim Gila is exposed to the roughest kind of brutality that man can inflict on woman. She is raped by strangers and is asked shocking questions by Nicholas. Her husband and son are kept imprisoned. She is a contrast to most of Pinter's women who are all pathetic sufferers, but whose physical and psychological agonies are of a much different order. The process of dehumanization rests only on language in the play. Violence does not take place on the stage as damping of electrodes on hands and ear-phones against ears as done to Lamb in *The Hothouse*. A sense of fear of being killed is infused through words and gestures. Gila is addressed to as 'fuckpig' and 'shitbay' but the expletives are manipulated with a controlled literary and dignified language.

In *Mountain Language* which is a very short play there are two women, one young and the other an elderly one having no names. They are objects of mental and physical torture. They confront a vulgar and cruel sergeant after eight hours of standing and waiting in the snow. The elderly woman is bitten by a doberman dog in the meanwhile. She is desperately in search of her son who is imprisoned in a military base. Her meeting and talking to her son in the visitor's room of the prison is represented through voices while the figures become still and lights *come to down* to half. In the same manner, the young woman's fears and phantasy get represented as voices coming from still figures in half light. The young woman has come to meet her husband. She is not from the rural area and does not speak the mountain language. Yet she is treated as the persons coming to meet the prisoners. Because of certain mistake in the computer, the young woman comes in the wrong door and in the wrong batch of visitors. The play ends with the suggestion of death of the elderly woman while her prisoner son with blood on his face gasps for breath and shakes violently. The guards, officers, and sergeant flaunt a sadist glee and inflict pain on the victims. The abuses hurled at men and women in particular unfold a political dimension that perpetuates 'censorship' and violation of 'human rights.'

Party Time, written after *Mountain Language*, speaks about a military presence and a road block while a party goes on in a flat. Among the major participants are four women—Dusty, Liz, Charlotte and Melissa. Relissa is seventy-years-old woman. They all talk about a club and the qualitative facilities like the swimming pool, bar, and secret chambers associated with it. But there is simmering sense of fear and

suppressed desire to know about the military operation taking place. Dusty's brother Jimmy is perhaps taken as a prisoner but she is not allowed to enquire anything about that in the party. Her husband is very rigid in reminding all about the strict discipline of the agenda of the party. There is no place for human or familial obligation in a sphere of military administration. The women too subscribe to the general views as members of the hierarchy. The methods of a possible coup are speculated by the women. As Terry suggests: "We've got dozens of options. We could suffocate every single one of you at a given signal or we could shove a broomstick up each individual's arse at another given signal or we could poison all the mother's milk in the world so that every baby would drop dead before it opened its perverted bloody mouth."[3]

Terry as a sadist wants her wife to look forward to the employment of these means with "a lot of sexual anticipation." The major representative victim in *Party Time* is a male Jimmy who stands in the doorway at the end of the play while everyone is in silhouette. He is a man who sits sucking the dark in anticipation of unknown tortures, of death.

Elizabeth Sakellaridon, in her discussion of Pinter's women, has aptly said that Harold Pinter is one who equilibrates male and female discourse while growing to develop and reveal humane compassion for them.[4] In the earlier plays, women as whore and wife were pitched against a social background. But in the latter plays as discussed here, they remain unchanged in their cunning and sadism but the background is that of political terrorism, representing an abnormal and extreme situation. All along Pinter's women suffer under pressures of situations but they do not give up playing the game of sexual politics in their own way irrespective of the disastrous results awaiting them.

NOTES

1. Susan Hollis Merritt, "Major Critics, Strategies and Trends" in *Pinter's Criticism, Critical Essays on Harold Pinter*, ed. Steven H. Gale (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990), p. 317.
2. *One for the Road*, p. 13.
3. Harold Pinter, *Party Time* (Faber & Faber, 1991), p. 25.
4. Susan Hollis Merritt, *Modern Drama*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, March 1989, p. 171.

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Sex and Property as Means of Tragedy in O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*

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O'Neill is one of the modern American playwrights who has tried to delineate different aspects of American life in different plays by employing a variety of techniques like symbolism, expressionism and realism. But his major contribution happens to be the field of tragedy wherein he tries to contemporise the Greek myths by giving them a modern, local, American setting. Tragedy, both as a philosophy of life and as a form of drama, has been very popular in the western society which has a tendency to emphasize extreme individualism and limitless freedom. O'Neill, who belongs to the materialistic society of the west, naturally perceives the tragic element in the life around him and tries to transform it into literary art, especially tragedy, two variant forms of which can be seen in his *Desire under the Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

Desire under the Elms may be considered as a modern American tragedy in that its theme is rooted in the nineteenth century America. The setting is that of the Cabot farmhouse in New England in 1850. The main characters of the play are based upon the members of an agricultural family. The protagonist of the play Ephraim Cabot happens to be an old man of 75 who has already lost two wives and has three sons. The house of Ephraim Cabot is not a happy one, but that seems to be suffering from a sort of curse. It easily brings to our mind the house of Atreus suffering from the ancestral curse in Greek tragedy. The stone-house is flanked by the two small elm trees which appear to participate symbolically in the human life of the house. They seem to have a deep influence upon the human life. O'Neill's introduction to the play contains a description of the elms which bears it out clearly:

> Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bind their trailing branches down over the roof—they appear to protect and at the same time subdue; there is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. When the wind does not keep

> them astir, they develop from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humanness. They brood oppressively over the house, they are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles.[1]

The dramatist's description of the elms offers a clear hint on the very close relationship between human life and Nature and provides a clue to the understanding of the nature of O'Neill's tragic vision of life as embodied in the play.

The main action of *Desire under the Elms* resembles that of the Greek drama especially *Hippolyta* by Euripides in that the protagonist and the other characters appear to be guided not by reason or discrimination but by some uncontrollable instinctive force. The tragic flaw of Ephraim Cabot, the protagonist of the play, may be understood to lie in his indulgence in instinctual pleasures and comforts and the concomitant negligence of his family responsibility towards his three sons who have already attained marriageable age. At the beginning of the play, we meet Ephraim Cabot who has already lost two wives. Ideally speaking one would expect him not to bother about his own comfort, but to think of giving some kind of security to his sons by arranging their marriages and by helping them improve their agricultural set-up so that he could easily and naturally earn their love and affection. But contrary to such an idealistic expectation from a good father, Ephraim Cabot does not bother to give his sons either a stable financial life or emotional security. He is almost killing them by his supreme indifference. The three sons are, therefore, deeply frustrated in their own ways and feel utterly helpless. They feel that their house which is built with stones is not an abode of peace and happiness but a sort of a prison. Peter's description of it makes the meaning explicit: "Here—It's stones atop o' the ground-stones atop o' stones—makin' stone walls—year atop o' year—him 'n 'ye 'n 'me 'n' then Eben—makin' stone walls fur him to fence us in!" (280)

The stonehouse easily symbolizes the petrification of human feelings and indicates how it has been converted into a prison. Another metaphor suggested by the dramatist for the house is that of a cage. His description of Eben, "His defiant dark eyes remind me of a wild animal's in captivity. Each day is a cage in which he finds himself trapped, but inwardly subdued," (279) clearly throws light upon the feelings of the character. Thus the metaphors of 'prison' and 'cage' symbolize the frustration, helplessness and suppressed anger of the sons under the tyranny of their father. They feel that their old father is not able to manage

his farm on account of his carelessness and irresponsibility. Peter, therefore, suggests that "I calc'late we might git him declared crazy by the court." (281) They are very sore to know that he killed his two wives by forcing them to overwork. Simeon describes him as a murderer:

> Eben: Didn't he slave Maw t' death?
> Peter: He's slaved himself t' death. He's slaved Sim 'n' me 'n' yew t' death—on'y none o'us hain't died-yit. (283)

The frustration of all the three sons is aggravated by Ephraim Cabot's third marriage with a young and impecunious widow called Abbie Putnam. Ephraim Cabot's third marriage clearly indicates his negligence of responsibility towards his sons and lack of self-control. His marriage does not show his desire for mere companionship in old age but his strong sexual desire for woman. His behaviour, thus, shows his inability to maintain a balance between instinct and reason. Consequently, his instinct begins to reign supreme over his reason thereby upsetting the smooth run of things in the family.

The frustration of the sons is caused by their inability to have full control over their shares of the farm from him as long as he is alive. He has not allowed them any freedom that is due to them, but made them slog almost in a thankless manner. The two elder sons of Ephraim's first wife have, therefore, planned to leave the house and go to California, the western part of America where they can earn a lot of gold and become rich in order to lead a comfortable life. Peter dreams, "We kin walk. It's an a'mighty ways—California—but if yew was t' put all the steps we've walked on this farm end t' and we'd be in the moon!" (283) But the youngest son (by Ephraim's second wife) Eben wants to fight for his share of the farm which belongs to him legally as it was bought by his own mother. He wants to stay back at home and manage the property. Thus the Marxian struggle for the possession of property happens to be the main cause of their frustration.

The Marxian problems are linked with the Freudian ones in the play. For example, all the three sons of Ephraim Cabot are worried about the materialistic security in terms of possession of land and gold. Eben, the youngest son, is bothered about his share of land which once belonged to his mother who happened to be the second wife of his father. Likewise, the elder and the eldest sons of the first wife of Cabot have been suffering from a sense of insecurity because of the thanklessness of their jobs on the paternal farm. They, therefore, have decided to leave their home and go to California in search of gold and other materialistic benefits and pleasures. But Eben, who has his own share of land,

wants to buy the share of land belonging to his elder brothers also. Thus, their desire to achieve some kind of happiness through the possession of material wealth like land or gold has, obviously, a Marxian significance about it. The father, Ephraim Cabot, does not want to part with his land by giving it into the custody of his sons as long as he is alive. Frustrated by this experience, the sons tend to dislike their father. The struggle for material wealth sets the father against the sons thereby converting filial love into hatred. The Marxian principle that all the human relationships are affected favourably or adversely by money or wealth is specially borne out by the theme of *Desire under the Elms* showing the strained relationship between father and sons.

The Freudian interpretation that all the problems of human life are those of bed or sex (*d'alcove*) may be specially applied to the play. As per Marxian interpretation, even sex is subordinate to the problem of material wealth, but for Sigmund Freud, sex happens to be the central problem of life. Thus both Marx and Freud are correct in their interpretations separately, but human life is so large and complex that both the interpretations may be seen to be complementary in understanding it. Sometimes, the problem of material wealth may be predominant and that of sex may be subordinate and sometimes it may be vice versa. Many times both of them are interchangeable. Sex may affect wealth or vice versa.

In *Desire under the Elms*, the problem of sex occupies a very dominant role which is directly associated with that of property. For example, Ephraim Cabot has a strong desire for a woman, a third wife, even at the age of seventy-five. His desire for marriage may not be said to be merely a desire for companionship, but one for a sexual partner so that he could produce a son even at such an advanced age, especially when he already has three sons of his own by his two wives. His desire for the third marriage is not only absurd and abnormal in itself but is closely linked with the problem of property. The arrival of the third wife i.e. Abbie Putnam creates new legal problems of property for his sons, especially his third son Eben who feels a new insecurity. He fears that he is going to lose his share of property belonging to his own mother to his new stepmother Abbie and rebels against her: "(Spitting with disgust) Her-here-sleepin' with him—stealin' my Maw's farm! I'd as soon pet a skunk 'r kiss a snake!" (290) Eben hates his father as much as his stepmother. His hatred expresses itself in his vindictiveness towards his father. He wants to take revenge against his father by sleeping with the same prostitute i.e. Minnie with whom his father used to sleep. Thus the revenge caused by the probable loss of property takes the guise of sexual revenge. As Eben says:

> Waal—when I seen her, I didn't hit her—not I didn't kiss her neither—I begun t' beller like a calf an' cuss at the same time, I was so durn mad—an' she got scared—an' I jest grabbed holt an' tuk her! (Proudly) Yes, sirree! I tuk her. She may've been his 'n your 'n, too—but she's mine now! (290)

The close link between sex and property could be seen in the later life of Ephraim Cabot. He has married the third wife Abbie as much for sexual companionship as for procreative purpose. The father's third marriage means loss of property for the youngest son. The birth of a child to the stepmother perpetuates the loss of property for the step-son. On the contrary, sex becomes a means of retention of his property for Ephraim Cabot. By marrying Abbie and by getting a child on her, Ephraim wants to have his land and house under his thumb:

> Cabot: A son is me—my blood—mine. Mine ought t'git mine. An' then it's still mine—even though I be six foot under. D'ye see?
> Abbie: (Giving him a look of hatred) Ay—eh. I see. (She becomes very thoughtful, her face growing shrewd, her eyes studying Cabot craftily).
> Cabot: I'm gittin' old—ripe on the bough. (Then with a sudden forced reassurance) Not but what I hain't a hard nut t' crack even yet—an' fur many a year t' come! By the Eternal, I kin break most o' the young fellers' back at any kind o' work any day o' the year!
> Abbie: (Suddenly) Mebbe the Lord'll give *us* a son.
> Cabot: (turns and stares at her eagerly) You mean—a son—t' me 'n' yew?
> Cabot: (his face growing full of joyous pride and a sort of religious ecstasy) Ye been prayin,' Abbie?—fur a son?—t' us?
> Abbie: Ay—eh. (With a grim resolution) I want a son now. (311-12)

For both Ephraim Cabot and Abbie, sex in its procreative aspect (real or mythical) is a means of fortification of their property. In fact Abbie has married him only to get hold of his property although she knows that he is already seventy-five-years-old and perhaps not able to produce a son at that age. But her belief in the remote possibility of getting a son has compelled her to marry him. When Ephraim Cabot dreams of getting a son on her, she grows aware of the legal rights. She asks him, "Would ye will the farm t' me then—t' me an' it?" (312) Cabot easily agrees to comply with her desire. Thus legal sex in the form of marriage acts as a means of fortification of their legal rights of property for the father and

the mother, it becomes a symptom of the possibility of loss of property for the third son.

Just as property is incomplete for Ephraim Cabot without sex, it is more so for Abbie, especially when she realizes that she can have only nominal sex with her old husband and cannot have real sexual satisfaction from him. Thus both husband and wife feel a sort of incompleteness in their life. Ephraim Cabot is eager to have a son and prays to God accordingly. But Abbie who knows that her old husband may not be virile enough to father a son on her, feels frustrated. She, therefore, wants to remove her frustration within the framework of legal marriage, by seeking it through the illegal, instinctive and animalistic channel. That is the reason why she sets about seducing her step-son, thereby achieving a double benefit for herself. She knows that her step-son being young has a natural attraction for the opposite sex because of which he has been visiting a prostitute called Minnie. She, therefore, wants to tease him about his nocturnal visits to the call-girl and tries to compromise with him by trying to be friends with him. She meets him privately one day and employs her wanton wiles of temptation thereby awakening his manhood:

Abbie: (at last painfully) Ye shouldn't, Eben—you shouldn't—I'd make ye happy!
Eben: (harshly) I don't want happy—from yew!
Abbie: (helplessly) Ye do, Eben! Ye Do! Why d'ye lie?
Eben: (viciously) I don't take t' ye, I tell ye! I hate the sight of ye!
Abbie: (with an uncertain troubled laugh) Well, I kissed ye anyway—an' ye kissed back—yer lips was burnin'—Ye can't lie 'bout that! (Intensely) If ye don't care, why did ye kiss me back—why was yer lips burnin? (317)

Although Eben hates Abbie as his stepmother and snatcher of his legal share of property, his latent sexuality is aroused by her systematically and with an ulterior purpose. As Abbie says:

> (quite confident now) I hain't a mite afraid. Ye want me, don't ye? Yes, ye do! And yer Paw's son'll never kill what he wants! Look at yer eyes! They's lust fur me in 'em, burnin' 'em up! Look at yer lips now! They're tremblin' an' longin' t' kiss me, an' yer teeth t' bite. (317-18)

After mentally arousing his sexual passion for her, Abbie invites him to the privacy of the farmhouse and tempts him physically so powerfully

and systematically that Eben feels confused about his own feelings towards her. He does not know whether his love for Abbie at present is filial or sexual. Abbie is so clever that she understands his feelings towards his lost mother and promises to be his surrogate mother on the cordial level and his bedmate on the sexual level. Eben struggles quite a bit mentally before deciding to choose either filial love or sexual love. Finally the animalistic instinct in him triumphs over his rational faculty. Nature achieves victory over the values of culture. He, therefore, declares his love for Abbie:

> (throws himself on his knees beside the sofa and grabs her in his arms—releasing all his pent-up passion) An' I love yew Abbie!—now I kin say it! I been dyn' fur want o'ye—every hour—since ye came! I love ye! (Their lips meet in a fierce bruising kiss). (321)

When the animal instinct is, thus, aroused in Eben, he forgets the apparent, legal relationship with her as his mother and enters into an incestuous relationship with her by making her his sexual partner. In the mythical sense, he becomes the secret husband of his own mother, thereby assuming the role of a modern Oedipus. As a result of this underground sexual union, Abbie conceives and is delivered of a male child. Thus incestuous relationship offers a multiple benefit to different people at the same time. For Eben, for example, it gives the secret and secure sexual satisfaction and a vicarious pleasure of taking revenge upon his father. For Ephraim Cabot, it offers the pleasure of having a son so that he could fortify his legal title to the property and maintain his dominating position as a father and master of the family. But it offers triple benefit to Abbie in the sense that it helps her to have secret sexual pleasure which is denied to her on account of her husband's old age; to cheat Eben of his own right to property and to strengthen her legal position and claim to property through her newborn baby. Thus the incestuous relationship between the step-son and the stepmother offers legal as well as illegal benefits to the parties concerned simultaneously. When Ephraim Cabot learns that he has become the father of a son even at the advanced age of seventy-five, he grows ecstatic and therefore arranges a birthday party and indulges in singing and dancing. Eben is not very enthusiastic about attending the party. He, therefore, stays away from it. The fiddler and the other invitees joke about Cabot's illusionary ecstasy over his so-called child. They have come to know through rumour that the child's father is Eben and not Ephraim.

The illusory satisfaction of having got a male child gives a false dignity to Ephraim and swells his arrogances. He taunts his son Eben

and irritates him by saying that he cannot part with the farm as it belongs to his child. There ensues a physical battle between the two. The old father overpowers the young son. At this moment of crisis, Eben can no longer contain himself. He shatters the illusion of Ephraim by revealing the secret that the child is fathered not by the latter but by the former. Now Ephraim Cabot is shocked beyond measure in the matters of both sex and property. On the other hand, Eben also begins to doubt the authenticity of Abbie's love for him. He feels that he is cheated by Abbie and used by her only as a scapegoat to be cheated of his own share of property. He is disillusioned about the genuineness of her love for him. That is the reason why he accuses her:

> (unheeding) Ye've made a fool o'me—a sick, dumb fool-a-purpose! (Ye've been on'y playin' yer sneakin' stealin' game all along—gitting me t' lie with ye so's ye'd hev a son he'd think was his 'n, an' makin' him promise he'd give ye the farm and let me eat dust, if ye did git him a son! (335)

When accused by Eben about her disloyalty, Abbie feels that she is in a quandry now. Though initially she established sexual relationship with him mainly with the intention of getting a child by him, now she realizes that she has really fallen in love with him and cannot live without him if he goes away to California abandoning her. She feels a new amorous insecurity in his would-be absence from the family, although she would very much have her legal husband with her. She is now on the horns of a dilemma. She has to choose between amorous security and legal security. Being a young lady full of desires, she decides to choose amorous security to the exclusion of legal one. In order to demonstrate her preference for her lover over her child, she kills the child by choking it with a pillow. Circumstances compel her, thus, to take a bold action. Indeed, she shows a great strength of will in proving her love for Eben through the murder of the child. Shocked by Abbie's inhuman murder of the child, Eben complains to the Sheriff against her. Old Ephraim is also shocked by the event and wants to complain to the Sheriff. His momentary and illusory bliss is shattered to pieces by the revelation of truth by Eben who declares that the child born to Abbie is not fathered by Ephraim but by himself. The knowledge of the incestuous relationship between his latest and third wife and his youngest son disturbs and hurts Ephraim very deeply and consequently he realizes the gravity of his own folly. He feels let down very badly by his own 'darling' wife, the Rose of Sharon and his 'dumb' son Eben who have shamelessly desecrated his marital bed. Ephraim Cabot suddenly devel-

ops a kind of *vairagya* or renunciation and wants to gift away all his material belongings and burn off his house by way of vengeance:

> (Stares at them, his face hard. A long pause—vindictively) Ye make a stick pair o' murderin' turtle-doves! Ye'd ought t' be both hung on the same limb an' left thar t' swing in the breeze an' rot—a warnin' t' old fools like me t' b'ar their lonesomeness alone—an' fur young fools like ye t' hobble their lust. (A pause. The excitement returns to his face, his eyes snap, he looks a bit crazy.) I couldn't work today. I couldn't take no interest. T' hell with the farm! I'm leavin' it! I've turned the cows an' other stock loose! I've druv 'em into the woods whar they kin be free! By freein' 'em, I'm freein' myself! I'm quittin' here today! I'll set fire t' house an' barn an' watch 'em burn, an' I'll leave yer Maw t' haunt the ashes, an' I'll will the fields back t' God, so that nothin' human kin never touch 'em. I'll be goin' to California—t' jine Simeon an' Peter. (346)

Whereas Ephraim Cabot is totally disillusioned by the futility of his action and defeated by life, Eben and Abbie are bound more closely in their love—however illegal it might be—and decide to go to the jail together.

The play, thus, clearly demonstrates the ultimate triumph of instinct over reason; Nature over culture; the animal over the angel. Ephraim Cabot who tried to negate reason by his indulgence in instinctive pleasure of life is finally forced to see the negation of his instinct by Nature itself and made wiser now but alas, only after paying a heavy price for it. In this sense he becomes a modern tragic hero. The Marxian problem of property is finally subordinated to the Freudian power of sex expressed in the final union of Eben and Abbie and their joint departure to the jail. Ephraim Cabot's disillusionment is symptomatic of his tragic wisdom awakened in him only when it is too late in life.

NOTE

1. Eugene O'Neill, *Five Plays*, ed. E. Martin Browne (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 277.

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Hybridity and Parallel Histories in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*

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Tom Stoppard's new play, *Indian Ink*,[1] takes us back and forth between the 1930s and the mid-eighties in India and England, exploring the nature of truth and time, the difference between the colonial and the post-colonial temperament and the disruptive influence of sexual encounter. The play records marvellously the atmosphere both of the old scene and the new. With Stoppard's breadth of mind and sparkling humour, it is a subtle experiment in the creation of parallel histories. The past is continuously being rewritten, reviewed and edited, correcting locations and chronology. Stoppard's overall approach is impeccably non-judgemental, his political and cultural comments always appropriate.

In our postmodern world of sophisticated literary theory, the historian has begun to continuously come under attack by literary scholars who have challenged and undermined the traditional historian's absolutist pretensions. The problematical relationship between literature and history focuses attention on the intervening of history and literature in historical writing itself, showing how literary narratives and politics are inextricably bound up in texts like *Indian Ink*.

Though historians are becoming more and more defensive, and probably the reason for this is their largely untheorized stance on history writing, Stoppard considers not this disjunction between the two disciplines, but tries to discover new ways in which each can assist the other. He also addresses the twin problem of the place of narrative in historiography and the alleged incommensurability of historical narratives. Although the narrative is borrowed from oral and written testimonies and historical narratives, it is essential literary and rhetorical. Meanings are an effect of the narrative design, rather than a deduction from the facts. It is therefore clear that historical narratives "have much more in common with fictional narrative than historians are normally willing to allow."[2]

The institutionalized boundaries between history and literature can

thus be challenged by showing that the historical discourse is subject to the same kind of analysis as any other discourse. Reality is always structured by the text, may it be literary or historical as none are transparent in projecting reality.

In this context, we can fall back on Hayden White's view that many teachers of literature often treat the study of historical context of a literary work as "a kind of archetype of the realistic pole of representation" alleging that this historical context has a concreteness and an accessibility that the work can never have. They forget that "the presumed concreteness and accessibility of historical milieu, these contexts of the texts that literary scholars study, are themselves products of the fictive capabilities of the historians who have studied those contexts.[3]

With the recent debates on the "slipperiness" of language and its "deep structure," the historian begins to get worried about the epistemological basis of his study and the literary critic deeply shaky with the idea of history being a firm foundation to the world of imagination. It is quite clear that the signifying power of language disables any attempt to produce a scientific discourse. This is the result of the French deconstructivists school which together with the Anglo-American analytical school emphasizes the textuality and not the referentiality of a text as the true determinant of historical meaning, producing a popular school of thought that "history is a linguistic artifact constrained by a genre specifying reference to conventionally agreed upon historical facts," and that "fiction" in other words, informs "history."[4]

Like his *Arcadia*,[5] which is one of the finest theatre productions to appear on the British stage in the past few years, and has won Stoppard both the Olivier and the Critics Awards, *Indian Ink* reflects the full range of Stoppard's gifts as well as his craftsmanship and versatility. The alternation of place and period makes for a rich and moving exploration of intimate lives set against one of the great shifts of history, the emergence of the Indian sub-continent from the grip of imperialism. The dramatic power of this production is not simply the province of skilful acting and direction; there is something in the work itself which is in tune with the clash of cultures.

Flora Crewe, a young poet travelling in India in 1930, has her portrait painted by a local artist. More than fifty years later, the artist's son visits Flora's sister in London while her would-be biographer is following a cold trail in India. What is striking about the play is that the stage is not demarcated between India and England, between past and present, and yet the sense of history is evoked with remarkable clarity—the railway station at Jummapur, the Dak Bungalow where Flora Crewe[6] resides for a few days, the electric fan, the punkah "which is like a pelmet

worked by a punkah-wallah who sits outside and flaps the thing by a system of rope and pulleys," (2) an image that is reminiscent of the punkahwalla in the court scene in Forster's *A Passage to India*. Flora, a writer in the 30s England moves to India in order to recuperate from an illness. There she meets Nirad Das,[7] the Indian painter who knows his London AZ backwards. When Flora mentions that she lives in Chelsea, Das excitedly responds: "I hope to visit London one of these days. The Chelsea of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood!—Rossetti lived in Cheen Walk! Holman Hunt lived in Old Church Street! 'The Hireling Shepherd' was painted in Old Church Street! What an inspiration it would be to visit Chelsea!" (7)

The Bloomsbury worshipping Nirad Das is of course typical of the intelligentsia of the thirties, extremely nationalist yet obsessed by English culture and manners. And when Flora is lying nude on her bed after her tubercular fit, she tells Das, who is still embarrassed after being asked to pour cold water on her naked body, that she fails to understand why he should like everything English: "You're enthralled. Chelsea, Bloomsbury, Oliver Twist, Goldflake cigarettes, Windsor and Newton . . . even painting in oils, that's not Indian. You're trying to paint me from my point of view instead of yours—what you think is my point of view. You deserve the bloody Empire!" She is here sowing seeds of doubt in Nirad's mind of his claim to authenticity and thereby highlights the unconscious process of hybrid mixture or creolization with her deliberate disruption of the homogeneity of the culture he belongs to. When the mystery of Flora's missing portrait is solved, it becomes rather clear that Nirad has painted an Indian landscape with Flora as its centre represented in the European style. Stoppard gives the impression that he approves of it—all very civilized, separate, but equal—though it stands to reason that Flora succeeds in converting Nirad into what she desires him to be, without Nirad being given a chance to objectify her.

Was this not true of many who were swept off their feet by anything English, trying to mirror a society in a way that was paradoxically both pleasurable and demeaning? Such are the results of domination and submission in which cultures are trampled underfoot and institutions undermined, with the indigenous man turned into a complex hybrid. But Nirad is convincing as an intelligent human being, intolerably torn between his Indianness and his European-educated mind. He will only be liberated into himself after having slept with her.

Nirad finally paints Flora in the nude, as she had once been painted by Modigliani, her lover in the past. It is clear that he and Flora have had a physical relationship, but they seem an improbable couple divided by attitudes and culture. Nevertheless, she succeeds in putting "the *rasa*

of erotic love called *Shringara*" (27) into her poem after an implied night of erotic love. Nirad puts it quite succinctly:

> Its God is Vishnu, and its colour is *shyama*, which is blue-black. Vishvanata in his book on poetics tells us: *Shringara* requires, naturally, a lover and his loved one, who may be a courtesan if she is sincerely enamoured, and it is aroused by, for example, the moon, the scent of sandalwood, or being in an empty house. *Shringara* goes harmoniously with all other *rasa* and their complementary emotions, with the exception of fear, cruelty, disgust and sloth. (29)

The title of the play is apparently derived from this theory of *rasa*. The introduction of romance makes Nirad's psychological dilemma even more complex, but it does not blunt the play's social and political concerns in the areas of gender and race.

Gopal Gandhi, Director of the Nehru Centre in London, is of the view that Nirad's exposition of the rasa and of Hindu scripture seem to "come not from Stoppard but some teach yourself guide." Surely Gandhi did not expect the expatiation of Nirad on Vishnu, Radha and Krishna to be that of a pundit. Nirad is a simple artist who in his own sincere style manages very well to convey his views on rasa. Gandhi finds these "dippings into packaged Hinduism" tedious, but I feel that if any further scholarly elaborations had been made, the scene would have instead become unbearable. What is important is the dialogue, of which Stoppard is a master, and the relevance of the evocation of a mood of eroticism through the discussion on Indian aesthetics. You come to care for the characters for what they feel, rather than what they think. The play's greatest quality is its compassion and emotional honesty which Gandhi has completely missed.

Flora finally leaves Jummapur and three months later dies somewhere in the hills. Juxtaposed with this action are the scenes of Das's son Anish, the impressionist painter now living in England, discussing his father's relationship with Flora's ageing sister. Eldon Pike is the writer who is researching on the life of Flora and busy compiling the *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe*. These characters in the eighties have their faces turned towards the past, to awaken the dead, and make whole that which is no more. They enter the colonial space in which the native is hemmed in but at the same time is being encouraged to be himself and not remain in slouching subservience to the coloniser. The play is a celebration of parallel history, the colonial and the hybrid state that follows it, enabling the reader to change his transcultural understanding.

Multiple time and space give rise to a hybrid history that is India of the colonial and the postcolonial era. As pointed out by T.K. Oommen, "pluralisation concedes and commends the co-existence of a variety of consumption and institutional patterns" so evident in a colonized state.[8]

Gradually and very skilfully, the play lays bare the whole life of Flora Crewe and her brief, but moving encounter with Das. Rehearsing the space-time logic, it moves forward in space, as when Anish Das, the son of the artist, becomes the enlightened hybrid, verbally conscious of his freedom and identity, and yet, in time paradoxically moving backwards as is obvious from his English mannerisms. Deeply aware of his history he hits back at Mrs. Swan:

> Mrs. Swan, you are a very wicked woman. You advance a preposterous argument and try to fill my mouth with cake so I cannot answer you. I will resist you and your cake. We were the Romans! We were up to date when you were a backward nation. The foreigners who invaded you found a third-world country! Even when you discovered India in the age of Shakespeare, we already had our Shakespeares. And our science—architecture—our literature and art, we had a culture older and more splendid, we were rich! After all that's why you came. (17)

And the annoyed retort that Mrs. Swan gives him leaves Anish a little ruffled: "We made you a proper country! And when we left you fell straight to pieces like Humpty Dumpty! Look at the map! You should feel nothing but shame!" (17) Here lies the colonial discourse in all its transparency and an endeavour by the Indian speaker to write himself back into history.

This is the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque in practice, a "boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations"[9] opposing the official, hegemonic culture which implies the interdependence and the mutual construction of oppositional subjectivities so necessary for the "articulation of cultural hybridity" as emphasized by Homi Bhabha.[10] This creation of the "Third Space" according to Bhabha and Robert Young is not assimilationist politics leading somewhat to "mimicry and ambivalence" but is a deliberate strategy of discouse analysis to de-historicize and de-locate cultures from their specific local differences and homogeneous character. Robert Young refers to Bakhtin's view that hybridity "sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains 'a certain elemental, organic energy and open-endedness.'"[11] Agreeing with Bhabha, he goes on to maintain: "Bakhtin's intentional hybrid has been transformed by Bhabha into

an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant colonial power . . . depriving the imposed imperialist culture, not only of authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but even of its own claims to authenticity." (23) This is a positive view of an endeavour to replace the imperial idea of linear history by a more multi-dimensional, syncretic movement. Multiple points of view of both the English and Indian characters throw ample light on the colonial culture, but seen from the present perspective, it seems there is no past about colonialism, as emphasizing the pastness runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial influence. It is this history and the writing of it that has given rise to recent exchanges between the foundationalists and the post-foundationalists, the modernists and the postmodernists. And behind these structuralist and post-structuralist debates I see the struggle to reformulate shifting identities and essentialist notions, and a move to rise above discrete and specific objects in order to assert different models of resistance and counter-discursive practices. .

If it were possible to know about the past once and for all, there would be no need to write history. It should be clear to historians in the wake of Hayden White's writings that recovering the totality of the past is virtually impossible.[12] Traditional practices of writing of history fail to question the conditions of their own making and therefore, retard any development of a democratizing critical intelligence. They raise before us the spectre of the real past, an objective past about which their accounts are held to be accurate and even true. History's epistemological fragility and the tentativeness of all readings is here completely ignored. The creation of fictional accounts of the past, as in Tom Stoppard's play, throws ample light on this fragility of documented histories, and thereby, takes us closer to the "reality." This is most certainly a significant development in the philosophy of history and literature which endeavours to privilege literary discourse that is self-reflexive and knows that the only "truth" it knows is fiction.

NOTES

1. Tom Stoppard, *Indian Ink* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995). The play is dedicated to the memory of Laura Kendal, Felicity's mother, and known to Indians as a talented actress from the Shakespeare Wallah drama company that once toured India staging plays in many public schools. Felicity has also acted in Stoppard's *Jumpers, The Real Thing* and *Arcadia*. It al-

most seems that Stoppard has been writing his last few plays for Felicity Kendal and that her Indian antecedents have been the inspiration behind them, though he strongly denies it.

2. Lionel Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 286.
3. Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, 1978), pp. 42-43.
4. Gossman, p. 289.
5. Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993).
6. Role of Flora is played by Felicity Kendal.
7. Role of Nirad is played by Art Malik.
8. T.K. Oommen, "Emerging Diversity: Birth of a New World Society," *The Times of India*, October 30, 1998, p. 10.
9. M. Holquist, Introduction to Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 4.
10. H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 38.
11. R.J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 21-23.
12. See Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

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E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*: Way to Promote International Understanding

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In his *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forster makes a serious attempt to reconcile the differences among races, religions, and nations and asserts a positive vision of unity, oneness, and togetherness. *A Passage to India* is a successful attempt by the novelist to bring different nations and religions together giving each one its due right to understand one another and thus make human society happier. *A Passage to India* is a prophetic novel in the sense that it deals with important issues like love, friendship, patriotism, human rights, nationalism, and universal brotherhood. The novel is all about inter-racial and international understanding. A willingness to know and understand one another can only open the channels of world understanding. The novel is, in fact, a statement of liberal hope, about joining together of faiths, races, creeds, and nations. The novel was obviously written after the horrors of the first world, so, the influence of the bloody war is very clear. The novel is not about India or Chandrapore alone, but it is all about human life. *A Passage to India* is an expression of the author's genuine desire for a good, affectionate understanding among people. All the misunderstanding and the ultimate unhappiness in the world is a result of man's inability to know each other. This personal weakness of an individual leads to the weakening of the whole humanity. Hence, is the importance of knowing one another. The novel is mainly about "the secret understanding of the heart"[1] which every sensible human being longs for. The principal message that runs through the novel is: "Only connect ! . . . and human love will be seen at its height."[2]

The entire world is waiting for a glorious entry into the twenty-first century with great hope and expectation. But at the same time our dreams are constantly threatened by communal violence, cruelty, wars, and violation of human rights. We are always boasting of our useless democratic principles, secularism, liberalization, freedom, and human rights; but on the other hand we are shocked to know how little we

'know' one another on personal level. It is true in the democratic fashion to say that all nations are independent, but are we really so? We are interdependent, and never independent, this independence which we are proud of is always 'political,' but never 'social.' This concept of 'interdependence may shock many narrow-minded people who are used to live in narrow and dark compartments. The world, as Fielding believes, is "a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will, plus culture and intelligence." (65) This is Fielding's broad-minded, liberal approach towards universal brotherhood and oneness of all. Fielding is one of the major characters in the novel who belongs to a liberal, educated class of people. He has an understanding heart and makes a clean breast of everything. Fielding is always found in the company of native friends and always shows his promptness in blaming 'his people' for the woes and miseries of the natives. He puts the whole blame on the 'English side' for the psychological and emotional crisis through which Dr. Aziz passes, and is not afraid to declare that Aziz is guiltless. Fielding is affectionate and sympathetic, but what is more interesting part of his personality is his love for and devotion to justice and humanity which attracts the reader. He firmly believes in the idea of Universal oneness and does not care to challenge it. He shows the presence of a clear conscience, maturity and perfection in his personality. Fielding is humane and truly religious because "he had no racial feelings . . . because he had matured in a different atmosphere." (65) Fielding is unconventional, broad-minded and his fundamental good will is responsible for the satisfactory relationship that he establishes with his Indian friends.

The first section of the novel called 'Mosque' opens up the possibilities of communication and it "aims at bringing about a sense of unity and equality. . . . Mosque becomes a positive symbol of the exploration of possibilities of friendship and affection."[3] Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested, Fielding, and Aziz are all convinced that love is necessary to a successful union and that little misunderstandings can best be avoided by possessing an adequate amount of love and mutual respect; and any person who knows this wisdom has the best chances of promoting universal brotherhood. We are introduced to Mrs. Moore who approaches life emotionally with a compassionate heart. She has an innate sympathy for the natives. It is through Mrs. Moore that the claims of unity and brotherhood are repeatedly asserted by E.M.Forster. She attempts to weave a new social fabric in Chandrapore with her humane, sympathetic attitude towards the natives. When Aziz tells her that some English women do not trouble themselves to wear off shoes before entering the mosque thinking no one is watching them, Adela Quested says, "That

makes no difference. God is here." (18) This is Mrs. Moore's religious tolerance and her belief in monotheism—a belief which pleases even God. Mrs. Moore believes that God exists in the mosque. This must not be viewed simply as a common politeness of an English woman, but it is her firm faith in other religions, her faith in Islam. She asks her son Rony Heaslop to 'behave pleasantly' in India because "God has put us on the earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and he is omnipresent, even in India." (53) This is here simple faith in the existence of both—God and India. Again she cries, "the desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God. . . . Good will, and more good will, and even more good will." (53) It is with this generous attitude, religious tolerance and mutual respect that we can establish a possible Utopia, and Mrs. Moore increases the possibility of this Utopia coming into existence. Mrs. Moore has come "with willingness to understand and love the Indians,"[4] so she has the best chances of success in personal relationships also.

The section 'Mosque' is mainly dominated by Dr. Aziz who is an impulsive, passionate, hospitable Indian Muslim. In the beginning of the novel he opens up the possibilities of cordial relationships with English women by inviting them to the Marabar caves. He likes to hear his religion praised but at the same time he respects the religious sentiments of the Hindus and the Christians. Aziz values friendship more than anything else, and Babur because "he never in his life did betray his friend." (159) This shows Aziz's concept of friendship which is a universal religion for him. Like Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore he also cries for "the secret understanding of the heart!" (17) On his way to home he sits in the mosque and experiences perfect happiness and peace of mind, but suddenly gloom prevails and he imagines his own tomb with a Persian inscription—the inscription which reveals his true desire for love and understanding:

> But those who have secretly understood my heart—
> They will approach and visit the grave where I lie. (17)

Dr. Aziz believes in universal brotherhood and he calls Fielding as his 'true brother and friend.' Aziz gives the best proof of his broad-mindedness and flexible, liberal Islamic attitude when he shows his dead wife's photograph to Fielding— the greatest compliment that an Indian Muslim can pay to a non-Muslim. He tells Fielding that "all men are my brothers." (125) He was Fielding's friend, and he was Mrs. Moore's and Adela's friend too. He loved them so much that "giving and receiving become one." (157) Dr. Aziz loved them so much because he had crossed all obstacles to meet them. What Aziz does for his European

friends is exactly what the world needs today—man's ability to surmount obstacles to meet other people irrespective of caste, creed, and nationality. He calls Mrs. Moore an oriental and when she dies on her way to England his grief knows no bounds and "he weeps like a child and also orders his children to weep also." (290) His personal relationship with his European and Hindu friends is built on solid foundations of faith, trust, good will, and confidence. In love and friendship man must not study, watch and observe, what he has to do is simply to feel, understand, and respect. And this is exactly the line Aziz follows when he says, "I study nothing, I respect." (328) The supporters of the French Revolution would easily respect Adela Quested for her desire to see the real India because she is the representative of equality and fraternity. Her intelligent heart receives a major shock when she comes across Rony Heaslop's inhuman and savage treatment of the natives, and she very boldly expresses her desire to break off their engagement. She is also like Mrs. Moore and Fielding who come forward in the interest of world understanding. She reveals her true concern for unity and universal oneness when she speaks: "There will have to be something universal in this country or how else are barriers to be broken down?" (160) Adela is a very bold and unconventional woman who can courageously think of breaking the barriers of creed and nationality. Rony Heaslop tries to weaken the bond of friendship where as his fiancee, Adela Quested attempts at concrete friendship. Adela Quested makes a social plea for universality and teaches us that man must learn to transcend all barriers and seek out the real essence—the inner soul of man.

Professor Godbole represents Hinduism and dominates the third section of the novel entitled 'Temple.' Godbole also believes in the existence of God as Adela Quested and Aziz do and shows respect for others's religious sentiments. But he does very little to promote world understanding and thus, is not very effective in forming ties with either English or Muslims. He represents Hinduism in the novel which is a living force for the Hindus—a symbol of Universality and brotherhood. "He is a voice of affirmation, faith in God, belief in Universal love."[5]

The third section of the novel is important from several points of view because it attempts at reconciliation and tries to bridge the gap between different creeds and nations. This section tries to clear up all the dark clouds of misunderstandings. All major characters come up in the open and break the barriers which keep men closed. Aziz and Fielding reconcile and become friends and brothers again; their reunion shows the power of trust, faith and understanding. Fielding tells Aziz emotionally that "all of us make mistakes. In such a friendship such as ours a few slips are of no consequence." (310) Aziz-Fielding friendship is a

synthesis of East and West showing that true friendship can never be a victim of petty misunderstandings. Aziz's relationships with Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested, and Fielding suffer sometimes due to their different creeds and nationality. But the final outcome is surprisingly optimistic because Aziz in spite of difference declares: "You and I shall be friends now." (362) Fielding is also convinced that friendship is what the world needs and he also earnestly cries, "Why can't we be friends now? It's what I want. It's what you want." (362) This emotional outburst is not an ordinary plea for personal friendship between two individuals; it is an intense appeal for universal friendship. *A Passage to India* is a realization of Forster's conception that a happier human society is based on social and racial equality. The clouds of racial prejudices can be cleared up, thus increasing the possibility of a growing understanding between the two people. The novel is a vision of universal oneness. "There is no getting out of this, our common boat. Not only we are related, each to each, as persons, but we partake also of the earth, sky, and water and of the unseen as well."[6]

In *A Passage to India*, Forster has succeeded in promoting the values of deeper significance like love, humanity, friendship, and world understanding. *A Passage to India* is, in fact, a holy pilgrimage to the world of international understanding meant for promoting good relations among nations and religions. It is not a passage to India only, but a pilgrimage around the world. The process of unity among different religions and nations is a long one, the longest journeys but it is not at all impossible to achieve if each one tries to respect and understand the other by forgetting one's own prejudices and by forgiving the others's weaknesses. Adela Quested's desire to know the real India and the Indians must be respected, for it is a courageous step towards the promotion of world understanding. Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested teach us that man must be able to perceive his ownness with the universe despite all the barriers of caste, creed, and nationality. Why can't we be friends? In fact, it's what we want and it's what we need. Why can't the British, the Chinese, the Americans, and the Japanese be friends? Friendship and love is what the Americans and the Indians and the Chinese need, and this is exactly what the Russians and the Australians also need. E.M. Forster asks many earnest questions about possibilities of friendly and cordial relations among religions and nations with all seriousness and good will. The major driving force behind this novel is the novelist's desire to promote international understanding for a glorious and peaceful future which the world is looking for with hope and optimism.

NOTES

1. Edward Morgan Forster, *A Passage to India* (Ludhiana: Kalyani, 1983), p. 17.
2. Malcom Bradbury, ed., *E.M. Forster: A Passage to India* (Macmillan, 1970), p. 15.
3. Vasant A. Shahane, *E.M. Forster: A Study in Double Vision* (India: Arnold-Heinemann, 1975), p. 103.
4. Frederick C. Crews, *A Passage to India* (1962) in Casebook Series, ed. Malcom Bradbury (Macmillan, 1970), p. 167.
5. Vasant A. Shahane, p. 118.
6. Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford and London, 1966).

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An Entry into the Mirror Stage and the Symbolic Order in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: A Lacanian Interpretation

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The purport of this paper is to analyze the mirror stage and the entry into the symbolic order in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

Lacan mentions in his *Ecrits* how a child between the ages of 6 to 18 months reacts in front of a mirror. "The act immediately rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the mirror stage and between the virtual complex and reality it reduplicates—the child's own body, the persons and things around him."[1]

The child between 6-18 months is in a pre-linguistic stage. It is still at the unary signifier level and has not entered the symbolic order. The subject here is as Kaja Silverman puts it, "indulging in an indexical representation."[2] At this stage the subject observes the environment as a mirror, and begins identifying with the objects in the field of the other or the symbolic order. The idea of the mirror must not be taken literally but rather as a cultural construct; where the symbolic order plays a role in structuring the subject. This cultural intervention assumes many forms, like the mothers gaze familial situation or the children media.

The mirror stage is also a deeply alienating stage in the life of the subject. Lacan talks about the mirror stage as a "Meconnaissance" or a misconstruction. The subject in the process of identification constructs the object of identification as the Ego Ideal and the subject perceives itself as that Ego Ideal. This cannot be achieved and within this *jouissance* (source of joy) the subject miscontructs reality.

Moreover this form of cultural intervention also structures the subject towards the acquisition of the symbolic order. The subject within the mirror stage is subjected to a battery of signifiers. At the unary sig-

nifier level the subject does not comprehend meaning, but develops a familiarity with the sound. Thus a repeated exposure to a signifier slowly structures the mind of the subject forming his entry into the symbolic order or language.

The mirror stage plays an important role as the subject is exposed to the entire play of binary oppositions and this reflects in the subject's attitude and behaviour in the symbolic order.

A subject enters into the symbolic order when, as Kaja Silverman puts it, the unary signifier which is nonsensical and irreducible and which does not participate in any language system is referred back by another signifier and then the subject enters into meaning, desire and the symbolic discourse and in this manner participates in the Phallus or the paternal signifier. In the process the subject is cut away from his desires which is the biggest alienation a lacanian subject faces. The desires to fulfill his missing complement can never be achieved.

II

The opening chapter of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* gives a glimpse of Stephen Dedalus in the infant stage. We also find his mother lavishing care on him: "When you wet the bed, first it is warm and then it is cold. His mother put on the oil sheet. That had a queer smell." (ch. 1:7)[3] At this moment Stephen's libido has still unchannelized and it is written all over him, in an unregulated manner. This is the condition which Lacan describes as a L'Hommelette (Silverman: 155), a libidinal omelette spread out in all the directions in the field of the other.' Stephen here has an unrestricted access to experience *jouissance* with the objects around him. The process of care given by the parents channelize the libido into set regulated patterns which Lacan terms as the territorialization of the body. A Lacanian subject is marked completely by lack and by this channelization Stephen loses touch with his original self and enters into the process of self-alienation.

He already develops some awareness of the symbolic order and language. The language acquired by Stephen occurs through the process of signification; when the binary signifier refers back to the unary signifier and creates meaning. This is the moment when the unconscious is created and desire originates.

We also have references to his mother having a nicer smell than his father and the various identifications relating to different people like uncle Charles, Dante and the Vances. How exactly do they attain different identities?

In the mirror stage the infant identifies with the objects in the sym-

bolic order from which it derives joy. It is basically a misconstruction. By the process of a gradual entry into the symbolic order and identification, Stephen learns to differentiate binary oppositions. Hence his mother is different from his father and uncle Charles is different from Dante.

During the entry into the mirror stage Stephen also absorbs religion. It is a master signifier which tends to dominate Stephen's life; especially his sense of inquiry. Stephen's father has progressive religious views, the thanks-giving dinner controversy bears testimony to it. The master signifier religion is also entwined with the master signifier of politics. Dante displays a binary opposition which is observed by Stephen: "Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green back was for Parnell." (ch. 1:7)

Thus very early through the binary opposition of colour, Stephen gets a basic understanding of Irish politics. This early identification will develop into the master signifier of politics, later on in the novel. A very interesting example of Stephen's entry into the symbolic order is the form of language utilized for communication: "Once upon a time and a very good time it was, there was a moocow coming along the road and this moocow that was coming down the road met a nicwens little boy named tuckoo." (ch. 1:7)

The above example has an aura of timelessness around it. Claude Levi-Strauss has described language and myths in his *Savage Mind*: "the nature of that savage mind reveals itself in the structures in its myths as much as in the structure of its language."[4] He goes on to say that "structures of myths prove actually formative as well as reflective of men's minds." (41)

One of the characteristics of language is the accumulative effects of changes in the syntax with time and usage which slowly structure the mind. Stephen is in the process of receiving language right from the basic structures of myths to the participation in the Phallus or the paternal signifier. The phallus is a paternal signifier and stands for everything that is lost in order to achieve meaning. It also stands for the privileges the subject gains as Terence Hawkes observes: "It is a signifier for the organic reality or needs which the subject relinquishes in order to achieve meaning in order to gain access into the symbolic register. It signifies that thing whose loss inaugurates desire." (183)

Stephen Dedalus, as seen in later parts of the novel, participates in the paternal signifier. He enjoys the privileges of the phallus with a proper education and environment. We also find how master signifiers like religion, partriotism, and aesthetics effect and mould him.

We also find the effect of castration on him, the intense sense of loneliness and isolation which drives him in the search for the missing complement in the field of the other. Vice, religion, patriotism and aesthetics all stand as object petit as in his search to fulfill his lack; due to his entry into the symbolic order.

In his search to fulfill his lack, all the master signifiers displace to prevent Stephen from Aphanasis or fading of the subject's being. The subject being cut away from his drives loses control on his own being. In fact these master signifiers actually situate a subject as he is cut away from the drives.

Thus we see Stephen as a Lacanian subject marked by lack going through a series of displacements of the object petit as in order to fulfill his missing complement and also to prevent himself from fading away.

NOTES

1. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits. A Selection, The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function*, ed. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 1-7.
2. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics.*
3. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Collins, 1988)
4. Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 40.
5. Mark Bracher, *Lacan Discourse and Social Change. A Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism* (New York: Cornell U.P., 1993).

Future Imperfect: Utopia/Dystopia in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

URBASHI BARAT

The utopian novel is not the most common fictional mode in the Western literary tradition. The product of a response to social upheaval and social reorganization, it became an important method of understanding and analysing society only since the last century and a half, a period that has witnessed greater political, social and economic changes than ever before, and marks the common human hopes and fears, anticipations and anxiety, at emerging social transformations. Utopia/dystopia is not just an imaginary land projecting a writer's prophecies; it is both there and then and here and now, for the imagined space and time of its fictional world is based on the present place and the present time. Thus it is kin to both satire and fantasy: if, as Darko Suvin puts it, "utopia explicates what satire implicates and vice versa,"[1] as Freud points out in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," "carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them."[2]

From the early twentieth century onwards most utopian novels have actually been dystopian. In a recent article in *Span*, John Tierney puts this down to "our evolutionary heritage": "Our species thrived by learning to plan for the future, and to fear it. We react instantly to danger, and nothing seems as dangerous as the unknown."[3] If, however, utopia/dystopia is accepted as a fictionalized presentation of the realities of the contemporary world, and often, indeed, of eternally recurring social and human situations, if fantasy is in fact reality, dystopia is inevitable with the grim realization that the garden today has been taken over by the machine, with the increasing sense of alienation and exile and the renewed examination in the twentieth century of the power structures of society. This is especially the case with women's novels. Right from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* onwards the question of woman's identity and

place has always been investigated by utopian writers, both male and female, but where men are more traditional in their approach women themselves are more radical, concentrating on theories of power and the power equation in the family and community rather than on the position of women per se. The woman's utopian novel, in fact, builds its social, political, religious and philosophical argument on the Marxist analogy that bourgeois is to man as proletarian is to woman. As Marxism examined the "woman question" in its critique of class and society, the woman's utopian novel moved from an analysis of the position *of* women in contemporary society to a creation of a position *for* women in the future that often in the end proves to be no less oppressive and paternalistic than the patriarchy of the present. This is explicitly so in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*,[4] of course, but it is obliquely indicated even in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*,[5] which seems to promise a utopian future rather than a dystopian one. Atwood and Piercy and prolific writers, who belong to different traditions of feminism, but in their only attempts at the utopian mode they share many common concerns and in many ways a common vision.

Piercy belongs to a socialist feminist tradition in American women's writing that goes back to the nineteenth century. This tradition questions capitalistic social institutions and advocates sweeping social and political changes, particularly in matters relating to sexuality, reproduction and motherhood. Radical feminists believe that patriarchy, which was the first class system in history, was the model for later social oppressions such as slavery and colonialism; that male domination originated not in biology but in the gender roles reinforced by society, and that female exploitation is not so much economic as psychological. Women are conditioned to seek self-fulfilment through social approval: consequently, they lack the self-esteem of men, who have been taught to believe that they are intrinsically superior beings. Like the cultural feminists, radical feminists hold that much of traditional family life, including child-rearing, needs to be modified, and that the so-called womanly virtues such as nurturing and sensitivity are not just feminine attributes but marks of humanity that must prevail in all relationships if the world is to survive. In her fiction and her poetry, Piercy writes about the need to develop non-exploitative relationships, the human damage caused by male patterns of rationality and order, the destruction of the environment and the impoverishment of urban life. It is these ideas that lie behind her *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

Using the classic travel-narrative strategy of utopian and satiric fiction, in which the traveller moves through time and space to encounter a world very different from his own, which in turn enables him—and the

reader—to understand the realities, the hopes and the fears of his social existence, *Woman on the Edge of Time* shuttles its protagonist and its reader back and forth between the New York of circa 1975 and a future world in Mattapoisett, a small rural community in New England today that symbolize the possibility of hope for Connie Ramos. The two worlds in which she finds herself are continually juxtaposed and provide a commentary on each other; a violent psychiatric patient, drugged and confined to a hospital ward, she keeps travelling to Mattapoisett through psychic concentration and repeatedly reawakens in hospital. Indeed, the novel is structured through a process of gaining and losing consciousness—in, as it were, a fictionalized projection of the New Left belief in consciousness-raising and of the focus on consciousness and ego in American psychiatric practice.

Connie's mental instability is constantly emphasized, as a sign of her alienation from the dystrophies present, but also as a sign of the times, that the people of a utopian future can only make contact with the exploited, the silenced, the mentally and emotionally battered. As Luciente, Connie's guide to the future world, tells her, "It's odd. Most we've reached are females, and many of those in mental hospitals and prisons." (196) It is only the powerless, paradoxically, who can change the world of 1975 to a Mattapoisett of 2137 (197-98) for they can imagine and will a utopia into existence. Hence, too, the title of the novel: "woman" is not just Connie but all women, all those who are marginalized, oppressed and used, precariously balanced on the edges of male norms of sanity and rationality, yet through whose fantasizing and desiring alone a new world, a new society, can come into being.

The novel begins with Connie rushing to open the door, thinking, "Either I saw him or I didn't and I'm crazy for real this time," (9) "him" being a person she had been hallucinating about for over a month, the person from the future trying to take her to see and understand a possible utopia. Ironically, however, at the door is her niece Dolly, running away from her lover and pimp Geraldo: when Connie tries to save Dolly by hitting Geraldo with a wine bottle, she finds herself beaten up by the two men hunting Dolly, strapped to a hospital bed, accused of attacking her niece's attacker. This helps the reader to empathize with Piercy's protagonist, for, even though Connie has a long history of psychiatric illness behind her, the way in which the madwoman-in-the-attic is institutionalized and treated by the medical profession shifts the reader's attention away from any question about her reliability as a narrator towards her victimization. For, as her state of mind is evaluated again and again by male norms of sanity, it is increasingly obvious that she is classified as mad only by a society that refuses

to listen to its women. Luciente (the name signifies "light") enters Connie's dark world just before she is about to be confined by the State, albeit only as a hallunication at first. Utopia for those who live in dystopia must indeed seem like a dream; Connie's present includes battered women, child abuse, street crime, drugs, men who rule by force, betrayal of human relationships; it is fantasy which keeps her alive and hopeful. If in her suffering Connie stands for all victims of exploitation regardless of gender, in her resilience, in her indomitable spirit, her refusal to accept defeat, she stands for the human spirit itself.

A Chicana immigrant in New York, living on the fringes of society, poor and jobless, displaced and dispossessed, rejected by her family, deprived of her child by the State, without a man by her side in a male-dominated world, Connie's longings for a stable loving relationship have always been frustrated at every turn. The novel opens with even Dolly, her last hope, who is as much displaced and exploited as she is, betraying her aunt without hesitation out of her patriarchally conditioned love and fear of her pimp, even though she knows how Connie had sheltered and tried to protect her. Clearly, love in such a world is not enough for a woman to survive by, whether it is a Connie or a Dolly, as is proved on every occasion when either of them tries to reach out to the other but fails to support her. What succeeds is belonging to the dominant culture. This is why their Chicana identity is so important: Connie cannot be heard by the hospital staff because they are mainly white and male. Contrast here Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which, like *Woman on the Edge of Time*, explores the way in which mental institutions try to control body and mind and whose symbol of oppression is the grotesque female Big Nurse, Kesey's reading of the archetypal Terrible Mother. Piercy's oppressors, on the other hand, are ordinary professional men and women who work together to classify and experiment with all those who are displaced in and by the dominant culture; dehumanization is inevitable in any power game, and it is here that the real danger of a patriarchal society lies. The psychiatric ward becomes a symbol of all the social institutions which are supposed to contain violence and chaos, including the church and the school. This is made explicit when Connie ponders over how to tackle her interrogators at the hospital:

> Doctors and judges, caseworkers and social workers, probation officers, police, psychiatrists. . . . What were they looking for? Would it be better to fall into their net or through it? . . . She was taking a test in a subject, and she didn't even know what course it was. . . . It was like saying the responses at Mass. When what she

> said didn't fit their fixed ideas, they went on as if it did. (92-93)

No wonder, then, that Dolly adopts an "Anglo" appearance to attract more customers, and that Connie's brother Luis changes his name to the more WASPish Lewis, his personality, too, reflecting the new name, as he turns from the loving older brother of childhood to exploitative devious tyrant, the product and the symbol of the dominant culture, manipulating the lives of his children, his sister and his wives with equal ease and power. The changes in Connie's name, too, are significant; from Consuelo Camacho she becomes Connie or Mrs. Ramos according to what her society demands of her at the moment.

The psychiatric hospital is not only physical but also mentally and emotionally confining; friends betray each other, touching is forbidden, and all communication denied. As Connie is moved from isolation to a mixed ward, where apparently comfortable living conditions are a cover for neurological experiments cared out on reluctant victims, all poor and friendless, in the name of social good, she turns to Luciente more and more frequently, so that he can take her into his world of light and mobility, in which tasks and activities are unspecific to gender, age and class, and identity is unrelated to colour, race or sex. Indeed, Luciente even turns out to be a woman, to Connie's astonishment but eventual relief. Not that the people of the future are a homogeneous or undifferentiated lot:

> we decided to hold on to separate culture identities. But we broke the bond between genes and culture, broke it forever. We want there to be no change of racism again. But we don't want the melting pot where everybody ends up with thin gruel. We want diversity, for strangeness breeds richness. (104)

Connie is told. This liberality extends particularly to sexual matters too: homosexuality is as normal and natural as heterosexuality, childhood sexual experimentation not discouraged, and "coupling" for pleasure alone the norm. The family has been replaced by a "core," and each child, sent into "birth" only after a death, and so always a wanted one, has three "comothers" to "break the nuclear bonding." (105) The "comothers" are usually, moreover, never "sweet friends," so that there are no misunderstandings or sexual antagonisms among them which might disturb the growing child. Men can be mothers too, and can even lactate. This is "part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for any-

one. The original production: the power to give birth. 'Cause as long as were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanized to be loving and tender." (105) Obviously, unlike most feminists, Piercy regards childbearing as a source not of women's oppression but of power. Consequently, as in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, children are produced outside the body, in laboratories; this is, however, not a sign of dehumanizing technology but of the end of sexual stereotyping and of the freedom from the pain of childhood and of genetic bonding for mothers.

The child, too, has to learn the meaning of love without possessiveness or dependence. Adolescents are removed from their mothers and left alone to fend for themselves for a week in the wilderness, so that they return with a new name of their own choosing and their own identity. Now they live with aunts, not mothers, both children and mothers learning to live independently as persons, not roles. Selfhood and identity are, then, of one's own making, and not a social construct. The language of Mattapoisett, too, eliminates conflict, especially of the gender variety, with the use of "person" and "per" instead of gender-specific nouns and pronouns, which have been "reformed." (42)

As Connie travels more and more into the future world she feels she has become a part of Luciente's "tribe," participating in their rituals, their celebrations and their mourning. This gives her an emotional bonding and stability that she had lacked in the "real" world. Chicanas have a strong sense of family, unlike the rational self-centred "Anglos" of the dominant culture. But Connie has been both abandoned by her extended family and denied the nuclear one of the WASP. When she had moved from Mexico to Chicago and then to New York, she had moved from family and community to the larger social system of the impersonal city, in which the marginalized have no meaningful existence; now she moves back into a family and a community that have, however, no "real" existence. Just as she is an outsider in the society she lives in, so, too, she can never really belong to Lucient's world either, for she is a part of the possible "history" of these imaginary creatures from an imagined future.

The "Back-to-the-future" hi-tech economy of the future Mattapoisett, moreover, based on the "good-life" movement of the seventies (see, for example, the popular utopian novel *Time and Again* of 1970, in which utopia can be reached only by going back in time), with its pollution-free environment—its use of recycled goods and of bicycles for transport, for one thing—and its zero population growth, and the apparently minimal governmental action, its workerless factories and its highly evolved art forms, co-exist with what might seem innocuous,

even desirable, but which hint at something more sinister lying behind the surface: the continuing tensions between people that need a "worming," when people are forced to confront their problems with each other, the term itself suggestive of pejorative implications, or the constant lapses into madness among the inhabitants of Mattapoisett. Even the unisex attire and the common wardrobe with its "flimsies" for celebratory wear are an indication of the insignificance of the individual against the community; notably, "flimsies" with all their beauty are but that, flimsy, and are interestingly, designed mainly for and by women. Besides, there are obviously strict controls everywhere, although "Government" as understood in contemporary terms may not appear to exist, the invisible authority being no less rigid than Huxley's Big Brother. The question, therefore, arises: is this really a utopia?

For the future consists not only of Matapoisett but also of New York, which Connie once reaches by mistake. In this city the outdoors exists only as a projection on a screen, human beings are put together with prostheses made to specifications, and women ("fems" as opposed to Luciente's "mems") can only be prostitutes totally dependent on the men controlling them (which is not too far from Dolly's position in 1975). "Multis" own people, food comes from factories, and intelligence is genetically controlled. The relationship of New York to Mattapoisett is clear: one is a distorted mirror-image of the other. The two societies are in fact constantly at war with each other, a war that is a symbolic projection of what is happening in the contemporary world (a utopian convention that was so successfully exploited in Satyajit Ray's film *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*). Violence is endemic to the human condition; it is even a mark of being alive, and human. Thus Jackrabbit, Luciente's lover, is killed in action; the artist's engagement with his society is active and can demand violence and even death. As Bee explains to Connie after Jackrabbit dies: "We're all at war. You're a prisoner of war [note the word-play, emphasized by the absence of hyphens]. . . . In your time many without power found ways to fight. Till that became a power." (328) Not only is this a comment on Gandhian non-violence, it is also a summing up of the feminist's vision of a woman's passive aggression in a paternalistic environment; Connie is inevitably reminded of the street fights and the riots and the violence of her own life. Her mind is made up: "the enemy would press on and violate her frontiers again as soon as they chose their next advance. She was at war. . . . No more fantasies, no more hopes. *War.*" (337-38)

Luciente tells her later that she had imagined the battle, but certainly the political war in the future Mattapoisett between the Shapers and the Mixers is no less deadly; indeed, it is all the more so because it

has clearly developed from twentieth-century genetic engineering and the kind of experimentation that people like Connie are subjected to in today's world. The Shapers want to breed people for "selected traits," while the Mixers "don't think people can know objectively how people should become," and the Shapers' desire is merely "a power surge." (226) If violence and the need for power over others can never be eradicated, the weak, the marginalized and the silenced will always be at risk. As Luciente says, "Power *is* violence. When did it get destroyed peacefully?" (370) The failure of utopia is evident in its inability to abolish power structures and power games. Luciente's attempts to help Connie escape from hospital and survive on her own are, significantly, unsuccessful.

Most striking of all is the effect that the Mattapoisett of 2137 has in the end on Connie; if it gives her a hope and a promise for the future that enables her to go on living in dystopia, it also "anneals" her mind. She resolves to kill all those who want to destroy her self through the physical and emotional violence of their neurological experiments. Now she is no longer "a receptive woman," for she has decided to rise above her victimization through a similar act of violence, even though this means she can never go back to Luciente's world. She believes however, that she can dedicate her act of war to all those who have suffered like her and to those "who will be born from my best hopes." (370) At least she has fought and won, she feels. But her victory is only partial, even from the short-term view: only four of her intended victims die, and her incarceration continues, now without the help of future hope.

This kind of ambivalence is not present in Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*. Where *Woman on the Edge of Time* has behind it Piercy's own sense of dislocation as a half-Jewish girl growing up in a violent and "Anglo" Detroit, and can equate her protagonist's Mexican childhood with a future Mattapoisett, Atwood, a Canadian, deeply conscious of the anti-feminist backlash of Christian fundamentalism and neo-conservatism, places *her* protagonist in the same New England region as Piercy does Connie, so that she almost seems, as it were, to examine the realities of Connie's "back-to-the-future" dreams in her *Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood's native Canada—once a British colony and now in danger of a grosser form of colonization, a cultural and economic one by the United States—is the place to which refugees from the American Gilead escape (as indeed American protesters against the Vietnam war had done in the sixties). In her study of utopia/dystopia she thus inverts the good and the bad place, just as she inverts social and moral values when she examines the role of religion in fixing woman's place through time.

Piercy's protagonist is named, and her story is narrated in the third

person; Atwood's protagonist may tell her own tale, but she is nameless, for she has no identity but only a role. By denying a self, however, the rulers of Gilead, no matter how swiftly and ruthlessly they may have silenced and enslaved them, have also diminished their men; if women are only Wives, Marthas, Handmaids, Aunts, Jezebels, Daughters and Econowives, men are equally only Commanders, Eyes, Angels and Guardians. Naturally, the protagonist is hesitant and apologetic about telling her story: it is as fragmented and shapeless as she is. She finds her self and her ability to go beyond the victim's role not through Connie's violence and destruction but through her belief in herself and through her creativity. This expresses itself in her sensitivity to language and to her ability to construct/reconstruct herself in words that bear witness to those acts of resistance that keep people human, and alive. That is why she constantly muses upon the ambiguity of words—for instance, "Waste no want not. I am not being wasted. Why do I want?" (17) note the twist implied through the use of the passive voice—or the word-games she plays with herself, the woman's rejection of the either/or oppositions of patriarchal discourse, as in:

> I sit in the chair and think about the word chair. It can also mean the leader of a meeting. It can also mean a mode of execution. It is the first syllable in charity. It is the French word for flesh. None of these facts has any connection with the others. (120)

The significance of her narrating her story is not that it is the truth, which it may well not be, as she observes again and again, but that she is able to do so at all: this enables her to construct herself, to control her own, inner, life, and to communicate with others, even if it is with only an imaginary audience. She "wills" herself, her characters and her readers/listeners into existence: "I tell, therefore you are." (279)

Where Piercy suggests the persistence of bourgeois patterns of social behaviour, Atwood suggests the limitations of feminist theory. For against the way reproduction is monitored and regulated through rituals such as the Ceremony of impregnation and the Birth Day, where the attendance of all the women is mandatory. (Piercy's Mattapoisett makes an interesting comparison in this respect.) As a result of an ecological disaster, sterility among both men and women is endemic, though, as always, it is the woman's reproductive capacity that is constantly under review. Since Wives cannot conceive, the Handmaid is of supreme importance in this society in which women do not have "jobs"; they only have tasks, and hers is the task of women everywhere and at all times: to bear children. If she fails to do so in the three chances allotted to her—

note the magical number that Piercy, too, refers to—she is banished to a life-in-death existence in the Colonies, sweeping up toxic wastes as Offred's mother is condemned to do.

As in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the matter of naming as a mark of identity is of particular significance. But Offred has lost her name and her place in a world she knew once, and hence she is even more dispossessed than Connie was, who had never belonged to either of the worlds she inhabits and whose name bears at least some semblance to her childhood one: today's Offred could well be tomorrow's Of-someone else. Like Piercy's Connie, she has lost her lover, Luke; her daughter; her closest friend, Moira: and her mother. Except for Moira, who, ironically, finds a version of freedom in a State-run brothel for Commanders—all the more ironical because she is a lesbian—the figures of the past return to Offred only as memories and as hope: like Connie, she is a "refugee" (239) for whom remembering the past is an assertion of selfhood. So is establishing communication with other silenced, marginalized and fragmented people, whether it is exchanging secret glances of recognition with other Handmaids to "show each other we are known at least to someone, we still exist," (295) or the Aunts and Marthas showing them some sympathy, or Serena Joy reaching out to Offred, or the Commander's hesitant request to Offred, to begin not an illicit relationship but a secret friendship, for a kiss that seems sincere, and to play Scrabble (significantly, a word-game) in return for a bottle of hand-lotion and a pile of old magazines. Offred's gain is not merely the balm that is so ironically lacking in this latter-day Gilead but the much more precious awareness that she is no longer merely an object to someone, "merely a useful body." (172) No wonder, then, that her mother's hope emerges as Offred's despair, as she addresses her absent mother silently: "You wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies." (127)

Indeed, throughout Offred's story Atwood examines feminist claims about the millennium. There is the irony of Offred having found her mother's view about men's role in childrearing and masculine values corrupting, a mother who had fought for a world in which her daughter would not have to fight similar battles. Offred herself had taken this "liberated" world for granted when she had brought up her own daughter, only to lose her when the new world came into existence. There is also another kind of irony in the way the Japanese women tourists, from a totally different culture, have adopted a characteristically Western appearance, with revealing clothes, high heels and lipstick, objectifying themselves as Dolly in Piercy's novel had done, but also as Offred herself had done once; when she sees them she remembers the past, its free-

dom and its social values, but she is now nonetheless deeply embarrassed and disgusted by them, while the Japanese on their part find the Handmaid's uniform of long red dress, headdress and veil exotic. Clothes, for both Piercy and Atwood, represent social conditions and social conditioning.

The important thing about Atwood's Gilead is that it is possible to escape and to survive it, and not necessarily through suicide or physical flight alone. Piercy's Connie had attempted to escape the New York of 1975 but had lost both that the Mattapoisett of 2137 in the process; this Mattapoisett, moreover, might never exist, and even if it did could well provide a subtext of paternalistic control. There are obviously many differences between the utopia/dystopia in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, but the similarities, surprisingly, are no less remarkable, even though the former's imaginary is on the surface utopian and the latter's dystopian. Both novels examine the tensions within the feminist movement regarding sexuality, feminine bonding and interpersonal relationships; they both query, in their different ways, the stereotyping of gender categories such as "women" and "mothers"; both embody the Derridean observation that "the future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It . . . can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity" (*Of Grammatology*) and Atwood's own comment that "Hope needs the future tense . . . but like thunder it's only an echo, a reverse dream" ("Hopeless"). Both Mattapoisett/New York and Gilead point to the importance of naming and of language in enslavement and liberation. In a world in which men and women live as bodies marked by gender, both novels hope through despair that the human spirit will survive and triumph over the ambivalence of the utopia/dystopia of past, present and future.

NOTES

1. Darko Suvin, "Defining the Literary Genre of Utopia," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 6, No. 2 (Fall 1973), p. 138.
2. Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day Dreaming," *The Standard Edition*, Vol. 9 (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 149.
3. John Tierney, "The Optimists are Right," *Span*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1 (December 1996/ January 1997), p. 6.
4. Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).
5. Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1976).

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From Innocence to Experience: A Study of the Adolescent Hero in J.D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye* and Brian Moore's *The Emperor of Ice Cream*

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Adolescence that crucial and inescapable period of life that bridges the gulf between the innocence of childhood and the experience of maturity, has been an abiding theme in literature, more so in the twentieth century when in the aftermath of the war a significant rise in the divorce rate and a fall in the birth rate was noticed and the child came to be over-indulged. This indulgence led to permissiveness both at home and in school and engineered the growth of a high strung, self-willed and often rebellious adolescent, harbouring conflicting emotions of guilt and innocence, acceptance and rejection sensitivity and recklessness. This apparently slow and sometimes traumatic transition from a carefree world to the responsibilities of adulthood assumed great significance and writers of fiction seemed to reveal an almost obsessive preoccupation with this vital life crisis. Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, Scott F. Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, were some of those who sought to illumine the psychological alienation, and deep personal conflict of protagonists who underwent biological, social and even religious confrontation with the world, on their way to maturity which necessitated coming to terms with an adult world which was so much at variance with their own.

From amongst the adolescents who populate modern fiction, the purpose here is to attempt a comparative analysis of two young heroes, the protagonists of J.D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye* and Brian Moore's *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, Holden Caulfield and Gavin Burke, and show how each one undergoes a slow and painful process of initiation which can either be 'tentative,' 'uncompleted' or 'decisive.'[1]

Close parallels can be drawn between these heroes standing on the

threshold of maturity. Both seek refuge from an unsatisfactory situation that has developed owing to their academic incompetence and their domineering fathers. Holden who had been expelled from two previous schools is to be expelled from Pencey Prep too, for having failed in four subjects. Unable to adjust to school and afraid of facing the unpleasant situation at home "Dady'll kill you"[2] his sister Phoebe tells him, he leaves both school and home, and with no particular aim in mind checks into a hotel in New York. He spends a frentic week roaming aimlessly around the town, dates his ex-girl-friend Sally, visits his kid sister Phoebe, spends the night in a waiting room on a railway station and on Monday which forms the end of the main plot goes to the museum of Natural History where he is joined by Phoebe. In the beginning of the novel as the narrator, he informs the readers that he would not tell them about his childhood but we do learn significant details of his life before and after this event.

Gavin Burke, the protagonist of *The Emperor of Ice Cream* faces a similar predicament. Having failed in the School Leaving Certificate examination he is convinced that he is 'predestined to be a failure,' and seeks refuge from a father who he believes to be "one of the most prejudiced, emotional and unreasonable men he had met. It was more than a year since he had decided there was no longer any point in arguing with his father. Silence and silent rebellion were the only defense."[3] To avoid going back to school and in defiance of his family's wishes, he joins the First Aid Party (F.A.P.) of the Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) even though he is embarrassed wearing its hated British uniform and the salary is a mere pittance. He spends his days and nights with his companions sometimes at the A.R.P. Station and at other times wandering aimlessly around Belfast, visiting bars and dancing halls. It is only towards the end of the novel after a bomb blast that his actions become purposeful and the narrative ends with his having attained the balance of maturity. The attitude of the protagonists however is enigmatic, though rebelling against accepted norms they need sympathy and guidance. Their problems are compounded because they lack intellectual and emotional support from the parents. In both cases, the mothers are ailing and the fathers too busy being successful to discuss or provide any kind of guidance which is urgently needed by the adolescents. Their siblings provide some measure of support but it is insufficient. In the case of Gavin, his older brother Owen and his nineteen-year-old sister Kathy are preoccupied with themselves. In Holden's case, his elder brother D.B. is a successful writer in Hollywood and comes to see him sometimes and the sister Phoebe is only ten. Hence both are condemned to fight their battle with the self and the world alone, and camouflage their

uncertainty under the guise of rebellious defiance.

Both protagonists are fired with the idea of freedom, the reigning passion of adolescents: freedom from parental authority and conventionalities in order to assert their manhood. The defiant stance which renders them 'alone' in the family enables them to explore and tend their own resources, and the time spent outside the home engenders an independent identity, thus furthering the process of maturity. Their aimless wandering can be compared to a physical journey which enables them to experience and recognize, evil and depravity in the world and helps manoeuvre a change in their attitude. The change, however, is brought about after a long and tortuous spell of deep personal conflict wherein the innocence of the adolescent comes into conflict with the values of the adult world. During this period of initial shock and passivity, all institutions of authority come under close scrutiny whether it is the parents, the school or social and religious institutions, and if found wanting they are rejected unconditionally. Religion, one of the oldest institutions of society, is viewed with distaste and distrust. Holden admits, "I'm sort of an atheist. I like Jesus and all, but I don't care too much for most of the other stuff in the Bible. Take the Disciples, for instance. They annoy the hell out of me. . . . I can't even stand ministers. . . . They sound so phoney when they talk." (99-100) Gavin lives in a house dominated by Catholic and Conservative values, this perhaps is the genesis of his White, and Black angels. One sits on his right shoulder telling him to do the 'decent thing' and the other Black one on his left shoulder whispers all kinds of naughty things into his ear. In Gavin's opinion the Black angel which had barely been mentioned in the catechism class "seemed more intelligent; more his sort." (10) He wonders at the veracity of his mother's statement when she says, "God is good, but God, if there were a God, did not seem to have been particularly good to hear. She was forced to endure her husband's taunts about the irrationality of women. . . Nor did he bless her with health. She suffered from bronchitis, sciatica and varicose veins. Her missal was stuffed with black-edged mass cards, in memorium of the many friends and relations God had taken from her." (133-34) As a result he stands erect as "the Godless guardian of the rational view," (224) unafraid either of 'Our father' or his father, or priests or bombs even at the time of danger and neither kneels nor prays in the hospital at the nervous behest of the priest.

Another problem that the young protagonists have to wrestle against is the problem of sex. Adolescence is marked by a lack of synchronization between the fast-maturing body and not so fast maturing mind. Rapid physical and hormonal changes, accentuated by the desire to emulate adult behaviour provokes them to indulge in smoking, drinking and

also sex. Holden indulges in innocent necking with Jane and later with Sally, and then phones Faith Constance a girl that "didn't mind doing it once in a while." (67) He befriends three girls in the Lavender Room and sends a message to Valencia the night club singer inviting her to join him for a drink and even accepts Maurice's offer of a prostitute. When she actually arrives, he changes his mind and asks her to leave. Although Holden goes through the motions of adult sexual behaviour, he fails to follow through and retains his innocence, because he rejects the adult code: "Sex is some thing I just don't understand." (63) The awakening of sensuality makes Gavin Burke feel he is "a sex maniac," "defiling innocent girls" in his mind and determines to buy himself "great Scarlet whores." (3) when he has the money. Mustering up courage he attempts to have sex with his girl friend Sally but does not succeed, yet continues to be fascinated by her stockinged legs. When he enters the A.R.P. world, he is exposed to a lot of sex. Soldier Mcbride his co-worker cuts indecent jokes and slyly paws Mrs. Cullen in full view of the other young lads. Bobby regales him with a story of how he went into a Methodist Church where young children were singing hymns in the Church loft, and how he sat next to a fourteen-year-old Soprane and putting his hand up her skirts made her squeal at very high pitch indeed. He further informs a shocked Gavin that he was able to get away with this by making a large donation to the Church when the police was called in. At the Club on the dance floor, Mrs. Luddin was "all clinging thighs, pressing breasts and face in his neck." (47-48) He also learns that the minister Re. McMurtry is a homo-sexual. Sex had loomed large in his mind but the actual encounters and experience of naked sexuality make him "physically sick" and he longs for the pure love of Sally. As he falls asleep, he dreams: "I am falling over a cliff. I am falling." (97)

These unsavoury experiences bewilder and further alienate the young protagonists from society. The world at large appears enigmatic, a far cry from the sheltered and carefree world of home and school. Gavin feels "life as an adult could be more terrible than anything a school boy might imagine." (94) Holden too realizes that the world is "a phoney world" and that "If you sat around there long enough and heard all the phonies applauding and all, you got to hate everybody in the world, I swear you did." At the hotel in New York, he sees a transvestite and realizes that the hotel was full of perverts and morons and 'screwballs.' (148) He sees ugliness and depravity all around, even chairs appear to him as "vomity looking," hence he wants to stand on a cliff and prevent children from falling over it, thus guarding their innocence. His visit to the museum further strengthens the belief that peace

and prosperity cannot be maintained. Gavin realizes that "His life since leaving school had been like a see-saw going up to the height of the grown-up world, a world where Lili sat on one's knee and nobody thought it odd, then down with a bump to being a child again, slapped by Daddy, lectured about exams, sent to bed in disgrace." (191) Biologically outgrowing their childhood and yet not ready to accept the adult value system, the protagonists seem suspended between two worlds, and experience great emotional and psychological stress. All their attempts to conform to society end in disquietude for their unconventional thinking and independent outlook makes them run foul of authority and they become perplexed, isolated and disillusioned. Apparently rejecting authority, they actually seek advice and it is for this reason that Holden visits his teacher, Mr. Antolini, but immediately regrets doing so. The teacher tries to abuse Holden and makes homosexual advances towards him, making him flee in nervous confusion. Gavin too decides to pass his matric in order to appease his father and Sally, but knows that he belongs to "a world of misfits."

Unlike traditional heroes of fiction, both Holden and Gavin are less than heroic. Each is bullied and threatened by the fear of losing his girl friend to a stronger contender but is forced to bear his humiliation and suffer in silence. Holden knows Stradlater who has "a damn good build" to be "a sexy old bastard," and yet cannot prevent him from dating his girl friend Jane Gallagher. He admits to being "one of those very yellow guys." (88) Gavin Burke's girl friend Sally is suddenly snatched away by John Henry "a great sack of a man," (161) who actually pushes Gavin around much to his chagrin, but who cannot retaliate because his soul had been "corroded with cowardice" and fear made his legs go weak. Outraged yet helpless, Gavin realizes that the world is no better than a battlefield where only "bullies came out best" (170) and that "all of life's races are fixed and false. You stand at the starting line knowing you can run as well as the others but your place is with the misfits." (192) Yet acceptance of their own weaknesses makes them considerate of others. Holden helps two children put on their skates and gives a donation to the nuns, and Gavin pays for his friend the penniless Captain in the bar. In spite of their innate kindness and their concern for the weak and the underprivileged, they are unable to come to terms with conditions as they exist and become lonely wanderers.

As a result of his unwholesome experiences, Holden realizes that the world is corrupt and 'phoney,' and all attempts to change it are futile. The world as it stands makes him want to 'puke' and he decides that he will not be a part of it. Disgusted, he turns away from the world and finds refuge in a mental system.

Mordecai Marcus in an article divides the initiation story into three types. "The 'tentative' which leads to the threshold but does not cross it; the 'uncompleted' in which the protagonist is still enmeshed in a struggle for certainty in the end, and the 'decisive' in which the protagonist has reached maturity and achieved self discovery." (128) Thus Holden experiences and recognizes evil and vulgarity and agonized by them is unable to bring about the required inner transformation to be able to accept the ambiguities of the adult world. His initiation at best can be called "tentative" for he is unable to conform. According to Grunwald, the fault lies not in Holden, but in the world in which he sojourned and found himself an alien.[4] Alarmed by the phoniness of the world and its inhabitants, Holden is unable to progress and finds refuge in a mental asylum where he is plagued by uncertainty and loneliness. "I think I am, but how do I know." (213) "All I know is, I sort of miss everybody, I told about." (214)

Gavin Burke, however, is more fortunate and his traumatic probation to manhood is more rewarding and 'decisive.' It is marked by a significant change in knowledge about the world and himself. When Belfast is bombarded he feels a peculiar kind of elation, "a tumult of joy." (199) He had been afraid of failing in maths, vomitted his breakfast before an exam and was petrified with fear when challenged by John Henry who remained surprisingly unperturbed as bombs exploded around him. Absolved of his fear he takes the first step towards maturity in refusing to escape with his family to Dublin when Belfast is bombarded. He spends a whole night confining dead bodies, and his A.R.P. uniform, earlier a source of embarrassment now gives him a sense of authority. He has gained insight, and with this awareness, he returns home confident and fearless, and there he meets his father who had returned looking for him. Tears of joy stream down his father's face at finding him alive but Gavin is more controlled. "After tonight . . . everything has changed . . . he can forgive his father anything." (225) The end of the narrative marks also the end of Gavin's psychic and emotional ferment. The external situation remains unchanged but there is a change in his attitude. The voices of the black and white angels become expendable, for now he heeds a new voice, "a cold grown up voice" within him and "he heeded that voice, heeded it as he had never heeded the childish voices of his angels." (250) The new voice counsels him to be silent. The roles are reversed. His father sits weeping before him like a child, and in a gesture of authority born of this new awareness, he quietly takes his father's hand to console him.

NOTES

1. Mordecai Marcus, "What is an Initiation Story," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XIX 1960/61, p. 128.
2. J.D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye* (Little Brown, 1964 [7th printing]), p. 7.
3. Brian Moore, *The Emperor of Ice Cream* (New Canadian Library No. 154, McClelland & Stewart, Rep. 1985), p. 33.
4. Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller. Jr., "J.D. Salinger, Some Crazy Cliff," *Western Humanities Review*, 1956, p. 205.

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J.D. Salinger's Fiction: An Appraisal

S.D. SHARMA

Writing in *The Nation* in March 1957, David L. Stevenson expresses surprise at the so-called critical verdict that Salinger is "rarely acknowledged by the official guardians of our literary virtue."[1] Answering the query, George Steiner writes, "He can now rest assured. The heavy guns are in action along the entire critical front. Salinger's unique role in contemporary letters has been accorded full recognition."[2] In the same vein, Arthur Mizener says, "Salinger is probably the most avidly read author of any serious pretensions in his generation."[3] Granville Hicks in *Saturday Review* in July 1959 writes, "There are, I am convinced, millions of young Americans who feel closer to Salinger than to any other writer."[4] Similarly F.L. Gwynn and J.L. Blotner comment, "The only post-war fiction unanimously approved by contemporary literate American youth consists of about five hundred pages by Jerome David Salinger."[5]

Whereas Maxwell Gismar considers Salinger's work "Ivy Rebellion of the Fifties,"[6] Isban treats him as the spokesman of "the non-conformists who resist the old betrayals of rhetoric and illusion and rejects the false claims of ideals."[7] If for Charles Kaplan, Salinger's tales are "comic masterpieces"[8] and can safely be compared with the classic in literature, for Charles H. Kegel, *The Catcher in the Rye* is "the failure of any form of communication."[9]

The above conflicting views of the eminent critics about Jerome David Salinger are but a natural corollary, concomitant to a novelist's gradual strivings for his determined efforts to get a proper identification and a place for himself in the hierarchy of recognized authors. Salinger, in fact, belonged to the literary era of the mid-fifties in America, which was itself struggling for coming out of the mental trauma it received due to the World War II. It was, indeed, a period during which moral and ethical values fast degenerated. The social cords broke down and people suffered from a complete spiritual void. Man, in general, felt completely

faced with grim challenges in a universe both absurd and frightening. The urbanized, alienated man looked upon God with askance. The proverbial Hardyian gloom pervaded everywhere, in a nut-shell.

The modern novelists of America such as Theodore Dreiser and Ernest Hemingway did their best to restore old ethical and moral values in the society. John Dos Passos also served the cause of the society by dealing with the problem of nervous breakdown and the fear of war in his novels. Similarly, William Faulkner and Sinclair Lewis also dealt with contemporary problems in their own novels. Thomas Wolfe, John Steinbeck and J.P. Marguand, likewise, depicted their contemporary milieu by dealing with various problems. But after these novelists there came many new novelists, J.D. Salinger being one of them, who popularized and practised a particular type of *ism* which specifically dealt with the American life and society in a strictly professional and technical sense. Synoptically speaking, whereas Norman Mailer is known for the cult of Bohemianism, John Hersey is identified with the Revival of Conscience. Similarly, Saul Bellow is known as the novelist of the intellectuals. Likewise, if James Jones is primarily known as a War novelist, it is William Styron, who dealt with the theme of innocence. With the novels of John Howard Griffin, the cult of Devil in Texas became popular. Similarly, amongst all these novelists, J.D. Salinger is also identified with the New Yorker School of Fiction writers. Decidedly, the credit for popularizing the New Yorker School of Fiction must go to Jerome David Salinger: for, his contributions in this regard, as has been discussed earlier, are much wider and more varied than those of John Cheever, Irwin Shaw and Edward Newhouse, who are the other noted novelists belonging to the New Yorker School of Fiction.

The Catcher in the Rye is Salinger's *magnum opus*, which deals with the life of an adolescent named Holden Caulfield. This novel became an instant success: for, about 250,000 copies were sold every year. Even such great masterpieces as *Marjorie Morning Star, The Adventures of Augie March* and *By Love Possessed* declined in their sale after ten years, but *The Catcher in the Rye* grew in popularity and sale year after year. The novel is a classic novel of adolescence and its central theme is the theme of alienation. Compared with Huck Finn, Holden certainly appears to be more powerful and convincing. It is, in fact, Salinger's artistic feat not only from the standpoint of psychology, but also from the point of view of dealing with the social and philosophical problems. In fact, Salinger worked on *The Catcher in the Rye* for about ten years and, despite criticism to the contrary, it was hailed as the true harbinger of the New Yorker School of Fiction. In this novel, Salinger deals with the life of an adolescent hero, who, for every good reason,

represents the whole humanity under four Rs, which, in summation, denote four powerful cycles of experience, wisdom and liberation cycles of experience, wisdom and liberation.

R_1 = Revival
R_2 = Redemption
R_3 = Recollection
R_4 = Resurrection

These four Rs suggest four distinct phases of every life in the Darwinian sense of the term. The first stage in the Salingerian work is the stage of Revival, which comes after a strong fit of epiphany. In other words, an adolescent hero like Holden Caulfield comes to the plane of reality. The second stage is the stage of Redemption, passing through which, an adolescent hero apparently looking like a neurotic absurd, is liberated from the strains of his psychological breakdown. Recollection, the third stage, is where an adolescent like Holden tries to identify his present with the past and makes his own identity. The fourth stage of Resurrection is the final stage, where Salinger's Holden like Seymour, Franny and Zooey, appears to be a virtue-incarnate.

Salinger wrote about thirty short stories within a period of approximately twenty-five years. These stories were periodically published in *New Yorker, Harper's World Review, Collier's Story, Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan* and *Saturday Evening Post*. After rigorous selection, Salinger chose nine for his work *Nine Stories*, which comprises "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," "Just Before the War with the Eskimos," "The Laughing Man," "Down at the Dinghy," "For Esme—with Love and Squalor," "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" and "Teddy." The dominant themes characterizing *Nine Stories* are: alienation, racial prejudice, estrangement in love, war-horrors, spiritual crisis, neurotic disorders and worldly disillusionment. The racial prejudice is the central theme in "Down at the Dinghy" and the estrangement in love is the keynote of "Just Before the War with the Eskimos." "The Laughing Man" deals with the problem of perversity and "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" with that of the betrayal of faith. "Teddy" deals with the problem of spiritual crisis. James E. Miller, a noted critic of J.D. Salinger, has appreciated *Nine Stories* for effective presentation of what is real and unreal or *nice* and *phony* in this world.

Franny and Zooey deals with the Glass family of New York. It is a faithful portrayal of Franny's nervous breakdown and, subsequently, Zooey's efforts to help Franny recover from her religious nervous crisis.

The message of the Fat Lady is a symbol of death in *Franny and Zooey*, for the creation of which Salinger received critical encomiums. *Franny and Zooey* is also significant from the point of view of Salinger's interest in the oriental philosophy.

Similarly, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* deals with the Glass family with a spiritual tinge. In this work, Salinger the philosopher, is dominant on Salinger the artist. Many aspects of the *Vedanta* and the theory of incarnation have been alluded to in order to suggest a sort of redemption to the Glass family. In treatment and narration, Salinger like Galsworthy, deals with the Glass Saga almost in the same way in which Galsworthy did in the *Forsyte Saga*. One immortal character in this work is Seymour, who has many autobiographical resemblances with Salinger himself. Some critics like Henry Anatole Grunwald find some autobiographical touches as genuine and the rest as fake. As for instance, Salinger, like the Glass children, was born in New York to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. To soothe her in-laws-to-be, Scotch-Irish Marie Jillich changed her name to Miriam when she married Sol Salinger.

Salinger's art is certainly the art of an Impressionist, which is one characteristic feature of the novelists belonging to the New Yorker School. Salinger treats art as a medium to express, represent, communicate human life. He is basically allied to the joyful mysticism of Whitman. The mystical anguish of Emily Dickinson and also the macabre humour of Mark Twain constitute the essential ingredients of Salinger's art and technique. Ring Lardner's prose rhythms and F. Scott Fitzgerald's poetic style impressed Salinger. He also liked John Updike's examination of the relation of spirit and matter. The patterns of withdrawal and return, of search for the ideal and the discovery of the self, as practised by Hawthorne and Melville, also constitute significant segments of Salinger's fictional technique. Like Whitman, he does not treat modern life as completely meaningless but as something meant for facing challenges with joy. His immortal creation Seymour stoically sums up Salinger's vision, which primarily controls his art and technique: "All we do over whole lives is to go from one little piece of Holy Ground to the next."

Salinger considers style like Buffon, as the man himself. He treats simplicity, clarity, euphony and the telling effect as the major contributory factor of a good style. His use of language is unconventional in the sense that he prefers colloquial diction to a traditional one. He didn't follow the genteel tradition and uses many rustic words which somehow passed into the military vocabulary due to World Wars. His major characters such as Holden, Muriel, Dr. Sivetski, Sybil, Carpenter, Eloise,

Marry Jane—all speak crude words which, in fact, were very popular amongst the adolescents during the mid-fifties in America.

Another significant feature of Salinger's language is his ability of using foreign words like *Kalyug, Buddhist, Vedanta, Atman* and *Khaki*. His use of symbols and images reminds one of the practitioners of the New Yorker School. Salinger's images are visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile or olfactory. His use of synaesthetic and empathic images is also remarkable. The most powerful image of the Fat Lady in "Zooey" and the image of the Tombstone in *The Catcher in the Rye* have become proverbial.

Salinger's black humour in *The Catcher in the Rye* resembles Mark Twain's and Right Morris's, Joseph Heller's and Ken Kesey's. Salinger's technique of narration, of introduction, of diaries, letters etc., of inclusion of soliloquy are other remarkable features as a fiction writer. Salinger is a consummate artist. His diction is precise, conversational, technical and colourful. His artistic use of dialogues, which are terse, chiselled, and crisp are certainly his great merits as a novelist.

Psychoanalysis of an adolescent also constitutes the kernel of Salinger's artistic technique of writing fiction. Like John Updike, William Styron and Saul Bellow, he presents a deeper study of his adolescent heroes and heroines, who appear as mad due to a number of neurotic strains. Lionel Tennenbaum, Franklin Graff, John Gedsudski, Sergeant X and De Daumier-Smith, in addition to Holden, are all notable psychological studies. Taken as a whole, Salinger is certainly a great novelist of America and he rightly deserves the meritorious title of being the father of the New Yorker School of Fiction.

Salinger condemns war and feels dehumanized to witness its after-effects on the whole humanity at large. The after-effects of the World War II manifested in social disintegration, loss of moral and ethical values, spiritual void and a sense of alienation. Disillusionment, cynicism, inhumanity, violence and neurasthenia were other horrifying effects of war. The age old belief that God is in heaven and all is right with this world lost its sanctimonious touch. The proverbial Hardyian gloom that God is not in heaven and all is not right with the world came to be taken as true not only by the neurotic adolescents but also by the grown-ups. Salinger, while dealing with the theme of alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny and Zooey*, also deals with the problem of spiritual crisis. As such, his characters get epiphany or revelation at the appropriate time so that they are saved from facing any more absurdity in life. Holden gets epiphany at the right time and he, instead of turning into an escapist, is deeply involved in the pleasures of life. The Carrousel scene in *The Catcher in the Rye* reads like a message of spiritual bliss to all those who are wholly depressed and totally non-plussed:

> Boy, it began to rain like a bastard. In *buckets*, I swear to God. All the parents and mothers and everybody went over and stood right under the roof of the Carrousel, so they wouldn't get soaked to the skin or anything, but I stuck around the bench for quite a while. I got pretty soaking wet, especially my neck and my pants. My hunting hat really gave me quite a lot of protection, in a way, but I got soaked anyway. I didn't care, though. I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way Old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn *nice*, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there.[10]

Like Holden, Salinger's Franny also symbolizes humanity's pilgrimage or quest for truth. Likewise, his Zooey also symbolizes redemption of humanity at large. Seymour, in the same way, represents the process of ressurection of young generation in America.

Salinger's non-conformist attitude is not a negative one but a positive one. For Salinger, even the idea of detachment, which he certainly borrows from the *Bhagavad Gita*, does not mean non-involvement but active involvement in the world. It does not mean escape or withdrawal from the realities of life. Salinger exhorts and sermonizes the adolescent, young generation of America not to feel alienated and depressed.

Salinger feels that despite the fact that this world is full of absurdities, one must have endurance to face them. His Holden, after every epiphany grows as a more reformed adolescent. Instead of running away from facing the realities of life, he strikes a reconciliation and compromise between what is *phony* and what is *nice*.

Salinger's works teach the philosophy of love—love not only for a human being, but also for the whole humanity. His characters being super-sensitive human beings, quickly react and revolt against whatever they think is hypocritical and counterfeit. Salinger is, therefore, essentially a philanthropist. His Holden, Franny, Zooey, Teddy, Buddy and also other characters—all are great philanthropists, in their own ways.

Finally, Salinger's protagonists, despite depression and defeat, have a unique survival instinct. They fully understand that, in a world full of absurdities and cut-throat competitions, only the fittest survive and the weakest become finally extinct. In this sense, they are the Existentialists and not the Nihilist, too. To conclude, Salinger is, in fact, a great novelist, and in the words of James E. Miller, "No other writer since World War II has achieved the heights of popularity of J.D. Salinger as yet."[11]

NOTES

1. David Stevenson, "The Salinger Industry," *Nation*, CLXXXIX (November 13. 1959), p. 360.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Arthur Mizener, *Harpers*, February 1959.
4. Granville Hicks, *Saturday Review*, July 25, 1959.
5. F.L. Gwynn, et al, *The Fiction of J.D. Salinger* (USA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), p. 2.
6. "The Salinger Industry," p. 362.
7. William Wiegand, *Chicago Review*, II.
8. Charles Kaplan, *College English*, XVIII, 1956.
9. Charles H. Kegel, "Incommunicability in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*," *Western Humanities Review*, XI (Spring 1957), p. 188.
10. *The Catcher in the Rye*, p. 275.
11. *J.D. Salinger*, p. 5.

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Political Pacifism and Private Panaceas: A Study of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*

N.K. GHOSH

> Fear teaches men nothing. If men enjoy killing, no memory of war will deter them. Nor will the knowledge of the material damage wrought by war. Only in infinitsimal degree do men's actions spring from rational considerations. One can be thoroughly convinced that an action is absurd and still delight in it.
>
> Hermann Hesse

Since time immemorial war has been a literary theme on the grand scale. Homer's *Iliad* which is known as the "world's greatest war novel" continues to enthral readers today as much as Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* remains an object of interest for the twentieth century student who can see in it reflections of many of the great polemical debates of our own times. Similarly, the battle of Kurukshetra in the *Mahabharata* delights both the elite and the common man through its depiction of the tales of heroism and the political and moral issues it raises. In the nineteenth century, Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* present unforgettable visions of mankind caught in the vortex of battles and conflicts. In the twentieth century, too, war has provided writers with tropes and imaginative fictions of enormous vitality. In the context of America, war as a literary theme "acts out the great tragic vision of our time, the prime historical peripeteia and narrative."[1]

The great avalanche of war novels in America began sometime after 1980 with the publication of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). The ever-growing interest of American writers in war themes seems inexplicable because ever since the Civil War came to an end in 1865, "not a single shell has exploded on American soil; not one bomb dropped from a hostile plane has destroyed a single home; Amer-

ica has not groaned under the heel of one foreign soldier's boot. Even the tempest of the two world wars which ravaged Europe did not touch her territory. There were no ruined cities, no blood-soaked fields, no Auschwitz or Dachau; no countless war dead, no casualties among old people, women, and children."[2]

Despite the fact of the American soil being free of the disasters of war, countless writers in the twentieth century have found war and the politics of war as appropriate raw material for exploring fundamental problems related to the life of an average American caught in the hands of forces beyond his control.

The publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969 brought its author, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. immediate fame and renown. The novel became a best seller and a film based on it was released in 1972. From the anonymity of the relatively 'unknown,' Vonnegut attained a level of fame which only few American writers could rival in the contemporary context. Emerging as it did in the era of the Vietnam war, the novel drew the attention of all who came to believe that all wars were senseless as well as inhuman in nature.

At the centre of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is the sordid tale of the aftermath of the fire-bombing of Dresden by allied bombers on the night of 13 February 1945, experienced by the author himself as a prisoner of war. How complete was the devastation of Dresden after the air raid is described by Bill Pilgrim, Vonnegut's prototype in the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*:

> There was nothing appropriate to say. One thing was clear: Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody that moved in it represented a flaw in the design. . . . American fighter planes came in under the smoke to see if anything was moving. They saw Billy and the rest moving down there. The planes sprayed them with machine-gun bullets, but the bullets missed. They then saw some other people moving down by the riverside and they shot at them. They hit some of them. . . . The idea was to hasten the end of the war.

Vonnegut, like Billy Pilgrim, escapes the air raid by seeking shelter in a meat-storage locker in an unused slaughterhouse in Dresden. Billy describes it as "a one-story cement-block cube with sliding doors in front and back. It had been built as a shelter for pigs about to be butchered. Now it was going to serve as a home away from home for one hundred American prisoners of war. . . . There was a big number over the door of the building. The number was five. . . . Their address was this:

'slaughterhouse five.'" (110-11) Thus their modest address gave Vonnegut the clue for the title of his famous anti-war *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut's anguish resulted from his being under attack by his own country's Air Force and the untold sufferings experienced by the victims of the air raid.

Prior to the shifting of the prisoners of war to Dresden, the miserable souls are assured that they are heading for a beautiful city where the food would be plentiful and where, unlike in all other German cities of the time, they could remain free from the constant fear of bombs since "Dresden is an open city. It is undefended, and contains no war industries or troop concentrations of any importance." (106) On their arrival at Dresden they saw the loveliest city whose principal enterprises were "medicine, and food-processing and the making of cigarettes." (108) The cold comfort of security that the Dresdeners seemed to enjoy by virtue of Dresden being a non-military zone of practically no strategic importance was short-lived for, as in the wake of the air raid by U.S. Air Force bombers, one hundred and thirty thousand people in Dresden died. From the security of the echoing meat locker which was hollowed in living rock under the slaughterhouse, Billy and his fellow-survivors observed: "There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn. . . . Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighbourhood was dead." (129)

The bombing and the consequent destruction of Dresden is not an isolated instance of senseless slaughter, points out Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, but it is an integral part of a general scheme whereby all senseless slaughters are justified in rational terms by the powers that be. Vonnegut cites from President Harry S. Truman's announcement justifying the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima:

> Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British 'Grand Slam,' which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.
>
> The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many-fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. . . .
>
> It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East. We are

> now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. . . . We shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war. (135-36)

War is inevitable according to Truman since old scores have to be settled. By bringing in destruction of countless millions with the aid of sophisticated nuclear technology, America can have the satisfaction of repaying manifold the Japanese error of bombing Pearl Harbor. By harnessing of the basic power of the universe to destroy 'every productive enterprise' of the enemy country, America can assert the "growing power" of its armed forces. Military supremacy is established without counting the cost in human terms. Meaningless destruction and senseless slaughters are part of the game. Reference to the book *The Destruction of Dresden* by David Irving is made in *Slaughterhouse-Five* to show how military generals find convenient rationale for the inhumanity that war generates in the name of a cause. In his foreword to the book *The Destruction of Dresden*, Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker is critical of David Irving's portraying "the frightful picture of the civilians killed at Dresden," for, in lamenting about enemy civilians killed in Dresden, both Englishmen and Americans shed no tear "for our gallant crews lost in combat with a cruel enemy." (136) Eaker's foreword ends thus: "I deeply regret that British and U.S. bombers killed 1,35,000 people in the attack on Dresden, but I remember who started the last war and I regret even more the loss of more than 5,000000 Allied lives in the necessary effort to completely defeat and utterly destroy nazism." (137) The massacre of 135,000 people at Dresden is camouflaged as a sacrifice to save the world from the disastrous effect of Nazism. Eaker seems to put forward the usual argument for the legitimation of the U.S. involvement to ensure the defeat of the Fascist power. It must be kept in mind that in the Second World War, the fight against Fascism provided the excuse for the destruction of places like Dresden and Hiroshima.

To counter the message of Eaker, Vonnegut cites from a portion of the foreword where Air Marshal Saundby remarks:

> That the bombing of Dresden was a great tragedy none can deny. That it was really a military necessity few, after reading this book, will believe. It was one of those terrible things that sometimes happen in wartime, brought about by an unfortunate combination of circumstances. Those who approved it were neither wicked nor cruel, though it may well be that they were too remote from the harsh realities of war to understand fully the appalling destructive power of air bombardment in the spring of 1945.

> The advocates of nuclear disarmament seem to believe that, if they could achieve their aim, war would become tolerable and decent. They would do well to read this book and ponder the fate of Dresden, where 135,000 people died as the result of an air attack with conventional weapons. (137)

One cannot miss the irony implicit in Saundby's statement that the approvers of such massacres are neither wicked nor cruel though they may be 'too remote' from the harsh realities of war to understand the significance of the power of the 'conventional weapons' to destroy indiscriminately. The fact that Dresden was destroyed by 'conventional weapons' is only indicative of how nuclear weaponry may be capable of hastening the doomsday of Earth. When Billy Pilgrim is undergoing treatment in the hospital at Vermont, he is drawn to the conversation between Professor Rumfoord and Lily about the bombing of Dresden. Rumfoord, who is planning a one-volume history of the Army Air Force in World War Two based on the twenty-seven-volume *Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two*, finds it surprising that the twenty-seven volumes of 'Official History' contains nothing about the Dresden raid "even though it had been such a howling success." (139) Rumfoord wonders why the success had been kept a secret for many years after the war from the American people. The Americans could know of the grim reality of Dresden in full measure twenty-three years after the raid, the span being equivalent in a way to the span between the tragedy of Dresden and the appearance of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969. When Lily asks Rumfoord why the Dresden event was kept a secret for so long from the American people, the latter says, "For fear that a lot of bleeding hearts might not think it was such a wonderful thing to do." (140)

It is largely the reaction of the 'bleeding hearts' to the tragedy of Dresden that Kurt Vonnegut wishes to portray in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Poised neatly against the attitude of those who hold the remote-control device of human destruction, in whom strength is a measure of the capacity to practise violence and courage, a measure of cruelty, the 'bleeding hearts' like Billy Pilgrim embody the agony of suffering humanity in the war. Translating his experiences of the Dresden aftermath into fictional reality has not been a comfortable task for Billy or his creator Vonnegut. At the very outset of his novel, Vonnegut writes:

> I would hate to tell you what this book cost me in money and anxiety and time. When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to write

about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece . . . since the subject was so big.

But not many words about Dresden came from my mind then—not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either. (2)

It took Vonnegut nearly twenty years to write *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In 1968 Vonnegut visited Dresden with the financial assistance of a Guggenheim Fellowship to collect material for a novel. He also sought the collaboration of his old friend Bernard O'Hare, to see if together they could reconstruct their Dresden experience in the form of a book on Dresden, a fact that Vonnegut mentions in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He wrote to the Air Force for details about the raid on Dresden: "who ordered it, how many planes did it, what desirable results there had been and so on." (8) But he was disappointed when told that the information was 'top secret still.' Top secret "from whom," he wondered. Vonnegut's crystallized agony of the Dresden encounter distilled itself to emerge as an effective statement on the reality of war experience in the form of a novel. He frankly admits the book is "so short and jumbled and jangled . . . because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds." (14) He wonders how news of massacre of enemies can fill people with satisfaction or glee and openly condemns the people who think mankind needs companies for manufacturing 'massacre machinery' on a large scale. The difficulty of fictionalizing human suffering on the grand scale is presented by Vonnegut aptly in the novel where he states:

> There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war, after all, is that people are discouraged from being characters. (119)

It is apparent that there is absolutely no scope for any individual heroics in a story of massacre when applied to modern warfare. Even valiant and courageous men are reduced to "listless playthings of enormous forces" beyond the scope of human control. What an anti-war novel about the destruction of Dresden can do at best is to project a hero capable of giving expression to his agonized silence in a mock-heroic vein.

When Billy goes to meet his friend O'Hare, Mary O'Hare reacts rather offensively at the idea of Billy's writing a book on Dresden. She tells Billy: "You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them. And they'll be fought by babies like the babies upstairs." (11) Mary's reaction is presented in the form of a powerful comment which is highly critical of the modern man's inherent weakness to glorify war and violence through movies and popular books. Billy comprehends Mary's message and decides to call the book "The Children's Crusade." O'Hare immediately looked up the word 'Children's Crusade' in Charles Mackay's book *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, published in London in 1841. Mackay underrated all Crusades and the Children's Crusade struck him as only slightly more sordid than the ten Crusades for grown-ups. The entry for the Children's Crusade read thus:

> History in her solemn page informs us that the crusaders were but ignorant and savage men, that their motives were those of bigotry unmitigated, and that their pathway was one of blood and tears. Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety and heroism, and portrays, in her most glowing and impassioned hues, their virtue and magnanimity, the imperishable honour they acquired for themselves, and the great services they rendered to Christianity. Now what was the grand result of all these struggles? Europe expended millions of her treasures and the blood of two million of her people; and a handful of quarrelsome knights retained possession of Palestine for about one hundred years! (12)

According to the information contained in Mackay's book, "the Children's Crusade started in 1213, when two monks got the idea of raising armies of children in Germany and France, and selling them in North Africa as slaves. Thirty thousand children volunteered, thinking they were going to Palestine. They were no doubt idle and deserted children who generally swarm in great cities, nurtured on vice and daring, and ready for anything." (12)

Mackay's insight into the true nature of reality of historical evidence and the manner in which this reality can be transformed into an illusion with the help of 'romance' to give to it the appearance of a Crusade admirably sums up the human predicament in the contemporary context which is a mere extension of the human intent to glorify unmitigated bigotry since the ancient times. By using Mackay's observations,

Vonnegut attempts to grasp the true meaning of the crusades against the backdrop of his own experiences relating not only to Dresden but also to similar happenings in the time's continuum. The soldiers who gladly volunteer for enlistment in armies with the idealistic notions of "this is my own, my native land," are like the naive children in the Crusades who volunteered to join the army of children thinking they were going to Palestine. Falling easy prey to calculated propaganda that lends a hue of idealism to deception practised by a 'handful of quarrelsome knights,' these naive soldiers walk into their own doom and destruction. Vonnegut is extremely critical of those who wield the power controls from remote areas and are instrumental in inflicting untold misery on mankind. The destruction of Dresden becomes for Vonnegut a metaphor for all the cruelties practised by man against his fellow-men. All instances of meaningless cruelty and violence relating to both the individual and the masses—Derby, who was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his; the man who had been killed in the famous five-day battle for Hill 875 near Dakto in the Vietnam war; the death of Private Eddie D. Slovik, the only American soldier to be shot for cowardice by the firing squad since the Civil War; the victims of Hiroshima; the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King; and the "count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam—are presented against the backdrop of the destruction of Dresden. Scenes from different plot lines, places, and times, converge at Dresden so that the variety of viewpoints are simultaneously amalgamated to provide the reader with the perspective necessary for the comprehension of the totality of both read and felt experience. This is made possible through the excellent use of the stream-of-consciousness technique which allows Vonnegut to explore the numerous possibilities beyond the narrow confines of time as well as space. The world of the author often merges directly into the world of the novel to give the elements of imagined creativity a distinctive touch of experienced reality.

Where biography and fictional imagination tend to part ways is Billy Pilgrim's frequent "Time travel" which takes him to Tralfamadore, the planet to which he is kidnapped by some Tralfamadorian robots who place him in a zoo with the movie star and sex symbol Montana Wildhack. Billy's "Time travel" makes him "spastic in time," he has "no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright . . . because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next." (17) But his travel to Tralfamadore gives him the philosophy which helps him to see things not in terms of fragments but in their entirety. What is exciting about this planet is that its inhabitants, the Tral-

famadorians, are not baffled or alarmed by all the wars and other forms of murder on Earth. The perpetual dread of the combination of "ferocity and spectacular weaponry" which are responsible for devastation on Earth do not affect the Tralfamadorians. When asked by someone at Tralfamadore what was the most valuable thing he had learned on the planet, Billy replies:

> How the inhabitants of a whole planet can live in peace! As you know, I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time. I myself have seen the bodies of school girls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen, who were proud of fighting pure evil at the time. . . . And I have lit my way in a prison at night with candles from the fat of human beings who were butchered by the brothers and fathers of those school-girls who were boiled. Earthlings must be the terrors of the Universe. If other planets aren't now in danger from Earth, they soon will be. So tell me the secret so I can take it back to Earth and save us all. (84)

He learns from the Tralfamadorians that war and peace are both there at Tralfamadore but what saves them from adverse situations that bother the Earthlings is their philosophy of living: "We have wards as horrible as any you've ever seen or read about. There isn't anything that we can do about them, so we simply don't look at them. We ignore them. We spend eternity looking at pleasant moments. . . . That's one thing Earthlings might learn to do, if they tried hard enough: Ignore the awful times, and concentrate on the good ones." (85)

It is not a philosophy of evasion which suggests one to be blind to the reality of experience. It is a measure to see events in life not in casual terms of cause and effect but to comprehend everything in terms of the absolute. Billy is reminded that "Earthlings are the great explainers. . . . I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all . . . bugs in amber." (62) And again, Billy says that Tralfamadore has taught him "Everything is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does." (145)

The philosophy that Billy has learnt from his Tralfamadorian encounters may seem to suggest escapism in the realm of fantasy or wild imagination. It may also seem to be the kind of restorative escape that Frost suggests in his poem "Birches" where the act of climbing the Birches gives the poet the cathartic release when he is "too weary of

considerations." However, Billy cannot share with Frost the idea that "Earth is the right place for love." Earth is the place where Billy can see nothing but the catastrophe of the grim holocaust that threatens to destroy the Universe. The Tralfamadorian way of looking at things in terms of a timeless continuum can be best understood in terms of the philosophy of the *Bhagwad Gita* which exhorts man to be involved in action without being concerned about the result or reward of such action. Detached and dispassionate action that the Gita talks of can take man out of the limited confines of cause-effect relationship. The Tralfamadorian tales recounted in *Slaughterhouse-Five* point to this end:

> Each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message—describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at one time.

The inhabitants of Tralfamadore enjoy their moments of bliss and shut their eyes to unwelcome reality, an attitude that would do the Earthlings enormous good since they were mere "listless playthings of enormous forces" and as such they could find salvation in learning to accept life as it came. The individual being a pawn in the hands of circumstances beyond his control finds it difficult to curb the brutality of the world. The safest option left to him is to accept things as they are. Religion in Tralfamadore being of marginal value, the Earthling figure to be respected is Charles Darwin "who taught that those who die are meant to die, that corpses are improvements." (154) Since one cannot control one's fate in this deterministic universe, the best course left open to one is simply to let be. At the end of *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut makes his authorial presence felt by remarking: "If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorians is true, that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still—if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice." (154) One of the nicest moments in recent times is Vonnegut's journey to Dresden with his old buddy, O'Hare.

The novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* is essentially pacifist in tone. Vonnegut condemns violence but does not see any great possibility of the

individual effecting any change. The goal then that Vonnegut sets for the individual is to find his own oasis in the barren desert of human existence. Man should aim not at a radical transformation of the world he inhabits, for that would be an exercise in futility, but he should direct his efforts towards the achievement of salvation for himself in a haven of peace far removed from the mad and debased society. Although war and catastrophe recur frequently in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, combat centred action is cleverly avoided to focus attention on Billy Pilgrim's conscious and subconscious interaction with the fire-bombing of Dresden. The novel contains no scene of any battle. What remains at the centre always is the devastation of a beautiful undefended city. Combining history with science-fiction, fantasy with documentation, reality with optical illusion, Vonnegut offers a comprehensive critique of war and the grim realities of war in a manner that justifies that "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre." Knowing man's limitations, Vonnegut rightly suggests that man should not cherish the illusion of transforming the external world of the manipulators of the power structure, but man should turn inwards to discover "the nicest moments." Vonnegut's message to suffering humanity echoes Hermann Hesse's advice to the German youth in "Zarathustra's Return":

> Friends, we must learn to desist from judging whether the world is good or bad, and we must forgo the strange pretension that it is up to us to better it. The world wasn't made to be bettered. Nor were you made to be bettered. You were made to be yourselves. You were made to enrich the world with a sound, a tone, a shadow. Be yourself, then the world will be rich and beautiful. Be other than yourself, be a liar and a coward, then the world will be poor and seem in need of betterment.[4]

It is in attempting to be his own self again that Billy Pilgrim, and perhaps Kurt Vonnegut, succeeds in restructuring the Dresden experience into an artifice that makes him "concentrate on the happy moments of his life and ignore the unhappy ones—to state only at pretty things as eternity failed to go by." (142) And it is not insignificant that Billy Pilgrim, allowed the selectivity possible under the Tralfamadorian principle, might have chosen as his happiest moment "his sun-drenched snooze in the back of the wagon" only a few days after the fire-bombing destroyed Dresden. Thus Billy Pilgrim has eventually learnt to discover from the emptiness and the disorder of the times the few happy moments in which it is best to live.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey Walsh, *American War Literature: 1914 to Vietnam* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 3.
2. M. Koreneva, "The Contemporary War Novel," *20th Century American Literature: A Soviet View* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 48.
3. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-Five* (London: Vintage, 1991).
4. Hermann Hesse, *If the War Goes On* (London: Triad, 1985) pp. 94-95.

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The Idea of Being American Indian: A Re-Reading of Two Short Stories

NILA DAS

When asked, "what is an American Indian," Scott Momaday, the renowned Pueblo novelist, poet, painter answered, "Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way he reacts to other men and to the world in general."[1] In the context, the phrase "given man" implies the Native American Indian rooted in his tribal culture. A few points are clear in Momaday's definition: a) The "idea" is grounded on the lived experience of a community. (b) The "idea" is a moral paradigm, a behaviour pattern, a thought system, a life process through which an individual attains his/her integrated mental structure or identity. (c) The "idea" is a socio-cultural guiding principle to live one's relations not merely to one's own community, but to the world as a whole.

Explicating the American Indian world outlook, Momaday said, "the whole world view of the Indian is predicated upon the principle of harmony in the universe. You can't tinker much with that, it has the look of an absolute."[2] In his own terms Peter Blue Cloud, the Troquois poet, novelist, story writer expounds the "idea" in much the same way: "there is an essence in us, our own. . . mystery, which is the power, which is creation . . . and that is passed on to the other people." (210) Gerald Vizenor, the Chppewa writer and Professor of American Indian literature defines the "idea" as "a spiritual quest in a way. I don't feel it is transcendence. . . . It is something that is alive and that is what makes the truth." (309) To these three writers of three tribes, the "idea" is a total concept, largely metaphysically oriented, that can be a matrix for creating collective consciousness. The "idea," in other words, is also the ideal or ideology, if one goes back to the lexical definition of the term: ideology is "a body of myth, belief, doctrine that guides an individual, a class or a larger group" (Random House Dictionary), ideology is "a systematic scheme or co-ordinated body of ideas or concepts about human life and culture" (Webster's International Dictionary).

The American Indian "idea" enables the contemporary creative writers to have both historical exclusiveness and a trans-historical perspective. Those who have the perspective, "are not at war with the environment, they are not rising above, and there are no subtle references to monotheistic superiority," says Vizenor. (309) In the immediate American socio-political context, as reflected in the Native-American literature, this often leads to counter-balancing the idea-system of the dominant culture, the conflicting if not overtly oppressive other.

To many of the writers including those of mixed parentage, the American Indian "idea" is a "cognitive map" to look forward to the past. Ill-adjusted as they are, to the mass consumption society and alive to the global concerns, the threat of nuclear doom, ecological disbalance, collapse of nations, ideologies, cultures, they find in the traditional Indian organic view of existence a way to survival. Peter Blue Cloud once said that for an Indian to live is to "live in the past, in the present, and in the future. . . . It is a continuous thing. . . . Going back to the circle." (39) In a world increasingly turning fragmentary, reverting to the "circle," to the philosophy of harmony and continuity can be a supplicating ideal or healing ideology for the entire human community, if so motivated.

Most of the contemporary American Indian creative writers, in an effort to live through the "idea" or ideology, often revert to the tradition of making use of the stereotypical images. Preservation and communication of knowledge, cultural history, traditional practices, the value and belief systems through images have been an age-old device in the American Indian oral literature. Specially folk tales developed an entire "technology" of using images so that the entire community could memorize them and retain the values through them. Many recent story writers try to revive the tradition. "Telling stories is a process in which a man invests and preserves himself in the context of ideas," says Momaday.[3] In the old tales the images initiated the listeners to the idea/ideal. Conscious as they are that the initiation or even the immediate identification of the images is no longer easy for their readers or their characters, the recent writers often develop the stories over the initial distance, sometimes a critical distance between the receiver and the received image and the idea it stands for. In course of a story, sometimes the received image is recognized as a cultural ideal. Sometimes the distance between the given image and the receiver widens, and the receiver plunges into an irretrievable psycho-cultural marginality. Let us re-read two contemporary American Indian short stories, and track the diverse modes in which the American Indian "idea" shapes both the theme and the narrative structure of the stories. The random choice is

self-explanatory.

We begin with Scott Momaday's "In the Presence of the Sun." (1991) Momaday frames the entire narrative on the pattern of continued story-telling of the shield-story-ritual, by yarning together sixteen parables, all on the shield, each tale having its own title like "the Shattered Sky Shield," "The Sun Dance Shield" etc. In tribal American culture, the shield, a precious family inheritance, also reflected the character of a clan, its values and ideals. "The shield is a mask. . . . that bespeaks sacred mystery."[4] (74) Listening to the shield stories told aloud in sunshine was regarded as a ritualistic participation in the mystery. "The shield is involved in the story. The shield is its own story. When the shield is made visible it means: here is the story, enter into it and be created. The story tells you of your real being." (74) The very title of Momaday's story, "In the Presence of the Sun" indicates an attempt at retrieving the process of ritualistic participation, the traditional mode of living through the ideal.

The story begins with the creation of the shield: "Jumping Bull made this shield from a vision . . . when they have a child, they are not supposed to tell a lie or think wrong. If they do, they are wounded or killed." (72) Passed on across generations, the shield is an immediate reality, a matrix of moral behaviour, a direction to an ordered social life. The subsequent parables take the readers to the core of American Indian myths, history, beliefs, values, the patterns of relationships, dreams, visions, philosophy of life. The shield is projected as an image of power, wisdom, world view heritage. Even if lost, the shield came back. That is what Yellow Grass realized when he could "redeem" his father's shield in the enemy territory, but the fan he had gifted his father could not be found. "You see the shield came back and the fan did not, "Yellow Grass told his grandson. "Some things, if they are very powerful, came back. Remember that . . . that is how to think of this world." (78) The wisdom, acquired by living through an integrated system of values and norms, is missing in the contemporary society.

Bote-telee has a gift of another kind of shield from Spider Woman, the mythical creator. Just before his eyes was a spider's web. "It was a luminous glistening shield." He flung water upon it repeatedly, "but it remained whole and glistened all the more." "Spider Woman," Bote-telee said, "will you give me this perfect shield?" "Bote-telee," said Spider Woman, "this is your shield." (83) Spider Woman's shield of beauty, wholeness, perfection remains a gift for all human beings of all times if they have a mind to ask for it.

In the parables on the American Indian socio-political history, the shield is conquered, devalued, disowned, sold. A forgotten pattern of

life, a lost ideal, the shield however reappears in the course of story telling, if not as a lived experience, in a vision or dream. In the last story, the shield is evoked as a heating ideology. The image becomes an intuition. "The shield was revealed to me long ago," said Green Shirt to his daughter, who had been narrating her own dream, "but it came to me at last in your dream. Now when I hold it up to others . . . I shall say, this is my shield and this is my daughter's shield! Behold!" As the man speaks, "in the sand of willows there was the shield. It was very old and beautiful." (107) In the shield story ritual, the real initiation happened when the shield was made visible. The recurrence of the vision of the shield in Momaday's story reinitiates the father and the daughter, and presumably also the reader-participants to the American Indian ideal.

In Momaday's story "the idea" transcends its ethnocentric realm, encompasses the entire human society, life and culture. Gerald Vizenor's trickster tale, "An Edible Menu and Slow Food Trickster" (1978) is of a different flavour. In the story the "idea" is projected largely in terms of conflict and contrast. As a prologue to the story, Vizenor defines the trickster image, quoting from Paul Radin, "he knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values moral and social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his action, all values come into being." (10) A familiar character in Native American folklores, the trickster, the animal-human being, is both a culture hero who brought the art of living to mankind, and a pretentious deceitful character, who unsettled creed.

In the set pattern of a trickster tale, Vizenor's story begins on the road. "Call me Ishmael," he said while he escorted a short balding sociologist across Cedar avenue, "follow me and you will find the best place to cross." The man ignores traffic control lights wearing "the smile of a tribal trickster." The image of the trickster is chosen by the narrator for the man.

Ishmael is really a man with no name. Born without certification at an ice-fishing house, a wild child in a wild place, he was called Noname at a school on the reservation. "The patriarch of the church" gave him the name Ishmael. "He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him," said the priest quoting from Genesis, deliberately selecting the name of a culture drop-out. The name in itself is an uncalled-for verdict of the policing culture on the tribal child. Throughout the story, Noname lives in and out of two binary images.

As in a typical trickster tale, the readers are taken through a series of Noname's deceitful/evil exploits, the norms of assessment sharply varying in two cultures. At the crux, the administration sentences Ish-

mael to prison for life on the false charge of first degree burglary and rape. The prosecutor wins elections in return. Ishmael smiles. The wry humour of the trickster is his critique on the travesty of justice.

At prison a psychiatrist is summoned for Ishmael because "he told the temperature in images and descriptions rather than in abstract numbers and qualities." (110) The psychiatrist writes in his notes, "the temperature to this incarnated subject is . . . but delusion. . . . The subject has not recognised the seriousness of his crime, refuses to accept social measures." (111) Much of Ishmael's punishment is due to his refusal to abide by the idea system of the dominant culture, or rather due to his adherence to another system of ideas.

Ishmael outwits prison authorities, escapes and is at sea. "Sailing is free, the sea is free. . . . Prison is scenario," he cries in glee. Vizenor once told an interviewer, "life is not static. Philosophically. . . . We should break out of all the routs . . . break of invented cultures, and repressions." That can be the writer's own explanation of Ishmael's action. In the set pattern of a trickster tale, Ishmael is outwitted in his turn, is returned to prison. He violates parole by crossing at the middle of the road. This is his own way of unsettling the oppressive social stratum. "Was the middle of the road, the figurative middle, worth the round trip to prison" asks the sociologist. "Metaphors are not qualities," argues Ishmael, "the mind's weather was free, but I was slow to learn about scenarios." (112) The contemporary trickster is rather sharp in his criticism of the hegemonic institution or institutionalized ideology.

> "Scenarios began with those who see us falling in freedom and fear for their secure hopes." (112)
> "Ideologies become scenarios for. . . . the fear of living and being, so the scenarios are plans for having and owning." (109)
> "trapped in one-act terminal scenarios . . ." (109)
> "men have downed virgin forests. . . . have tried to outwit nature mean the graves." (113)

As an alternative, Ishmael posits the American "idea." He calls it the ritual: "Rituals are celebrations. . . . Scenarios are planned not celebrated." (109) The sociologist, presumably an Anglo-American, all-too-aware of the counter ideology, himself illustrates Ishmael's argument: "The rituals celebrate the known and the unknown, even the foreknowable. . . . The conscious and the unconscious through time and space . . . there are no mysteries in scenarios." (110) The discourse, however, leads to nowhere, as the sociologist does not oppose the other "idea." At the same time he does not accept the two "ideas" or ideologies as

either/or choice. He does not offer any counter argument either. Instead, he wonders at the identity of his tribal companion. "Who are you?" he asks at the end. "Call me Ishmael," comes the answer. The sociologist refuses to identity Noname with the image of the evil-doer. "What are you looking at?" he asks again. "The trickster," says Ishmael. "Where?" "In the mirror there." The mirror reflects Ishmael's own image. Noname at last finds himself at one with the trickster. The sociologist too sees his pathfinder as the image of the tribal culture hero. "You could be the winning hand of a trickster," he observes, as congenial in his tone as Ishmael has been. In the context, recognition in itself is a form of acceptance.

The trickster image and the "idea" it embodies, has a healing effect on both the characters. "My imagined tricksters are compassionate and comic. . . . You can't act the comic way in isolation. . . . It is a positive act of survival, getting along. . . . Tribal cultures are mostly comic," says Vizenor (Bruchae 294). That can be the best commentary on the theme of the story.

In neither of the two stories the American Indian "idea" is projected as a counter culture or a counter attack on the threatening "other." To the Native American creative writers, the psycho-cultural orientation to the "idea" is as essential to the development of an individual as to the enrichment and continuity of human civilization. The American Indian "idea" confirms, celebrates, transforms from within. Cultural transformation happens slowly, and needs to be a continuous process. The responsibility lies with the future.

NOTES

1. Hobson Geary, ed., *The Remembered Earth : An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Writers* (University of New Mexico Press, 1981), p. 162.
2. Joseph Bruchae, *Survival This Way: Interview with American Indian Poets* (Tuscan: University of Arizona Press, 1987), p. 180.
3. Gerald Vizenor, *Wordarrows: Indians and Whites in the New Fur Trade* (University of Minnesota Press, 1978), p. 4.
4. N. Scott Momaday, *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems 1961-1991* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 14.
5. Simon J. Ortiz, ed., *Earth Power Coming: Short Fiction in Native American Literature* (Navajo Community Press, 1983).

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P.V. Dhamija's *Beyond the Tunnel*: From Alienation to Integration

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The present paper is an attempt to explain the theme of alienation in P.V. Dhamija's *Beyond the Tunnel* published in 1997. I have divided the paper into four parts: (a) The concept of alienation, (b) The alienated figure, (c) The theme of alienation in the novel under consideration, and (d) conclusion. The first part of the paper attempts to define the nature and scope of the idea of alienation. This is followed by a brief discussion of the alienated figure in general. Then follows a detailed analysis of the alienated figure in *Beyond the Tunnel*. The concluding part of the paper puts the predicament or the protagonist into the total semiotic world of the novel.

The term alienation is an ambiguous one, often expressing various shades of meaning both denotative and connotative ranging from the positive to the negative. The term is used in fields as diverse as psychiatry, sociology, anthropology and literature. It "represents a sense of estrangement from other human beings, from society and its values, and from the self." "Alienation may refer to objective social conditions or just as readily be employed to describe two rather different subjective states, the first being states of self-alienation inferred to be present by outsider observers. Second, by contrast, it may also refer to subjective states of alienation not detectable to outsiders, but felt by the person himself."

Alienation means estrangement or separateness. Indeed, "alienation has for a long time been a dominant idea in the writings of nineteenth and twentieth century men." To be sure, the importance of the notion of alienation has been expressed in the writings of individuals as various as Karl Marx, Fyodor Dostoevsky, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka, whether with respect to the oppressed worker, or the underground man, or young man evolving into an artist yet at the same time estranged from family, religion, politics, and cultural and societal values, or the man metamorphosized into an insect and thereby physically separated from his fellow men.

The alienated figure may be defined as an individual who is alienated at the following levels:—He may be alienated (i) from other individuals and society, (ii) from God, religion, and all value system, (iii) from the human predicament in a hostile universe, or (iv) from himself. Thus when interpersonal alienation, social isolation, estrangement from God and religion, existential alienation and self-alienation or self-estrangement are experienced by a character, he may be considered an alienated protagonist or an outsider. The two important types of alienation found in several works of literature are self-alienation and social alienation. In the former type, an individual may lose contact with any inclinations or desires that are not in agreement with prevailing social patterns, and in the latter, an individual may find the social system in which he lives to be oppressive or incompatible with some of his own desires and may feel estranged from it.

The alienated figure may be a power seeker, malcontent outsider, reformer or liberator, existential outsider and an absurd protagonist or defeated outsider: e.g., Faustus and Macbeth, Bosola, St. Joan, Hamlet, the Waiting for Godot group, and the family in *The Homecoming* respectively.

The novel presents and contrasts two individuals—Jagdeesh and Ajeet. These two characters represent two distinct levels of response to evil in society. The story oscillates between two attitudes symbolized by the two friends. The two begin as humble boys and go through very bitter experiences. However, the similarity between the two ends there. Ajeet's harrowing experiences make him an unrelieved cynic whereas Jagdeesh's encounters with evil elevate his faith in human goodness to a level of insightful maturity. Ajeet is a central figure in the story and his image is that of an outsider. The image here is of a man without hope. He is a man alienated at once from hope or from any future. It is obvious here that Ajeet, far from being a calloused person, is an extremely sensitive, even abnormally sensitive, human being. His sensitivity then, is an alienating factor in his life. His alienation is a self-imposed predicament. The pattern of Ajeet's development is of a boy who has been learning lessons about life. These experiences more often than not prove to be the sort of experiences which could very well cripple an impressionable and sensitive boy.

Ajeet enrols as a student at Delhi University. For the first few months, he feels greatly excited. The glitter and the tempo of the campus and the city around enchants him deeply, and he cannot understand why people live in villages like Bilawalpur. When he returns home in his first vacation, he is full of praise for everything about the university and the city. His attitude to the village way of life has drastically

changed, and there is a touch of disdain for the villagers in his tone. (10) However, this impression is not a lasting one.

Ajeet receives too many punches to hold on to this impression. He learns about several representatives of a corrupt and violent underworld, a society that exists below the surface or respectable society. Ajeet develops a negative attitude/an attitude of negation to everything outside him. He finds life in Delhi thoroughly bad. He gets sick of the place and the people, who are selfish, crooked and malicious. He encounters homosexual professors, callous and dishonest physicians, and ministers involved in debaucherous, corrupt and anti-social, anti-national practices, in drug-trafficking and espionage. (12-13)

Ajeet had been brought up as an over-protected child in the village and was now suddenly exposed to the callousness and waywardness of the city life. (14) At school he had been fed on a system of morality, of values like truth, non-violence, love, duty, loyalty, etc. (14)

Ajeet is unable to see good things. He goes through the most critical phase of his maturation cycle—meeting gay professors, callous doctors, wicked politicians, jilting and jilted lovers. (18) He is forming into a cynic and pessimist. Ajeet comes across several instances of nepotism, favouritism, injustice, unfairness. His teachers, some of whom work as pimps, degrade and dehumanize him. Journalists are heralds of falsehood, not champions of liberty, equality and justice. He realizes that clerks, senators, councillors, professors and ministers are a gang of blood hounds. Ajeet feels he is surrounded by people having no self-respect, no pride. He hears about sex rackets, evil nexuses, and espionage. Ajeet becomes a cynical snob. He says to Jagdeesh, "No I think I have a perspective on things. I have also come across good people since. So I can't say everything is rotten in this country." (52) Oppression, tyranny, exploitation continue, but there are many good things also. Geeta abandoned him for Prakash—that made him bitter. Now three more girls have walked out on him, but he does not feel jilted now. Ajeet has changed experientially.

Ajeet has to go through the turbulence of one of the worst conjugalities in the world and becomes a misogamist-misogynist. He marries a girl called Sonia about ten years his junior. It is an arranged marriage. Ajeet works as a personal manager in Delhi. His salary is more than enough for a medium middle-class family. But Sonia has strange notions of status and conjugal happiness. Extravagance is one of them. She wants to buy all those things which they neither need nor can afford. (117) Sexually, she is a very cold woman. Ajeet succeeds in getting rid of her. Here, more than misunderstanding is at the heart of alienation between Ajeet and Sonia. On the surface, the primary problem is

Sonia's inability to offer a response—she is averse to sex. Thus, it is that both man and wife seem alienated from what should be a most natural act for newly married people: sex.

Finally, Ajeet meets his ideal woman, Majula, who restores his faith in life. So far, absence of love provided a clue for his estranged existence. Now love tends to have positive effect on him. Love serves to provide him with warmth in an otherwise cold world, and security amidst insecurities or uncertainties. In terms of family and social life, Ajeet achieves re-integration or develops a sense of belonging and unity. Manjula, his wife, is beautiful, good and intelligent. It is she who finally re-integrates Ajeet, an alienated figure, into the mainstream.

Thus Ajeet begins as a humble village boy; wades through black slime, which makes him an unrelieved cynic; goes through the turbulence of one of the worst conjugalities in the world, thus becoming a misogamist-misogynist; braves the baptism of that terriorst trauma which purifies his spirit, draining him of his cynicism; and rejoices in the happy union with Manjula, which restores his faith in friendship, love and divinity. (167) Jagdeesh also begins in a normal way: he is erected on a solid foundation of abiding faith in essential human goodness, social justice and the ultimate rightness of God's cosmic order; the first few cruel and bitter experiences of his Delhi University days and some years that followed did not shake his faith. Ajeet's dismal account of his sad childhood, his bad university days and his first marriage surprisingly firm his already firm faith. (167)

To sum up, the semiotic world of the novel rests on the dichotomous perceptions of the two central characters of the reality around them. The two friends react to basically the same environment in distinct ways and the one cannot but conclude that the phenomenology of their responses stems from their different backgrounds.

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Jyotirmoyee's *The River Churning*: A Feminine View of Partition

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The Golden Jubilee of the Indian Independence also marks the fiftieth anniversary of Partition. The brutal surgical operation that took place in August 1947 was not a closed chapter. The bitterness of the division still reverberates in the minds of the innocent victims and the sensibilities of the people who witnessed Partition.

The numerous accounts tracing the 'history' of Partition focus on the political developments that led to Partition and the consequent violence, mass exodus, refugeeism and rehabilitation. But the subtler aspects of Partition like the loss of honour and family, nostalgia for the lost home, exclusion and dispossession find little space in such accounts. This 'human dimension' of Partition is not a thing to be captured factually but to be felt and realized only through identification.

The depths of the human morass of the Partition massacres and the ultimate experience of 'the people' are never likely to be fathomed to the full. Yet commendable attempts have been made to assimilate the enormity of the experience of 'the people' in fiction because it includes the marginalised narratives of individual victims in their description along with historical truths.

There are great classics on the theme of Partition written in different languages like *Jootha Sach* by Yashpal, *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni, *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *Aazadi* by Chaman Nahal, *Mera Dard Na Jane Koi* by K.S. Duggal to name only a few, which can be termed as the 'Literature of Anguish.'[1]

But historical accounts or social histories in the form of fiction generally tend to give a patriarchal version of Partition. Though women were very much a part of the millions who witnessed Partition, they seldom figure as the 'subject' in the master/male narratives. Accounts of women as agencies do occur but are projected only as supplementary to the male action. Women as 'victims' are also mentioned but no specific attention is given to their traumatic experiences.

Partition was a pathogeny of the male lust for power. It was a typical male construct where women were made the site of macabre enactment. In this hyper masculine revenge drama of mutual humiliation, women's bodies were the 'territories' that were violated, mutilated and tattooed with the symbols of the other religion. Perhaps men on both sides thought this was the best way to punish and humiliate. Like Draupadi. Women, on both sides, were at the receiving end of violence as its victims—it was they who were raped, it was they who were widowed, it was they who were treated as outcastes and untouchables and finally, it was they who were left to pick up the scattered threads and begin anew the process of rehabilitation and resettlement of their families.

And yet, hardly any master/male narrative on Partition places women at the centre. Thus to get a wholesome view and to read Partition as a gendered narrative of displacement and dispossession, we have to turn to women writers who speak for themselves. They articulate the voice of the 'fragments' which compels a different reading of Partition. Women writers like Krishna Sobti, Qurratulain Hyder, Ismat Chugtai, Amrita Preetam, Attia Hosain and Bapsi Sidhwa adopt a perspective that locates women at the centre rather than at the periphery. And one of the most powerful of such 'fragmentary voices' is that of Jyotirmoyee Devi who highlights the hitherto marginalized situation of women within the socio-political space of the Partition 'process.'

Jyotirmoyee Devi's *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga (The River Churning)* was originally published in 1967 as *Itihasey Streeparva (The Woman Chapter in History)*. Since time immemorial woman and her body is being hegemonised and colonised by men. Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning*, a partition novel, is a vehement voice to expose and counter these tendencies and hence is analogous to what Partha Chatterjee describes as the 'inner domain.'[2] In her Author's Note, Jyotirmoyee Devi clarifies and states her theoretical position by referring to the chapter *Stree Parva* in the *Mahabharta* and points out that the chapter hardly deserves the name:

> . . . even Vedavyasa could not bear to write the real *Stree Parva*. . . . Cowards do not write history. There are no great poets among women, and even if there were, they could not have written about the violation of their own dignity. Hence there is no recorded history of the real *Stree Parva* . . . The *Stree Parva* of humiliation by men? . . . The chapter that remains in the control of husband, son, father and one's own community—there is no history of that silent humiliation, that final pain. . . . The *Stree Parva* has not yet ended, that last word is not yet spoken.[3]

This is again analogous to Partha Chatterjee's point of view towards the "fragments" or "fragmentary voices" and their role in the entire process of nation building. "A woman's body is a pawn even in the game of nation building." (xxvii) History will continue to be 'his story' till the fragmentary voices like that of Jyotirmoyee Devi are heard and taken into consideration.

The narrative of the novel, hailed as "cerebral" by Mahasweta Devi throws the consciousness of the reader in the flashback amidst the sudden blaze of communal frenzy, which destroyed the 'peace' of a village on a certain night in 1946 in the erstwhile East Bengal. Harmony, peace and amity are trampled over and within a few hours, there is complete havoc in the Hindu households. Young adolescent girl Sutara is the only survivor from her family. But the trials of fear and pain do not end with the molestation of the physical. The endless trials of 'assault' on Sutara had just begun. Tamijuddin, her father's friend, whose family takes her in and nurtures her, faces threat from his own 'community.'

Tamijuddin's wife's down to earth understanding of the social dynamics is proven right when Sutara's brother, on hearing about the news of her survival, responds in a meek lukewarm manner. Ultimately, Tamijuddin and his eldest son safely escort her to Calcutta, where she moves in as a guest of her brother's father- in-law.

The protagonist, Sutara, is thrust into the whirlpool of torment unawares after sexual appropriation by the men of one community. Initially, partly because of her innocence and partly because of her unconscious state at the time of the assault, she is unable to understand the reluctance and indifference of her brother to take her back to Calcutta. But realization gradually dawns upon her when she is forced to go through the process of exclusion in the household of her brother's father-in-law in whose home the family takes temporary refuge. Acceptance becomes a remote possibility. Instead, she becomes an object of curiosity and becomes the 'topic' in the house to discuss either loudly through innuendoes or in whispers. She is considered as impure, an outcaste, an untouchable:

> Six months in Muslim household—what caste purity could such a girl be left with! All right, you have brought her here, but at least let her remain in a corner like *hadis* and *bagdis*! (36)

The problem of Sutara becomes an inextricable web which is difficult to untangle. Sutara's brother and his father-in-law see through the entire process of exclusion but succumb to the pressures of the other family members and the rigid stand of the community at large. Sutara's victimi-

zation is covered under the garb of the will of God and conveniently left to the *Karma* of her previous birth because 'individuals do not really count before groups.' (48)

Just by her presence Sutara, a refugee from Partition, creates complications. She is marginalised and excluded from the ritually pure domains of hearth, drinking water and marriage. It is ironical that immediately after the assault, her marriage becomes an improbable necessity in the eyes of the community. Yet it is feared that she might jeopardise the marriage prospects of her niece and is unwanted at the weddings—at Subha's wedding she is discriminated, promptly fed and despatched.

A sophisticated way to keep her at a distance is carved out by sending her off to a hostel run by the Christians Missionaries. The 'patriarchs' of the family unburden the sense of guilt by saying:

> This has been going on since the time of Amba of the *Mahabharata* and Sita of the *Ramayana*. (47)

Thus she becomes the exiled Sita and becomes part of the history of women of all time—'Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kaliyuga. . . . She represented all women who have been insulted, tortured, neglected, deserted through history.' (69) At the crossroads of her life, Sutara is totally at a loss with a sense of unbelongingness and bewilderment. She experiences that state of liminality where she could not belong to Tamijuddin's family without severing her roots as she was a high caste Hindu, she was not accepted by her own family because she had lost her caste, her honour and consequently, defiled communal honour. And then, in the new environment of the hostel, with European teachers and among girls who had forgotten which tradition they belonged to, Sutara was once again an outsider.

For Sita of the *Ramayana*, Mother Earth emerged from beneath and took Sita with her. But Sutara can not and does not die like Sita. She leads a most precarious existence on the margins of the society—she is neither a widow nor married. The vicissitudes of her life make her realize that she will never have a home. While working in Yajnaseni College, she finds a place to stay but it is neither a home nor a household and least of all a nest created by a woman's love and care.

Thus, with one stroke she is doomed to the community of the destitutes. Suddenly her entire world recedes, fades like a shadow. She is marked for life and pays for the crime of which she is the prime victim. The invisible fire engulfs everything—her ancestral home, family, honour, happiness and hope. Sutara, who had everything once, now has

nothing. The damage is beyond repair. She is in a peculiar situation where she is treated by her own as a distant stranger. She is exiled forever.

Facing rejection and alienation, her lonely soul accepts life as it is. But has she really? No. Sutara could hardly get her memories out of her system. Sakina's marriage proposal of her brother Aziz for Sutara, brings back all the horrors of the nightmare. She says, 'How can I forget the fate of my sister, my parents?' (93) and when Promode comes into her life as a silver lining, her heart is very heavy with conflicting emotions—'hope, despair, fear, fatigue had left her as burdened as the earth. And her mind? It had been reduced to pulp by the combined neglect and revulsion of society. There was nothing left of it.' (131)

Through Sutara's predicament, Jyotirmoyee Devi endeavours to visualize partition not merely as an 'event' of 'rupture' which moves on a path of "a continuum from pain to healing"[4] and where repair is through the "healing power of memory"[5] but as a 'process' of continual truama and exclusion of the marginalized victims where memory serves only to deepen the eternal raw wound rather than heal it.

The novel offers a critique of the nationalist patriarchal versions of history by opening them up at their critical erasures and exclusions. In the beginning of the narrative, while trying to tackle the inquisitive queries of young girls, Sutara says:

> . . . History is a vast subject, it is not possible for one person to cover all of it. You can study in depth and write the history of *your own nation*. You can do it, can't you? And, remember, history is not confined to the pages of a book . . . the *victor* is always prejudiced about the history of the *vanquished*, he keeps things from coming to light, he prefers to *conceal*. Does history tell you about the weak and the poor? No. (3) (Italics mine)

Thus Sutara's situation asserts and substantiates what is termed by the author as the unfinished agenda of the yet to be completed *Stree Parva*.

NOTES

1. Jaidev, "Literature of Anguish," *Indian Review of Books*, Vol. 5, No. 11 (August 16 September 15, 1996), p. 2.
2. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation And Its Fragments* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 6.

3. Jyotirmoyee Devi, *The River Churning* (New Delhi: Kali For Women, 1995), p. xxviii.
4. Jason Francisco, "In the Heat of Fratricide: the Literature of India's Partition Burning Freshly (A Review Article)" in *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, No. 2, 1996 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for South Asia), pp. 227-50.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

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Greatness of *The God of Small Things*

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"I will write a book because I have a book to write, not otherwise,"[1] such is the earnest and compelling urge of Arundhati Roy to write *The God of Small Things*, which has won for her the famous Booker Prize of 1997. This novel is indeed a unique achievement of Indian English Literature for it "fulfills the highest demand of the art of fiction,"[2] and has "the sweet smell of authenticity, tranquillity and triumph."[3] Like any other great work of art, this novel has many dimensions and hence scope for multiple interpretations. It is, first, an autobiographical novel; Mary Roy, her mother, points out that Arundhati "has drawn bare bones of characters from the family."[4] But it is an autobiographical work with almost confessional candour, at times with the painful risk such exposures entail. As Arundhati Roy herself explains: "If you're looking for me, you'll find me in there. For better or for worse."[5] It is also a feminist fiction because Ammu, the protagonist of this novel, tries to live life on her own terms, though she has to go through terrible hell on that count. Even Arundhati Roy, while commenting upon the outrage of male orthodoxy against her novel, writes: "Perhaps it's because I'm sort of living out a feminist goal. I am a woman who has choices, who decides, and then takes responsibility for the decisions—whatsoever they are."[6]

Besides these autobiographical and confessional elements, this novel is also an account of the clash between innocence and experience—the narrative is filtered through the eyes of seven-year-old twins, Rahel and Estha, the children of Ammu. They look at the complexities of adult world of corruption and cruelty with awe and bewilderment. Their outlook provides an intimate and insider's view of the tumultuous events unfolding around them. There is, then, the eternal element of tragic love between two social opposites, recalling to mind the primordial passion of Catherine for Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. The novel is also a bitter indictment of the communists of Kerala during the sixties when the petty politics of power becomes far more important than the highly undeserved suffering and subsequent death of a promising youth,

who is an untouchable. And finally, the novel deals with a specific Syrian Christian family to which Arundhati Roy herself belongs, and the hypocrisy of the seemingly pious middle-class morality of these people, preaching and practising two different things.

The main fabric of this fiction revolves round a few days in the December of 1969, when Sophie Mol visits Ayemenem along with her mother Margaret Kochamma, the divorced wife of Chacko. Margaret is visiting her ex-husband to forget the accidental death of her second husband, Joe, but unfortunately she has to face a second death too soon, that of Sophie Mol, who is drowned in the Meenachal river of Ayemenem. Yet this death by water of a small child is simply a focal point of reference; because of its universal theme of tragic love, the story of the novel

> actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag.
>
> That it really bagan in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved and how.
>
> And how much.[7]

This reference to love laws makes it clear that despite several criss-crossing currents of story line, the main theme relates to the forbidden love between Ammu and Velutha, between a caste Christian and an outcast Paravan, between a rich lady and a carpenter-cum-mechanic in the pickle factory of her mother, between a mother of two children and a youth. Ammu is the daughter of Pappachi, the Empirial Entomologist, who becomes a frustrated autocrat, brutally arrogant and imperious, when the credit for the discovery of a unique moth by him is snatched away by his boss. From that moment, Pappachi turns a monster, spewing forth all his pent-up venom on his hapless wife, Mammachi, and his daughter, Ammu. He takes fiendish satisfaction in beating his wife with a brass flower vase and in shredding, with scissors, Ammu's most beloved shoes to pieces. After his retirement from service, he returns to his native place, Ayemenem, a remote, small town in the Kottayam district of Kerala.

Partly to avoid her father's tyranny and partly to escape from the dull, drab, parochial and orthodox mindset of Ayemenem, Ammu goes to Calcutta for a few days where, in a wedding ceremony, she meets her future husband and, without waiting for the permission of her parents, hurriedly marries this Assistant Manager of a tea estate of Assam: "She thought that *anything*, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem." (39) But within weeks of her blissful marriage, she is shocked to her last bones by the jolting discovery that her husband is a full-blown alcoholic. A brief respite is there in her troubled conjugal life when she is blessed, in 1962, with "two-egg twins, born to her by candlelight amidst news of a lost war" with China. (224) As her drunkard husband mostly bunks his duty, so he is summoned by his English manager, who wants apparently to summarily dismiss him from his service. But tempted by Ammu's extraordinary charm, he puts before her husband a dubious demand that he should go away for his treatment to free himself of alcoholic addiction, leaving behind his beautiful wife at the manager's bungalow. The degraded husband is ready even to accept this demeaning demand of his depraved boss, but his self-respecting wife is so infuriated at this absurd plan that she fiercely fights with her husband and finally returns to Ayemenem, a place from where she was desperate to escape only a few months back.

But at Ayemenem, her sudden arrival is quite unwelcome, largely on account of her hurried marriage outside the Syrian Christian Community and her "Half-Hindu Hybrids." (45) Even Chacko, her Oxford-educated and self-proclaimed Marxist brother, points out to the twins, Rahel and Estha, that their Ammu has "no Locusts Stand I." (57) Ammu protests at this double standard where a son is everything for the family and a daughter is nothing, thanks "to our wonderful male chauvinist society." (57) But she is a born rebel; once she went against her orthodox Syrian Christian society by marrying a Bengali, now she becomes more outrageous by falling for Velutha, the god of small things, who models everything from toys to small machines to furniture, and whom her twins adore during the day and she loves during the night. She finds in Velutha the same spirit of rebellion as smouldering within her, "he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against," (176) and so she loves him "with the whole of her biology." (330)

Ammu is also aware that neither Mammachi nor Baby Kochamma finds "any contradiction between Chacko's Marxist mind and feudal libido" (168) because he cannot help having a man's needs, but they are blissfully ignorant of her womanly desires. So, to square the matter, Ammu goes to meet Velutha wearing the shirt of her brother. Yet it is

less the meting of two bodies and more a mating of two eternally rebellious souls guided by primitive passion, a mating between Woman and Man, Beauty and Nature, described in almost Lawrentian language of utter seriousness: "Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man. She was as wide and deep as a river in spate. He sailed on her waters. She could feel him moving deeper and deeper into her. Frantic. Frenzied." (336-37) And further: "She moved closer, wanting to be within him, to touch more of him. He gathered her into the cave of his body." (338)

Has ever been such a rebellion, in anytime and any clime, forgiven by the so-called civilized society? In the name of preserving sanity, countless insane acts of mindless violence have been committed to check this inherent human feeling of love. So Velutha must be severely punished for tasting the forbidden fruit. If Chacko, a caste Christian, violates women working under him, it is his manly and masterly privilege. But if the reverse happens, Velutha is subjected to the terrible terror of history. Even his own partyman, Comrade Pillai, is of no help to him and curtly brushes him aside, "You should know that party was not constituted to support workers' indiscipline in their private life." (287) Not only that, from passive spectator, Comrade Pillai becomes one of the active conspirators, by assuring Inspector Thomas of Kottayam Police that Velutha does "not have the patronage or the protection of the Communist Party." (262-63) After all, Pillai has enough business sense to print labels for the pickles bottles of Chacko's factory so that his own press should not be closed down; he is also aware of the growing popularity of Velutha among his co-workers, thereby threatening the position of Pillai as the unchallenged local union leader.

So, though the children—Rahel, Estha and Sophie Mol—go for an adventure on their own in which Sophie is drowned in the Meenachal river while crossing it, the scheming mind of Baby Kochamma blames Velutha of kidnapping them and lodges an FIR with the Kottayam police. After securing an assurance from Comrade Pillai, after all Kerala was under a Communist government, Inspector Matthew despatches a team to crack down on Velutha in the dead of night. Unfortunately Rahel and Estha are also hiding in the same abandoned History House to watch this "live performance" (309) of history being repeated again, of the bestial brutality of power over the powerless: "They heard the thud of wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man's breath when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib." (308) Here, one is reminded of Carlyle's humble acceptance that his voluminous writings on the French Revolution fail to pre-

sent the graphic picture of the Reign of Terror in the same way as the single volume of *A Tale of Two Cities* written by Dickens. Similarly, a few lines of police monstrosity by Roy here present a more poignant picture than all the records of Human Rights activists. It is how she describes the living death of Velutha after police beatings:

> His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow on his mouth had split open his upper lips and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lips, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. His lower intestine was ruptured and hemorrhaged, the blood collected in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged in two places, the concussion had paralysed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his knee caps were shattered. (310)

The apparent objectivity of cool facts simply highlights the highhandedness of the police, while, ironically enough, a bold signboard at the police station reads:

> Politeness
> Obedience
> Loyalty
> Intelligence
> Courtesy
> Efficiency (8)

When Ammu goes to the police station to rectify the police error that there was no attempt by Velutha to molest her or to kidnap her children as complained by her aunt Baby Kochamma, she is humiliated by the Police Inspector, who does not only touch her breasts with his baton but also refuses to listen anything from her, because the Kottayam Police does not "take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children." (8) Baby Kochamma, the seemingly pious spinster, also collaborates with the crime of the police by convincing the twins that if they do not give the "legally correct" statement, their Ammu would have to rot in the prison for the death of Sophie Mol. Frightened, Estha does as told by the devilish grand-aunt, and the police washes its hands off from the custodial death of Velutha the next day. A few months later, Ammu also dies of coughing her lungs out in a remote nursing home of Kerala with

none to attend or accompany her.

This heart-rending story of Velutha and Ammu would have remained unsung and unknown, but for its resurrection and restructuring by the meeting of Rahel with her brother Estha some two decades later at Ayemenem. Their meeting revives everything mutely, and yet vividly, in their memory. Hence the narrative has such time frame where, in a true Eliotonian way, past, present and future are all a continuous flux, something unusual in Indian English fiction. "Roy employs a circuitous narrative so that events emerge elliptically and out of chronological sequence. She cunningly uses cinematic techniques—time shifts, endless fast forwards and reversals, rapid editing simultaneously to accelerate and delay the coming disaster."[8] This type of sophisticated narrative structure is an organic need of this novel because there are so many subplots involved, like the failed marriage of Rahel with an American, that of Chacko with Margaret, and the unconsummated love of Baby Kochamma for the Irish priest haunting her to her dotage. But all these subplots are inter-connected; as a student of architecture, Roy has laid, brick by brick, the magnificent structure of this novel which can endure the onslaught of taste and time.

Not only the subject matter and plot structure, even the language used by her is unique. "As a writer I govern language, and language does not govern me,"[9] points out Roy. The novel itself, at one level, "is about language and the inability of children to understand the language of adults, and the power of language to evoke work."[10] As the seven-year-old twins largely narrate the story, so there are essentially endless verbal games and word-plays—but they all are tuned to perfection in producing the needed artistic effect. With "the defamiliarising quality of her prose, her metaphoric exactitude and striking similes," Roy was alone, among the 106 entries for the Booker Prize, who "has her own voice, her own signature."[11] It may be her first novel, but it is a 'Tiger-woodsian debut,' as rightly remarked by John Updike. Books like *The God of Small Things* come only once in a long time, and even Roy is unable to tell if she would, and could, write another such novel in future. All of her 37 years of life have gone in the making of this wonderful work of fiction—which is just another name for the facts of a lived life.

NOTES

1. Arundhati Roy in Interview with Sheila Maharani, *The Times of India*, Oct. 25, 1997, p. 15.

2. Jason Cowley, "Why We Chose Arundhati," *India Today*, Oct. 27, 1997, p. 28.
3. Binoo K John, "The New Deity of Prose," *Ibid.*, p. 23.
4. "My Daughter and I," *Ibid.*, p. 26.
5. "I had two options—writing or madness," Arundhati Roy interviewed by Urvashi Butalia, *Outlook*, April 9, 1997, p. 75.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New Delhi: IndiaInk, 1997), p. 33.
8. Jason Cowley, p. 28.
9. In Interview with Sheila Maharani, p. 15.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Jason Cowley, p. 28.

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What is this Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard?

VIJAY K. SHARMA

Before its publication, Kiran Desai's debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) was serialised as "Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard" in the *New Yorker* and was much acclaimed by the Western readers. Salman Rushdie's appreciation of Desai's yet unpublished novel found expression in his inclusion of its excerpts in his controversial *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997* celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. It is therefore only natural to explore the "strange happenings" and all this "hullabaloo."

Though not necessary, but usually one expects the first novel of an author to be some kind of a veiled version of his/her autobiography, especially if the writer happens to be a woman. But Desai pleasantly belies such expectations and offers her readers with something different, almost unique—"strange happening" in the form of a dull-witted young man-turned "Baba" of "unfathomable wisdom" perched on a guava tree dishing out one-liners pregnant with sagely advice for the ills of his devotees.

This metamorphosis takes place when Sampath Chawla, a highly bored post-office clerk in a sleepy town named Shahkot, while travelling in a bus, feeling "the air thin about him and the freshness of greenery bloom within his tired frame," decides to duck the mundane queries of a co-travelling old crane. The bus halts momentarily and Sampath, feeling "the marvellous emotion that had overtaken him," leaps "from the window of the the stalling bus, spurred by his annoyance at the old crane's voice." He raced.

> . . . into the wilderness towards an old orchard visible far up the slope. He ran with a feeling of great urgency. Over bushes, through weeds. Before him he saw a tree, an ancient tree, silence held between to branches like a prayer. He reached its base and fervishly, without pausing, he began to climb. He clawed up his way from branch to branch. Hoisting himself up, he disturbed dead

> leaves and insect carcasses and all the bits of dried-up debris that collect in a tree. It rained down about him as he clambered all the way to the top. When he settled among the leaves—the very moment he did so—the burgeoning of spirits that had carried him so far away and high up fell from him like a gust of wind that comes out of nowhere, rustles through the trees and melts into nothing like a ghost. (49-50)

Later, despite the persistent requests and persuasion from the members of his family, Sampath refuses to come down from the tree. He had decided to remain there forever come what way. Overnight he is deified, becomes what some call a tree Baba, others Monkey Baba. The press reports: "According to popular speculation, he is one of an unusual spiritual nature, his child-like ways, being coupled with unfathomable wisdom." (67) The "unfathomable wisdom" of the Baba, the readers know, comes from Sampath's violation of the postal ethics and people's privacy during his service days. He knows people's secrets because he used to read their mail to get some kick out of their personal lives and liven up his drab existence. Devotees mistake his knowledge for his clairvoyance or his super human power and shower all kinds of respect and veneration on him.

The drama of Sampath's unusual pranks begins when one day he suddenly decides to bare his bottoms taking the guests at his boss's daughter's wedding by surprise:

> And slowly, deliciously, feeling it was the right thing to do, Sampath began to disrobe. Horrified shrieks rose from his audience. However, in this flushed moments, he mistook them for cries of admiration. He could not let himself down and he began to unbutton his shirt. He tossed the garment into the air like a hero throwing away the rag with which he has cleaned the weapon that will kill his enemy. As the shrieks grew in volume and intensity, he lowered his hand to his pants. 'Stop him.' shouted Mr. D.P.S., and several people rushed towards him. But Sampath climbed deftly on to the highest tier of the mountain and in one swift movement, lowered both his trousers and his underpants. (41)

Apparently, Sampath came upon this novel idea from something which he chanced upon while doing his job in the post office: "It was curious how he thought of his sleepiness when he had to work, but miraculously forgot it when he came upon something that interested him. On his way home, he recalled a postcard he had seen of an ape with a very big and

alarming red bottom." (35) As a young man in his early twenties, he is a witness to his colleague Mr. Gupta's amorous flirtations with the never-minding, ever-obliging Miss Jyotsana. His interest in "petticoats, toe-nails" is strangely coupled with "monkeys." (32)

Not only this, his birth was not one of those unusual ones. The "enormously large" (3) Kulfi, Sampath's mother to be, attracted attention of everyone around. "People stopped short in amazement as she walked down the street. How big she was! They forgot their dealings in the almost empty marketplace. They teetered on their bicycles as they looked around for just another sight of that stomach extending improbably before her like a huge growth upon a slender tree." (4) Kulfi (unusual but suggestive name for a woman) is a voracious eater. "Meal after meal of just rice and lentils could not begin to satisfy the hunger that grew inside Kulfi."(5) While Desai paints a sensuous picture of the devouring mother, the boundary between human and animal almost disappears. But unlike a savage, Kulfi's creative mind goes overboard. "In her mind, aubergines grew large and purple and crisp, and then, in a pan, turned tender and melting. Ladyfingers were flavoured with tamarind and coriander. She thought of chopping and bubbling, of frying, slicing, stirring, grating." (5) All these skills come handy to Kulfi later while she serves the Baba, who was merely her son before his reincarnation.

Sampath's queerness seems to emanate from his mother, whose side of family had the dubious distinction of having various such members. Distraught at his wife's gobbling habits, Mr. Chawla wonders what (not who) he has been married to, and is apprehensive that "if the baby takes after her, we are really in for trouble." (6) His fears come true and that is precisely what happens.

In another sense, Sampath's birth coincides with what his father thought was the end of the world, though it was also a harbinger of rain and food—much needed respite from unbearable heat and hunger. The "vast crash in the street outside" (11) is nothing but dropping of famine relief consisting of "containers full of sugar and tea, of rehydration mixes, dried milk power, raisins in packages covered with pictures of smiling foreign women. There were nuts, sweets and baby-food tin galore." (11) Everyone thought even the people in Sweden have remembered to send a birthday present to the newly born child who brought them good fortune, thus naming him Sampath. It is also significant that the omniscient narrator chooses to point out that the child "was triumphantly and indisputably male," (12) thus hinting at a dominantly patriarchal bias in the society. Yet the good fortune is accompanied by darkness. "In great good humour, chewing on famine relief, they cele-

brated by the light of a roomful of candles, for the electricity had, of course, gone." (13) The phrase "of course" is an indication of the future events not only in Sampath's life but also in those of the people around him.

The monkey side of the story is not only funny but also it is steeped in mythology and symbolism. The Baba loves the monkeys—their company, their pranks and feels absolutely at home (pun intended) when they play around him. Being incarnation of the Hindu god Hanuman, they command immunity as well as respect; being the ancestors of us humans, they are seen as primeval creatures—an important link between the past and the present and, of course, reminder of the human beginnings. The Baba orders them around as if they were his minions. Sometimes he is able to show his devotees that he has control over them, although that is not true. Calling them by various affectionate names such as "you badmashes," Sampath shows his special affection for them. The monkeys, however, add a touch of ribaldry to the holy situation in the guava orchard. Soon when they get used to the taste of liquor—the devotees offer bottles of liquor to the Baba, though he does not drink at all—things get out of control of everyone—Mr. Chawla, the devotees and even Sampath himself. The police also finds themselves helpless and the monkey menace continues to the detriment of the safety of the devotees and sometimes the Baba:

> Caught up in this drunken dance, savage faces, long tails, saris draped in purple and yellow streamers all about him, useless bits of thought flew past Sampath, everything going too fast for him to stop and grab at them. He could jump; but no, it would be his undoing. He could pull on the monkeys' tails; no, he would shout. No, he had better hold tight. . . . (131)

Sampath's father, who has been exploiting his son's new role of a messiah to his financial and social advantage, feels threatened by the monkey business and approaches the District Collector and the other top officials "to make it clear that it was their responsibility to do something about this disruption to sanctity and peace in Shahkot." (132) Apart from the SP, the DC and other top officials, a CMO, a lady from a Monkey Protection Society, a bird watching Brigadier from a local army outpost, a member of B U F H M—Branch to Uncover Fraudulent Holy Men, a never-die saying spy from the Atheist Society (AS), a scientist from the biology department at the Lady Chatterjee University—an expert in human-langur interaction, several outraged devotees from the Hanuman Temple, interested townfolk and Sampath's family members

get embroiled in this fantastic imbroglio. They work comically at cross-purposes to confound the scene completely. The scene seems, as it were, ripe for yet another metamorphosis of a human into a guava this time. Sampath Baba magically disappears right in front of everyone's eyes:

> They looked here. They looked there. Up and down the guava tree. In the neighbouring trees. In the bushes. Behind the rocks. They stared up into the branches again and again, into the undisturbed composition of leaves and fruit bobbing up and down. Its painfully empty cot. But wait! Upon the cot lay a guava, a single guava that was much, much bigger than the others: rounder, star-based, weathered. . . . It was surrounded by the silver langurs, who stared at it with their intent charcoal faces. On one side was a brown mark, rather like a birthmark. . . . (207)

The mystic Baba attains nirvana, waiting to be carried into possibly a monkey's paradise! The Cinema Monkey, a special one who has penchant for young women, this time changes tack and picks up "the fruit himself before anybody had time to move and calm-eyed and wise, holding it close to his chest, with the other monkeys following in a band, he leapt from the guava tree's branches and bounded away." (208) Desai's magic realism raises the question about Baba's real identity. The way the monkey carries away "the fruit . . . calm-eyed and wise, holding it close to his chest" suggests "the fruit" to be a dead monkey, for that is how it is transported away by the monkey. Who did Baba belong to? The monkeys or to us humans? Or, is it irrelevant to raise such an issue?

Coming back to Kulfi, Sampath's crazy mother, one is bound to look into her contribution to the holy saga of the Baba. Like a traditional mother, she, in order to serve her "holy and gifted" son, prepares highly esoteric meals for her son. She cooks all sorts of wild fowls, raiding the forest for yet undiscovered herbs, spices and plants. Her mania for gourmet meals leads her to birds' nests and even on a monkey hunt. She "combines maternal love with the desire of a good Indian wife to serve a charismatic male by cooking meals dredged up from her febrile unconscious. After having served up orioles, hoopoes and shrikes she dreams of armadillos, yaks, macaques and weeps for flesh yet undiscovered," says Dilip M. Menon in his review of the book. Significantly, the novel ends with the ultimate exotic cooking with something/someone falling into her boiling cooking pot:

> Despite themselves, they drew their attention from the mountain

top. Above Kulfi's enormous cooking pot hung a broken branch. In the pot were spices and seasonings, herbs and fruit, a delicious gravy.

And something else.

Gingerly, they approached the bubbling cauldron. (209)

What or who was it? A crack, a howl, a watery splash in the wild temptuous weather add an intriguingly macabre final note.

Another woman character of the Baba's family, Pinky, his adolescent sister, creates an equally funny but bizarre situation. She bites off an ear of the local ice cream boy, the Hungry Hop boy (another suggestive name!) outside a cinema, only to realise later that she is passionately in love with him. Secretly from her family and despite the boy's mortal fear of her and also despite severe restrictions imposed on him by his family, the young Pinky achieves success in convincing the Hungry Hop boy of her deep feelings for him. The relationship, however, does not materialise mainly because of its lack of practical considerations on the boy's side. In the end, one finds her helping the people who chase the monkey with the "guava-Baba" to rescue whatever remains of the Baba. In the process, Pinky seems to have fallen for a fellow pursuer of her brother—a much old, but dashing Brigadier. "She was filled with an urge to tweak his buttocks. Hadn't her father told her to set her sights higher than herself, not lower?" (208)

In this whole absurd and satirical drama, a distinguished spy of the Atheist Society is made to look comic. Determined to expose the "fake" Baba, he is jeered at and pursued by everyone—the Chawlas and the devotees, with no support from the police or any other quarter. Desai purposefully reverses the triumph of the irrational over the rational.

Kiran Desai's improbable hero has a predecessor in Indian English literature in R.K. Narayan's Raju, a guide turned swami, in his well known novel *The Guide*. The name Sampath in Desai's book is a throw back to Narayan's young protagonist of the same name in several of his works. Unlike Raju guide, Sampath Baba chooses to renounce the material world for no ulterior motive. He embraces the monkey world in the lush guava orchard suggesting his proximity to the wild and primeval nature. There is also an Animal Farm-like suggestion as to who is human and who is savage. Also, Sampath is a reminiscent of the real life popular Baba—Mauni Baba who sitting on a wall, blessed people with a touch of his foot on their head. A large number of politicians of all hues and colours and many other VIPs were his devout devotees.

The point now is: does such a thing as the Tree Baba happen anywhere else except in India? Perhaps no. Kiran Desai's genius is rare

amongst women's writings where there is dearth of comic material. Desai also has the gift of appropriately sprinkling satire, absurdity, playfulness, mystic and the fantastic together with the farce and innocence in her writing. One is not surprised that such an Indian and exotic tale found eager and enthusiastic readers in the Western world, where the book was serialised and published. This is not to undermine Desai's achievements, nor to suggest that the book does not interest the Indian reader. In fact, going by the element of familiarity, the Indian reader is likely to enjoy the story all the more, perhaps on a deeper level. Being "blessed" by no less a "Baba" than Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai has proved her gift of the pen with her very first novel. She has made a place for herself, not as Anita Desai's daughter, but as a promising, gifted novelist sharing lineage with likes of Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy.

NOTES

1. Kiran Desai, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 49.
2. Dilip M. Menon, "Midday's Child," *Indian Review of Books*, 16 July-15 Aug. 1998), pp. 46-47.

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Dative Disembodiment, Independence This

All of us have a vaudeville because of
Half a century of Independence.
Let's reflect whether 'tis our desert since
Internal flickerings tell us to doff
And slough all corrupt activity
Lest comeuppance face us if independence
Is not any inner deliverance
(But only carte blanche for infernal dunce.)
The discontinuous human psyche,
Man's mind, the multifaceted spirit,
An eloquent abstraction yet instinct
With rare fecundation, never squeaky,
Propels us perpetually on to
The well-meaning activity in life.
This alone is the way to become ripe,
Attain Freedom good, noble things to do.
The Golden Jubilee Year of freedom
Should spell sublimity, splendid, 'Suvarna'
In mundane gain, winning supernal fane
By disentangling us from all serfdom.

New Year Desire

Great joy and cheerfulness
It wakes up within all of us
To see all Nature blushing
Beneath each flower smiling
And beaming in brightness!
But let's not waste our precious hours
One vain trifles since the 'fabled' shade
Of each departed day perpetually falls
On our graves and renders us dead
Before we die; the proverbial worm exults
As he beholds us hasten thitherto fade.
We should strive skyhigh, never to be laid
Into the catafalque we want to evade
Although for each maid and dame and man it is made.

M.L. WADIKAR

The Sky Toucher

You are monumental but still
Still in midst of sound
Still in midst of light,
A torturing stillness
Injecting the serene mind
Into a serene stillness
The massive splendour of your sight
The brave confidence of your might,
Speaking of the still beauty in you
Still and silent too.

Remember, massive as you are,
Gorgeous too!
Placed in a placid inertia
Which injects in you, stability
Although not of mind but of might
You create yourself and destroy too,
And that too,
A massive destruction
And a massive noise.

Anger

Anger retreats into regret
Regret swells into anger,
Anger dwells in our hearts.

The pang of death brings death to
The fury in the socket of our hearts.

Vain baneful anger,
Kills men of wisdom,
Wanes the wonder of

THE CALM
THE GOAL OF LIFE.

USHA RAMAN

Triangle

Moving along the current
I see the panorama
Of the lovely landscape;

Tied to a post
I fee the waters underneath
Flow fast and change;
Turned within
Lo the ever changing shadows
Of the never-changing flame.

The Moment He Becomes Heartless

It's vibrant
Makes other vibrant
It laughs
Makes others laugh
It wipes the tears of agony
takes you to the golden realm
of the purest ecstacy
It rears the real values of life
in the little fields
of feelings and emotions
selfishness it destroys
and love it distributes
in the dark night of despair
it holds the bright torch of hope
It's taller than the Himalayas
deeper than the oceans
wider than the blue sky
it kills the devil in you
nourishes the man in you
makes you god through and through
It's the heart, it's the heart
It is there in you, in me
and sure in everybody
the man is dead
the moment he becomes heartless

C.M. MOHAN RAO

Beauty

You reign
In looks and scores,
That decide a winner,
For a year or two.
You live,
In thoughts and views,
That let me write few lines,
And ease my restless mind.
You shine
In time, and its turns,
To let us sense,
Our helplessness.
You glow,
In sun and stars,
That let me long for you,
At times,
You smile,
In kids and small flowers,
Filled with love and innocence,
Till its brim.

The Force

Yesterday,
I was ready,
To lend all help,
And let you win the race.
But
Today, I feel,
I should not try,
And let you have,
All help, dear friend.
For the thoughts,
Of your success, and efforts
To compete and win,
Against me, some day,
Stops me, I swear
And I am helpless, dear.

Survival

"You shall be mine,
And mine alone,
You will suffer and die,
But shall not leave,
Or betray me,
All along the way.
We shall survive,
With all that we have
And die, as life tends,
To be an uphill task,
Your care, your smile,
Your tender touch,
Will keep me moving,
I swear, I swear."
Are my husband's words.

"This is a hopeless case,
And shall require,
An operation that is costly,
And medicines too,
Please make all payments,
So that, we can start,
The treatment, and if in case,
There is no money,
Take him to other place.
Or let me know,
So that we two
Can sit, discuss and co-operate
To solve the issue,
You can do the needful,
To let me be happy,
And I shall do the needful,
To let him be healthy again."
Were the male doctor's words.

YOGESH G. NAIR

BOOK REVIEWS

Nibir K. Ghosh, *Calculus of Power: Modern American Political Novel*. New Delhi: Creative, 1997. 255 pages. Rs. 500.

When fewer and fewer readers seem to know less and less about the hybridities of fiction, Nibir K. Ghosh believes that there is something concrete and cognizable as the "Modern American Political Novel." In 239 pages of argument, explication and illustration, Ghosh achieves something remarkable. He not only re-examines the politics of such putative political novels such as *Boston, It Can't Happen Here, In Dubious Battle, For Whom the Bell Tolls, All the King's Men, Catch-22, The Armies of the Night* and *The Book of Daniel*, but canvasses the "political" force of personal struggles for equality and social justice documented in such novels as *The Awakening, Native Son, Invisible Man, Another Country, Slaughterhouse-Five, The Bluest Eye, Fear of Flying* and *The Color Purple*.

Ghosh believes, and with some good reason, that all politics is power-driven; that the fictional calculus is as good as any other method to harness when oppressive social and cultural systems obscure the forms and distribution of power in daily lives. "The modes of perception and the analytical framework implicit in" this study of American fiction, hopes Ghosh, "may also prove useful to the Indian setting and milieu." (vii) I would have agreed immediately but for the hard evidence newspapers gave us recently of the machinations that thwarted the tabling and passing of the Women's Reservation Bill in parliament. The point is simply that the identity based politics of which most American fiction is made up has very little to do with the entity based politicking that kills enlightened initiatives.

In an appallingly ironic way, however, Ghosh is right about the immediacy of American political truth to our concerns. Take, for example, Colonel Korn's allurements to Captain John Yossarian of *Catch-22*: "You see, Yossarian, we're going to put you on easy street. We're going to promote you to major and even give you another medal. . . . We're going to glorify you and send you home a hero, recalled by the

Pentagon for morale and public-relations purposes. You'll live like a millionaire. Everyone will lionize you. You'll have parades in your honor and make speeches to raise money for war bonds. A whole new world of luxury awaits you once you become our pal. Isn't it lovely?" (*Catch-22*, pp. 416-17) Of course it is. That, I thought, was how our HRD mandarins spoke honouring a Pokharan II scientist, or a minister descanted at a function giving away *swarnajayanti* medals for 11 Indian scientists. Now the trouble with literature is that it seems topical all the time which, in Philistine thinking, ought to make it irrelevant at any time.

Ghosh is at his impassioned best in a chapter called "American Justice on Trial" which examines Upton Sinclair's *Boston*, a fictional account of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, 1920-1927, and E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*, an unweaving of the Rosenbergs trial of the early 50s through the fictive biography of a boy. That undertrials invite some public sympathy anywhere in the world, and that martyrdom is an easy story to tell are always at the back of Sinclair and Doctorow's minds. What passes all understanding (to these writers themselves, and to Ghosh who discusses these cases at some length) is the sizable hate and suspicion which the American official machinery was able to galvanize, the fiendish energy of its media to effectively antagonize an informed public to whose conscience these cases might well have had a human rights appeal. Ghosh quotes Doctorow as lamenting: "what kind of anthropological ritual is that?" Well, that is where misanthropology enters by proxy. For no government can officially list misanthropy on its common minimum programme.

The enormous creditworthiness of Ghosh's thesis is perhaps its very limitation. Power changes hands. Like money. It is this currency of power that makes, for example, the Voting Rights Act of the Americans shameful. This Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson thirty-three years ago, and will expire in 2007. Once again Congress will decide whether African-Americans will be *allowed* to vote! No other Americans are so unenviable. There is, alas, great scope for another book by this author.

University of Hyderabad **K. Narayana Chandran**

Sanjukta Dasgupta, *The Novels of Huxley and Hemingway*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1997.

Legends in their own time, expatriates by choice and, most assuredly, exemplary spokesmen of the 1920s and the 1930s: nonetheless, the gulf between Aldous Huxley and Ernest Hemingway is enormous and unbridgeable. A comparative study, therefore, of their work seems like an odd proposition. Consider Huxley: a most cerebral writer blessed with a most cerebral ancestry; a self-confessed ratiocinator unable to fuse the body and the mind; as legend has it (confirmed by none other than Bertrand Russell), he carried with him on his frequent globe-trotting at least one volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; like his own alter-ego Philip Quarles (in *Point Counter Point*), his intellectual self-always prevailed over the emotional and the instinctive; an introvert who increasingly turned away Anglo-Saxon attitudes and the Judeo-Christian tradition, and turned towards pacifism, mysticism and Sufi, Buddhist and Vedantic thought. Consider Hemingway: born in rugged, physically challenging surroundings; the son of a champion angler; an inveterate sportsman, big-game hunter, wrestler, gun-trotter, soldier, adventurer. The view from the book-lined, erudite, sedate, peaceful world of Surrey, England, and another from Ketchum, Idaho, with its mountains and mountain streams, suggest sharply contrasted worlds.

Not to belabour the point, it must be stressed that even a most casual perception of Huxley and Hemingway tends to exhibit more contrasts than comparisons. On the one hand, the shy, reclusive and retiring prophet and utopian obsessed with the perennial concerns of mankind; and, on the other, the boisterous, bearded, fun-loving 'Papa' always on the move: Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Venice, London. Now dodging bullets while driving an ambulance (for the victims of the war), now at Pamplona amidst bullfights, now at Madrid with the Republican barricades even as the spirit of freedom wilted at the hands of Francisco Franco, now in Havana among the wrestlers! The images invoked by the two are diametrically opposite. From yet another perspective, Huxley even in moments of deepest despair refused to give up the struggle. Hemingway sensed failure, both of his body and of his craft as a writer, and could not help shooting himself to death. Despite the contrary contention of the book under review, I find it hard to overlook the vast spaces between Huxley and Hemingway. If one seeks to study the two planes of reality as exhibited in their novels, one may expect to find two altogether *diverse* planes of reality.

Looking at the contents of this study by Sanjukta Dasgupta, more questions arise. For example, critical consensus has it that *Point*

Counter Point (1928) is a major work of fiction of the time holding an unrelentingly candid mirror to the age. But in this study *Point Counter Point* gets a short shrift. Nothing is said about its graphic portrait of an essentially joyless, crushed decade of the twenties. No consideration is given to 'Credo quia absurdum: Amo quia turpe, quia indignum' (words quoted by Huxley at a narratively most opportune moment), and on these words so much of the conceptual basis of *Point Counter Point* rests.

This reflection on human perversity is not a passing thought. In one of the scenes in Soho the point is made dramatically that civilization in the West is unwittingly and unnecessarily on a headlong course to doom. The Lawrentian figure Mark Rampion speaks for Huxley:

> Bolsheviks and Fascists, Radicals and Conservatives, Communists and British Freemen . . . what the devil are they all fighting about? . . . They're fighting to decide whether we shall go to hell by communist express train or capitalist racing motor car, by individualist bus or collectivist tram running on the rails of state control. The destination is the same in every case. They're all bound for hell, all headed for the same psychological impasse and the social collapse. . . .

The sense of utter futility at the time in Britain and beyond in Europe is what Huxley is concerned with. As the concluding words to the novel imply, with bitter and trenchant irony, the pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven is not even remotely on the horizon. These aspects of *Point Counter Point* have not drawn the attention of Dasgupta.

The same with *Brave New World. Brave New World* advocates, especially as Huxley's preface to the 1946 edition makes it explicit, that science must be used to serve mankind and not to enslave it (and it is this nightmare that the dystopian *Brave New World* so graphically depicts). This merits only a passing reference. On the contrary, Dasgupta claims that in *Brave New World* we have a 'rejection of the future' and that it reveals 'Huxleyan spirit of negativism.' Far from it. *Brave New World* is pragmatic. It is profoundly concerned with the future of the world community, and not just the Western world. A great deal could be said to substantiate this. But suffice it to note that this study misses the moral and intellectual centre of *Brave New World*. Besides, one must ask why *Those Barren Leaves, Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island* are taken up for detailed consideration at the expense of *Point Counter Point, Brave New World*, etc.

Hemingway fares only slightly better. The study accords due importance to later novels. But why is *The Sun Also Rises* shown scant re-

gard? A novel which is seminal of all the work that followed? A novel in which most later developments in the novelistic career of Hemingway may be traced? The fate of Jake (i.e., Jacob!) Barnes, an impotent and physical and emotional cripple, the decadent protagonist, one of the first unheroic heroes in modern literature, symbolizes the fate of emasculated Europe in the twenties. Brett Ashley keeps reappearing in the post-World War I literature in England and America. Some reference is indeed made to these and other basic matters in *The Sun Also Rises*. But there is no evidence of close, searching analysis. There is little substantiation.

This reviewer must reluctantly conclude that the author has not presented the ramifications involved. It is, of course, heartening to find someone willing to undertake such a daunting task implicit in the subject chosen.

Dharwad A.A. MUTALIK-DESAI

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