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SUBVERSIVE STRATEGIES IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLIEST MASTERPIECE: *THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA*

R.W. Desai

Critical views have, in general, not been kind to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. I give below some representative comments: for Hazelton Spencer "the core of the plot is love" and the play is "Shakespeare's first resort to the romantic bag of tricks to which he went again and again throughout the rest of his career."¹ Completely off the mark, Spencer mistakes male lust in 2G for "love," thus distorting the play's basic subversive message which is an unsparing questioning of the romantic notion of "love." The point that the play makes is that "love," mistaken for male lust, is a delusion that blinds both male and female to its carnal nature.

Likewise George F. Baker who asks, "Could there be a more complete confession of dramatic ineptitude than that last scene?"² Baker is, of course, thinking of Proteus' thwarted rape of Silvia by the timely arrival of Valentine, followed by his offering Silvia to the would-be rapist in deference to male friendship — as many critics have assured us is the case. The enormity of such misunderstanding is epitomised in Baker's euphemistic description of Proteus' attempted rape of Silvia as "trying to force his love upon her." If rape can be described as "his love," it is clear that the critic's prudish vocabulary can come nowhere near encompassing what Shakespeare is attempting with bold Elizabethan frankness. In fact, Proteus knows better than this critic: he unabashedly admits that rape is "'gainst the nature of love" (5.4.58).³

H.B. Charlton is as misguided as Spencer and Baker. "Romance, and not comedy," he declares, "has called the tune of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*."⁴ But the truth is that far from being either "romance" or "comedy," the play is a ruthless exposure of the animal in the male psyche in the act of breaking free from the wrappings of culture and civilization, and

revealing itself in the forms of deceit and masochism in Proteus and Valentine, respectively. At the same time, the women, Silvia and Julia, are only slightly better than the men: Silvia's hypocrisy is evident in her sending Proteus her picture while verbally resisting his amorous advances, thus giving contradictory signals, while Julia is so eager to become a married woman that she will endure the most disgraceful kinds of humiliation from the man she hopes to successfully coerce into marriage with her. All of this is neither "romance" nor "comedy" but, rather, Shakespeare's exploration of the dregs of human behaviour that we all carry, buried somewhere deep within us, or what Freud calls the Id, the unconscious reservoir of primitive instincts. "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout?" is the question put to Stetson in "The Waste Land," while Hamlet, over three hundred years earlier, had warned Ophelia, "We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us" (3.1.129). A welcome change from the critics mentioned above, Masfield is refreshingly perceptive: "*Love's Labour's Lost* is fantasy. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* deals with real relationships. It is a better play than the fantasy."⁵

What I am going to argue, then, is that 2G though an early play is by no means immature; that like *Titus Andronicus*, though in the ostensible happy-ending mode, it deals with the flip side of the human psyche — both male and female — in its darker complexities. Here the early Shakespeare is sharpening the tools he will later use with — admittedly — greater finesse and sophistication in destroying the myth of individuals being uncompromisingly good or irredeemably bad and create a realistic range of characters who are of "mingled yarn, good and ill together" (*All's Well*, 4.3.84), the angel and the devil co-habiting in homo sapiens. Shakespearean comedy, as is well recognised in contemporary criticism, is far from being "a romantic bag of tricks"; rather, it grapples with disturbing manifestations of often aberrant human behaviour, and 2G is an early expression of such a concern.

I

In fact, 2G is anti-romantic. There are submerged pointers within the play to suggest that Julia has been seduced by Proteus (or the other way round), perhaps even made pregnant by him, which accounts for her pursuit of him to Milan to force him into matrimony. This possibility is hinted at, not spelled out, a dramatic device that is a characteristic and remarkable feature of this play. In the lengthy conversation between Speed and Launce, the two servants, concerning the relationship between Proteus and Julia, innuendos abound having reference to mutual sexual pleasure in intercourse ("when it stands well with him [penis erectus] it stands well with her," and "My staff understands me" being a reference to the same suggestion) (2.5.10-28). Thus the hitherto indeterminate relationship of Julia with Proteus is clarified by the present conversation, this being a pronounced feature of the play. To the extent that such proleptic structuring requires that the play be better appreciated when read rather than watched for its more subtle ramifications to be grasped, we may concede that this reflects more the hand of the young intellectual than the experienced dramatist that Shakespeare developed into during the closing years of the last decade of the sixteenth century.

The play is based on the assumption that in general the male ego prefers an affair to marriage. The female ego's wish is exactly the converse. This, of course, is an old truism, well re-formulated by Shaw with reference to Shakespeare's heroines:

In Shakespeare's plays the woman always takes the initiative. In his problem plays and his popular plays alike the love interest is the interest of seeing the woman hunt the man down. She may do it by blandishment, like Rosalind, or by stratagem, like Mariana; but in every case the relation between the woman and the man is the same; she is the pursuer and the contriver, he the pursued and disposed of.⁶

That the expectation of marriage, or total commitment, still holds true for the woman despite the Feminist movement in its most active manifestation being nearly fifty years old is confirmed by the observations of two — among many others on similar lines — liberated, young American women recorded in the Hite Report:

I think that if there is such a thing as a sexual revolution going on it is, for the most part, to the detriment of women. Men expect that a woman will consent to having sex more often and with less commitment. Men very rarely take responsibility for the birth control and it angers me that women have to be prepared every day for a man's sperm. Women are really wreaking havoc on their bodies and mainly for the explicit pleasure and convenience of men.

and

I think the sexual revolution is very male-oriented and anti-woman. The idea is that men are telling women they're free to 'do it' with whomever they want. But the catch is that the double standard is still employed. A man is ... 'sowing his oats'; a woman ... is a 'prostitute' or 'nymphomaniac.'

From the male perspective to "do it" without the shackles of marriage is the perfect fulfilment of his pursuit of happiness, a realisation expressed pathetically by Ophelia in the song she sings while in her demented state:

By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack and fie for shame,
Young men will do't if they come to't —
By Cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, "Before you tumbled me,
You promis'd me to wed."

He answers:

"So would I a done, by yonder sun,
And thou hadst not come to my bed." (4.5.56-64)

It has been observed by a wag that when a man looks at a woman he imagines her in bed without her clothes; a woman when she looks at a man imagines him in his best clothes, standing by her side at a social gathering. I think this witty insight contains an underlying truth that 2G confirms: that for the male the relationship is basically biological; for the female, socio-economic. Certainly these are simplifications, even oversimplifications, but in two hours traffic on the stage the message has necessarily to be loud, clear, and direct. That the play itself corroborates such a perspective may be seen in Proteus' candid admission to himself in soliloquy that the imagining of Silvia's beauty, nude, is what has made him forget his loyalty to Valentine:

Methinks, my zeal to Valentine is cold;
And that I love him not as I was wont.
O, but I love his lady too too much!

And that's the reason I love him so little.
 How shall I dote on her with more advice [on better acquaintance],
 That thus without advice begin to love her!
 'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld [her visible lineaments]
 And that hath dazzled my reason's light;
 But when I look on her perfections [her nudity]
 There is no reason but I shall be blind. (2.4.197-206)

Sharpening the focus of our attention, then, on the play's crucial scene, the thwarted rape of Silvia by Proteus, we encounter the reaction of a critic whose outspokenness is his only virtue. Logan Pearsall Smith is furious with Shakespeare for his outrage of our moral feelings ... in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* where Valentine makes an outrageous and calm offer of Silvia, whom he loves, to the scoundrel whose attempt to outrage her he has just prevented.⁸

But does Valentine really love Silvia? Like the critics earlier quoted, Smith's reading of the play is restricted to only its surface meaning, thus missing the wood for the trees. Superficially viewed, undoubtedly the play's meaning conforms to Smith's interpretation. But after a close examination of the opening scenes of the play we may begin to doubt that Valentine has fallen in love with Silvia and sense that it is actually the other way round. All of the initiatives come from her and Valentine, a blockhead, is so imperceptive of her overtures that realization dawns only after he has been enlightened by his servant:

- Val.* How now, Sir? What are you reasoning with yourself?
Speed Nay, I was rhyming: 'tis you that have the reason.
Val. To do what?
Speed To be a spokesman from Madam Silvia.
Val. To whom?
Speed To yourself. Why, she woos you by a figure.
Val. What figure?
Speed By a letter, I should say.
Val. Why, she hath not writ to me?
Speed What need she, when she hath made you write to yourself? Why, do you not perceive the jest?
Val. No, believe me.
Speed No believing you, indeed, sir. But did you perceive her earnest?
Val. She gave me none, except an angry word.
Speed Why, she hath given you a letter.
Val. That's the letter I writ to her friend.

Speed And that letter hath she delivered, and there an end. (2.1.127ff)

True, prior to this conversation Valentine has confided to Speed his interest in Silvia, but it is she who takes the decisive step in initiating him into the prospect of marriage to her. Once initiated, Valentine goes overboard. His eulogisation of Silvia to Proteus is so hyperbolic as to both amuse and make the audience doubt its genuineness. Silvia is "a heavenly saint," "divine," "a principality." He condescendingly grants that Julia will be permitted to carry Silvia's train as she walks. Waxing hysterical, his praise of her is so fulsome that Proteus cannot hide his embarrassment and chides him for this impropriety:

Val. She [Julia] shall be dignified with this high honour,
To bear my lady's train, least the base earth
Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss.
And, of so great a favour growing proud,
Disdain to root the summer-swelling flower,
And make rough winter everlastingly

Pro. Why, Valentine, what braggartism is this? (2.4.152-9)

Had such praise been addressed directly to Silvia, it could have been construed as a Renaissance lover's conventional flattery of his mistress, but told to Proteus it suggests a divided kind of attachment.

With this development Valentine seems to be trying his best to kindle sparks of love in Proteus for Silvia thus transferring her to his friend, and it is in this quite extraordinary phase that 2G is unique in the canon. Unlike all of the later plays—in particular *As You Like It* and *Othello*—in which the woman takes the initiative in capturing the man, who in turn remains a willing captive, in 2G Valentine repeatedly urges Silvia to welcome Proteus "with some special favour," to "entertain him / To be my fellow-servant to your ladyship," these exhortations culminating in what must amount to a willingness, rather, an eagerness, to share her with him or, perhaps, to altogether relinquish her to him: "And I will help thee to prefer her too: / She shall be dignified with this high honour" (2.4.98, 101-2, 152-3). As is well known, critics have tried to find equivalences to such a willingness to share the beloved with the friend in medieval and Renaissance romance, but without con-

vincing success. Valentine's efforts in this direction are quite exceptional — and pathological. And as might be expected, his efforts are crowned with total success: Proteus is captivated by Silvia's charms or, perhaps, more plausibly, by Valentine's rhapsodic, verbal depiction of her, a possibility that Proteus himself with fine insight recognises:

It is mine eye or Valentinus' praise,
Her true perfection, or my false transgression,
That makes me reasonless to reason thus? (2.4.190-3)

It seems to me that the question we must ask is why Shakespeare gives to Valentine such strangely insistent and oft reiterated exhortations to his fiance and friend to come together if for no other reason than to alert us to a fundamental aberration in his psyche. The "outrage" that Logan Pearsall Smith feels at Valentine's offer to relinquish Silvia to Proteus at play's end should really have been felt by him as early as this scene where the ground is being prepared for that later scene. Shakespeare is depicting in Valentine a not uncommon male psychological condition that needs reassurance as to the woman with whom he is involved being desirable to other men in order to sustain his interest in her. Bereft of such a prop, his libido collapses.

II

But if the men in this play are fickle, as Orsino of *Twelfth Night* candidly admits,

... however we do praise ourselves
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn
Than women's are. (2.4.32-5),

the women, too, have feet of clay. Unlike the later comedies which are generous to the women, 2G is not. The women here are shrewdly calculating or deliberately inconsistent. Is Silvia truly in love with Valentine, or is she using him as a means to get out of the clutches of the foolish Sir Thurio? Valentine is certainly a preferable alternative. And is not Julia's pursuit of Proteus motivated more by the desire to become a respectably married woman

— having shared her bed with him as is implied in 2.2.1-8 and, as noted earlier, virtually confirmed in 2.5.10-15 — than out of love for Proteus? For the play would seem to be stretching credibility too far if it expected the audience to believe that the initially spirited Julia who undertakes a journey to Milan unescorted would abase herself in the manner in which she does out of love for the fickle Proteus to whose wooing of Silvia she is a distraught witness, unless her chief objective was matrimony. Though generally known, it is worth reminding ourselves at this stage in the argument that the ratio of men to women was (and still is) weighted in favour of the latter. Even though "in all communities of western civilisation, more boys are born than girls, [the] mortality amongst boys, especially during the first year, is considerably above that of the other sex."⁹ No statistics are available for Shakespeare's England, but demographers are certain that such was the imbalance in sixteenth-century England as well. This sense is inherent in Balthazar's ironical song in *Much Ado* urging unmarried women to let the men go and be "blithe and bonny" (2.3.68-9) — advice to which a more self-respecting Julia might have paid heed, had it not been for her likely pregnancy.

Meticulously crafted, the play's quartet of major characters belong to clearly defined psychological types. If Silvia is bold, witty, mocking — a worthy precursor of Beatrice — Julia loses her independence of spirit and becomes painfully self-conscious, tentative, childish. "I'll get me such a colour'd periwig," she plaintively muses while studying Silvia's picture, noting that "her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow" (4.4.181-3). Whether identity is to be defined by an external form, or by something more intrinsic, is a question Julia's thinking of acquiring "such a colour'd periwig" raises. A similar question is implied in the opening line of Proteus' song, a serenade to Silvia on Sir Thurio's behalf, in which the interrogative pronouns for person and object are both applied to Silvia: "Who is Silvia? What is she?" (4.2.37). On one level 2G challenges the concept of individuality, of essentialism, offering instead the theory of characters being types of psychological states in which all human beings partake to a greater or

lesser degree, their behaviour depending upon time, place, and opportunity. Today, with organ transplants a reality and brain transplants seeming to be within the grasp of medical science in the near future, numerous moral, ethical, and legal problems will of course arise. 2G is, perhaps, one of the earliest philosophical texts to envisage the complexity of the issue which was again addressed by Yeats over three hundred years later, first in the poem "For Anne Gregory" which in all probability is his salute to 2G —

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair" —

and then in a later poem, "The Three Bushes," whose theme, like that of *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure*, is the interchangeability of identity thus erasing the very notion of identity:

"I love a man in secret,
Dear chambermaid," said she,
"I know that I must drop down dead
If he stop loving me,
Yet what could I but drop down dead
If I lost my chastity?

O my dear, O my dear

"So you must lie beside him
And let him think me there.

And maybe we are all the same
 Where no candles are,
 And maybe we are all the same
 That strip the body bare."

*O my dear, O my dear.*¹⁰

2G does not perpetrate the bed-trick, as it has been flippantly (and unsuitably) called, yet it hints at such a development in the easy restoration of Proteus' passion for Silvia back to Julia, and in the readiness with which Valentine yields to Proteus his claim on Silvia at the play's end.

Since 2G, as I have tried to show, is a critique of the notion of individuality, it should not surprise us that "person" occurs only once in the play as opposed to a much higher count in the other Shakespearean plays of the same period: *2H6*, 7; *3H6*, 5; and *R3*, 8. These statistics are revealing. As a man of the theatre Shakespeare of course knew that the modern sense of "person" as denoting a distinctive identity (e.g., Hamlet's "If it assume my noble father's person, / I'll speak to it though hell itself should gape / And bid me hold my peace" 1.2.243-5) is an inversion of its original Latin root "persona" = "a mask used by a player, a character acted" (*OED*, "person") which suggests a multiplicity of roles played by the actor, thus negating identity. Significantly enough, even the single occurrence of "person" in 2G focuses on external appearance, the equivalence of "persona":

Thurio Sir Proteus, what says Silvia to my suit?

Proteus O, Sir, I find her milder than she was;
 And yet she takes exceptions at your person.

Thurio What, that my leg is too long?

Proteus No; that it is too little.

Thurio I'll wear a boot to make it somewhat rounder.

(5.2.1-6)

Both Julia with her auburn periwig and Thurio with his rounded boot are specimens of persona, not person, but being an experimental play, 2G's effacement of character is selective: Julia in her later disguise as a boy seems colourless in contrast to her earlier resourcefulness, while Silvia's complete silence in the last hundred lines is a contrast to her loquacity throughout the play.

If, then, Julia's interest in Proteus is not so much because of him as a person, but as a marriageable convenience, this seems to be confirmed by her ability to joke frivolously with the theatre audience at Sir Thurio's expense in the scene from which I have quoted above. For every ironical reply that Proteus gives to Sir Thurio's questions regarding his looks, Julia sarcastically comments "aside" to the audience ridiculing his opinionatedness. Too extended to quote in full, the scene's very length shows that the dramatist has here given her the pivotal role of not only cutting Sir Thurio down to size, but more, I suggest, of showing us a jilted mistress who is not emotionally too deeply distressed at her rejection, but rather, at her having failed to find a husband. In other words, the play explores the borderland between romance (*Romeo and Juliet*), sexual desire (*Touchstone and Audrey*), and social respectability (*Charlotte and Mr. Collins*). My third example is from *Jane Austen* and not *Shakespeare* because after *2G* no such example of matrimonial practicality can be found; thereafter the element of romance is invariably present which explains why the dramatist gave to his later plays such disclaiming titles as *As You Like It* or *What You Will*. Having introduced the subject of anti-romance in *2G*, it is possible that he (or his advisers like *Henslowe*) felt that it was too uncomfortable a presence for romantic comedy which explains why -- as numerous theatre historians have observed -- the play has never been popular on the stage.¹¹

My example from *Jane Austen* is, of course, speculative: it projects a possibility that *Shakespeare* might have developed along similar lines had such iconoclasm proved popular with his audiences. Consider the following revealing analysis of the *Charlotte-Collins* tie-up by *A.N. Kaul*:

The first shock has come from *Charlotte Lucas*, her [*Elizabeth's*] best friend: *Elizabeth* finds it incomprehensible that this "sensible, intelligent young woman" should so readily accept *Mr. Collins*. *Charlotte* herself has no high opinion of *Mr. Collins* or, indeed, of men and matrimony in general. But marriage, she realizes, is "the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune," their one "preservative from want." She has accepted the ridiculous clergyman "solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment." To *Elizabeth* it is plain that her friend has "sacrificed every better feeling to

worldly advantage" and that, much as she likes and sympathizes with her, "no real confidence could ever subsist between them again." The very quality of intelligence that prevents Charlotte from deluding herself with regard to her motives makes the nature of those motives more clear and painful.¹²

Both Julia and Silvia are, I suggest, precursors of Charlotte Lucas and the practicality of all three women finds its most blatant expression in the no less than hundred-line conversation between the menials Speed and Launce concerning the woman Launce has decided to marry. "She hath no teeth," Speed points out, but this does not deter Launce, for Speed also points out that "she can milk," "she can knit," "she can wash and scour," "she can spin," and, finally, she hath "more wealth than faults," which elicits from an ecstatic Launce the rejoinder, "Why, that word makes the faults gracious: well, I'll have her" (3.1.290-353). Understandably, the philosophy of marriage for convenience would not be palatable to Shakespeare's audience, and after 2G he seems to have abandoned its inclusion as a serious component of his plays.

In contrast to Julia, Silvia is full of self-confidence: when Valentine greets her with the fulsome "Madam and mistress, a thousand good-morrows," she parodies his foppery with the retort, "Sir Valentine and servant, to you two thousand" (2.1.91-2). Vivacious and adventurous, Silvia has no hesitation in playing with Proteus' feelings. Repeatedly denouncing him for his infidelity to Julia, at the same time she consents to letting him have her picture thus encouraging him in his pursuit of her. Certainly Hardy had her capricious behaviour in mind when his Bathsheba sends Boldwood the valentine card bearing a seal with the words "Marry me" in the centre. That he had 2G in mind while writing the novel is clear from his quoting Proteus' magnificent line, "the uncertain glory of an April day" (1.3.85) towards the end of chapter 18 entitled "Boldwood in Meditation — Regret" of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Further, that 2G continued to remain a significant feature of Hardy's mental landscape is seen in his choice of Julia's moving lines to Proteus, "Poor wounded name! my bosom, as a bed, / Shall lodge thee" (1.2.114-15), as the epitaph for *Tess*, written as long as seventeen years after *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

III

The conflicting signals that Silvia's behaviour with Proteus send out are partly to blame for his infatuation, culminating in his attempted rape. As is well known, this scene has come in for severe criticism. Harold Bloom, for instance, concludes his treatment of the play and this scene with the words, "Even the most solemn of Shakespearean scholars are aware that everything is amiss with *The Two Gentlemen*, but Shakespeare evidently could not have cared less." And concerning the attempted rape and its aftermath, he raises a question that any defense of the play must needs address:

... while poor Silvia never utters another word in the play after she cries out "O heaven" when the lustful Proteus seizes her to commence his intended rape. What is the actress playing Silvia supposed to do with herself during the final hundred lines of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*? She ought to whack Valentine with the nearest loose chunk of wood, but that would not knock any sense into the lummoX, or into anyone else in the madness.¹³

A twenty-first century Silvia might do what Bloom suggests, but a hundred years ago Nora only slammed the door, and Shakespeare's sixteenth-century Silvia can only show her resentment by her silence. But the rape scene needs to be looked at in the total context of the Silvia-Proteus relationship, in which the picture episode stands out as a significant pointer towards understanding. The message is complex and needs to be deciphered in terms, not of the stage but the study, this being 2G's weakness dramatically, but its strength as a play of ideas which is a characteristic of this remarkable play.

The picture episode, as briefly noted earlier, is suggestive of an attraction-repulsion on Silvia's part towards Proteus. Flattered by his tireless overtures, nevertheless neither her conscience nor her pride will permit herself to become a too-easy substitute for the absent Julia. If we grant that Shakespeare's intention was to introduce this ambiguous element into the relationship as exploratory of a complex psychological condition — which only an accomplished boy-actor would have been able to handle — then the rape scene becomes a culmination of these

conflicting forces. Wishing to dote on her picture, Proteus begs her to let him have it and, surprisingly, is able to specify precisely which one (amongst many?) he wants:

Vouchsafe me yet your picture for my love,
The picture that is hanging in your chamber;
To that I'll speak, to that I'll sigh and weep.... (4.2.115-17)

To the attentive reader these lines are arresting. Had they occurred in a detective-mystery-suspense novel, and Silvia later been found murdered, Proteus would have been arrested as a suspect having had intimate relations with her. But in this play the point is not developed — as it would be later with powerful effect in Iachimo's unauthorized intrusion into Imogen's chamber in *Cymbeline* — the dramatist in 2G preferring to sow the seed in the reader's mind, inviting suspicion without the text either confirming or denying any conclusions drawn. It is in this sense that drama (like poetry) elicits greater interactivity with the text than does the novel thus rendering it richly complex, provocative, and challenging. To dismiss the innuendo as inconsequential, as critics have done,¹⁴ seems to me to be a denial of drama's multi-layered texture for, as Berry Weller astutely observes,

Shakespeare's characters frequently manifest the desire to be recognised as something more than they 'seem', that is, to belie the visible and audible evidence of their presence onstage by suggesting it does not and cannot adequately represent what they are ... [At its] most powerful, drama does not explain too thoroughly; it preserves something of the mystery of human motive and action.¹⁵

Unlike the novel — and Henry James comes to mind immediately — "drama does not explain too thoroughly," as Weller points out. In agreeing to give Proteus her picture to "worship" and "adore" while at the same time professing revulsion, Silvia meets him half-way, thus becoming a consenting partner:

I am very loath to be your idol, sir;
But since your falsehood shall become you well
To worship shadows and adore false shapes,
Send to me in the morning, and I'll send it.
And so, good rest. (4.2.123-7)

Consider the following account in Peter Summer's novel *The Lover Man*:

A girl of nineteen told of a night of fear with a man who had bought her four lager-and-limes at a village dance.

Then, she said, he offered to drive her home. He took the wrong road but she soon realised that this was no mistake.

He stopped the car in a lonely lane, forced her to climb into the back of the car and raped her.

Miss Baker agreed that she danced the last waltz with Virgil Pegasus, who had been a perfect gentleman all evening. She did not think the drink she had taken affected her, and denied that she had consented to what took place.

Pegasus, who denied the charge, was found guilty and jailed for seven years.

"I believe this girl did lead you on to some extent," said Judge Hiram Love, "which is why I have exercised leniency."¹⁶

The crucial rape scene, then, is the culmination of all that has gone before. Since in most situations drama relies on physical action for its effectiveness, the actor playing Proteus should "suit the action to the word," as Hamlet instructs the players (3.2.17), by drawing his sword, pressing the point against Silvia's throat, and forcing her down on the ground, thus enacting his words to her, "I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end ... force you" (5.4.57-8). (For, of course, it should be remembered that except for "Exit" the Folio has no stage directions.) The would-be rape onstage, unprecedented in Elizabethan drama,¹⁷ though thwarted by Valentine's intervention, should be construed as accomplished by virtue of intent. In law, "a criminal intention means an intent to do an act whose natural and probable consequences are criminal" and, further, "a person is liable for his criminal attempts, as they show the existence and the nature of motive or ulterior intent."¹⁸ True, physically Silvia has not been violated, yet from Valentine's point of view we must take into account what he has overheard prior to his appearance on the scene. Looking closely at her response to Proteus' proposal, both of which Valentine in hiding overhears, we may be inclined to concede that Valentine does have some grounds for believing that Silvia's feelings for the two men are divided. While declaring that she loves "Valentine / Whose life's as tender to me as my soul," and that she detests "false perjur'd Proteus" (5.4.36-9), there is no suggestion of her recoiling from Proteus as a man. The text seems to hint a subtle distinction between the physical — popularly termed

the chemistry between two individuals — and the moral. True, her moral abhorrence of Proteus cannot be gainsaid; but the penumbra region beyond this remains shadowy. Put bluntly — and this it must be confessed is a disservice to the scene's delicate textual filigree — she rejects Proteus not because she finds him sexually unattractive, but for other reasons. I give below a part of the dialogue for consideration:

- Pro.* What dangerous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo for one calm look?
O, 'tis the curse in love, and still approv'd,
When women cannot love where they're belov'd.
- Sil.* When Proteus cannot love where he's belov'd.
Read over Julia's heart, thy first best love,
For whose dear sake thou didst then rend thy faith
Into a thousand oaths, and all those oaths
Descended into perjury, to love me.
Thou hast no faith now, unless thou'dst two.
And that's far worse than none; better have none
Than plural faith, which is too much by one:
Thou counterfeit to thy true friend!
- Pro.* In love,
Who respects friend?
- Sil.* All men but Proteus.
(5.4.41-54)

In the early stages of a man-woman relationship the prime factor in the equation, as everyone knows, is the physical aspect that each sees and finds attractive in the other. At no point does Silvia declare Proteus unattractive to her as she does concerning Sir Thurio (e.g., 3.2.4-6, or 5.3.17). And it will be recalled that for Othello the first casualty he blames for his supposed loss of Desdemona's love is his complexion, then his lack of social grace, followed by his age:

- Haply, for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years (3.3.267-70)

Having overheard Silvia's reply to Proteus' proposal, Valentine now knows that the sole reason for her rebuffing him is his prior commitment to Julia and his friendship with himself — not her

finding Proteus repugnant.¹⁹ Her resistance to Proteus is on account of his violation of the code of honour that makes his friendship with Valentine sacrosanct, not the more basic one of her own reaction to Proteus. Silvia is more a precursor of Cressida, torn between her commitment to Troilus and her desire for Diomedes (5.2.107-8), than of Imogen who rejects Cloten outright while calling him a "fool," telling him "I care not for you ... I hate you," and declaring that her husband's "meanest garment" is dearer to her than as many Clotens as the number of hairs on his head (2.3.106-7, 113-15, and 138-40).

Given these circumstances, the alacrity with which Valentine relinquishes Silvia to Proteus after the latter's sudden repentance becomes understandable and not "outrageous" as Logan Pearsall Smith pronounces it to be. In the Indian epic *The Ramayana* Rama rejects his wife Seeta after recovering her from her captor King Ravana because, as he says, "how can a Kshatriya take back a wife who has lived so long in a stranger's house?" But Seeta emerges unscathed from the trial by fire to which she is publicly subjected thus proving her chastity, and Rama then justifies himself with this explanation: "Think you that I did not know your irreproachable purity? This ordeal was to satisfy the people."²⁰ We may, or may not, be impressed with Rama's explanation, but it is clear that both texts, Valmiki's and Shakespeare's, are neither unreservedly condemnatory of male chauvinism, nor fully supportive of female susceptibility to the male gaze, respectively. Not surprisingly, so odious was the rape scene and Valentine's offer of his fiancée to the would-be rapist that it was not till as late as 1841 that Macready restored the lines to the play text. And as recently as 1952 in Denis Corey's production at the Old Vic, the lines were again cut.

Source study criticism has identified no less than eighty-six parallel precedents of the transfer of the beloved to a friend, but Shakespeare's handling of the subject is quite different: it is not the simple and straightforward loyalty to friendship rather than love that is being celebrated, not "the all-dominating urge of sworn friendship," as Munro describes it,²¹ but rather, the case of the

man-woman relationship in the context of the Other man's disruptive presence. In later plays like *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* the tension assumes a more blatant form; in *2G* it is still muted. Viewed in the context of "sworn friendship" as Munro does, Silvia's silence to which Bloom objects must seem inexplicable, and Munro's wish that Shakespeare had "disembarrassed himself of the incident in the plot" a reasonable line of thinking. But replace "sworn friendship" with "male suspicion" and the result is that the last scene undergoes a total transformation, Valentine's relinquishing of Silvia as well as her silence becoming not only plausible but inevitable.

In continuation of this line of inquiry, there is a detail — Julia's fainting — that must detain us for the further evidence it furnishes in support of my argument that the friendship versus love theme has been erroneously supposed to be the play's epicentre:

Val.	...
	And, that my love may appear plain and free, All that was mine in Silvia I give thee.
Jul. (Sebastian)	O me unhappy!
Pro.	Look to the boy.
Val.	Why, boy! why, wag! how now! what's the matter? Look up; speak. (5.4.82-7)

A question that immediately arises is: Why does the play show us Julia fainting and not Silvia? Julia, after all, has known for a long time that Proteus is madly in love with Silvia; therefore Valentine's offer of Silvia to him, and the possibility of Proteus accepting the offer, would hardly come as a shock to her. It can, of course, be argued — as has been done — that Julia's faint is a feint whereby she is able to introduce the ring that Proteus gave her and thus establish her claim upon him. Apart from the problem of feigning a faint so that the audience would see it as such, while the characters would see it as genuine (c.f., Lady Macbeth's "Help me hence, ho!" 2.3.117), Julia hardly needs the ring to establish her identity; all she needs to do is throw off her disguise and appear as a woman for Proteus to be forced to recognise her as Julia.

Is, then, Julia fainting, and not Silvia, a psychological error on Shakespeare's part — as numerous critics have suggested — or is there a message that needs to be deciphered? My preference is for the latter. By assigning the faint to Julia, not Silvia, Julia emerges as the more sensitive of the two women. Silvia, a high society lady, is blase, insouciant, unruffled; Julia, a country girl, possibly pregnant by Proteus, is genuinely distressed at Valentine's handing over of his claim on Silvia to him. Silvia's silence hereafter, as we shall see in the next section, is a confirmation of her indifference.

IV

Exposing with keen Swiftian insight the repellent side of human nature, especially in sexual relationships, the play ought not to raise contemporary eyebrows, especially in a post-Lawrence-Nabokov-Burroughs scenario. The apparently negative features of *2G* are in actuality its strengths. Anthony Davies praises "the famous serenade scene (4.2.)" for being so vivid because "it is one of the play's only fully successful scenes involving more than three characters at a time."²² This is surprising. One would have thought that after Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, two of the most outstanding plays of the twentieth century, the paucity of characters in each scene of *2G* would be considered an artistic triumph, hardly a drawback. And when K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar tells us that *2G* "anticipates the subtler parallelisms in the maturer plays to come,"²³ he takes away with one hand what he confers with the other. Offering dubious compliments for the wrong reasons seems to be a fate reserved for *2G* among all the plays in the canon. Rather than viewing it as significant only because it contains embryonic themes that assume their full development in the later plays, the play should be judged in its own right for its worth as a masterly exploration of gender characteristics and differentiation and as an exposure of male instability as well as female calculatedness in the face of such instability. Marriage is the only defence that the economically depend-

ent female has with which to bind down the recalcitrant male.

Till recently it was fashionable to reject the traditional notion of gender differentiation based on genetical distinction as obsolete, and to attribute it to upbringing and parental and societal conditioning, but as Anna Mulrine points out in a recent article, "Are Boys the Weaker Sex?" this view is undergoing revision:

Scientists are exploring very real biological differences that may make boys more impulsive and less efficient class-room learners — in sum, the weaker sex, a role typically associated with women.... Many boys today are growing up with tremendous expectations but without adequate emotional fuel or the tools they need to succeed in school or sustain deep relationships....²⁴

Crab, the only dog in the canon and, if I'm not mistaken, the only dog in English drama until the mid-nineteenth century, is, I will argue, the male par excellence. Self-centred, selfish, immune to "deep relationships," not even with his master who endures severe punishments to protect him, Crab seems to be the most un-doggie kind of dog. "He is a stone, a very pebble," his master declares. Governed by his basic instincts, "he make(s) water against a gentlewoman's farthingale," steals "a capon's leg," and farts under the dining table so that "all the chamber smelt him" (4.4.1-16). Crab is the quintessential male combining in himself all of the repulsive characteristics of the males in the play. Like him. Valentine and Proteus are not really in love, nor is their professed friendship genuine; the Duke, Silvia's father, is determined to force his daughter into a match that will make *him* happy, regardless of *her* feelings; Sir Thurio knows that Silvia is indifferent to him, yet he persists in wooing her; and Sir Eglamour, initially Julia's suitor, then Silvia's professed protector, runs away to save his own skin, abandoning Silvia to the outlaws (1.2.9 and 5.1.1-12, 5.3.7-11).²⁵ Though an early play, *2G*, like *The Comedy of Errors*, is brilliantly structured, each episode reinforcing the play's underlying message, holding a mirror up to the men, and issuing a warning to the women in the audience.

But despite the general litany of condemnation directed against *2G*, there are some exceptions that have recognized its serious purport and rejected superficial readings critical of the play for being immature or, yet more damning, slipshod. Among the early

critics Johnson and Pope are noteworthy: "When I read this play," Johnson observes,

I cannot but think that I discover both in the serious and ludicrous scenes, the language and sentiments of *Shakespeare*. It is not indeed one of his most powerful effusions, it has neither many diversities of character, nor striking delineations of life, but it abounds in *maxims* or "pithy sayings" beyond most of his plays, and few have more lines or passages which, singly considered, are eminently beautiful.²⁶

And for Pope,

It is observable (I know not for what cause) that the stile of this comedy is less figurative, and more natural and unaffected than the greater part of this Author's, tho' supposed to be one of the first he wrote.²⁷

Pope's word "natural" is what Johnson, too, sees as the most pronounced feature of *2G*, anticipating — as we have seen — Masefield's praise of the play for dealing with "real relationships" rather than "fantasy." In our own times, Mason Yu-hong Wang sees the play as "a burlesque of gentlemanly fashion in friendship and courtly love,"²⁸ while Betken, likewise, regards Valentine as the play's central character whose "heart is in the right place" but, comparable to Don Quixote, is held up as a figure of satire, for to be too good is untenable in the real world.²⁹ Though limited, the views of these two critics are at least not dismissive. However, *2G* is neither burlesque nor satire; rather, it addresses itself with the utmost literalness to exposing the most basic — and therefore distasteful — ingredients of the male and female egos. And, remarkably, Shakespeare seems to be reiterating this line of thinking in his depiction of both Caliban and Ferdinand who, like Proteus, are would-be rapists, if given the chance. In the colonial period Caliban was seen as the uncivilised Other, the rapacious Other with beastly instincts, a precursor of Aziz of *A Passage to India* or of Hari of *The Raj Quartet*; post-colonial approaches to the character have seen him as the dispossessed, subjugated victim of colonialism for whom rape is the only means he has to get even with his oppressor; but it has not been recognized that Ferdinand is as much a potential rapist/seducer, for Prospero threatens him with dire consequences

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
All sanctimonious ceremonies may

With full and holy rite be ministered....(4.1.15-17)

Proteus, a lover in the courtly tradition (like Lancelot); Caliban, the misshapen, repulsive Other; and Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples, are all, under the surface, male animals capable of infidelity, betrayal, rape, in order to gratify their basic instincts.

Far from being "a tale of heroic male friendship,"³⁰ as Jean E. Howard describes it, *2G* is scathingly critical of even the epithet "gentleman" being applicable to the male of the species: when Proteus tells the Duke that he is reluctant to malign his best friend because " 'Tis an ill office for a gentleman" (3.2.40), surely this sanctimonious piety elicited scornful laughter from Shakespeare's audience which already knew that he intended going right ahead and doing precisely this. Thus the play exposes the hollowness of its own title, an extraordinary instance of deconstructive self-reflexivity. If the play's ironical title invites us to regard the "gentlemen" with deep suspicion, I think the same holds true if we replace them with the "gentlewomen" in the play. When Hester Jones tells us that the hollow friendship between the men is Shakespeare's rejoinder to Montaigne's essay in praise of male-male friendship, she is of course right, but when she goes on to argue that the play is celebratory — in deliberate contrast — of "women who understand the rules of friendship,"³¹ she seems to have overlooked Silvia's ambiguous behaviour dissuading yet encouraging Proteus in pursuit of her favours, while reminding him of his earlier commitment to Julia. Thus does Silvia salve her conscience while indulging her sense of sexual power over the hopelessly smitten Proteus. For Silvia, a striking looking and elegant red-head, should be represented as a fashionable court lady, which indeed she is being the daughter of the Duke of Milan. As such, like Hermione of *The Winter's Tale*, written twenty years later, she easily conquers the hearts of the two gentlemen from Verona, a cultural backwater as compared to Milan, a point stressed in the play's opening scene and summed up in Valentine's description of Proteus as "dully sluggariz'd at home ... with shapeless idleness" (1.1.7). With equal ease does she eclipse the homely Julia, also from Verona, ousting her memory

from Proteus' affections by dazzling him with her charm. As might be expected, Masfield alone among the commentators sees Silvia as Shakespeare intended her to be portrayed — alluring, tantalizing, unpredictable:

Of the fine scenes in the play, sc. iv in Act II, where Valentine and Sir Thurio walk with Silvia, with whom they are both in love, is the liveliest. The two men bicker across the lady, as though the next word would bring blows. The demure pleasure of Silvia in being quarrelled for, is indicated most masterly in less than thirty words.³²

Silvia's complete silence after her thwarted rape — to which Bloom objects — is a contrast to her volubility throughout. Yet, if my reading of the play is plausible, then her silence is suggestive of her having no special preference for Valentine over Proteus. As Proteus switches his affection from Julia to Silvia and then back again to Julia while, uttering at the same time what are the play's most memorable lines,

O Heaven! were man

But constant, he were perfect: that one error

Fills him with faults, makes him run through all th' sins:

Inconstancy falls off ere it begins:

What is in Silvia's face, but I may spy

More fresh in Julia's with a constant eye? (5.4.110-15),

so is Silvia's flirtatious behaviour at least partly contributory to male inconstancy.

V

And yet it can be argued that despite all of Silvia's beauty and brilliance the play's true heroine is ultimately not she but the comparatively nondescript Julia. True, Silvia is the focus of attention for three-quarters of the play, but in the closing scene, while Silvia is silent — Bloom's point — to Julia belongs the play's speech of nine lines spoken in her disguise as a page, though now known to all to be a girl, which concludes with her alluding to her male habit:

It is the lesser blot, modesty finds,

Women to change their shapes, than men their minds. (5.4.108-09)

Corroborating Proteus' admission of male infidelity being incurable, Julia's lines support the notion of an inherent genetic dif-

ference between male and female psyches. That this thought is given to Julia, not Silvia, is a further indication of the displacement of the one by the other at the play's end. Silvia, relinquished by Sir Thurio in favour of Valentine (5.4.132-5) after having been relinquished by Valentine in favour of Proteus, and then relinquished by Proteus in favour of Julia (5.4.114-15) is reduced from enjoying most wanted status to most rejected status, her silence according well with her indifference to whatever fate awaits her. True, all ends well, for Valentine claims her as his own (5.4.126-31), yet the conventional ending is neither the play's message nor its essence.

In conclusion, the question raised by Bloom as to what the actress playing Silvia is to do with herself during the final hundred lines calls for an answer. But there is a yet more intriguing question that needs to be addressed: what is the actress playing Julia to do when Proteus forces Silvia down to the ground preparatory to raping her? Scream? Try to pull him off? Or look stunned and incapable of action? Silvia's exclamation, "O heaven!" (5.4.59) does not provide enough of a clue for the director. The easiest way out would be to have Valentine appear before Julia can react, but a more interesting alternative would be to have Julia assist him in pulling Proteus off Silvia, followed by Julia helping her to her feet, re-arranging her dishevelled clothes, and taking her to a nearby boulder on which to sit. Viewed realistically, it can be maintained that Silvia's silence thereafter is on account of the shock she has suffered, but interpreting dramatic action too literally in terms of real life situations is not the best way to understand 2G. That even Valentine's line "Here she stands" (5.4.129), perhaps accompanied by a gesture of endearment in the form of taking her hand, or arm, elicits no verbal response from her — quite unlike her earlier volubility — is suggestive.

The play, then, is celebratory of nothing; it is decelebratory of everything, and herein lies its astonishing originality. Valentine is "a notable lubber," as Launce had observed (2.5.39); Proteus by his own admission will never be constant (5.4.110-13); Silvia's silence eloquently signals her indifference to Valentine, while Julia's

last speech to Proteus, "How oft hast thou with perjury cleft the root?" (5.4.103) makes it clear that she accepts him out of necessity, hardly choice, refusing to be taken in by his professed "shame and guilt" and "repentance" (5.4.73-9). As everyone knows, in a so-called 'mature' comedy that Shakespeare wrote six or seven years later, moral perfidy is set right by "an old religious man" (AYLI, 5.4.166), the sudden conversion of the sinner to saint occasioning regret on the part of Dr. Johnson that Shakespeare "suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers."³³

But such transformations are the stuff of fiction, hardly of fact. 2G reflects the unflattering reality of the latter. The play's conclusion is a stroke of extraordinary genius — something criticism has not credited the early Shakespeare with — because it operates on two levels simultaneously: the surface level where every Jack gets his Jill; but on a deeper level, shunning both resolution and closure.

NOTES

¹Hazelton Spencer, *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare* (1907; rpt., London: G. Bell and Sons, 1947), p.19.

²George P. Baker, *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p.23.

³Shakespeare quotations are from *The London Shakespeare*, ed. John Munro (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 6 Vols.

⁴H.B. Charlton, *Shakespearean Comedy* (1938; rpt., London: Methuen, 1952), p.43.

⁵John Masfield, *William Shakespeare* (1911; rpt., London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p.35.

⁶George Bernard Shaw, "Epistle Dedicatory to Arthur Bingham Walkley," Preface to *Man and Superman* in *The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965), p.155.

⁷Shere Hite, *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp.333, 319.

⁸Logan Pearsall Smith, *On Reading Shakespeare* (London: Constable, 1945), p.11.

⁹*Ency. Brit.*, 11th ed., "Population."

¹⁰The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1996), pp.492, 569-70.

¹¹Apart from its inclusion in the *Folio*, the only contemporary reference to 2G is in Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), where it is listed along with "his *Errors*, his *Loue labors lost*, his *Loue labours wonne*, his *Midsummer night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice*" as examples of Shakespearean comedy being "most excellent."

¹²A.N. Kaul, *The Action of English Comedy: Studies in the Encounter of Abstraction and Experience from Shakespeare to Shaw* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1970), p.219.

¹³Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (N. Y.: Riverhead Books, 1998), pp.40, 36.

¹⁴See, e.g. William T. Betken, *The Other Shakespeare: The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Rhinebeck, New York: Bardavan Books, 1982) who, with reference to the picture, observes, "This has raised a question with some anent how Proteus knew about the picture. There were so many ways he could have come to know ... that the question of whether he had been inside her chamber (most unlikely) is not to the point. The request for a picture, repeated and made specific with the one *that is hanging* is simply a device for Proteus (and the playwright) to provide for a messenger (Julia) to deliver — unbeknownst to Thurio — his ring to Silvia. For her part, the hope that he will cease to bother her if given a substitute for the real thing is sufficient motivation for giving him the picture" (pp.204-05). This is a typical critical approach that reduces the play's action to theatrical contrivance, to theatrical manipulation, overlooking drama's deeper agenda of exploring the hidden springs of human behaviour. If the picture episode is "simply a device," there was no need for the dramatist to have Proteus refer specifically to "the picture that is hanging in your chamber."

¹⁵Berry Weller, "Identity and Representation in Shakespeare," *ELH*, 49 (1982), 342-43.

¹⁶Peter Summers, *The Lover Man* (London: Granada, 1978), p.97

¹⁷In *Titus Andronicus*, written most probably in 1594, a year after 2G, Lavinia is dragged offstage by Demetrius and Chiron (2.3.187).

¹⁸Bijai Narain Mani Tripathi, *An Introduction to Jurisprudence (Legal Theory)* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Agency, 1990), pp.298, 301.

¹⁹The then notorious, though now famous, John Payne Collier, in his *Notes and Emendations to the Texts of Shakespeare's Plays* (1853), argued that Valentine believes Silvia has been unfaithful to him and so offers her up to Proteus (see Betken, note 14 above, p.256). Betken consigns Collier to "the gutter" for drawing such a conclusion. I may be fortunate to escape such a fate because my argument is that the text merely hints at the possibility without spelling it out.

²⁰*The Ramayana*, trans. C. Rajagopalachari (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), pp.307, 308.

²¹See Munro, note 3 above, I, 264-66.

²²Anthony Davies, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" in *The Oxford Companion*

to *Shakespeare*, ed. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.498.

²³K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Shakespeare: His World and His Art* (1964; rpt., New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1984), p.157.

²⁴Anna Mulrine, "Are Boys the Weaker Sex?" *U.S. News and World Report* (July 30, 2001), rpt. in *The Reader's Digest* (April 2002), p.96.

²⁵It is possible that there is some confusion in the text concerning this character. Regardless of this, he is another of the play's "gentleman" whose conduct is thoroughly ungentlemanly.

²⁶*Johnson: Prose and Poetry*, ed. Mona Wilson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Pr., 1951), pp.532-33.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p.532.

²⁸Mason Yu-hong Wang, "Burlesque and Satire in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," unpub. Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1972.

²⁹Betken, note 14 above, p.269.

³⁰Jean E. Howard, "Preface" to 2G in *Shakespeare's Comedies* (New York: Norton, 2001), p.85.

³¹Hester Jones, "Love and Friendship in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," *Bulletin of The Shakespeare Society of India*, ed. Poonam Trivedi (1994-5), p.5.

³²Masefield, note 5 above, p.38.

³³Johnson, note 26 above, p.541.

THYAGARAJA'S IMAGERY: IMMATERIALITY VIA THE WORLDLY

S. Viswanathan

The great saint-composer Thyagaraja [1767 (59?)-1847] lived in Tiruvaiyaru near Tanjore in the Tamil country and composed and sang his famous songs mostly in Telugu, besides a few in Sanskrit. The songs are regarded as the acme of perfection in the fusion of poetic composition and Carnatic music rendition; he is justly celebrated as an ace exponent of the devotional and spiritual tradition in music and as the prime guide and path-maker who inspired later generations of composers and musicians. Musicologists, musicians and critics have between them paid a great deal of attention to his compositions, to the text as well as to their inexhaustible musical life and power, nuances and virtuosity. The commentators have highlighted his absolute immersion in devotion to Rama, his kinship with the line of great devotees of the legendary and also of the immediate past, the Haridasa tradition, his revelling in the Ramayana episodes and in the singing of the Lord's name. Reminiscences in the songs, apart from those of the scriptures and the puranas, of the Gita and the literature of the devotional tradition have amply been pointed out. The fusion of poetic feeling and musical excellence in many a composition has been a perennial source of an exalted artistic-cum-spiritual experience for generations of musicians and listeners. As is the wont with the life-histories of saints and poets, the penchant for the hagiographical and the anecdotal has come into play in the accounts of Thyagaraja's life, and the discerning may have to make allowance for this factor.

Yet there are certain distinctive features of Thyagaraja's life, music and poetry, which deserve further attention and will reward closer enquiry. The songs are to be regarded not merely as an outward expression of Thyagaraja's bond with God in the form of Rama. Rather, it is in and through the poetry and music of the songs that the covenanted relationship gets forged and finds its evolution and realization, its achievement and articulation alike.

The songs may be said to embody and enact the very process of Thyagaraja's experience of a hard-won relationship, with its turns and vicissitudes. They cover a large gamut of the range of attitudes and moods, from the throes of alienation to easy familiarity and close intimacy with God. The songs are in a sense colloquies with God and with self in relation to God, of which we are vouchsafed the benefit of overhearing. The poetic energy of many songs to a considerable extent springs from their images, similes and metaphors. The images, to denote all these by this term, are part of the very formation of thought and feeling and part of the poetic argument of the songs, and are more than vehicles of expression. The main strands of imagery in the songs relate to music (*sangita*), to Lord Rama's image, his attributes and exploits and his associates', to the details and particulars of Thyagaraja's fondly reverent and scrupulously elaborate ritual worship of Rama, and to the figures in the long line of devotees. This is hardly surprising as these categories of imagery belong to the fields of experience of Thyagaraja's life and thought, music and poetry with him being synonymous with devotion.

Besides the images pertaining to music, devotion, ritual worship of the form and figure of Rama and meditation on his deeds, the lyrics contain a sizeable number of images and metaphors relating to the everyday world and to common human life and nature. These are images and turns of phraseology drawn from the material realities of life, images which have to do with the ways of the world and are sociocultural as they belong with popular culture and idiom. They may therefore have, *per se*, a worldly or other-directed or outer-directed orientation as distinct from the inner-directed vision of Rama of the poet's preoccupation. In this paper, I shall consider some implications of the rather paradoxical functions which such worldly and homely images perform in Thyagaraja.

If only as a preliminary, it is worth noting that the music imagery, which is a mainstream imagery in Thyagaraja, often takes the form of a spatialization and concretization of music metaphors. Just so, the recurrent references to the daily puja ritual routine are to the concrete items of action, those acts of his daily

routine of celebrating and honouring the statuettes of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Anjaneya with gestures of worship and offerings such as a variety of flowers and items of food and milk. If the concrete images of such items are invoked in a number of songs, there is one song where Thyagaraja brings about a visualizing evocation of an abstract, inward meditation of Rama in a series of concrete analogies of ritual worship for abstract meditation, the song 'Namakusumamula' in Sri Raga suggests an interesting interchange of abstract and concrete throughout. Music, in the songs in general, as basically in the *rasa* theory metaphor, is apprehended as a drink, a drink of ambrosial sweetness and immortalizing power, as witness songs like 'Intasowkhya...' ('how pleasing'), 'Ragasudharasa' ('the essence of ragas'), 'Swararagasudha rasa', and 'Nadatanu manisam' ('the incarnation of *nada*'). The metaphor is often sustained in all three parts, pallavi, anupallavi and charanam, of the kriti (lyric).

A particularly impressive instance of such a sustained development of a music metaphor in concrete terms is the song 'Nadasudharasambilanu...' ('A crystallization of the resonance of music') in Raga Aarabhi. Such a crystallization of *nada* which is the spring-root of the Vedas and the scriptures, declares Thyagaraja, took human incarnation in Rama. The seven swaras are the Lord's voice (in another reading, the bells that ring in the Lord's shrine); the ragas are Rama's mighty bow, the *kodanda*; the three broad strains of music rendition — *gana* (the solid); *naya* (the pleasant) and *desiya* (the popular) are the Lord's *trigunas* in balance. The straight-to-the mark and steady flow of arrows from Rama's bow is nothing but the intricate twists and turns of idea and expression in music rendition called *sangatis* in Carnatic music. Amidst all this animated sense of a synaesthetic vision, the meditative contemplation of such a form of Rama breeds benediction. So runs this song calling up Rama with his attributes as embodiments of music.

Similarly, in 'Banturitikolu' (Raga Hamsanadam), Thyagaraja works out the idea of service to Rama and of himself as a servant-guard of Rama in his darbar in telling terms. (Indeed, Rama ceremonially holding court is a favourite image with Thyagaraja.)

As a warrior-guard he would ruthlessly scatter the enemies of bhakti and of goodness, making them run pell-mell. He would wear the armour of horripilation due to his exhilaration in Rama's service right in his view; he would proudly display the badge identifying him as Rama's bhakta and would wield the magic sword of Rama's name. A whole scene is thus called up of a dynamic instance of a variation on the master-servant theme, common in devotional as well as love literature, even as elsewhere Thyagaraja invokes ideas of the lover-loved / unloved relationship and of the relationship of friends and companions, other stances commonly adopted in the devotional tradition.

Such are the instances of concrete images arising from the realms of bhakti and sangita. There are a number of songs in which images of a worldly cast figure prominently. These mundane images coming as they do from surprisingly disparate areas of life and experience bear witness, first of all, to the range of reach and reference of Thyagaraja's poetic mind and its ideation. What is more, the collocation and interaction of such disparate images would seem to imbue them with a suggestiveness developed in the total context and in the pressure and movement of the song. As a result, the apparently remote and unrelated image-ideas acquire a unity among themselves and a relevance to the contemplative, other-worldly concerns of the songs. This quality bespeaks something akin to the unified or undissociated sensibility on the part of the poet Thyagaraja, the quality which T.S. Eliot once considered to be the hallmark of the Metaphysical tradition in verse in which he placed Dante, Donne and Crashaw. The materiality or what we may call the 'worldliness' of the images raises interesting questions some of which may be considered with reference to a few examples.

The song 'Teratiyagarata...' ('can't you draw the curtain aside...') in Raga Gowlipantu is believed to have been the out-pouring of the poet-musician's feeling in the shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirupati, when he went there to worship. Tradition has it that when Thyagaraja arrived, the deity in the sanctum happened to be curtained off to his sore disappointment and the

spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling in his song had the miraculous effect of the curtain dropping away on its own to facilitate a glorious darshan. The poet-saint interiorizes the hard curtain interposed between himself and God as the screen of egoism and passion within his self which relentlessly pushes away and keeps out dharma and moksha (to the dominance of the lower aims of artha and kama). The poet sets out with this internalizing of the situation and siting of the fault within himself. In the three charanams of the lyric, he invokes a series of images, five in all, by way of reinforcing his lament of his plight of frustration, deprivation and disappointment; these images range over a variety of external-world situations, apparently unconnected. He likens his predicament to that of fish which out of sheer hunger falls to the bait or into the hook or net, and then to that of one finding the light of the clear and bright wick-lamp being cut out, and thus getting engulfed by sudden darkness. The poet next evokes the scene of a person heartily enjoying a delicious meal only to find in the midst a fly falling into the food and utterly spoiling the feast. The next image is that of a person sitting down to meditate on Hari, and his mind wandering away to unclean, tabooed places (and thoughts). The final comparison is with the predicament of herds of beasts falling into the trap set for them not knowing them for what these are, this last image suggesting in the context, among other things, something of 'mind-forg'd manacles' on the poet's part. The acute sense of shock, distress and denial in his situation is felt within himself and expressed by him in terms of this set of external images, and the strength of the feeling brings together the apparently disconnected vignettes. There may seem to be an irony in particular in Thyagaraja bringing forward the image of a self-defeating wandering of the mind of a would-be meditator, precisely at the moment of the poet's own interrupted contemplation of Hari, this image itself being part of a series touching on a variety of matter. But, if irony there be, it is part of the paradoxical interplay and subrogation between inner and outer frames of reference, between ideas of external obstruction and internal block, between the real material screen and the

metaphorical one, also a metonymic movement between the two in a sense. That the power of the poetic-musical utterance is supposed to have caused the instant removal of the physical obstacle is a tribute to the song and the composer; it is also a tribute to the poetic coalescence of metaphor and reality.

There are several other Thyagaraja lyrics where occurs a similar flurry of wide-ranging images called up either as metaphorical comparison or as instances of different kinds of behaviour or situation. A striking if problematic instance is the composition in Raga Natakurijini, 'Manasuvishaya...' ('The engagement of mind and energy...'). The poet-singer starts with the rhetorical question whether if one gives one's mind and energy entirely to stage-players and voluptuaries or boon-companions such a one will ever win Rama's grace. In the rest of the song, Thyagaraja forcefully brings out the futility and cupidity of indulgence in such a pursuit and the predicament it leads to through a series of sharp and strong images of worldly reference. The lines in this part of the song can be read and interpreted in more than one way. The first line in the anupallavi admits of two readings or two kinds of decomposition — 'tana-talupu okarintiki teesipetti' (removing the main door of one's house for it to be fixed in another's) and 'tanatalu pokarintiki teesipetti' (giving away one's all to one's neighbours). In the first interpretation, the man who gives away his main door finds himself in the plight of having to keep driving out the street-dogs which have a proverbial knack of straying into open houses. In the second interpretation, the man who gives away his essential wherewithal is reduced to the state, like the prodigal son in the parable, of eating begged food in the company of dogs which he may have to be chasing away. Also, the second line of the anupallavi can be split up to read either as 'ta kukkalu tolu riti' (meaning one in the state of having to drive away the dogs) or as 'ta kukkaluto (a)la riti' (meaning one left in the company of street-dogs) thus oneself going to the dogs; the singing rendition of the line could make both the readings possible. The Thyagaraja songs, in respect of both their origin and their transmission, belong with the tradition of oral utterance. Hence it is possible that the

differences in readings, as in this song, arose as a result of metanalysis, different ways of splitting up, in song rendering or in the listener's ear and mind, giving room for wordplay, perhaps not intended by the composer but yet a part, albeit unconscious, of the process of creation and communication. Wordplay or ironical expression is to be found in a few places in the songs. In 'Chakkarni Raja Margamu' (Raga Karaharapriya) there is the term 'theeyanu' (in one reading) 'gangasagaramu' an euphemism for 'toddy' and 'Raanitiraadu' (Raga Manirangu), 'devendruniki sudehamu' (an ironical reference to the ugly, eye-dotted body of Indra as a fine body). Thyagaraja heartily despised poetic acrobatics bereft of bhakti; but he did believe enough in poetic and musical suggestion as well as statement for the realization of bhakti.

There are many songs across each of which runs a whole string of images. There are songs where Thyagaraja exposes the utter fruitlessness of various modes of human endeavour other than and opposed to what he relentlessly emphasizes as the one and only thing needful, cultivating the saving wisdom of yearning for the grace of Rama. Among examples of such songs which abound in homely and earthly images may be mentioned — 'Nalinalochana...' (Raga Madhyamavati), 'Ninneneranamminanu' (Raga Aarabhi, to be distinguished from the well known Pantuvarali song which also begins thus), 'Emijesitenemi...' ('what if whatever one does'), 'Samayamutelisi...' ('Betimes, without missing the opportunity') and Raga Asaveri and 'Proddupoye...' ('It is all time wasted') in Raga Todi.

A brief sampling of one such kriti and of a few such images in other songs may be in place. In a Kalyani composition, 'Karuvelpulu', Thyagaraja emphatically asserts that in performing the role of a true protector kings and chieftains are no patch on Lord Rama. They are to the Lord as the short-term low quality *kuruvai* rice of the kharif crop to the best quality rice of the main or rabi crop, as a petty stream to the great Cauvery river (which river figures in several interesting ways in the songs), like the flickering wick-lamp to a glowing torch-flame, like an ordinary attractive man to Manmata, like a little pond to the ocean and so

on. In 'Nalinalochana', meditating in the fashion of a stork, seeking spiritual guidance from a thieves' den, etc. are among many images adduced of worthless pursuits. In the same song Thyagaraja in the same vein asks whether serving of milk and curds to venerable sanyasins will help feed milk to infants. The idea of infant feeding is brought up in another kriti 'Ramaneeyada (Raga Karaharapriya) in the question whether the dreaded tiger assuming the form of a cow will yield milk to Thyagaraja's child. By the same argument in 'Emijesite' he cites as instances of vain enterprise, building storied mansions lighted with lanterns, celebrating with eclat the arrival of a son or adoption of one or feeding others with rice smeared with free-flowing ghee if the person does not earn Rama's grace.

There are several images of incidental occurrence in songs across the canon, which are laden with considerable sociocultural significance. One such is that of 'pattigottu', the town or village bull, dedicated to a temple or freed to roam about in the memory of the dead, which as a minor social institution in the community life of those times had the privilege of free access and of eating unhampered whatever it came by. The composer reproaches himself likening himself to such a bull in 'Etulabrotuvo...' ['(I know not) how you will save me...'] in Raga Chakravaham and in 'Proddupoye' in Raga Todi. The facile choice of an easy short cut in preference to the right royal road of devotion, the straight if broad path of virtue, is deprecated in terms of concrete images of 'lane' and 'rut' in 'Chakkani Rajamargamundaga' (Raga Karaharapriya) and 'Bhuvinidasudane' (Raga Sriranjani). In 'Ramaneeyada' another Karaharapriya song, Thyagaraja topically alludes to the stage tradition of his day of men playing women's parts in his reference to the actor playing a courtesan's role being incapable of any inwardness with the conduct of a virtuous lady. There are also instances of dramatic images in the songs. Some may be outlined here. Rama enjoys a divine music and dance performance in his court with Thyagaraja as his fellow-*rasika* with whom he compares notes. Lakshmana is envisioned in some songs as speaking on many an occasion to Rama on Thyagaraja's behalf. Thyagaraja asks Hari in a song why he does not come

to him and wonders whether, when none of the Lord's associates would ever play the talebearer against Thyagaraja, Garuda, the vehicular god of the Lord has shirked plying the huge distance. Indeed, two of the operas of Thyagaraja have survived and he lived in the Tanjore region where operas, mostly in Telugu, though it was the Tamil country, were written and performed in his time as later. There is no evidence of Thyagaraja's operas having been performed, though the ones written by his grandfather Girirajakavi were performed and patronized. Also Thyagaraja also uses the universal commonplace of the world-stage, of life as a theatre now and then, making variations on it, natably so in 'Itisamayamura...' (in Raga Chalanatta).

Thyagaraja also uses several such traditional images, part of the literary stock-in-trade, in their traditional signification, for example, the fetters of life, and also that of the predicament of man being in the state of a water-drop on a lotus-leaf finding itself in a helpless, ceaseless toing and froing. Such a signification seems to be the traditional one of the image as it is thus employed by Sudraka in his *Mruchchakatika*, and by Sankara in *Bhaja Govindham*, though the image can be used in a favourable sense to suggest non-attachment to life. A favourite descriptive image with Thyagaraja is that of the curl of Rama's forelock with its swinging motion, 'alakalu'.

The main concern of the present article is with images which show a down-to-earth quality and implicitly suggest how alert and alive the saint-composer was to the goings on of life around him in generality and in minute particulars. No wonder that certain pet aversions of his find expression in the songs. Among these are ostentatious, often hypocritical, acts of piety like elaborate yagnas entailing animal sacrifice which he condemns as cruelty to animals. Indeed he distrusts esoteric practices or powers in general and regards them as of little ultimate avail. Other targets of disapproval are luxurious common feasting, learned hypocrisy, the degenerate Brahmin, tale-bearing, and hypocrites who entice others with theatrical blandishments of courtsey, womanizing, tuft-hunting and cringing for patronage. In several songs he laments

the ill-treatment meted out to him by his elder brothers. He displays an ambivalent attitude in general to cognates and agnates and to the value of the neighbourliness of neighbours. If in one song he expresses regret that his lot is cast with a town bereft of Haridasa ('Tolinejesina'), there are other songs in which he celebrates his town and rejoices in community worship. A similar ambivalence may be traced in the poet's use of images of eating and food and bathing. Though he may express his disapproval of fringe philosophies in a song or two, in general he positively discourages sectarian divisions and animosity and especially the divide between non-dualism and dualism. Many of his songs are also in ardent worship of Siva and Devi and there are also a couple of songs each on Ganesh and Subrahmanya.

Thyagaraja offers vigorous satirical comment on the follies committed in society in the name of religious activity as well as in other fields. The satire often appears in the form or guise of self-criticism in songs which are by way of almost agonizing self-examination and self-reproach sometimes bordering on the self-pitying. But it is evident that the faults he attributes to himself in these kritis, as in the famous *Pancharatna* one, 'Dudugugala...' in Raga Gowla, are those which he has observed and detected in others in the world, not exactly his. He projects these on to himself for imaginative force, in some saintly, vicarious act of expiation for others and also so that the example may serve as a sort of *exemplum ad horrendum* for his listeners. There are also songs in which he portrays and celebrates the ideal conduct and deportment of a true bhakta, an ideal he lived up to alongside and in spite of his realist apprehension of the world around him. In other words, as a poetic personality, amidst the true ecstasies of bhakti and music, he had his feet firm on the ground and a sure grasp on the real, and it enabled him to be true to the 'kindred points of heaven and home'. All in all, he was no ascetic or world-rejecting recluse. If anyone, he knew well how to be *in* the world but not *of* it.

The secular images we have noticed are very much part of the total conception of the sacred in the song and poem of their occurrence. These images cannot be neglected as a device of, or

a concession to, popular communication, and as no more. Nor can we on the excuse of the oral transmission of the songs for decades before they achieved manuscript status or print suggest that the homely and earthly imagery is a later interpolation due to corruption. We may grant that allowances may have to be made for oral-formulaic composition and also for exigencies of rhyming in Carnatic music compositions. But Thyagaraja's choice of imagery and diction is much more than a manner of speaking; it is to do with the basic process of poetic conception, of the hinterland of thought and feeling behind it and of the execution of the lyric, all alike. In the process Thyagaraja's poetic mind interacted with the cultural tradition of his times, a tradition which could still retain a certain unity between the learned or high culture and the popular culture. No wonder that Thyagaraja could imaginatively absorb and participate in the popular culture of his time insofar as he drew with ease upon the popular idiom, on images which originate from folk tradition and wisdom, and from proverb lore, from the popular imagination, in short. Such images, it may be noted are not merely those of pastoral or rural innocence but also those which relate to human evil and to fallen human experience as it were.

In conclusion, the question may be posed how far and in what direction one should go in sociologising the imagery or other aspects of a poet-composer like Thyagaraja. The real documentary interest the imagery may have for us or the question of the class bias of the social awareness (or limitations of it) of Thyagaraja in his songs, however interesting these may be by themselves, should not perhaps be pursued at the expense of, or, worse, to the neglect of, the poetic and cultural implications, value and power of the imagery in question. At the present time, the term 'material' in critical parlance is taken to be synonymous with 'political', and it is not sufficiently recognized that the materials of 'cultural production' (as it is called) could in some cases at least simultaneously possess qualities of materiality and an immateriality, sometimes artistic, sometimes spiritual and sometimes both. A consideration of the function and effect of the material imagery in Thyagaraja helps to make such a recognition possible.

THE "MARUTS" OF THE *RGVEDA* AND SHELLEY'S "ODE TO THE WEST WIND": A STUDY IN INFLUENCE

Asha Viswas

If we look at Shelley's writings, there is a clear shift in his views about India between *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*. In *The Revolt of Islam* he appears to believe in British Imperial power as the liberator of its subjects from Asiatic darkness. He views the Empire as a fertile ground for 'a grand utilitarian experiment.' Shelley, the radical aristocrat, accepts the binary model in which 'this' reclaims the 'other.' Shelley's social positionality within the English ruling class must have moulded such views. In the early 19th century, imperialism as the expansion of European culture and civilization over the whole world, was not condemned. In the late Victorian age, this so-called 'civilizing mission' was replaced by jingoist imperialism. In the light of this thinking, Shelley, in *The Revolt of Islam* presented the colonial 'other' as a 'tyrant' and the colonizing power as a martyr in its efforts to enlighten the dark spaces of the earth. In an unpublished article "Philosophical view of Reform" Shelley had expressed the same view about colonialism in India:

Revolutions in the Political and religious state of the Indian Peninsula seem to be accomplishing, and it cannot be doubted but that the zeal of the missionaries of what is called the Christian faith, will produce beneficial innovation there...'

However, by 1818-1819 these views changed. A number of factors were responsible for drawing Shelley closer to India and Indian literature. First, Shelley had read the poems and novels written about India or about Indian themes. The important amongst these were Southey's poem "Curse of Kehama" published in 1810 and Sydney Owenson's novel *The Missionary* published in 1811. In this novel, Hinduism, as embodied through the character of the Vedanta priestess Luxima, is presented in better light and is preferred to the intolerant asceticism of the Catholic missionary Hilarian. Shelley was greatly influence by this novel. On 21st July 1811 he wrote to Hogg:

Have you read a new novel, *The Missionary* by Miss Owenson? It is a divine

thing — Luxima, the Indian priestess, were it possible to embody such a character, is perfect. *The Missionary* has been my companion for some time ...since I have read this book I have read not other ...but I have thought strangely?

Secondly, on 7th December 1812 Shelley ordered books from Thomas Hookham, one of these books was the Hindu Pantheon. Thirdly, the influence of William Jones on Shelley's imagery, subject matter and style is also well known. William Jones, a political liberal orientalist in England, had founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He loved and respected Sanskrit and identified the common 'Aryan' roots of Sanskrit and Latin, Greek and Teutonic languages and compared the Greek and Roman gods with the Hindu Pantheon. This attracted Shelley towards Hindu antiquity. Fourthly, Shelley was influenced by his cousin Medwin of the 24th light Dragoon of East India Company's Indian army. Medwin had spent five years in India. His love affair with a Hindu woman had ended badly, but it had converted him to the Hindu thought. On his return to Europe, he read his Indian journal to Shelley at Pisa. He also wrote two poems with Indian settings, namely "Oswald and Edwin" and "An Oriental Sketch and Sketches in Hindostan." Both of these poems were edited by Shelley. Thus Medwin also provided an important link between Shelley and India. Fifthly, Shelley was influenced by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In June 1817 Raja Ram Mohan, a Brahmin and founder of Hindu Reform Movement, Brahma Sabha (Precursor of Brahma Samaj), wrote a book, *Translation of an Abridgment of the Vedanta*. The book was published in London in 1817 by John Digby after his return from Calcutta. The *Monthly Magazine*, London published excerpts from this book. Ram Mohan also published a magazine, *The Missionary and the Brahmin*, in which he answered the criticism of the Hindu religion by the Christian writers. Ram Mohan's writings soon drew the attention of intellectuals in London. Coleridge mentioned him to Southey in a letter dated 31st January 1819. Shelley does not mention Ram Mohan's name but he must have read Digby's London edition of the translations and the three articles published in the *Monthly Magazine*. This conjecture is based on the following information. The January 1818 issue of the maga-

zine carried a review of his father-in-law Godwin's *Mandeville* along with excerpts from Ram Mohan's book. The March 1818 issue contained a review of Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*. He must surely have read both the issues. Perhaps, it was after reading Ram Mohan Roy that Shelley gained a deeper insight into the Vedic lore. The last but not the least important factor that drew Shelley closer to the Vedic and Upanisadic thought was, in my opinion, his self-exile into Italy. Disgraced as a mad, sad, bad Shelley, deprived of the guardianship of his own children, proclaimed by the Court as a corrupter of the morals of his countrymen, Shelley, an impulsive, emotional man of strong likes and dislikes, must have been completely disenchanted with Christianity and the alien religion must have soothed his bruised self.

Now, before discussing Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," it would be better to talk briefly about the 'Maruts' as described in the *Rgveda Samhita*. The different deities invoked there are different phenomenon of nature. All of them share certain common traits. For example, they are omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Their powers are extended over earth, water and sky. Maruts are prominent amongst these deities. In the ten books (Mandalas) they are invoked in 33 hymns. Besides this, there are several other hymns in which they are invoked conjointly with Indra, Agni, Vayu and others. The hymns in which they are invoked separately are: Book 1, Nos. 37-39, 64, 85-88, 166, 168, 171-172; Book 2, 34; Book 5, 53 to 61, 87; Book 6, 66; Book 7, 56 to 59; Book 8, 7, 20, 83; and Book 10, 77-78. Maruts have close proximity with Rodasi who follows them with loose hair. They shed rain, bring storm and lightning, and stir the woods with their irresistible power. They are different from Vayu which is gentle and soft.

Now, we come to Shelley's poem. "Ode to the West Wind", one of his best known poems, is a plea to the wind to fill him with itself. In its direct address, the poem follows the hymns of the *Rgveda*. In each of the first three stanzas, Shelley addresses the wind directly and calls on it to 'hear.' These three stanzas begin with 'thou' or 'O thou.' A relative clause governed by 'who,' 'which'

or 'whose' is added to modify 'thou.' Though this direct address is found in as ancient a work as the Bible, for example:

By you, O Jehovah of armies,
Are examining the righteous ones. (20, 2, 12)

Yet the address ends there. The direct address is also found, sometimes in Greek hymns. For example, in Homer's "To the Earth, Mother of All," we have the following lines:

O Universal mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep
Eldest of things, Great earth, I sing of thee.³ (Shelley's Translation of Homer)

In ancient odes, one finds direct address and use of adjectives for deities. For example, in Sappho we have:

Throned in splendour, deathless Aphrodite
Child of Zeus, Snare braider,
I beseech you.

But that is the end of the description. There is no tradition in Greek or Roman classical literature to devote so many lines to name a deity.

There is a close resemblance between Shelley's invocations and the invocations of the *Rgvedic* hymns, full of adjectives and adjectival clauses. To give just one example, hymn 29 of the first book of the *Rgveda Samhita*, addressed to Agni and Maruts, uses the following adjectives and adjectival clauses to describe the Maruts:

1 Who know the mighty regions of mid-air⁴ (V.3).

2 The terrible who sing their song, not to be overcome by might (V.4).

3 Brilliant and awful in their form, mighty devourers of their foes (V.5).

4 Who sit as deities in heaven, above the sky Vault's luminous sphere (V.6).

5 Who scatter clouds about the sky, away over the billowy sea (V.7).

6 Who with their bright beams spread them forth over the ocean in their might (V.8).

Shelley, too, in his 70 line poem uses adjectival clauses in the following lines:

1 Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead are driven.

2 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed.

3 Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere.

4 Thou on whose stream ...lose clouds are shed.

5 Thou who didst waken ...the blue Mediterranean.

6 For whose path the Atlantic level powers cleave themselves.

Then, Shelley's desperate prayer — "hear O hear," "prayer in my sore need," "I fall on the thorns of life, I bleed," etc. find their original in a number of hymns of the *Rgveda*, such as: "hearken to our call" (1.2.1); "I make my prayer... I call" (1.2.6-7); "hearken ye to my cry (1.23.8); "hear thou my call" (1.10.9); "hearer of our cry" (1.10.10); "I crave help" (1.18.1); "Ye come with ready succour at call of ... a singer such as I" (1.18.2); "hear this call of mine... longing for help I cry to thee (1.25.19); "they who worship you cry" (1.38.2); "I call ...we implore" (7.58.5); "The priest loudly calls thee praising thee in song" (7.56.18).

This direct address to an object of nature presupposes giving human consciousness to it. Shelley's wind is a "Wild spirit" which is "moving everywhere." The description of the Maruts in the *Rgveda* is fully anthropomorphic. They are sons of Rudra and heroes of the sky (10.77.2; 1.122.1; 3.54.13). They are brothers, young and unaging, they hold lightning in their fists (5.54.11). They have chariots of lightning and they yoke the winds as horses (3.54.13). They are singers and help Indra while singing their song (5.57.5).

Thus Shelley's "West Wind" and the Maruts of the *Rgveda* are given life, will and agency. Without this animism there would have been no invocation. Shelley's 'Wild Spirit' is 'unseen.' This 'unseen' enchanter has control over the five elements — earth, air, sky, water and fire (in the form of lightning). In the Vedas too, the material existence is governed by the subtle cosmic powers of 'Indra,' 'Vayu' and 'Agni,' the mental, vital and material planes respectively. But without the power of the 'unseen,' omnipotent Cosmic Being, these three are powerless.

In the 4th verse of *Chandogya Upanishad*, the wind is called the life principle, the 'prana' or breath of life in the wind. The ancient seers knew that air is the condition of life, the very 'breath' of the Supreme. Shelley's "West Wind", too, is the 'breath' of Autumn's being. In the last line of the very first stanza, Shelley addresses the wind as 'destroyer and preserver.' This contradictory image is a common feature of the *Rgvedic* invocations. The elemental powers are invoked to destroy the evil ones, the enemies, and preserve those who pray to them (1.29.5; 1.36.15; 1.40.9, 10). From this image of the west wind as destroyer and preserver, we are given another image — that of the 'Maenad.' Shelley's Meanad corresponds to the 'Rodasi' of the *Rgveda*, who follows the Maruts in their swift race, with loose tresses (1.167.4-5; 5.56.8). Like the Maruts, Shelley's 'Wind', too, has a chariot.

In the third stanza of Shelley's poem, the sea (water element) is anthropomorphised. While spring will awaken the earth from its winter dreams, the autumn wind has awakened the Mediterranean sea from the enchantment of spring. The wind-ruffled sea, when clouds loom large above it, will not be able to receive the sunlight. The sunlight stands for the visionary gleams and the waves are the waves of thoughts during waking consciousness. The clouds are the clouds of 'maya' over the nervous system. Until these waves of thoughts subside, until the clouds of ego and ignorance move away, the submerged dark regions of consciousness will not reflect the towering cosmic consciousness. During sleep, when the physical senses are in abeyance, the spiritual self is open to the sleeper.

The scene soon changes from summer to autumn, from the mediterranean to the Atlantic. The sapless foliage of the ocean know "thy voice." Shelley's West Wind has a 'voice.' The Maruts, in 1.38.10 of the *Rgveda*, are addressed thus: "O Maruts! at your voice's sound this ...; habitation shakes." In 2.34.3 the waves raised by the Maruts are the ears with which the streams listen to the coming of the 'Maruts.'

In the fourth stanza of Shelley's poem, there is a shift from

earth, sky and water to the speaker, to the man made up of these elements. The speaker is aware that complete surrender to this natural force is the way out. Hence the cry: "Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud" In 1.38.1 of the *Rgveda* we have a similar prayer: "When will you lift us up by both hands as a dear sire his son." In 1.72.3 the same prayer to the Maruts is repeated: "Lift, ye us up that we may live."

Shelley's prayer "make me thy lyre" presents the wind as a singer. The poet wants to be a passive instrument of this singer. While the Atlantic powers are given the active voice — "they cleave themselves," the poet, like the leaves which are driven by the active agent wind and like the clouds which are 'shed,' wants to be an instrument of the will of the wind. The image of the 'lyre' suggests that this musical instrument must itself be in tune to the 'mighty harmonies' of the wind — an actively passive instrument. Shelley implores this singer and prophecy maker to publicise his thoughts to mankind all over the universe. Like the dead-leaves which are driven by the wind, Shelley wants his thoughts to be driven.

In a number of *Rgvedic* hymns, the Maruts are invoked as singers. In 1.19.4 they are "the terrible who sing their song." In 1.37.10 as "these the singers"; in 1.38.15 they are 'tuneful'; and in 5.61.15 they are "lovers of the song." In the *Rgveda*, too, the poet seers pray to the Maruts to spread their hymns far away:

Bear thou far away...

this my hymn...as if chariot borne. (5.61.17)

Thus the structure of a poet's desire never changes. It transcends time and space.

The three spheres of activities, assigned to the wind in Shelley's poem, are the earth, the sky and the water. These are the spheres of the Maruts too. In 1.39.1 "They are shakers of the earth." In 1.39.3 "they course in through the forest trees of the earth." In 1.39.5 "they rend the forest kings apart." In 1.166.5 we have the following description:

...the forest fears as ye drive near

and the shrubs fly before thee swift as whirling wheels.

In 5.60.2 "Woods bow down in terror" when the Maruts come; in 8.20.5 "the forest trees ...shake and reel ...and tremble as ye come." Shelley retains this power of the wind over the tree leaves and fits it in the framework of the Hindu cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

From the sphere of the earth, the Maruts of the *Rgveda* move to the sky. Their activity in the sky is described in the following hymns of the *Rgveda* :

Thou kept the light and water
imprisoned in the clouds. (1.11.5)

(Ye) sit... above the sky-vault's luminous sphere
...who scatter clouds about the sky. (1.19.6,7)

They make the lighting with their power. (1.64.5)

...they drive forward the big clouds
like wanderers on the way. (1.64.11)

Forth rush the torrents of the dark red stormy clouds. (1.85.5)

...they who like fiery sparks with showers of rain
blow through the heaven. (8.7.16)

Shelley's West Wind's activity in the sky is the abridged version of the afore-quoted lines.

There is a close resemblance between the Maruts and Shelley's West Wind in their impact on waters. In Shelley the personified "Atlantic powers cleave themselves into chasm" and the sapless foliage "grow grey with fear and tremble." In the *Rgveda* almost the same expressions are used: "thou cleft the channels of the torrents" (1.32.1); "The waters ...thou cleftest" (4.41.8); "when ye have hastened on ...the waters are disturbed" (5.58.6); (the waters) "before your coming bowed down so to acknowledge your mighty force(8.7.5).

After comparing the images and ideas of the two works, we can, now, look at the key words used. The epithets used by Shelley for the West Wind are, 'wild', 'uncontrollable', 'tameless', 'swift', 'spirit', 'fierce' and 'impetuous.' Each of these epithets has been

employed for the Maruts, not just once, but many times. In 1.58.2, 2.34.1, and 7.58.2 the Maruts are called 'Wild'; in 1.64.12, 1.85.13, 1.87.1, 2.34.1, 5.87.2 and 5, and 7.56.11 they are called 'impetuous'; in 137.4 and 5.60.2 they are 'fierce'; in 1.64.7 and 11 and 5.87.2 and 5 they are 'swift'; and in 1.37.4, 1.64.3, 1.64.12, 1.85.13, 1.87.1, 5.87.2 and 5 the Maruts are called uncontrollable, 'resistless,' 'strong' and 'vigorous.'

I will quote a few lines from Book 4, hymn 32 of the *Rgveda* to point out the lexical similarity between the two works:

Swift and impetuous art thou
...and irresistible...
may we be friends of one like thee.
...comrades for lively energy.

Compare these lines with Shelley's:

O uncontrollable
...the comrade of thy wanderings
...one too like thee...
tameless and swift
...be thou me, impetuous one.

This is not mere coincidence, Shelley acts as an 'echo chamber' picking up images and lexis from the hymns of the *Rgveda* about which MaxMuller said:

As long as man continues to take an interest in the history of his race and as long as we collect...the relics of former ages...the first place...will belong, forever, to the *Rgveda*.⁵

Poetry is a relay race and Shelley stands on the shoulders of giants — the poet seers of the *Rgveda*.

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⁵"Preface" to *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, Vol.1, p.ix.

A CANADIAN OFFERING ON THE ALTAR OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE: SARA JEANETTE DUNCAN'S *THE BURNT OFFERING*

M.K. Naik

Anglo-Indian fictionists are not particularly notable for a proper understanding of the Indian mind, its hopes and aspirations, and its social and cultural moorings. The reason for this is not far to seek. These writers, by and large, share the outsize 'Prospero complex' which was the 'oadge' of the Anglo-Saxon tribe which, by almost sheer accident, one day found itself master of a vast country with a teeming population. The Englishman in India soon came to believe that British rule in India was 'divinely delivered' and decidedly deserved. An entire philosophy of colonialism was built upon this basic doctrine, which for the Englishmen of the 19th century had the force of a 'revealed' truth. In 1883, Sir John Seeley declared that the British Indian empire was 'an empire similar to Rome, in which we hold the position not merely of a ruling but an educating and civilising race' (*The Expansion of England*: 1883: 3-4). And it will be recalled that in 1913, Rudyard Kipling had described the educated Indian as 'This Caliban we have worked without intermission to make' (*Thy Hand, Great Anarch*: 1987: 672: Quot.)

There are, however, a few notable exceptions, like E.M.Foster, Edward Thompson and F.W. Bain. While these are well-known names, there is one novelist who is in the same class, but is largely unknown, except to experts in the field. Sara Jeanette Duncan (Mrs. Everand Coates — 1861-1922) was a Canadian who married an Englishman and lived in India for a number of years. Her *The Burnt Offering* (1909) is a highly sympathetic portrayal of the Indian freedom struggle in the pre-Gandhian age.

If Duncan is almost totally free from the 'Prospero Complex', the chief reason for this could be that she hailed from Canada, itself a dependency of England at that time; her sympathies were naturally with the colonized, and not with the colonizer. This perhaps marks a subtle distinction between her and those few

other novelists, who refuse to don the red-coloured 'Prospero Mantle.'

Sat in Calcutta in the early years of the twentieth century, *The Burnt Offering* is an evocative picture of the Indian freedom struggle in Bengal during that eventful decade. The title of the novel itself appears to suggest the two-fold approach the novelist adopts in viewing the freedom struggle. The phrase 'Burnt Offering' literally means, 'a sacrifice offered to a deity by burning (especially Jewish animal sacrifice.)' (*Shorter Oxford Dictionary*: 1967 ed.: 237). The phrase also appears in the *Bible*: 'Thou desirest not sacrifice; ... thou delightest not in burnt offering. / The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit / A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' (*Psalms*, 51: 16-17).

The narrative in *The Burnt Offering* presents many characters which illustrate the central theme of sacrifice on the altar of Indian independence, and in most cases, it is the supreme sacrifice of death. Bepin Behari throws bomb at the Viceroy's carriage, and when he is pursued by policemen, shoots himself. Ganendra Thakore, the aged patriot, is sentenced to ten years' transportation; he dies in prison, and 'the jail hospital authorities noted that his bodily decline began from the day on which Bepin met his self-inflicted fate' (316). The policeman, shot at and wounded by Bepin, spills his blood while doing his duty to a foreign master; and the poor pariah killed accidentally in the explosion is a case of involuntary sacrifice. Ironically enough, the 'sacrifice' involves another victim, who is in a way responsible for the fate of all these Indian victims. Sir Kristodas Mukerji, K.C.I.E., Chief Justice of His Majesty King Edward the Seventh's High Court of Calcutta, who sentences Ganendra to ten years's of transportation, is not the man he was earlier. As Duncan tells us, 'Usually talkative, he had little or nothing to say.... His fretfulness fell away from him; nothing seemed to rouse it.... A gentle blankness seemed to take its place and a quiet indifference' (299). We see him last on the slopes of the Himalayas, wearing the yellow robe of a Sanyasi. Before that he has already returned to the Foreign Office the Order of the Indian Empire conferred upon him

by the British Government, as a gesture of atonement. The judge's young daughter, Janaki, too renounces the world — and another young life is offered as oblation in the same cause.

It is not only the Indians who make the 'Burnt Offering', White men and women also have their own oblation to make, in one way or another. It is as if, Kali, the ancient Indian goddess (whose cult is typical of Bengal and who still receives animal sacrifice) demands oblations from them also, though in their case the offering is not voluntary. John Game, Secretary Home Department, is severely wounded in the bomb-blast intended to kill the Viceroy, and dies a few days later. Kali has claimed her victim. It is significant that the two other white victims are also highly sympathetic to the cause of Indian freedom. Vulcan Mills, Socialist M.P., comes to India to champion the cause of Indian independence. He is prevented from addressing a public meeting, deported and 'placed under personal restraint' at Aden. Mills' daughter, Joan, makes a far greater sacrifice. She has fallen in love with Bepin Behari Dey and is actually engaged to him. She learns of his suicide just before the marriage is to take place.

The central issue of the Indian freedom struggle indicated in the title is treated in the narrative in such a way as to present two diametrically opposite positions on it: the common British attitude to it and the Indian. According to the imperialist philosophy, widely shared in the nineteenth century in England, the Indian call for freedom from British rule was totally un-called for, unrealistic and foolish. Sir John Strachey observed: 'Not only in our own interest, but because it is our highest duty towards India itself, we intend to maintain our dominion.... It is clear that the only hope for India is the long continuance of the benevolent but strong government of Englishmen' (*India*: 1988: 359-60). And Lord Curzon (that 'very superior person') enunciated the Imperialist doctrine even more emphatically, when he declared: 'To me the message is carved in granite, it is hewn out of the rock of doom — that our work (in India) is righteous and that it shall endure' (Q; Rawlinson, 1948, 44).

Several Englishmen and Englishwomen shown to be living

in India in the novel seem to subscribe to this imperialistic doctrine. The opening scene itself suggests this very clearly. Bepin Behari Day, who is dressed in 'neat European clothes' and holds a first class railway ticket is prevented from entering a first class carriage, though there is ample room in it, by two Englishmen, who are obviously '*pucca sahibs*'. We learn later that they are only planters (and hence probably not highly educated), while Bepin has studied at Cambridge. But for '*pucca sahibs*', all Indians were dirty, uncivilised brute. This is clear from the planter's contemptuous reference to Bepin as 'Baboo' and his further comment, 'can't have you spitting about here'(2). The poor planter (who had probably not read James Mill, Macaulay and G.W. Stevens, the writings of these intellectuals being totally out of his ken) is unconsciously echoing the sentiments expressed by these worthies. James Mill (who had never visited India) was convinced that the 'Hindu, like the eunuch, excels in the qualities of a slave (Mill, 1840, Abr. ed., 326); Macaulay tells us, 'The Castilians have a proverb that in Velentia the earth is water and the men women; and the description is at least equally applicable to the vast plains of the lower Ganges.' (Quot. Chaudhuri, 661); and G.W. Stevens argues, 'The leg of a free man is straight or a little bandy.... The Bengali's leg is either skin and bone or ... else it is very fat and globular ... with round thighs like a woman's. The Bengali's leg is the leg of a slave' (Quot., Chaudhuri, 673).

At several other places in the novel, British characters voice equally contemptuous sentiments about Indian character and personality. During dinner at the prestigious Calicut Club, when the talk turns to the usual subject of the Indian 'seditious movement,' Sir Robert Farquhar, 'Home Member', remarks: 'We can't give them (the Indians) a constitution before they've got a backbone,' thereby implying that Mill and company had said so picturesquely. And when John Game comes to know that Joan Mills is going to marry Bepin, the Bengali, his reaction is: 'The thing is criminal' (223).

Certain other commonly held British responses to India are also exemplified in the novel. Curiously enough, the colonial British

betrayed a strange apathy towards India, when they were not busy debunking it. Macaulay told his contemporaries, 'A broken head in Cold Bath Fields produces a greater sensation there (In the British Parliament) than three pitched battles in India' (Quot. Michael Edwardes, 245). Writing in the next century, Edward Thompson repeated the Judgment: 'They say that the mention of the word India is guaranteed to empty the smallest hall in the city (Thompson, 1925, 9).

Foley in the novel expresses precisely the same sentiment when he says, 'The whole of the interest at home in this Ganendra business has been excited by Mills, and his being out here. Otherwise what is sedition in India to a test match? Nothing' (225).

When this apathy was inevitably dispelled by a recognition of the intensity of the political agitation in India the colonial Englishman's reaction was equally characteristic of the logic of Imperialism. According to this logic, 'All interference on the part of civilised white nations with the 'lower races' is not *prima facie* illegitimate' (J.A. Hobson, 1938, 204). Typical of this was a letter signed 'Britannicus,' which appeared in the *Times*, when the agitation over the Ilbert Bill was at its height in India: 'the only people who have any right to India are the British. The so-called Indians have no right whatever.' (Michael Edwardes, 1969, 199). Several characters in Anglo-Indian fiction argue along similar lines. A British Army officer in John Masters' *By the Green of Spring* says, 'This country belongs to us. We won it fair and square, and if they don't like it, they can do the other things' (Masters, 1981, 44). Curiously enough, almost seven decades before this, Skene in Edmund Candler's *Siri Ram: Revolutionist* had said virtually the same thing: 'This country is ours after all and we won it as fairly as countries ever have been won. There is no question of handing it over.' (Candler, 1912, 17) (It is interesting to speculate how Candler and Masters would have reacted if Germans had defeated England in World War II and occupied the country).

In *Burnt Offering*, the alleged offence for which Ganendra Thakore is sentenced to ten years' transportation is of a piece with the same line of argument. The Judge tells Ganendra, 'You

have been found guilty of attempting to excite feelings of hatred and disaffection to the British Government established by law In the eyes of the Government which rules, and for many years must continue to rule this land, whose high and undeniable justice I am here to affirm, a great part of what you have been allowed to say (in your defence) must appear a farrago of mischievous nonsense You have for years instilled political poison into the minds of the youth of this province' (248-251). It is true the Judge who says this is an Indian, but he is speaking here as an arm of British justice, and asserting the imperial doctrine. He repents later, but that is another story.

Nevertheless, even in the heyday of British imperialism, there were a few Englishmen and women of the liberal persuasion, who sympathised with the cause of Indian independence, rose above differences of race, colour and creed, and refused to subscribe to commonly held prejudices about India and the Indians. This liberal position is ably represented by Vulcan Mills, the Socialist M.P., and his daughter, Joan, who visit India at the height of the agitation launched by Ganendra. In his very first meeting with Dey, Mills tells him, 'My heart has been with you (Indians) for a long time... (I am here) to do what is humanly possible (for your cause)' (11). Soon after his arrival in India he sets about earnestly studying the Indian problem. Bepin goes into ecstasies in describing his activities: 'He is learning so fast it amazes me. Nothing is too much trouble to him, so long as he elicits the facts.... He is a godlike man' (73). Mills sides openly with the Indian agitationists, and contributes handsomely to the Ganendra Thakur Defence Fund, though this means that he and his daughter must travel by second and not first class, rest of the way. He tells interviewers, 'I stand before you ashamed, not only of my country but of my country's interpreters' (99). His response to the question, 'How can you know the different peoples of Hindustan?... You see only that all are black,' is: 'No ... it is the one thing I will not see, that one man is white and another black, of buff or brown of pea-green: or any other colour' (172). He protests strongly against the 'unnatural measures imported by an alien Govern-

ment to check the political development of the Indian race' (180); and when he threatens to address a public meeting in support of Ganendra Thakore, he is quickly deported on the charge of sedition.

Joan 'used to worship her father' (15), we are told, and she certainly shares his liberal philosophy and his sympathy for the underdog. A great leader of the Suffragette movement, she has been to jail twice. In the opening scene, when the two '*Pucca Sahibish*' British planters refuse to allow Bepin to enter their carriage, she goes out of her way to invite him to hers. Later she tells her friend, 'I am glad to think that my father and I are partly responsible for Mr. Thakore's action (i.e. defying the ban on public meetings). We urged him not to submit to your intolerable law' (94). She has identified herself so completely with the Indian cause that her father describes her as 'my offering to your cause' (137), thus again stressing the varied significance of the title of the novel. He adds, 'she is already given to this country. She will not return to England with me ... she will ... begin a career of some usefulness to women in India (137). At one place she tells Bepin, 'I believe I love the very smell of India' (186); and when Bepin talks about 'your Government', she exclaims, 'Do not say Your Government: for my part I disavow it now and forever' (192). She wants to marry Bepin, partly because she loves him, and also because she regards this as her 'duty.' 'How else can one so completely devote one's self to these unhappy brow-beaten people, whose heart is spurned by the heel of our race. How can one do anything short of identifying one's self with them?' (197). In fact, she does try to erase her English identity and take on an Indian one. Her Indian friends give her the name of the legendary Padmini, and she even puts on the 'head-veil' (272). She tells Bepin, 'I shall find it very easy to adopt your religion.... I have never been able to agree with father and Herbert Spencer'; but adds regretfully, 'I am afraid that I can never feel the *Vedas* like a Hindu' (273). Towards the end, her identification with the Indian cause is so complete, that when both her lovers — Bepin and John Game are killed, her reaction is: 'What does it matter, a little

disorder — a life here and a life there, so long as a principle shines out brighter and clearer than before?' (316) At the end, her friends insist that she should join her father, who is in trouble in England; 'but he has given me to India' (316), she protests, and finally leaves most reluctantly.

The fact that finally the marriage between Joan and Bepin does not take place after all raises an interesting critical conundrum. Did Duncan, in spite of all her liberal sentiments, flinch in the end, from taking the final plunge and showing an English woman actually marrying a 'native', though he has been educated in England? In that case, Bepin's suicide provided an excellent way out of the difficulty, and it was properly motivated also, since his wrath at Ganendra's conviction, his throwing a bomb at the Viceroy's carriage, and his suicide when chased by the police — all these fit admirably into the narrative pattern of the novel. One is however inclined to give Duncan the benefit of doubt, and absolve her of unconsciously harbouring colonial intentions, and adroitly escaping its consequences, in view of the overall spirit and tone of her novel. In fact, it would be uncharitable to harbour any suspicion of the kind.

The two diametrically opposed attitudes to the cause of the Indian agitation for freedom are paralleled by two similar positions adopted by Indians: viz. the Loyalists and the Revolutionaries. The loyalists are motivated by considerations of fealty or prudence or cowardice or self-interest, or a mixture of some or all these. Sirdar Bulwant Singh, formerly Subedar major in Nicholson's Sikh contingent is the typical loyalist, who for the British was incontrovertible proof of the justification of British rule in India. He tells Mills, 'When Ganendra Babu sent his evil talk in printed papers among the men of my *pultan*, I took it all from the hand of the postman to the hand of the Adjutant-Sahib, who burnt it, and said I had done well' (173). The loyalty of the Indian army in general was for British politicians the chief reason why the granting of independence to India was totally unnecessary. In a speech in the House of Commons a few months before Indian Independence Winston Churchill argued, 'In the War ... more than

three and a half million (Indian soldiers) came forward in support of the King Emperor ... out of their loyalty to Britain' (*Europe United Speeches*, 1947-48, 21). (Not being particularly mathematically inclined, the great British statesman failed to understand that three and a half million constituted less than ten percent of the Indian population which was about forty million then).

Bulwant Singh's loyalty to the British Government is easily explained. He is the beneficiary of a large land-grant from the Government. The Raja of Kolapatta is a bird of the same feather, but more devious in his methods. He gives Mills 'a very handsome entertainment in Indian style' but next morning when they meet at the Victoria Club, 'Vulcan raised his hat elaborately, but the Rajah with a frightened look, hurried off in another direction' (87). The presence of the Home Secretary explains why the old Rajah behaved the way he did. 'Kolapatta is certainly in high favour. What is coming to him next — a C.I.E.?' (84).

Jyotindra Pal, another self-seeker, is far more cunning. A wealthy contractor, he is 'either a moderate in wolf's clothing or an extremist in that of the sheep.... He throbbed with all the new national aspirations; but he valued pleasant relations with Englishmen generally and the signature of anybody in the Department of Public Works' (84).

A far nobler soul, Sir Kristodas Mukerji K.C.I.E. finds himself torn between what he thinks is his duty and what his heart prompts him to do. As the judge who tries Ganendra for sedition, he has no hesitation in sentencing the accused to ten years' transportation; but soon after this a great change seems to come over him. His daughter notices how 'for some days Sir Kristodas had been unlike himself.... Usually talkative, he had little or nothing to say.... His fretfulness fell away from him.... A gentle blankness seemed to take its place, and a quiet indifference' (299). 'In the Bar Library they said he was failing, and it was told in support of this that he had taken advantage of a couple of Court holidays to visit a shrine to which his family had once made yearly pilgrimage, and that he had gone far from empty-handed' (299). Janaki sums up the matter succinctly: 'He is sorry, he is sorry

about Ganendra' (299). Finally, we find him renouncing the world and setting out on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas, where his thought is 'all for the summit' (319). Before this he returns to the Viceroy the coveted Order of the British Empire he had received.

Another man who has renounced the world, however, responds to the political question with a detachment typical of his as a Sunnyasi. Swami Yadava, a family friend and spiritual advisor to Kristodas, does not fully approve of the revolutionary methods of Ganendra. The Swami thinks Ganendra 'believes himself to be purely inspired, but he is ruled entirely by anger.... It is a pity' (178). The Swami's argument is: 'We Indians owe so much to England — justice, railways, political ideas' (163).... 'We have drained England of her best blood and her best brains ... for a hundred years' (168). He describes England as 'the husband of India We are children of England also.... There are those who would make their mother a widow. I am not one of them' (165). He believes that 'God has the emancipation of India in His hand, but it cannot be taken from Him by force or by fraud, or in any evil way' (162). He adds, 'When the fruit is ripe, it drops to the ground. The British in India are ripe' (162). He is confident that very soon the British 'will grant us our desire, the good English, and leave to us our country' (164). The next remarks Duncan puts into Swami Yadava's mouth, however, reveal how much she is a child of the colonial age, the basic beliefs of which she cannot but share: 'They (the British) will take some taxes, which we can very well spare, to pay an army to protect us from ourselves and the Pathans; the Viceroy will become a magnified resident, very polite about the tariff, and the white rulers, as a caste, will disappear' (164). These were assumptions which practically every British writer — including fictionists — of those days held to be solemn truths.

In 1883, Sir J.R. Seeley wrote: 'the notion that India is a nation rests upon a vulgar error ... India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa' (Seeley, 1883, 257). In fact, as late as 1944 (i.e. just three years before Indian Independence) Beverley Nichols warned of disaster, in case

the British at all withdrew from India, which, he was afraid, 'would be left completely defenceless from aggression ... large part of India would revert to their traditional anarchy.... The North-West frontier would ... flare up again in a bonfire of tribal warfare which might spread far beyond the frontier' (Nichols, 1944, 252). And, again, what Jim Ballard, the Magistrate in E.W. Savi's novel, *Birds of Passage*, says, is typical of the general Anglo-Indian novelist's approach to this question. He fears that a British withdrawal will only 'start a civil war, which would drench the country from end to end in bloodshed and which would oblige the British to reconquer India for the sake of peace' (Savi, 1939, 47). While these ideas were commonly shared by the British of the colonial times, it certainly strikes a false note to make Swami Yadava express them.

The two outstanding exponents of the logic of revolution are Bepin Behari Dey and Ganendra Thakore. Bepin, one of the younger 'prophets of the new spirit' (134), is a devoted disciple of Ganendra, and wholly committed to the cause of Indian freedom. Ganendra tells us what happens when the young man falls in love with Joan: 'He came to me weeping and said the flame within him was no longer pure; it was mixed with love. He was sad and terrified, expecting my curse. Instead of that I blessed him. I saw in it the hand of God to preserve him. To preserve him, I mean, from his own reckless impulses' (135). But Ganendra has apparently misjudged God's intentions. Bepin kills himself after his abortive attempt to kill the Viceroy. Just before this he declares, 'I desire to write my name among my country's heroes, and it will be written there in letters of gold' (290).

It is Ganendra Thakore, however, who explains fully the logic and philosophy of the cause of Indian freedom. He is clearly modelled after both Lokmanya B.G. Tilak, the most outstanding figure of the pre-Gandhi era, and Sri Aurobindo or Aurobindo Ghose, as he was known before he turned sanyasi. Clearly reminiscent of Tilak is the description of Ganendra's personal appearance. His 'was the face of an old man, thin, monastic, and acute, delicately and supremely modelled to be a perfect symbol

of intelligence. An expression of curious control was about the mouth, greater control than the ordinary human experience would seem to require. The sunken eyes too, were gentle' (27-8). It may be noted here that Tilak (b.1856) was fiftythree year old at the time the novel was written and though fiftythree may not be 'old age' by modern standards, the general life-expectancy in India then was around thirtyfive, and a man around forty was definitely considered 'old.'

On the other hand, the rest of the description would appear to fit Sri Aurobindo, rather than Tilak: 'The short black hair, cropped like a European's, was turning grey about the temples.... It was a face attended by an obsession, an obsession served by the very soul of the man; his eyes held the shadow of the wings of it.... A faint, fresh scent of sacramental oil came from his person ... as he sat ... with his *chudder* thrown togawise over his shoulder.' First, Tilak an orthodox Brahmin, would have thought it anathema to wear 'cropped' hair, and always had a clean shaven pate, as his religious tradition demanded. But Aurobindo, who passed his childhood and part of his youth in England, wore his hair 'cropped like a European's'. Further, the '*chudder*' thrown togawise over his shoulder suggests a typically Bengali mode of dress, thoroughly alien to a Maharashtrian of the old school like Tilak, whose dress normally was a dhoti and a doublet-like white jacket, with a coloured topee, called a *pagadi* on his head. Apart from this, certain other details suggest how the two real-life figures seem to merge in the character of Ganendra Thakore. He is sentenced to ten years' transportation on a charge of sedition. Tilak was also sentenced to six years' transportation in a Mandalay prison in Burma in 1908, when the novel was perhaps being written; Aurobindo was arrested twice for seditious writings in 1906, and later in connection with a Bomb outrage in 1908.

Ganendra's long speech at his trial is an eloquent plea for Indian freedom, and it shows how perfectly Duncan empathised with the Indian cause. Denying the charge that he has been trying to excite 'hatred and disaffection' among his countrymen, Ganendra begins by saying that 'these' harsh words do not truly

describe the new emotion which is beginning to thrill the hearts of my countrymen' (245). This new emotion was 'not hatred of any person or disaffection to any potentate, but hatred and disaffection toward the political conditions which were numbering the manhood, and silencing the voice, and destroying the traditions of my own great and ancient people' (246).

Raising the political debate to a higher, spiritual level, Ganendra adds, 'The men of my race must come out of political bondage; they must tear themselves at any sacrifice from ignoble dependence upon an alien power, from the poor comfort and security that we are asked to value above our birthright — in order that they may enter into the first condition under which they can realise and proclaim to the world the Divinity that from the beginning has loved this land above others' (247).

Hence, says Ganendra, 'India proclaims God's mission to the world — India, whose God is older than light of thought, whose inspiration gave the West a religion which it dares to retail to us at second-hand. India is the guru of the nations.... The mission of India to proclaim and prove the union of God and man, the supreme, universal, and eternal necessity of knowledge. India holds the torch of the spirit and would hold it high. This is the mission of Nationalism, miscalled hatred and disaffection' (247-48).

Finally, Ganendra tells the Judge and the jury that 'he asked for no grace and expected none, that he was prepared to take the consequences of his acts, and proposed to make no appeal from the decision of the court' (248), and adds, 'I do not hope to establish my intention in the eye of the law; but I know — I know — that I have established it in the eye of God' (249).

It is interesting to realise how this entire speech reminds us of both Tilak and Aurobindo. Ganendra's reference to freedom as 'our birthright' is a clear echo of Tilak's well-known saying: 'Swaraj (freedom) is my birthright and I must have it.' And the distinction that Ganendra makes between establishing his intention in the 'eye of the law', and establishing it 'in the eye of God' recalls Tilak's impressive declaration in the court, which sentenced him

to six years' transportation in 1908: 'I may be guilty in the eyes of the law of this court; but there is a Law higher than yours, and I am convinced I am innocent in the eye of the Almighty.'

At the same time, Ganendra's insistence on linking up the cause of political freedom with India's spirituality is more typical of Aurobindo than Tilak, who was well-read in the Indian religious classics, but made no special effort to spiritualize politics in the manner of Gandhi later. Aurobindo, on the other hand, always held that nationalism was not merely a political activity, but a religious *sadhana*. India, he argued, had a great mission — to be a spiritual guru of the world: 'The first pre-requisite is for India to become free so that she can ... spread the spiritual message throughout the world'(Quoted in Karan Singh, 85).

Burnt Offering has been accused of being more reportage than fiction. Its characters, we are told, are 'disembodied.... Its action ... undramatic ... its plot ... perfunctory ... the obvious tension implicit in subjects such as revolution, attempted assassination, interracial marriage ... is substantially diluted by pervasive reportage. Altogether (Duncan's) novels reveal much information about social attitudes, political grievances, and popular opinion in late Victorian India; but they give no consistent personal reactions, or definite individual responses to these attitudes, grievances and opinions. On the whole the information they provide is so generalized that it is just as reality available in non-fictional forms such as letters, journals, travel narratives, newspaper articles, or polemical treatises. Consequently, they are less interesting as works of fiction than as documents of social history of polemical exposition' (Birbalsingh, 75).

It is difficult to accept this verdict on *The Burnt Offering* by a critic, who, though based in Canada, is obviously of Indian origin. The plot, far from being 'perfunctory', moves logically and steadily to culminate in the tragedy of Bepin's suicide and Ganendra's death. And these two characters at least, as this essay has tried to show, are far from 'disembodied.' They live, act and speak in a manner reminiscent of two of the noblest Indians whose impact is still felt on the modern Indian mind. Long out of print, and

generally neglected by scholars, *The Burnt Offering* remains a memorable Canadian offering on the altar of Indian Independence.

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HOW NEHRU REPLACED GANDHI: REVEALS RAJA RAO IN *KANTHAPURA*

Brahma Dutta Sharma

In Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* we have the treatment of what happened on the political horizon of India during the period beginning with M.K. Gandhi's launching the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, through its reaching the remote corners and interiors of India, to the British rulers' suppressing it with repressive measures, and, during this course of incidents Jawaharlal Nehru's adopting a socialist model of reconstruction for his country as opposed to the revival of the ancient indigenous one, and, consequently, becoming for the Indian masses, including those inside the Congress Party, a leader preferable to M.K. Gandhi. Raja Rao is not only faithful to the historical facts of the period but also has revealed something not focussed attention on by the historians writing about the history of the period, namely the identifying of the reason behind the shift in people's loyalties from Gandhi to Nehru. The revelation of this reason is the most important dimension of the novel as it also explains the reason behind an unexpected occurrence in the history of the freedom struggle of India, namely M.K. Gandhi's resolving to relinquish even the primary membership of the Congress Party at the time when he was believed to have been its undisputed leader.

At the beginning of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* it is Mahatma Gandhi who is the undisputed leader of the Indians fighting for the independence of the country as Moorthy the local leader of the Congress Party regards none but Gandhi as his leader, as is evident from the narrator's report: "...they go with the Mahatma to the Dandi beach to manufacture salt." "And they pride themselves on following his policies and principles and carrying out his programmes. For instance, one of the Kanthapurians says: "' Monsters. Monsters, yes they may be, but we are out to convert them the Mahatma says we shall convert them. Our will and our love will convert them' " (K., p.229). But there also comes a stage when these people start finding faults with Gandhi and Moorthy.

Nay, there comes a third stage too when even Moorthy begins to find faults with Gandhi and declares Nehru to be a leader giving him and his countrymen a ray of hope that the desired goal can be realized under his leadership. For instance, one of the villagers reports: " Since the arrest of Moorthy they are afraid. They say, 'We are not all going to sit behind the cage-bars like kraaled elephants' and when I say, 'What does that matter, we are for the Mahatma,' they say, 'Yes, yes, learned sir, but our lands will go uncultivated, and there will be neither child nor woman to pull the weeds or direct the canal water' " (K., p.54). Nay, there comes a stage when the narrator himself says: " 'Mad we were, daughters, mad to follow Moorthy' " (K., p.230) and even Moorthy declares: " 'Ratna, things must change. The youths here say they will change it. Jawaharlal will change it.... He says in swaraj there shall be neither the rich nor the poor. And he calls himself an 'equal-distributionist,' and I am with him and his men' "(K., pp.256-58). Thus Moorthy shifts his loyalties from M.K. Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru. That implies that in this novel Raja Rao narrates the story of the period in which Indians fighting for the freedom of their country had begun to realize that Jawaharlal Nehru was preferable to M.K. Gandhi. And if one analyses the incidents included in the novel and decodes what lies embodied in it, one arrives at the reason why the mood of the Indians in general and the Congressmen in particular changed and why they began to consider Jawaharlal Nehru to be preferable to M. K. Gandhi.

The first thing to be mentioned here is that the movement led by Moorthy in the novel brings to the people of Kanthapura nothing but misery and one can infer that the movement is a failure, as when both the movement and its aftermath are over Kanthapura has become desolate as is evident from the report: "... there's neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura..." (K., p.259). C.D. Narasimhaiah states this fact when he writes: "... is there any fulfillment at all in the novel? Thanks to police atrocities the entire village is desolate: ... their men had been imprisoned, women scattered among the neighbouring villages, and Moorthy gone away, God knows where.... Only the peasant, who has nowhere

else to go, goes back to his soil — and stays alone, literally the only one left to tell the tale of the emptied village."² If an effort ends in nothing it tends to make the philosophy behind it unpopular.

Let us come to the second thing, namely, a comparison between the economic views of M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Both these political thinkers sympathized with the poor. M.K. Gandhi articulated his sympathies for the poor quite emphatically. For example, he wrote in 1929 (*Young India*, 8 Dec. 1929): "If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that the ryot possesses the same soul that they do and that wealth gives them no superiority over the poor."³ He stood also for people's adopting the ethical ideal of non-possession, as he wrote in 1928 (*Young India*, 15 Nov. 1928): "(Bolshevism) aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it."⁴ He also admired the Bolshevik ideal when he wrote: "...there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctioned by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain; the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes."⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru also championed the cause of the poor peasants and the landless and spoke for socialism, land reforms and giving land to the landless. For example, once he wrote: "It seems to me that if we are to improve the conditions of the masses, to raise them economically and give them freedom it is inevitable that vested interests in India will have to give up their special position and many of their privileges. It is inconceivable to me how else the masses can rise.... But it is obvious that the (divesting) is bound to cause loss to the classes or groups which enjoy special privileges at the expense of the masses."⁶

Jawaharlal Nehru declared in unambiguous terms that he

was in favour of divesting the big landowners of extra land and giving it to the landless peasants, as he said in his Presidential address at Lahore on the 29th of December 1929.⁷ But soon there were differences between the two leaders and they took up positions between which no reconciliation was possible: M.K. Gandhi advanced the theory of trusteeship but Nehru started pleading for pure socialism.

M.K. Gandhi advanced the theory of trusteeship as an alternative to the philosophy of socialism as he himself revealed through his paper *Harijan* on the 3rd of June 1939: "I enunciated this theory when the Socialist theory was placed before the country in respect of the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with the privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour."⁸ While giving the details of the conduct he expected from a rich man he observed: "The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society."⁹ Nay, he even rejected the idea of divesting the landlords and zamindars of their extra land and, while addressing a deputation of big zamindars at Cawnpore in July 1934, said: "I shall be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property without just cause.... But supposing that there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property, you will find me fighting on your side."¹⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru advanced the opinion that the path of socialism was the only path to India's welfare and that those who stood in the way to socialism, namely landlords, zamindars and talukdars had to be removed. He said this quite explicitly when he wrote: "Inevitably we are led to the only possible solution — the establishment of a socialist order, first within national boundaries, and eventually in the world as a whole, with a controlled production and distribution of wealth for the public good.... If political and social institutions stand in the way to such a change, they have to be removed."¹¹ Thus he rejected one's right to own

private property. And since he found Gandhi, in his theory of trusteeship, had accepted a man's right to own as much private property as he could he charged Gandhi with protecting the landlords, zamindars and talukdars, as he wrote: "... I think of the paradox that is Gandhiji.... And meanwhile he blesses all the relics of the old order which stand as obstacles in the way of advance — the feudal states, the big zamindaris and talukdars, the present capitalist system."¹² Jawaharlal Nehru regarded the theory of trusteeship as a theory justifying capitalism with the help of a different terminology and rejected it when he wrote: "The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power of good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee and he may exercise it as he wills. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of one individual or a group. Many Englishmen honestly consider themselves the trustees for India, and yet to what condition they have reduced our country."¹³ Nehru advanced the view that it was not only a government's right but also their duty to divest the rich of their properties beyond the ceiling and to distribute them among the poor. And he started pleading for this step quite zealously and there came a stage when he was unhappy with the whole Working Committee of the Congress Party on the question of the meaning of the term 'socialism' and wrote to Mahatma Gandhi:

I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognize that education on these issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go far at present as I would like it to.... The resolution of the Working Committee on the subject showed such an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the overmastering desire of the committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense.¹⁴

The way Pandit Nehru pleads for socialism here signifies that he considered socialism to be the embodiment of the gospel truth. However, he was promising to the landless peasants economic gains at the cost of the landlords. Obviously, what he promised to the landless was much more lucrative than what Gandhi prom-

ised to them through his theory of "the ethical ideal of non-possession" or "the abolition of the institution of private property." M.K. Gandhi's interpretation of 'equal distribution' as providing one "the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more" must not have looked so attractive to the have-nots as Jawaharlal Nehru's interpretation as raising the masses economically by making "the vested interests in India ... give up their special position and many of their privileges" (see *supra*). The fact finds projection in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* in the form that here it is Jawaharlal Nehru who had been described by Moorthy as an equal distributionist but M.K. Gandhi has not been given the credit to have been that. In other words, the novelist reveals that the masses of the day felt convinced that Jawaharlal Nehru was a genuine equal distributionist while M.K. Gandhi was not. So it is very probable that it was for this reason that Jawaharlal Nehru's programme endeared him to the masses more than M.K. Gandhi and he replaced Gandhiji as the leader of the Congress Party, especially the masses.

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¹Raja Rao, *Kanthapur*, ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.169. All the subsequent quotations from the novel (*K* for short) refer to this edition.

²"Introduction," *Kanthapura*, ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah *op. cit.* p.xv.

³M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, comp. R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1992), p.88.

⁴*Ibid.*, p.26.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Jawaharlal Nehru, *Nehru: The First Sixty Years*, Vol.I, ed. Dorothy Norman (Bombay: Asia, 1963), pp.297-98.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.206.

⁸M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, *op.cit.*, p.66.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.74.

¹⁰Quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru in *Nehru: The First Sixty Years*, *op.cit.*, p.382.

¹¹*Nehru: The First Sixty Years*, p.378.

¹²*Ibid.*, p.379.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.205.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp.360-61.

SHASHI THAROOR'S MYTHOLOGICAL FANTASISATION OF THE EMERGENCY

O.P. Mathur

John J. White has rightly noticed: "The 'return to myth' is often assumed to be a particular feature of the Modernist movement in the early part of this century. Although many writers of the Modernist era, including Eliot, Joyce, Kazantzakis, Pound and Yeats, were certainly preoccupied with myths, such an interest is to be found with equal richness, and at times with a far greater intricacy of expression, in much subsequent twentieth century literature."¹ The critic also disarmingly identifies an important feature common to so many modern 'mythological' novels: "Rather than offer his reader new myths or revitalized old ones, the mythological novelist presents a modern situation and refers the reader to a familiar analogy."²

These characteristics also underlie many of the modern Indian novels which have appropriated different Indian mythological territories, as in Anand's *Gauri*, Narayan's *The Dark Room* and *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, Salman Rushdie's *Grimus*, *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, etc. Shashi Tharoor, however, stands in a class by himself, for in two of his novels *The Great Indian Novel*³ and *Show Business*⁴ he has, as he admits, attempted to yoke history and myth,⁵ to look at India through the refraction of two kinds of light, the "light cast by the source" and "the light cast by a satirical view of the present."⁶ In *The Great Indian Novel*, he has, in addition, as the very title indicates, invoked our memories of the *Mahabharata*, which has become an inseparable part of the Indian psyche, with a skill that through even a disconnected and fragmentary narration of a major part of the twentieth-century Indian history he is able to resuscitate nearly all the essentials of the story of the *Mahabharata* as a more or less causally connected account, thus illuminating the presentness of the past and the pastness of the present. Jean-Claude Carriere, a for-

eigner, records the deep impression that the *Mahabharata* made upon him as "a part of Indian Life," as dwelling in "the recesses of your soul."⁷ In modern post-independence Indian history, the immanent spirit has been our commitment to democracy, except for its brief eclipse during the Emergency. This short period seems to have cast a spell over the early Tharoor, for he has variously handled it in his early novels (*The Great Indian Novel* and *Show Business*) and a two-act play.

In *Show Business*, the novelist is direct in his portrayal and trenchant in his condemnation of the Emergency. Pungently satirical, its chapter entitled "Kalki" describes through its cinematic vignettes passing in the dreams of the unconscious hero, Ashok Banjara, so many gruesome details: "an opulent city dotted with poor people" (*SB*, p.85), a veritable wasteland with government officials heartlessly making the people suffer, and "an evil queen, with a hooked nose with white-streaked hair, seated on a throne of burnished gold" (*SB*, p.288), (all suggestive of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*) surrounded by courtiers "who bend deeply from their copious waists," and relentlessly passing orders of stringent punishments like tearing out the tongue of a woman "clad in black and white, her material a coarse print" [the press], and sentencing an old sage [Jaiprakash Narayan] who had persuaded bandits to lay down their weapons with his face "serene" in the knowledge of the inevitable ('*Vinash kale vipareet buddhi*') to be locked up and starved. Videos like this go on till Ashok Banjara himself, clad in resplendent white [Morarji Desai?], possibly the Kalki Avatar, rises to destroy the whole set in a conflagration (*SB*, pp.291-92). Shashi Tharoor returns again to the theme of the Emergency, though on a much smaller scale in a two-act play, "Twenty-two Months in the Life of a Dog," included in his book entitled *The Five Dollar Smile* (1990)⁸ in which a dog is the witness of the sufferings imposed upon the people during the period.

It was in his ambitious work, *The Great Indian Novel* that Shashi Tharoor had dealt with the theme extensively against not only a much broader canvas of history but had also highlighted

its inner contradictions by attempting a sort of archetypal montage by presenting it as a contemporary *Mahabharata*, with its large gallery of characters, narrated by 'Ved Vyas' who is modernised not only in his name as 'V.V. Ji' but also by his ironically ambivalent and varied strategies of narration. The cantankerous old narrator, doodles with the narrative and with himself as the narrator, almost like a modernist post-deconstructing both himself and the tale he is telling.

His object is to weave and unweave, sew and tear, the political history of India from about the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of the Emergency and what follows it. All this is done by attempting to view it through the changing filters of irony which clarify and interpret the contemporary political characters and events in lights varying from the most humorous to the most repulsive. Moreover, the narrator is neither sure of the ground on which he stands nor of the true nature of the objects and events he writes about. The only certitude is that there are no certitudes. He calls his view "ambivalent" (p.368). It might perhaps be better called multivalent, for he says:

I knew that in India there were really no blacks and no whites; nor was there a uniformly dingy grey. Instead, political morality and public values were a mystical, blurred, swirling optical illusion of alternating blacks and whites in different shades of depth and brightness. (p.368.)

There is another difficulty too. Archetypal characters and events tend to reappear, but not all do so, nor in the same order or relationships. Hence, Shashi Tharoor's novel can be *Mahabharata* only partially and that too not without a great deal of stretching and manipulation making the parallels only partially applicable. But all the same, it must be said to his credit that he has generally got over these difficulties and while rendering the spirit of the *Mahabharata* with a fair amount of truth and vitality the author and the narrator are both conscious of the gulfs that separate an epic age from an "underdeveloped country" of the twentieth century. The contrasts are sometimes too glaring, but he has tried to get over them or made the best of them by bridging the gulf with a narrative of an irreverent or humorous vein, for

incongruity is regarded as the soul of humour. In a way, the post-independence Indian politics seems to have been interpreted as fluctuations in the fortunes of Draupadi Mokراس, i.e. D. Mokراس (Democracy). It was after the death of Dhritrashtra (Jawaharlal Nehru), the great 'visionary' democrat, who with his eyes fixed at the stars, failed to see the dangers and pitfalls right under his nose and the coming into power of his daughter Priya Duryodhani (a clever alteration of 'Indira Priyadarshini') that D. Mokراس's problems began. Priya-Duryodhani's revolt against the old Guard of the Kaurav Party (the Congress), her suggested marriage (in V.V. Ji's dream) with Ekalavya (V.V. Giri), the decision to hold to a 'swayamvara' in which only Arjun (the press) is able to meet the challenge of opening the huge ballot box in which she stands, thus becoming her natural guardian. In the 'swayamvara' (outside V.V. Ji's dream), D. Mokراس chooses Arjuna in the modern ambience of a coffee house of a seminar.

The approach to the Emergency is subtly traced from the rise of Priya Duryodhani who gradually consolidates her power and popularity. The important political steps she takes meet with D. Mokراس's appropriate responses. Duryodhani's appointment of Yudhishtir (Morarji Desai) as Dy. Prime Minister and sharing power with him makes D. Mokراس a little plump (p.342), while his resignation makes her sick (p.343), only to be revived a little by Yudhishtir's resignation in protest from the Kaurav Working Committee (p.345). She again relapses into minor ailments at the 'resignation' of "the gentle Muslim academic" (Zakir Hussain) for Presidency (p.347) and the ascending of Ekalayava (V.V. Giri), Duryodhani's nominee, to it (p.348). The transparency of Duryodhani's hollow slogan "Remove Poverty" makes D. Mokراس asthmatic (p.352). Good health, however, returns to her after the hacking of Karnistan (Pakistan) into two parts and the formation of Gelabi Desh (Bangladesh) (p.350). But all was not well in the country — the emergence of Jayprakash Drona (Jayprakash Narayan) from his retreat to lead a popular uprising against Duryodhani's inability to keep her pledges of eradicating all the natural evils including poverty and a court's judgement finding

her guilty of electoral malpractices, the natural corollary of which should have been her resignation. At this critical moment appears Shakuni Shankar Dey (here apparently a composite picture of Sidhartha Shankar Ray and Sanjay Gandhi) to advise her to impose a state of 'Internal Siege' (Internal Emergency) in which she can detain all the leaders of the uprising and also censor the Press. It is when the Internal Siege has been proclaimed that we enter the real struggle of the *Mahabharata* — the struggle between Good and Evil respectively by D. Mokrasi (Democracy) on the one hand and ruthless Priya Duryodhani's (Indira Gandhi's) dictatorship on the other.

The central events of the *Mahabharata* are rooted in two main 'battles' — the game of dice, after which a futile attempt is made to disrobe D. Mokrasi, the Pandvas receive a sentence of exile followed by a year of exile in hiding, and the main battle of Kurukshetra which witnesses the death of numerous great warriors including all the members of the Kaurav Party. With his hatred of a nauseous and sadistic totalitarian rule unwilling to share power or give away even a part of it to its rightful heirs, Shashi Tharoor links both the important 'battles' to the Emergency — one to its tyrannical exercise and the other to the final battle which extinguishes it.

Rightly ascribed to V.V. ji's dream is the game of dice representing the deceit, falsehood, unashamed cruelty and persecution characteristic of the Emergency. The crushing of all the rights of the individual, including the right of privacy, is presented through the attempted disrobing of D. Mokrasi, who from her earlier role of a concerned observer now becomes the chief victim. In the earlier episodes tracing the contours of the Emergency, it is largely irony that predominates, whereas this episode of the game of dice is dominated by anger, pity and despair. This seems to be the central episode of the novel, for it presents an unambiguous condemnation of autocracy and a cruel and direct trampling of democracy which was only tangentially and phonetically suggested by calling Indira Gandhi as Priya Duryodhani and Democracy as D. Mokrasi, while V.V. ji's representation of the actual battle of

Kurukshetra would have presented difficult ethical complexities, in addition to numerous practical difficulties which we shall consider later. It is not that there are no such difficulties in the presentation of the game of dice. Before or during the Emergency there was no conflict between Indira Gandhi and three of the Pandavas representing the army, bureaucracy and the diplomatic services (represented by Bhim, Nakul and Sahadeva respectively). The court verdict which triggered off the Emergency also has no mythological parallel. At most there was a political struggle led by Jayaprakash Narayan (Drona, Duryodhani's guru!). Among the Pandavas only one, i.e. Arjun (the Press) was demanding Indira Gandhi's resignation. And among the important progenitors, both political and biological, of Gandhiji (Gangaji or Gangaputra, i.e. Bhishma Pitamaha) and Jawaharlal Nehru (Dhritarashtra) only and a few others were not there to witness the disrobing. Karna (Jinnah) had long ago left for the country of his own creation and then for the other world. Thus the political contours of the India of the middle seventies of the twentieth century were quite different from those of the mythological game of dice as embedded in the traditional psyche. Shashi Tharoor has deftly solved this difficulty by employing the 'dream' strategy which, while having some recognisable links between myth and reality, allows him ample scope for employing all the inventiveness of plot and character without the danger of being charged with forcible manipulation. In this dream world reality is presented in a new but appropriate apparel and the whole is charged with the irony of a modern Ved Vyas (V.V. ji), appearing as one who can afford the smile of the amusement of one "who has kept watch over man's mortality" and knows the reality as a sphere which he understands thoroughly from all angles and can play with it and recast at will the whole narration from new perspectives. V.V. ji, while being modern in his ambivalences (and also a true representative of the age of 'Dwapara,' an age of doubts and ambiguities), is at the same time like the Lord, playing a willing role in his own creation. He gives us ironic peppery slices of modern history with jams of fantasy and dream.

But India is not a banana republic or an Arab country where democracy has no deep roots and can almost permanently be replaced by dictatorship. Here democracy cannot be suppressed for long:

No, Ganapathi, Draupadi was Indian; she was ours, and she had to wear a sari. We could not place her in universal beauty contests to be judged as her occidental sisters were, by the shape of her legs or the cut of her costume. If she had been wearing the skirts or dresses or even the trousers of Western democratic women, she might have been far easily disrobed. (p.385).

After a temporary lull, Indian democracy tends to rise again from her ashes the sparks of which were in fact never extinguished. The harsh and totally underserved sentence of a long exile passed against her five husbands may perhaps be interpreted as the brushing aside of the independence of the chief organs of a democratic government. All these selected details of the insensitive functioning of the bulldozer of the Emergency affect the lives of the common people with equal ruthlessness — a licence for the police to do whatever they like — forced completion of sterilization quota, blind slum-clearance and the so-called urban renewal, increase in unemployment caused by the abolition of bonded labour, etc. (p.384). At the political level it results in the suppression of the supremacy of the people by the so-called supremacy of an unrepresentative and frightened parliament as an instrument of Duryodhani's parliamentary dictatorship, and the abolition of the freedom of the press.

After abbreviating the long years of exile and the protracted negotiations of peace conducted by Krishna into about a year and a half, the narrator quickly makes Duryodhani unthinkingly jump into the General Election which is "a contemporary Kurukshetra" (p.391). In fact, Kurukshetra is universal and eternal:

There was good and bad, dishonour and treachery, betrayal and death, on both sides. There was not glorious victory at Kurukshetra. This election is not Kurukshetra; life is Kurukshetra. History is Kurukshetra, the struggle between dharma and adharma is a struggle our nation, and each of us in it, engages in on every single day of our existence.

Yet this Kurukshetra is non-traditional, for the issue is "the rout or the restoration of democracy":

I saw the meaning of Independence come pulsating to life as unlettered peasants rose in the villages to pledge their votes for democracy. I saw journalists younger than the Constitution relearn the meaning of freedom by discovering what they had lost when the word was erased from their notebooks. I saw Drapadi's face glowing in the open, the flame of her radiance burning more brightly than ever. And I knew that it had all been worthwhile. (p.392)

The *Gita*, preceding the actual battle, is represented as the advice of Krishna Parthasarathy (Lord Krishna) to Arjun (the Press) who is bedevilled by doubts whether to fill the nomination paper as a candidate or just keep writing. The famous conversation takes place in the Ashok Hotel where V.V. ji, the narrator, sitting at the next table, overhears and records it. The concluding part of Krishna's speech contains, among others, these significant words:

So Arjun, stop doubting: rise and serve India.

Serve me the embodiment of the spirit of the nation. (pp.397-98)

At last Arjun decides to get the opposition into an electoral pact.

The details of the battle of Kurukshetra (the General Election of 1977) have been completely ignored except in its conclusion, the defeat of Priya Duryodhani, largely because of the arrows of sharp criticism shot by Arjun (the Press). The ignoring of the actual battle obviously flows from the imposition of an archetypal framework on the twentieth century Indian politics resulting in the absence of a number of important warriors from the 'battle.' Gangaji, i.e. Gangaputra Bhisma (Gandhiji) and Karna (Jinnah) could not be presented as alive and fighting in 1977, and Jayaprakash Drona (Jayaprakash Narayan), could not have led his forces or even fought for her. The *Gita* had been fairly well rendered in a modern ambience in Ashoka Hotel, but there is no Dhritrashtra (Jawaharlal Nehru) to rule over the kingdom or to hear the *Gita* and to learn about the battle through the ears and eyes of Sanjay. In fact, his daughter was the ruler. It is unnecessary to prolong the list of such anomalies which make the presentation of the battle of Kurukshetra (General Election) impossible. And an election re-assembles a battle only metaphorically. It is the two main leaders and the result which are important. And they have been presented faithfully and forcefully.

Priya Duryodhani's defeat is well-deserved and complete. But the narrator's ambivalence is apparent even in these episodes which ought to have been unmistakably white and black, but are not so. They are enveloped in a grey irony. The periods of 'democracy' which precede and follow the Emergency are not spotless. The popular government that follows the Emergency does not herald joy or enthusiasm, because it is beset with weaknesses. Even 'Dharmaraj' Yudhistir (Morarji Desai) has made himself not an object of veneration but of amusement, because of his openly practising and preaching 'auto-urine therapy' and his odd dietetic preferences.

The Emergency, as portrayed in the novel, is not followed by a period too glorious or hopeful for the country. And the Emergency itself is perhaps not as black as it is often portrayed to be. Possibly this factor along with the disenchantment of the people with the type of 'democratic' government that replaces the Emergency leads to the return of Priya Duryodhani's to the throne after a brief period of three years.

The events of the novel viewed with a binary vision — contemporary and mythological, realistic and imaginary, serious and ironical — are reflected in the techniques of realistic descriptions and dreams of the narrator. The Emergency itself, however condemned, has much merit in it. V.V. ji believes that it saves the people from "the political chaos in the country, fuelled by Drona's idealistic but confused uprising which a variety of political opponents had joined and exploited, could have led the country nowhere but to anarchy" (p.369). Moreover, there is the twenty-point programme giving the government "a new sense of purpose where earlier there had been drift and uncertainty" (p.369); the officialdom acquired a new work-ethic "to serve the common man far more effectively than ever before" (p.369). "I had no doubt," says the narrator, "that more Indians would benefit from the abolition of bonded labour and the implementation of land reforms than would suffer from the censorship of articles however well Arjun could write them" (p.369).

The declaration of the Siege, the arrests of the agitators, the silence in the

streets, had been accepted by non-political India without a murmur. The only sound that replaced the months of clamour appeared to be the deflating hiss of a long public sigh of relief." (p.370)

The people accept "the loss of their politics without demur" (p.371). Moreover, as V.V. ji demonstrates through a parable, we Indians are notoriously good at being resigned to our lot, like that man in the parable, a symbol of India, who falling from the wood-mice eaten branch of a tree under which a tiger is waiting for him, into a well full of hissing snakes, makes the best of his lot by licking up a gleaming drop of honey on a solitary blade of grass growing on the wall of the well and in the last moment of his life attempts to obviate by a drop of honey the deadly snake-venom about to be injected into him (pp.371-72). The people of India similarly accept their lot without caring for what lies behind the delightful screen of the better work-ethic.

The Prime Minister ruled like a Goddess: black to liberal democrats, black to her political opponents... white to adoring impoverished sanselotters at rural public meetings, white also to contemplated corpulent capitalists.... It was a complex spectrum of blacks, whites and fluid greys. Brahminical ambivalence was therefore nothing to be ashamed of. (p.368)

The novel in its ironic and irreverent tone, in its shifting of moods and its multivalent portrayal of the political scene seems to illustrate the Vedantic view put forth by Maharshi Vyas (not 'V.V. ji of the novel) himself that the world is a 'Leela'⁹ of the divine principle. It seems to be a dance of verities. 'Dharma' is a spherical whole which can be viewed and interpreted from different angles. It is another discourse on unity in diversity: "it would seem from the newspapers that Indian life consists almost exclusively of a bewildering variety of forms of political behaviour" (p.370). Perhaps it is this that makes Shashi Tharoor say:

I judged a degree of irreverence to be essential is the telling.... I took heart from the conviction that irreverence in the Indian tradition is not sacrilege: the epics themselves ascribe human qualities, imperfections, base motives and feet of clay even to the gods. This prompted the humour, the puns and wordplay, the ironic tone of the book — all serving to say, "look this novel does not take itself too seriously, but it wants you to judge for yourself what you wish to take seriously from it."¹⁰

The novel is a powerful political statement in favour of both

individual and national liberty, though at the deeper levels of man's personality it presents ambivalences. *Dharma* the novel, as the novel asserts, is multifaceted:

If there is a message to the book, it is two fold ... to reexamine all the received wisdom about India, second to do so through a reassertion of dharma, defined not just as religion but as the whole complex of values and standards — some derived from myth and tradition, some derived from our history by which India and Indians must live.¹¹

This 'Dharma,' a complex of ambivalences, a prism of values and standards, which runs through our mythology and history, and though dissolved and diffused in our body politic, is sparkingly crystallised, primarily in its political dimensions, in Shashi Tharoor's portrayal of the Emergency, which represents a convergence of a vast mythological space into a few decades of modern history by means of an identification of a few years and characters as analogous to their mythical archetypes.

To sum up, in its portrayal of the Emergency through a tale of 'Dwapara' (an age of doubts and ambiguities), the novel's achievement is unique, for it demonstrates that though there are "multiple realities and multiple interpretations of reality,"¹² 'Dharma,' in all its connotations, is the bedrock which sustains mankind and any violation of it is bound to recoil on its perpetrator sooner or later, that both history and mythology, being creations of man's action and imagination, tend to run somewhat parallel to each other, that though the creation may be a 'Leela,' the amusement it produces is 'the fine delight that fathers thought', for Tharoor's novels are "didactic ones masquerading as entertainment."¹³ It is amazing how his treatment of an extremely transitory historical event like the Emergency is loaded with so much profundity of reflection which may easily be missed because of its satirical and merry frolics through time and imagination.

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¹ John J. White, *Mythology in the Modern Novel* (Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.5-6.

² Ibid., p.23.

³Shashi Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989). Further page references to the novel are incorporated in the text of the paper without repeating the title.

⁴Shashi Tharoor, *Show Business* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991).

⁵Shashi Tharoor, "Yoking of Myth to History," *Littcrit*, Vol. 16, No. 1 & 2 (Dec. 1990), p. 7.

⁶Shashi Tharoor, "The Novel Entertains in Order to Edify," Vol. 20, No. 2 (Dec. 1994), p. 6.

⁷Quoted by Kavita Nagpal in "In Search of an Epic," *The Hindustan Times*, Magazine Section, 7 Oct. 2001.

⁸Referred to by M.K. Naik in M.K. Naik & Shyamala A. Narayan, *Indian English Literature, 1980-2000* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001), p. 211.

⁹The concept of 'Leela' or Sport of the Creator as being at the root of creation is quite a popular one. Interestingly, it was codified by Maharshi Ved Vyas (the 'original' of 'V.V. ji' of the novel) in the words "Lokavattu leela kaivalyam" (i.e. the creation of the universe is the sport of God), *Vedanta Sutra*, Chapter, II, Sutra 33.

¹⁰Shashi Tharoor, "Yoking of Myth to History," *Littcrit*, Vol. 14, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²Shashi Tharoor, "The Novel Entertains in Order to Edify," *Littcrit*, Vol. 20, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 8.

THE HAIKU AND TANKA AND R.K. SINGH

Patricia Prime

R.K. Singh has published many academic and literary articles and poems in national and international journals. His work has been anthologised in over 85 publications and his poetry has been published in over 100 magazines worldwide. He also has several books of poetry to his credit. I want to take as a reference point for this essay on R.K. Singh's haiku and tanka the collaborative publication *Every Drop Stone Pebble* (with Catherine Mair and Patricia Prime), and a range of Singh's work published on the Internet and a manuscript of unpublished haiku. The collaborative haiku collection, *Every Drop Stone Pebble* (published in 1999) is a first collection of haiku by New Zealand poets Catherine Mair and Patricia Prime in conjunction with R.K. Singh. At the time of publication two of these three poets (Singh and Prime) had only been writing haiku for a short time.

Let me first explain the basics of haiku and senryu. The following notes on haiku are taken from *Haiku Headlines* (David Priebe, 2001):

Haiku and senryu are miniature poems which give expression to sudden or subtle moments of curious awareness and insight into the nature of passing time. With their origins, perfection and popularity in Japan for more than three hundred years, the poetic formula is now practiced by poets worldwide. In English haiku and senryu are composed ideally in three phrases of 5-7-5 syllables, although slight variations quite often suffice to be effective. There is a pause after either the first or second phrase that serves to pivot the yin/yang experience. The expression is achieved with phrases that suggest rather than narrate in sentences, allowing the reader's imagination to rhapsodise and make the connections. Both haiku and senryu depend upon contrasting yet complementary images expressed in the present tense. The difference is that haiku illustrate physical principles and phenomena; they are objective and treat of natural and seasonal situations condensed into what/where/when. Whereas senryu illustrate social and psychological principles and phenomena; they are more concerned with subjective who/what situations that may be humorous, sarcastic, satirical, pathetic or ironic. Quite often, however, haiku/senryu are hybrid with traits that are interwoven. Whether pure or mixed, haiku/senryu are parsimoniously expressed so that the conclusion comes off as strategically effective as the punch line of a joke.

Haiku then is a tiny poem of Japanese origin, usually only three lines long and of a total of seventeen syllables or less, that uses concrete images to create a sensation that one can almost touch, smell and taste. Just as in nature, each poem is made up of fundamental building blocks that together form a living, breathing entity. The haiku poem pulsates with the rhythms of nature and follows the elemental themes of earth, air, fire and water. The true beauty of haiku lies in its ability to capture an intensely human moment, mood or insight with a clarity and poignancy that can be lost in other verse forms.

The master of haiku is generally considered to be Basho who rescued it from conceit and instilled his verse with real poetry: "the first snow-/ the leaves of the daffodils / are just bending." In this haiku we can observe the ceaseless interplay of the temporal and the eternal, something Basho proclaimed as one of the prime functions of poetry. The fragmentary nature of haiku and the sense it gives of leading the reader to draw conclusions or to supply what is unexpressed can be seen in the following traditional format of 5-7-5 syllables from Singh: "No letters today- / addresses of his dead friends / greying in diary" (*Every Drop Stone Pebble*). Within themselves the haiku strive to capture "a moment of truth" or of revelation, as in the following poem: "Among the white hairs / a solitary black one / keeps her hope alive" (*EDSP*). These haiku of natural phenomena are refreshingly wise, speaking directly to the reader. They are clear passionate poems that speak of desire, love, loss, sexuality, the senses, nature, joy and death — with an uncommon positiveness and clarity, as in the following two poems:

A crow picks at
cow's back in the afternoon-
drooping ragpicker (tinywords, 2002)

Her wet lingerie reveals
more than her body;
I drown in her sea (poetsindia, 2002)

Singh is particularly good at presenting the gamut of feelings involved in "rites of passage": high endeavour, release, eroticism,

as in this fine poem: "I felt her fingers / the strings of my son's guitar / unemployed for a long time" (*EDSP*). It is pleasing to read poems that display the kind of vigour and freshness with which haiku need to be injected from time to time. An example is the following poem: "My bedroom / a maze of cobweb / spiders breed" (*EDSP*). It is a haiku that evokes (as it should) the essence of the moment in its sensory detail. It therefore has no explanation, interpretation or adjectival distraction. Instead its focus underlines the genre's concern with the momentary, the natural, and the specific. In other words, it is what is happening now, at this moment, and it is well to remember that haiku is so concerned with delicacy of feeling, aesthetics, and poetic diction. It is simply language functioning in a certain way so that we can understand each other, but within that is built sentimental codes, codes of authenticity and codes of certain kinds of emotion.

Singh submitted the manuscript of a selection of his haiku to a well-known American *hijin* for publication. The *hijin* responded with e-mail rejecting the manuscript. The following remarks are an excerpt from this letter:

The biggest problem for me is the fact that it is apparent that we are employing vastly different conceptions of haiku besides the obvious mechanical matters which struck me immediately (odd compressions of language, personifications, overt metaphors, equation writing). It is apparent that the sensibility which we look for in haiku is one thing for you and another for me. These seem altogether too circumstantial and diary-like for my taste, recounting the activities of the day but without these activities necessarily leading to a deeper understanding of the quotidian.

These comments stipulate that the haiku poet should reach a selfless state where the subject chooses the poet, rather than the other way round. A haiku should never be contrived but should focus on a particular subject meditatively. The differences are tremendous between what is acceptable in Western haiku and haiku that is written by a person using English rather than the native language. We may note in some of Singh's verses that he compresses the language

A moth
struggling for life
on wire (worldwidepoets, 2002)

where the exclusion of the definite article "the" (which precedes the noun and implies a specific or known instance) in the last line leads to some confusion in the mind of the reader. The haiku poet should feel, see, and sense spontaneously. Connections should come to the mind in a moment of lucidity. In the above poem, the connection lies between the moth struggling for life and the man-made wire that holds it fast. The haiku poet puts images together but does not reveal the picture; the images themselves should suggest a deeper truth. At such a moment, one begins to see things in their "complex simplicity":

A load of wood
on her frail back
autumn evening (worldwidepoets, 2002)

Personification, metaphor and simile are seldom (if ever) allowed in haiku. In the following example

Tears invisible
on his water-face serene
Buddha meditates (worldwidepoets, 2002)

Singh personifies the Buddha and illustrates his thoughts and feelings: his face is "serene," he "meditates." "Show, don't tell" is an axiom that can be used when talking about what constitutes a "good" haiku. The haiku poet must learn, in the words of American hijin Michael Dylan Welch, to make his haiku a "poetry of the noun — that is, the thing, visible, touchable, even turnable in one's hands." By today's standards the haiku is a poor one. Hijin in Western countries have a vantage point of greater experience with matters of subject, juxtaposition, language, present tense, seasons and internal comparison.

The accusation of Singh's poems being too circumstantial and diary-like may be only a matter of taste. But many of Singh's poems express a thought, rather than portraying an unjudged image:

Wish I could be part
of the quietude this morning
the sun's so promising (worldwidepoets, 2002)

Although this poem has present tense, a seasonal word and clear language, it is no more than a passing thought expressed in a

sentence with no awareness through the senses. There is no juxtaposition with another image, and no resonance through internal comparison with another object or setting.

The technique of writing haiku and its internationalisation depends upon humanity's realization of truth. International means something that is agreed on or used by all or many nations. A body of rules may be established by custom and agreed on between nations. Many Western haiku writers take as their stepping stone the guidelines laid down by the Haiku Society of America of which their magazine *Frogpond* is the cornerstone. *Frogpond* publishes haiku, senryu, haibun, renku, essays, articles, book reviews and news about contests.

Although the Western viewpoint is presented and valid, it is only fair to highlight the distinct Indian (cultural) sensibility expressed in Singh's haiku and tanka. I quote from an essay entitled "Japanese Haiku in Indian Poetry" by Urmila Kaul in the Indian magazine *Poetcrit* (July 2002): "In spite of the negative attitude of Hindi scholars, haiku has secured an honourable place in Indian poetry." Although Singh's poems are easy to read, from a Western viewpoint, their seeming transparencies are deceptive. The poems are filled with echoes, allusions and other enriching resonances that are only to be found in coming from an Indian background. Let me give as an example the following poem which has been published on the Internet in *worldwidepoets*:

He couldn't understand
what's Hindu about having
fish and onion
after prayers in Tuesday feast
in the temple courtyard

Trying to unpack the various strands in these essentially Indian poems is like being in a room full of the trick mirrors; each image changes with perspective. It is a short imagistic description of man's dilemma, but for those who know the background and myths, the poem can be perceived as an argument about Hindu philosophy that is taken up throughout many of Singh's poems. The meaning of some of these poems may be seen as "negotiations" between cultures and himself as the hyphen in Indian-English

haiku and tanka.

I would now like to reflect on Singh's preference for haiku in 3-5-3 form, as is favoured by the editor of *Asahi*, David McMurry. There are many different forms arising in Western haiku (5-7-5; 3-5-3; 4-6-4) and editors view them differently. The classical purity of the 5-7-5 form is often more acceptable for certain contests and publications, while other forms are recognised by various magazine editors. The 5-7-5 pattern has been responsible for most Western haiku appearing in a three-line form. Many poems conform to this convention, but it is not rare to see haiku taking other shapes. For instance the poet, Giovanni Malito, offers this short version:

low tide
the driftwood
rests (Haiku Poetry Ancient & Modern, 2002)

while a haiku by Alexis Rotella is written in four lines:

among morning glories
the drip
drip
of lingerie (Haiku Poetry Ancient & Modern, 2002)

Singh also writes some of his poems in two lines:

Here she goes in the long light
and swiftly a shadow moves with her (paper wasp, 2001)

and in shorter lines:

Facing the sun
a lone flower
dye to bloom (Poetcrit, 2001)

and in poems of four lines:

Off to a corner
in each other's arms
they taste heat
with wet mouths (unpublished)

none of which conform to the traditional pattern. Clearly, these are the most appropriate shapes for what the poets are trying to convey. Sometimes, even when one wants to go with the rule-makers, the boy of the poem just won't co-operate. The subject matter almost defies the restraint required in haiku.

Some poets have abandoned seasonal reference in an attempt to broaden haiku themes from the natural and to include

technology and modern ideas. In the above examples there is seasonal imagery or a reference to nature while some poems have a more complex reference to the natural world. Each haiku employs the present tense of the verb, giving it immediacy and highlighting the moment of insight that inspired the poet. The present tense aids involvement in the things surrounding that moment of inspiration, enhancing feeling and perceptions that could be lost in the craft of creation.

Poetical forms conform to convention. With haiku my preference is for no title, capital letters and little punctuation. Singh, on the other hand, uses a capital at the beginning of each haiku. The brevity of the form encourages economy, precision and plain language. The appeal of haiku is universal, and while there are still differences in the grammar and syntax of poets writing in English as a second language, the scope and depth of haiku is lasting in its representation of human experiences. Haiku poets view the world as passing; its transient nature grasped poetically. Compassion, tolerance, and a warmth for all sentient beings are shared with the reader.

To move now to the tanka written by R.K. Singh, I'd like to turn first to what the President of the Tanka Society of America, Michael Dylan Welch, has to say about defining tanka in English. In Vol. II, No.1 of the Tanka Society of America's newsletter, he has this to say:

One of the best attempts I've seen at defining tanka was made in 1994 by the Haiku Society of American definitions committee led by William J. Higginson.

Here is the draft definition the committee presented at that time:

TANKA. The typical lyric poem of Japanese literature, composed of five unrhymed metrical units of 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 "sound symbols"; tanka in English have generally been in five lines with a total of thirty-one or fewer syllables, often observing a short, long, short, long, long pattern. Tanka usually need no titles, though in Japanese a "topic" (*da*) is often indicated where a title would normally stand in Western poetry. In Japan the tanka is well over twelve hundred years old (haiku is about three hundred years old), and has gone through many periods of change in style and content. But it has always been a poem of feelings, often involving metaphor and other figurative language (not generally used in haiku). While tankas praising nature have been written, and seem to resemble "long haiku," most tanka deal with human relationships or the author's situation. In

the words of Sanford Goldstein, "behind the scene is the autobiographical moment of the poet" ("Tanka: Off the Back Burner," *Frogpond* XV:2 Fall-Winter 1992). The best tanka harmonize the writer's emotional life with the elements of the outer world used to portray it.

Tanka is Japanese for *tan* (short) *ka* (and alternative of *ku* [for verse]) — a form of poetry older than the recorded history of Japan. Tanka is a poem of five lines — short/long/short/long/long. Traditionally of 31 syllables — (5-7-5 7-7) — tanka, like haiku, enjoy a degree of modern flexibility. The maximum syllabic account remains at 31, but tanka written in English may better approximate the Japanese form if written in fewer syllables. In many tanka, a reference to nature is linked with a human response. In Japan today, tanka also address varied aspects of contemporary living.

Let us now take a look at Singh's tanka in the light of these views. Singh's poetic capability lends itself more effectively, I feel, to tanka rather than haiku. Tanka has a more subjective feel with its concrete images that are allowed to convey emotional content. Singh's tanka are concerned with a number of recurrent themes — with continuity; with the mysterious quality of the natural world and the moments of revelation that sometimes come to those who appear to live on the edge of that world, in the suburbs and small towns; with notions of identity — as an isolated individual with a shifting sense of self, and as a member of the larger community concerned with academia, his colleagues, politics and social policies. Here are two examples of his tanka: the first concerned with that isolation and melancholy that each of us experiences and the second in a lighter vein:

I fear the demons
rising from my body
at midnight crowding
the mind and leading the soul
to deeper darkness

(stylus, 2002)

"Waiting for the remains / of the sacrifice vultures," begins one tanka, and metaphorical and sometimes literal seasons and climates, both domestic and global, pervade Singh's tanka. He writes of the brooding sultry city — "Breathing allergies / it aches

my soul to live here"; of the border patrols between Pakistan and India — "From the border rings / he's stationed dangerously" and from the world of academia: "More anti-Muslim / my educated colleagues." He is a travelled poet and what he sees is riddled with signs and symbols: even when at home he discerns portents in the physical environment: "Stray fungi grow / on the broken window frame."

Tanka should give the reader a glimpse of something beyond language that creates sense of wonder, interwoven with sadness, sometimes with joy or humour. In fact, they should share the basic qualities of all successful poems. How then do Singh's tanka meet this criteria? Does the author turn an awareness into language that conveys the meaning while utilizing the best possible choice of words? Are feelings, diction and form unified? Do the poems touch one's heart? Is one moved to new thinking or appreciation of things or situations of which one was formerly unaware? Let's take as an example an unpublished poem:

Bare chest
flowing shirt
half-hid pubic hair
on the ramp
a male model

This poem certainly had humour, as we can appreciate the strut of the model revealing perhaps more of himself than is necessary. It is spare in words: none are unnecessary. It doesn't particularly touch one's emotions or reveal any new insight; doesn't conform to a regular syllable pattern, nor does it move one to new thinking. Therefore, I maintain that it is not a very good example of tanka. Another example is the following verse:

Between virgin curves
he deep-breathes evening mist
rests in the hollow
of the mountain listening
to the rhythm of a quiet stream (snakeskin, 2001)

This is a more subtle poem. It explores human feelings with an association, comparison or contrast of emotional aspects to nature. Many people write tanka which seems to follow this tradition to

merely describe nature, but Singh has captured the essence of tanka which is to capture a moment where *new* words are used to allow us to feel *old* emotions.

We speak of the leaps that should be in individual tanka (between the upper three lines and the lower two lines): we should not know what the author is going to say in the next line. When reading a poem, we want to be surprised with new ideas and combinations of images and emotions. If at the end of one line my mind has already guessed what will be said, there is no reason for reading further. Here is an example of Singh's tanka at its best:

Waiting for the remains
of the sacrifice vultures
on the temple tree
stink with humans and goddess
on the river's bank

(lynx, 2001)

Something deeply felt manages to shine through in this poem. Arresting images that evoke a sense of place, time and how the poet felt are co-mingled with an unusual subject, a recognisable voice and contextual images. In short, the poem has *integrity*. In the successful tanka lines must follow one another in some way that makes sense. Usually this happens in a manner similar to the leaps of imagination between stanzas in a poem. The tanka must be good enough to stand alone and it must have the necessary formula of giving the reader a glimpse of something beyond language that creates a sense of wonder.

Singh's haiku and tanka are a small part of his large output, but they should not lose their integrity because of that. He values both genres and writes in both, but makes a clear difference between the two. This difference should exist, if not in the reader's awareness, certainly in that of the author. Rule making should be left in the hands of the author and therefore it is his/her prerogative to study the haiku and tanka written today and to read translations of traditional poems to clearly understand the perimeters of the genre. I think it is clear that Singh has done just that in his work.

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KINSHIP AND COMMUNITY IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S *LINDEN HILLS* AND *MAMA DAY*

Saroj Bala

The feelings of kinship and community have a very important place in African American culture and tradition. For black women, these feelings emerge out of the shared experience of isolation and their mistreatment by society. They have common experience of exploitations because of racism and sexism. During the times of slavery, the feelings of kinship and community helped them endure all the sufferings heaped upon them by the white masters. The blacks in the southern parts of America were able to face the crisis during the problem of segregation and then integration only because they always live as a community. In a way, the discrimination from the white people helped the black people to realize the importance of their own cultural and traditional values and feelings of kinship and community. This is all the more true of the black women. For them, survival and freedom are dependent on the values and actions of the community as a whole. They know that freedom from oppression must be acted out and shared by all. Afro-American women have been holding central position in their families and communities not solely because of their relationship with men, but because they themselves have bonded together to ensure the survival of their race. The black women have instilled positive survival skills in their children in order to help them develop their self-awareness and created the group-mindedness that even today are the mainstay of the black people. It is this feeling of community that helps the individual to retain his identity despite being a part of a larger group. This salient feature of the black culture and tradition has been artistically delineated by Gloria Naylor through her women characters. The bond between them confesses identity, purpose, and strength for survival. Naylor, like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, feels that this bond is very important not only to fight against racism and sexism in the white world but also to fight against the discrimination within the black society. But at the same

time, she makes it clear that those black women, who reject the feeling of belongingness to their community, invite self-destruction. However, we cannot ignore the fact that such women get attracted to the ideology of the dominant society because of the attitude of black society towards its own women. Naylor focuses on the women-centered communities in her novels.

In *Linden Hills* (1985), we come across a financially secure settlement of black people. Linden Hills is literally carved out of a seemingly worthless land by ex-slave Luther Nedeed, who in 1820's has the secret dream of developing 'an ebony jewel,' a community of successful blacks who could stave off the racism of America and exhibit through their fine houses that the members of their race can be powerful. Nedeed wants his community to be powerful through materialistic achievements and, not through the collective efforts of his people. Her chronicle of the history of Linden Hills is similar to Morrison's tale of the Bottom on Top, because both the communities are originated by the ex-slaves in the 19th century.

The outside world perceives Linden Hills as a symbol of black achievement. This symbol of achievement, a showplace, is precariously kept in place by the machinations of a wealthy black patriarchal family. Although Luther Nedeed appears to have power, the black people in Linden Hills are immeasurably affected by their race because they are separated from other Americans. Race and class-distinctions are intertwined in Linden Hills because in attempting to transcend the racial separations on streets like Brewster Place, the upper middle class separates itself from the less fortunate blacks. They shut themselves in so that they might not be shut out from the possibility of achieving power in white America. Not only that, they also separate themselves from each other. In order to make a community of their choice the middle class blacks reach nowhere because they want to achieve success without the prerequisites of a viable community-sharing and nurturing.

Many black people in Linden Hills have achieved material success, but they are unable to become a community because

they have erased the essential parts of themselves in order to stay in this jewel neighborhood. Through these characters, Naylor wants to emphasize that one cannot create community only by achieving material success and isolating oneself from other people of the community. Sharing and cooperation with each other are the bases of a community and without these no community can exist. But Luther Nedeed tries to create a community, 'an ebony jewel' which feels like a "wad in the white eye of America." They carefully select the families that are allowed to live on it because their people "are to reflect the Nedeeds in a hundreds facets and then the Nedeeds could take these splintered mirrors and form a mirage of power to torment a world that dared to think them stupid or worse totally important."¹ 4

Most of the blacks, who are able to make it in material terms, have to erase the essential parts of themselves. Their lives have been damaged by the pursuit of wealth and power that Nedeed embodies, though some of them do not even know it. They distort natural inclinations. The Nedeeds go to the extent of distorting their families in order to create Linden Hills. Xavier Donnel gives up the idea of marrying Roxanne Tilson because she is so much herself. Social status and economic benefit are of utmost importance to him. Maxwell Smyth becomes totally artificial. His diets, clothes, etc. are regulated by him. The pressures of his fraudulent job leaves Rev. Hollis without the wife he loves, and he becomes alcoholic. Laurel puts everything into becoming a successful businesswoman, sacrificing her relationship with her friends, and her love of music and swimming. Her relationship with her husband is not fulfilling. Braithwaite, a historian, separates himself from life in order to chronicle the comings and goings of the Nedeeds. His view of historiography is that of detachment in order to be objective. Through him, Naylor emphasizes that the intellectual version of Linden Hills where official history-making and an obsession with objectivity mean that people like him are not concerned with human life and its intricacies.

The Nedeeds play the most crucial role in destroying the possibility of forming a community by negating the individuality

of their wives and by dominating other residents, except the poor people in Putney Wayne. They also keep their wives isolated from the community. By emphasizing the Nedeed women's ignorance of their own history, Naylor shows how the repression of women's history is necessary to the maintenance of patriarchy. The Luther Nedeeds keep their wives away from the other black women of the community. It shows how these women fail to fight against the sexist ideology within the black society. They cannot pass on their tradition of sharing and nurturing because they do not have any friend and daughters.

Other black women like Roxanne and Laurel Dumont also fail to associate with other women of their community and believe that they do not have anything common with them because of their socio-economic status. Through Willie's visit to Lester, Naylor reveals how his mother and sister Roxanne have dissociated themselves with the other women of their community. They have given up their naturalness to live among the privileged. Mrs. Tilson invites Willie to dinner and comments: "But we are eating like peasants tonight -just fried chicken."² The unnecessary paraphernalia on the dinning table, not required for such food, reveals her distance from her people.

Laurel Dumont also fails to become an extension of the black community because of her status in Linden Hills. In the section of the novel, devoted to Laurel, Naylor makes the most significant connection between Mrs. Nedeed and the other black women who live in Linden Hills. Laurel, like her, lives a privileged yet empty life. Her grandmother Roberta encourages her to make a home for herself on her own territory. But Laurel slips into depression after coming back to Linden Hills. She is broken by the news that her husband wants to divorce her. Both of them are very successful in their respective fields, but together they fail to make a home for themselves. She tries to reach out to Willa Prescott Nedeed, but her husband has locked her into the underground morgue of their house. She does not have any resource, cultural or traditional, that might help her to understand that she can begin again because of her rejection of those values. With

no knowledge of, or ability to recognize, a tradition of women who had succeeded on their own terms, Laurel thinks that individual freedom can only be achieved in death. Women like Ruth Anderson and Kiswana Brown are traditionally and culturally rich. It is significant that they do not have money, cars, big houses, and all the other material and dominant culture-determined signs of success. But this poor community is considered outside Linden Hills on account of their poverty, and Kiswana Brown has already left the place to live in Brewster Place. Willie and Lester experience genuine warmth and feelings of community at the Andersons' home. Norman offers real hospitality even though he is dirt poor. People joke that if Norman brings home air, Ruth would "make gravy, pour it over it, and tell him not to bring home so much the next time."³ They are real hosts, who make guests feel welcome. These rare scenes of good-natured laughter and a sense of community are limited to Putney Wayne area only. Grandma Tilson, who refuses to succumb to the pressures of the successive Nedeeds, also belongs to Putney Wayne. All these characters do not forget their own culture and identity in their quest for upwardly mobility.

Naylor's account of the Nedeeds gives us not only an understanding of their attempt to develop patriarchy, but also their inability to create a community that must be the source of any route for the Afro-American to empowerment. A community cannot exist without a shared history and shared values. In this novel, Naylor has shown that even male characters like Willie and Lester experience the restrictions of Nedeed's vision. It is clear when people just watch on the burning of the Nedeed house and do not attempt to help them out.

Naylor's another novel, *Mama Day* (1988), deals with the experience of the black people of an island called Willow Springs. Here the black people are able to make a strong community of their own without associating with the white culture and tradition. It is the black people who possess land. This island does not belong to either Georgia or South Carolina where the rulers do not allow the black people to own land. Naylor presents a world

outside the white parameters, connected to the mainland by the flimsiest of bridges, at times destroyed by storms. Naylor, primarily through the characters of Mama Day and Abigail, projects carefully the ways of conceiving relationships, history, and reality that make it possible for the black people to avoid imitating the white cultural and traditional values. Mama Day or Miranda, like Mattie Michael in *The Women of Brewster Place*,⁴ plays the force behind the strength of the community and for the survival of their own culture and tradition. Strong community feeling is evident in the sisterhood of Miranda and Abigail and it spreads through the whole island. Both the sisters remain distinct personalities for their neighbours as well as for the reader. They are "two peas in a pod, but... two peas still the same,"⁵ but only together they make perfect mother for Cocoa. Both of them write combined letters to Cocoa when she is in New York, reflecting the strong sense of caring and sharing among the three women.

This sense of caring and nurturing is not limited only to Cocoa; rather, Mama Day has dedicated herself to the well being of all the members of the community. Bernice, a young woman, is able to become the mother of a child only through the efforts and guidance of Mama Day. Bernice is a woman of weak constitution. All medicines from the mainland deteriorate her health than helping her to conceive. Mama Day, through her wisdom and knowledge, not only improves her health, but also helps her conceive. Thus Mama Day practises the black tradition of helping other women in times of distress and cope up with difficult situations.

Mama Days helps not only Bernice, but the whole community. She guides them in times of distress, treats their ailments and tries to inculcate the feelings of community in them. This is visible in the age-old tradition of Candle Walk. Candle Walk is celebrated after the harvesting of all crops, which people cultivate in their fields. For the poor, the winter could be very difficult due to lack of food and clothes. Candle Walk is a way of helping the needy without feeling obliged. People give all sorts of things to each other without considering its monetary value. Even the jealous characters like Pearl and Ruby give something to the

neighbors on this day.

The quilt, prepared by Mama Day and Abigail, is another fine example of the strong feelings of kinship and community. It symbolizes a relationship between self and others. In this, individual identity is not lost but merged into a larger whole. Each individual has his own importance despite being a part of the community. The individuality of people in the community of Willow Springs is not lost. Just as the pieces in the quilt can be readily identified but stitched together and the scrappy rags create something whole, and beautiful, so each individual matters in the community of Willow Springs. The quilt is not only for George and Cocoa, but also for the future generations. It will help communicate the feelings of sharing, caring, and sense of belonging to the community. Naylor has described vividly the beauty of quilt after it is complete: "The overlapping circles start out as golds on the edge and melt into oranges, reds, blues, greens, and then back to golds on the edge and melt into oranges, reds, blues, greens, and then back to golds for the middle of the quilt. A bit of her daddy's Sunday shirt is matched with Abigail's lace slip, the collar from Hope's graduation dress, the palm of Grace's baptismal gloves. Trunks and boxes from the other place gave up enough for twenty quilts: corduroy from her uncles, broadcloth from her great-uncles. Her needle fastens the satin trim of Peace's jumper to a pocket from her own gardening apron. Golds into oranges, into reds into blues...."⁶ It shows spiritual strength, psychic health, and social vitality, resulting out of the weaving together of past and present, pain and joy, and the weakness and strength of the generations. Mama Day does not leave anybody out of the quilt, which is symbolic of the unity and sense of belonging. She does not want to leave her mother out of the quilt just because Abigail finds childhood memories of her insanity very painful. Mama Day uses a piece of her mother's gingham, which is the 'dry rot,' symbolizing her tragedy, by using Sapphire's homespun as backing. The feelings of kinship and community in Willow Springs are so strong because of Mama Day's perception of the past as quilt, and because she is able to make

the whole picture by putting together and connecting the past, present, and future. Linda Martin Wagner has rightly pointed out that instead of individualism and possessive love, the quilt symbolizes a relationship between self and others.⁷

The community in Willow Spring is so independent that Naylor emphasizes the fact that it is futile to attempt to describe or control it through the parameters of the white world's maps, pictures and movies, and the myths are depicted as inadequate to express black experiences. The place does not belong either to Georgia or Carolina, and hence independent of their influences. The developers paint the place as a timeless, "picture-ss...vacation paradise,"⁸ but miss the spiritual richness of the place. An outsider's attempt to compare the place with 'a picture postcard' is not sufficient to express the natural beauty of the island. Reema's son also attempts to understand the absence of Willow Springs from the map, and tries to define it in terms of latitudes and longitudes. He misinterprets the island's central myths of 18 and 23, seeing it in relation to the maps. He is ridiculed by Mama Day because he "... had come to the conclusion after extensive field work (ain't never picked a ball of cotton or head of a lettuce in his life — Reema spoiled him silly), but he ... still made it ... to be the lines of longitude and latitude marking off where Willow Springs sits on the map. And we were just so damned dumb that we turned the whole thing around."⁹ Similarly, when Cocoa and George initially try to take further their relationship with the help of the ways of the white world, such as dialogues from cinema or magazines, they do not succeed much. George has only horrifying images of women who are "normal only about seventy-two hours out of each month"¹⁰ which he gets from books and magazines. It is only after his visit to Willow Springs that he is able to understand Cocoa and her grandmothers in relation to the black culture and tradition.

All these examples do not imply that the community of Willow Springs does not have any connection with the mainland. The only thing is that they do not want the artificiality of the outside world to penetrate into the island. Mama Day, rooted in her own

cultural place and connected to her history, experiences no threat to her identity 'across the bridge.' She sees everything with her own perspective. Her perception is so clear that she is able to see the real meaning beneath the white world's superficial images. Watching T.V., she finds Phil Donahue very ludicrous asking very seriously, "Is there intelligent life in outer space?.... And are they trying to get in touch with us?"¹¹ She concludes that such antics could be summed up in two words: "...white folks. And when they found a colored somebody to act fool-like the man from Ne Jersey, holding up a snapshot of his cousin posing with a family of Martians — she expanded it to the three words: honorary white folks."¹²

Thus we see that in Afro-American society, the rich familial past and the sense of nurturing, through other women in the community, help the black women to survive and give them a sense of belonging. Survival knowledge is passed from one generation to another. It can be passed by mother, sister, aunt, cousin, or another woman in the community, thus creating a meaningful past, a stable, present, and a hopeful future. The survival knowledge and security of the kinship and community enables the generations of the black women to learn from the success and failures of the previous generation, but the absence of this knowledge leads them nowhere.

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THE PHOENIX RESURRECTION: SOME NOTES ON THE WOMEN PROTAGONISTS IN NGUGI WA THIONG'O'S LATER NOVELS

Rita Nath Keshari

Petals of Blood (1977), one of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's later novels, portrays a disillusioned village elder who comments that Kenya's Independence is like hot water to a thirsty man. This trope of futility and betrayal reflects the author's basic attitude towards the post-Independence situation in Kenya. Ngugi's later novels *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1987) are inscribed with his angry denouncement of his country's bourgeoisie. According to Ngugi, these unscrupulous brokers have bartered away Kenya's sovereign rights to western powers for paltry personal gains. As intermediaries between these western arbiters and the ignorant and impoverished Kenyans, they are perpetuating the same colonial exploitation, but in its new avatar — neocolonialism. In his non-fictional writings such as *Writers in Politics* and *Decolonising the Mind* Ngugi points out that Kenya's leaders resort to political violence to safeguard their position. Critical voices are silenced and cultural activities are heavily censored. Exile is a common punishment for the rebels. At the economic level, indiscriminate acceptance of foreign loans has crippled the nation with mounting debts. Ngugi stresses that this calamity is further compounded by the culture of consumerism slowly alienating the masses from their roots. His first few novels, written in English, were addressed to this deprived section of society. As Ngugi came to understand this anomalous situation, he wrote his fifth and sixth novels in Gikuyu which were later translated into English and entitled as *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* respectively.

In *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi explores the possibility of kindling the spirit of revolution in ordinary people to destroy corruption in private and public spheres. The female protagonists in these two novels are probably treated as a metaphor for Kenya — a land deceived and plundered by various

forces. This paper intends to explore how Wanja in *Petals of Blood* and Jacinta in *Devil on the Cross*, in their different ways, represent a minority group whose integrity and cultural wealth are threatened by the incursion of a dominating and monologic outside discourse. It will also be discussed how Ngugi uses the narrative form for disseminating his political ideas. Wanja represents that class of women who are deprived of the dignity of a second chance. Her chequered life sees her pass from one situation to another without much respite. Like Wanja, Jacinta is also seduced by a rich old man. Kimeria, Wanja's rapacious love, is intended as trope for the upstart Kenyan accumulating ill-begotten wealth.

There is a further instance of intertextuality in the way Jacinta's personality evolves out of Wanja's. Jacinta is at first made to bear, as it were, Wanja's cross but while the heroine of *Petals of Blood* remains nailed to her fate, Jacinta resurrects herself. Ngugi allows Jacinta to extend the unactualised possibilities of Wanja's intense struggle and measure herself against new challenges. By maximising the technique of intertextuality Ngugi impresses upon the reader that his fiction is a scathing attack on the vitiated political atmosphere in Kenya. Therefore while Wanja becomes enmeshed in sordid realities, Jacinta's character is fleshed out as a revolt against it. While Jacinta has enough scope to erase the stigma of unwed motherhood, Wanja remains psychologically maimed till the very end of the novel, *Petals of Blood*. Her mother, though sympathetic, is powerless before the patriarchal system which forces Wanja's father to brand her as a prostitute and excuse his criminal friend Kimeria. On the contrary, once Jacinta is left in the lurch by the rich old dotard, her parents welcome her back to the fold. She is made to feel proud of her motherhood.

Jacinta's and Wanja's adolescent appetite for glamour is less a sinful lust and more a desire to explore novelties, to redefine their relationship with the world outside. In their vulnerability before powerful elderly men these impetuous girls resemble the mesmerised tribal chiefs who bartered away their precious land to

white traders for more trinkets. Instead of the colonials, the bourgeoisie, consisting of Kimerias, continues the same practice of chicanery and appropriation. The cankered social system corrodes even the most intimate blood bonds.

In order to survive, Wanja abandons her new-born babe and employs herself as a barmaid. She exercises her power over men, however ephemeral it may be, and struggles to master herself once remorse sets in. Her womanhood is a kernel proposition in progression; in it are concealed her strength and her shortcomings. She is oppressed by the miasmic efforts of enticing men temporarily. At the metonymic level this binary opposition of self-deception and self-esteem is contiguous with the losing game she plays.

A relationship that will render her complete as woman and mother eludes her. Her dream-child is a metaphor for her innermost self that seeks to be born once love nurtures it back to life. The route back to respectability is so long that Wanja loses her way frequently. Her return to her ancestral village Ilmorog can be construed as an attempt to seek a new identity. In Ilmorog she meets Abdulla, Karega and Munira who had staked everything for their nation's independence. The unprecedented calamities it ushered in drove them to seek refuge from the dreadful weight of their past. The character of Kimeria is a chief functional unit which will appear entangled in Abdulla's life also. Abdulla had been a freedom fighter whom Kimeria had betrayed to the British police.

The arid fields all around her in Ilmorog accentuate the frustrations of her barren self. Determined to acquire wealth and achieve happiness Wanja returns to the city and resorts to prostitution. Ngugi implies subtly that Wanja's perversion is a collective humiliation and all those who malign her are to be condemned equally. Wanja returns again to Ilmorog, realising that she cannot stoop so low. Referring to the precolonial practice of polygamy in Kenya, Ngugi insists that this entitled a woman, however wretched she may be, to a respectable life as mother and wife. Condemning polygamy as promiscuity, the white missionaries enforced monogamy among the tribal converts as a moral and

social principle. Thus uprooted from traditional moorings many women flocked to urban centres eking out a miserable existence, yielding often to temptations. Once women were commoditized by the white capitalist system they continued to suffer the same ignominy even after independence. It is clear that while Ngugi compares the two epochs he has no solution to the problem.

When Wanjia is vilified by wretched profligates, Ngugi's anguish can be heard in the following words:

We are all prostitutes, for in a world of give and take, in a world built on a structure of inequality and injustice, in a world where some can eat while others can only toil ... in a world where a man who has never set foot on this land can sit in a New York or London office and determine what I shall eat, read, think, do, only because he sits on a heap of billions taken from the world's poor, in such a world, we are all prostituted.¹

Wanja symbolises the predicament of a subjugated race overpowered by the forces of history but determined to be born anew to forge a new identity. She signifies simultaneously a downtrodden woman and the mythological phoenix bird: "She is that bird periodically born out of the ashes and dust."² Wanjia experiences a series of fire accidents at crucial junctures of her life. The first fire accident brought her bereavement and paradoxically renewed her passion for life. After her arrival in Ilmorog the fire-symbolism is associated with her, endorsing the signifier phoenix attributed to her. She is closely associated with the earth, harvest and rain. She is elemental and even salamandrian whom fire cannot affect. The fire-symbolism is also used as a narrative strategy for leading the tale from one climax to another. In the process, the flow of the narrative becomes uneven.

In Ilmorog she tries to achieve motherhood. Quite significantly, during a full moon night appropriate for fertility rites, her hut catches fire. It is as though she has to undergo an intimate contact with fire, a rite of purification, before she can fulfil the act of conception. Fire becomes iconic of the only sacrament that can baptise her back into the fold. During her visit to the city another fire makes her reach out to Ilmorog more desperately for solace. She resolves not to get emotionally involved with anyone

till she erases her past through a new efflorescence of her spirit. As a source of livelihood, Wanja begins to sell *thengata* — a local traditional brew prepared for community celebrations, for poets and warriors. Meant to be a source of vision and inspiration, this drink is forbidden for sale. Wanja breaks this taboo by setting up *Thengeta Breweries*, a full-fledged business enterprise with Abdulla as her business partner. The instant success of this commercial venture becomes implausible especially because Wanja and Abdulla had no capital nor the necessary business acumen to manage the Breweries. Ngugi seems to be anxious to prove that capital concentrated in honest hands can lead to generation and fair distribution of wealth.

The next development in the narrative depicts Wanja's grandmother's land claimed by the bank which had mortgaged it in exchange for a loan. Ngugi portrays the banking system as a vicious version of the village pawnbroker. Wanja redeems her grandmother's land by selling off the patent of *thengeta*, her brewing unit and other possessions to Kimeria and his industrialist friends. This recurring theme of capitalist exploitation tends to unhinge the narrative at this point especially because Wanja is trapped again in the flesh trade. Her frequent entry into and exit from prostitution appear as techniques for carrying the narrative forward.

While Wanja denies any trauma resulting from her downfall, Abdulla decides to rescue Wanja from Kimeria's clutches. He ignores her professed aim for destroying the system from within and triumphing over evil. While Wanja decides to murder Kimeria, Abdulla agrees to shield her from the consequences. In a dramatic turn of events Munira sets fire to Wanja's pleasure house to destroy its sinful influence on the city. Just as Wanja murders Kimeria, the flames spurt out. The fire, Wanja's and Abdulla's miraculous escape from the burning inferno, and their recovery in the hospital — these kaleidoscopic events leave us breathless. This fire accident leads Wanja to share a powerful intimacy with Abdulla. Quite predictably the trope of fire leads us on to a new change in her life. She achieves motherhood but refuses to enter into a conjugal relationship with Abdulla. She decides to live alone having found her fulfillment in her child.

Ngugi seems to be justifying violence as a method of destroying the bourgeois predators. He deliberately avoids a political solution. How can a range of non-bourgeois's forces wrest control from the elite bourgeoisie, rewrite their role in overcoming the hurdles of class-divided nationhood and progress towards genuine socialism? He leaves this question to his readers.

In *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi takes up this counter-discourse and shows how Jacinta builds up her challenge to the bastions of power. She is privileged enough to begin life as a steno-typist. This novel dispenses with significant male characters. Most of the men surrounding Jacinta lack vitality and are devoid of the rich and complex contours of Abdulla's or Karega's personality. In terms of structure, there is a reduction of scale. While the earlier novel has a richly woven texture and the lyrical flow of the oral tradition, the later novel is a forthright satire on the socio-political degeneration and moral perversion of Kenya. *Devil on the Cross* can be read as an allegory of the subaltern finding a historical voice. The kernel signifier of neo-colonial exploitation in the novel — an international conference 'Devil's Feast' in Ilmorog attended by national and international tycoons who seek to prolong their hegemonic coalition to ward off the liberationist forces within the country — is juxtaposed against Jacinta's struggle. The novel veers dangerously towards being a socio-political treatise, discarding in the process the conventional norms of a narrative.

Jacinta's political opposition to the dominant ethnic-political alliance is not supported by any plebeian uprising. Ngugi turns his attention to Jacinta's isolated struggle against capitalist expansion which acquires a complex dimension when she accepts Gatuiria as her fiancé. Gatuiria, of bourgeois descent, was trained in America to be a professional. He is disillusioned with the values of western society and defies his father's will to become a musician. By composing a great national anthem he hopes to retrieve those minority voices repressed by the homogenizing impact of a neo-colonial society.

In Jacinta's dream the Devil appears tempting her with the greatest material gifts only if she owes allegiance to him. The

ambivalence carefully patterned in Satan's statements — once about the corruption of the oligarchy in Kenya, another time about the virtues of material wealth — illustrate the fraudulent approach of some revolutionaries. Jacinta echoes the words of Christ on the mountain-top: "Get thee behind me Satan." Thus the saviour motif is subtly grafted onto this firebrand personality. As narrative device for revealing her political commitments, the dream-sequence appears to be weak and contrived.

Another twist in the tale that appears to be equally contorted is the reappearance of her blackguard lover as her fiancé's father. As he threatens to annihilate her she takes a straight aim at him and shoots him dead. Ngugi could be implying that one's past has to be vanquished first in order to challenge the future. Secondly, this kind of a literary strategy allows a further compression of the narrative. The last shreds of Gaturia's filial allegiance hold him back. His principles of social equality and distributional justice pull him towards her but he cannot discard his class instincts and follow her. The father whom he secretly abhorred during his lifetime becomes an impossible burden after death. Like Wanja who begins a new life after killing Kimeria, Jacinta feels liberated from a burdensome past after annihilating her enemy in public. She does not need to camouflage her act of vengeance. She can fight her own battle alone.

During the five years that separate the two novels Ngugi was building up his resistance to the Eurocentric literary forms, especially that of the novel. In *Devil on the Cross* he weaves in oral folklore into the conventional pattern of the novel's form. The importance of this experiment lies in developing different narrative techniques. Ngugi argues that his fiction is not an eloquent transcreation of Kenyan reality but a scathing almost deafening criticism of it. In the process *Devil on the Cross* is stripped of the subtlety and artistry of *Petals of Blood*.

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- ¹Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), p.157.

- ²Ibid., p.281.

BOOK REVIEWS

SHUSHIL KUMAR SHARMA, *THE THEME OF TEMPTATION IN MILTON*

(New Delhi: Intellectual, 1996), pp.176, Rs.200.00

H.C. Gupta

The book prepared from Dr. Sharma's doctoral thesis is an illuminating addition to scholarly studies on Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* are still prescribed in a number of universities. *Prima facie* the book will be worthwhile to Milton students and scholars. What is of still greater use is the author's painstaking collection of moral and ethical views of Vedantic and other Indian thinkers together with those of Christian theological scriptures and related western saints and preachers in the opening chapter. Being put together, the readers have the temptation of comparing and contrasting these views — an exercise which besides being interesting widens the reader's intellectual horizons.

The theme of temptation ever remained a haunting passion with Milton all through his life. No wonder it has appeared in his writings so often. It is praiseworthy of Sharma to highlight that Milton's treatment of the theme goes on maturing from work to work and finally to arrive at his resume of Milton's ethical code. The chapters speak of their contents: 1 Temptation: The Concept and Its Dimension; 2 *Comus*: Rejection of Cordial Jule; 3 *Paradise Lost*: The Breach of Trust; 4 *Paradise Regained*: Apage Satan; 5 *Samson Agonistes*: Imprudence; 6 The Aesthetic Aspects of the Theme of Temptation; and 7 Conclusion: Milton's Ethical Code.

John Ruskin once aptly observed: "If a book is worth reading, it is worth buying." Sushil Kumar Sharma's book is certainly worth reading. If brevity is the soul of wit — and if lucidity is an unfailing test of scholarship — here is one such book, which in Sharma's intellectual microcosm encapsulates Milton's quintessential theological views in his major poetical works. A special fascination of the book is the author's biographical tally of temptations and baits Milton himself faced in his own political career with those of the

protagonists' of his poetical creations in the last paragraphs of the chapters 2 to 5. Sharma has steered his standpoint through critics' and scholars' viewpoints — which are rather too many in the chapters. Systematic and syllogistic, he is analytical and critical. Postulate in his statements, he is definite in his observations. And he writes in a style that is simple yet energetic. He is precise and scientific, and idiomatic and florid, too. An opinionated author with the courage of his convictions, he carries his way through critics' zigzag with a missionary zeal.

As stated earlier, Shushil Kumar syllogistically concludes in chapter 7: in all the four core chapters he has dealt his matter under four heads — (i) the temper, (ii) the subject of temptation, (iii) the baits used by the tempter, and (iv) consequence. In the typical style of a knowledgeable teacher, he begins or ends his paragraphs with key sentences that start or sum up the discussion pithily, e.g., "As revealed in his major poetical works, Milton's ethical code revolved round three tenets: (i) that Knowledge sans Morality is not only wicked but disastrous, too; (ii) that Chastity is the bedrock of Virtues; (iii) that Ambition born of ego and pride makes a man deviate from the right path and lends (sic) him into hideous ruin (pp.163-64). And he goes on to encapsulate: "Milton's list of virtues as derived from a study of his poetical works ... includes: (i) purity, (ii) temperance, (iii) prudence, (iv) justice, (V) truth, (vi) faith, (vii) hope" (164). "Similarly his list of vices includes: (i) despair (as against hope), (ii) anger which includes one's indulging in "practice" too; (iii) obstinacy: sticking to something even when one is told of one's faults; (iv) using guile including "theft" and "deceit" to achieve one's end; (v) envy; (vi) pride and arrogance; (vii) inordinate ambition; and (viii) breach of trust: ingratitude" (165). Likewise, Milton's aesthetics and devices — linguistic and non-linguistic —, figures of speech, images, symbols, allusions, gestures, etc have been given in a nutshell and relevantly illustrated from the texts of the works.

Dr. Sharma would increase the book's appeal if he were to do away with spelling divergences in "honour" and "honor", "Jesus" and "Jesus's" and so on and a few other proof-reading nods in editions to follow. The book, as it is, more than justifies its reading: it is worth reading.

VIJAY VISHAL, *PARTING WISH*
(Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 2001), Rs. 100.00

Patricia Prime

Vijay Vishal tells us in the introduction to his new collection of poems, *Parting Wish*, that it is dedicated to his deceased wife. The range of these poems stretches from childhood to age, family relationships, racial harmony, social and philosophical questions to humanity's search for fulfilment. The title poem "Parting Wish" is dedicated to the poet's wife and summarises her life and the love between them. It ends:

She mocked death
With her last winsome smile,
Smilingly she lived
And smilingly
Faded out of life.
A difference to me and mine!

The Parting Wish draws the reader back to it — not in code-cracking mode but in order to re-experience, more deeply, the original thrill. Often it is an obscure sensation, but no less real for that — the elusiveness is part of the package. Very much not tied-up-with-string is "Luckless Lass," the story of a woman's loss of innocence and her corruption at the hands of others. A search for a quintessential Vishal voice would be in vain — his voices are various. But there are constants as well as variables and his repertoire is wide. For example: domestic metaphor — "I was a balloon blue. / And lose / To dizzy heights" ("Blue Balloon"); joking narrative — "Among many fashions in vogue / Suicide is the most stunning / Six per minute in India / Quite a record of sorts!" ("Suicide Spree"); physical description — "I met a Lady / Of exceptional charm? Rare grace, blooming face / With nobility writ large all over." ("Fair Encounter").

Perhaps the most praiseworthy quality in Vishal's poetry is its *lightness*. I mean its evanescent texture, its delicacy, its grace. His seemliness, his composure and sensitivity are indicated in nearly every poem. The poem "Searching Search" with which the book ends is a fine achievement, even if the precise connotations

being made are not always clear. To take one example, the "miracle" discussed in "Searing Search" celebrates a new love which, however, is "mired in misery" and "treachery." "Searching Search" is a poem which echoes and brings together many of the images and words of the rest of the volume. The tightening effect of this is intellectually satisfying. Although few of the poems recommend themselves at first reading: ("Walking Shadows," "Mediocrity Mechanism" and the title poem are exceptional perhaps), they can be returned to again and again. The volume as a whole is integrated principally because of the successful long final poem "Searing Search." This poem is a grim comic exercise constructed around events in the poet's life. It picks up ideas and words from earlier poems, and brings together many of the obsessive images found throughout Vishal's work. The poem ends: "Ah! / Dreams do blossom into realities/ Miracles do happen in life."

In *Parting Wish* the cross-referring and associations work in a controlled fashion, far beyond mental quirkiness. As an instance, I quote from the poem "Parallelism":

Man is man
Despite
His caste, colour, race
Bequeaths deeds
Worthy of pride
To humanity at large.

the poet equates man with nature. In "Walking Shadows," a few pages later, one feels that man is destined never to be at one with the natural world. The circuit of images is welded together. It is a technique of symbolism, familiar in Yeats, in which the literal parts of the symbol refuse to be burnt up.

Parting Wish is unfailingly suggestive and enjoyable, and it is hard not to sound over-solemn in evaluating it, as the poet taunts you with praising the formality of the poems while enjoying their humour. In the end the reader is left exasperated and exhilarated at the same time because the poet stimulates an appetite that he never satisfies directly, never drawing a conclusion and often offering an ending that is the equivalent of a cold shower. But there is a great deal of crucial substance too.

A. RAGHU, *SECOND CROP*

(Gullion: Imprint Books, 2002), pp.76, Rs.50.00

J.V. Villanilam

There are not many forces in human nature as strong as love. Love can bind people for life; it can also divide people for long, if not for the whole length of life. But love has gradations; it has varieties: husband's love for wife and vice versa; lover's love for beloved; and children's love for parents and parents' love for children. Mother's love for her child is of a unique character and differs from all other forms of love, even from father's love, they say. All of us are attached to our mothers in a very special way for we are part of mother's body in a personal way. The second and the third poems in A. Raghu's collection of fifty-eight poems (including his special "P.S.") are tributes to grandmother and mother.

Coming back to the many-splendoured thing called love, the poet, like any other person, has to enact different roles of love in life. The poet is destined to enact the different roles of lover, beloved husband, wife, son, daughter, girlfriend, boyfriend and even as casual enjoyer of the emotion of love, forbidden or legitimate. Raghu examines love as if it were a seeker of solace at the psychologist's couch or even a patient on physician's examining desk. Love lies with eyes closed and the poet runs his experienced hands into every nook and corner of love. The diagnosis is successful and the poet-physician can be proud of his skill and adroitness. The patient leaves the couch or desk hale and hearty.

Out of the fifty-eight poems, twenty-four are poems dealing with one or another aspect of love. Love is the opposite of hate but also the opposite of love, because loving something or someone is not loving that thing or person; it is usually love of the idea of love. Love can be selfish; most of the time it is, and so it hides many good and bad aspects of the object of love. This is what happens when out of adolescent curiosity, or mature, gonadal pressure, one starts loving oneself in another person. One elevates the object of love to unattainable heights only to discover that the object so venerated has feet of clay. By the time this discovery is made, matters must have progressed so much that

going back is more difficult than going forward, which one cannot do in any case. So one is frustrated beyond limit.

Raghu's poems are a treat indeed. There is plenty of pathos, but there is plenty of light-heartedness too. Many of the poems are memorable for the sudden turn of events they represent, for their unexpected closures. Beautiful expressions clothe ordinary thoughts in the most extraordinary manner as do appropriate similes and metaphors, chiselled expressions, powerful diction. Many poems seem to be based on the poet's own little experiences that he narrates anecdotally but with deep feeling. After a silent ride with a friend in an autorickshaw for fifteen kilometres, shivering endlessly under the impact of the North Indian winter, his partner senses his predicament of going back all alone in the same vehicle, takes off her shawl and wraps it around him, hands staying on his shoulders a little longer than absolutely necessary. The poet's adoration for his mentor, Nissim Ezekiel, is expressed by the refrain, "You did a lot for me." He suppresses his tears while in the room where the great man lies, but bursts into tears on stepping out of the room.

The poem "Model Marriage" is an example of Raghu's wit, humour, irony and sarcasm. Fatty Bombola's Prince reigns supreme over his principality of pretty females but (or hence) Bombola goes off in anger and pain to live in her father's house in Madras. The poem is followed by one expressing a radically different set of emotions: a piece on infidelity is followed by "Without" which treats love that has no exceptions. Many of the poems speak of unrequited love, rejected and frustrated love, love recollected in tranquillity, love elevated to spirituality, love enthroned on a rational pedestal, love for a beloved who belongs to someone else, love that makes one feel guilty, and above all, love that chastises the self.

The poems that do not deal with love — I could call them the non-love poems — are equally lovable. The young poet shows a maturity beyond his age. He enters into the souls of sons, for example, who have grouses against their fathers' sagacity and ridicules husbands and wives who enter into marriage with the thought of cheating each other.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *THE SUN BEHIND THE CLOUD*

**(New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2001),
pp.262, Rs.365.00**

Mohan Ramanan

This novel is Basavaraj Naikar's first historical novel and is about one of his ancestors, Bhaskarrao Bhave. Bhave was an intrepid freedom fighter and was successful in escaping execution at the hands of the British who saw him as an enemy. Bhave defied the British because they were about to apply the unjust Doctrine of Lapse on Bhave's kingdom Naragund. The Doctrine enabled the British to take possession of kingdoms which did not have heirs. Bhave was childless and requested the British to allow him to adopt a child so that Naragund would have a ruler after him but the British would not agree. Bhave organised the native Princes against the British but he was betrayed by his own people and arrested. But he had loyal servitors too and an old cook who resembled Bhave died in his place. Bhave escaped and living incognito married a second time, his Queen, Savitri, having committed suicide to escape the British. This marriage procured Bhave a son and the great fighter passed on peacefully secure in the knowledge that his line would not perish with his death and the even greater satisfaction that he had not really been defeated by the British. Bhave's exploits are the stuff of legend and Naikar has warmed to his subject.

Naikar has been faithful to his sources and he has certainly succeeded in writing an entertaining tale. Those interested in British Indian history are likely to enjoy the book and I count myself among such readers. Naikar writes with passion and while the facts determine much of the plot he also allows the imagination some leeway. His description of Bhave's escape and the scene where Bhave's mother Yamunabai and wife Savitri contemplate suicide are done with passion. His depiction of the enemies within and their treachery is poignant not least because it rehearses a familiar Indian motif. Characters like Gangadhar who cleverly foils

Bhave's designs on his daughter-in-law by the simple, but heart rending, expedient of murdering her, are well-delineated as are Raghopant and the boy Krishnna. Naikar does not succumb to the temptation of demonizing the British. Instead they are shown as human beings with both good and bad qualities.

Where Naikar falters is in his use of language. There are many linguistic infelicities and clearly if his intention was to imitate Indian forms of speech he does not succeed. If Naikar can smoothen out his style of writing his next book will be more satisfying. With this novel and two collections of short stories behind him and plenty of energy and enthusiasm he should be publishing soon.

**G.N. DEVY (ED.), *PAINTED WORDS:
AN ANTHOLOGY OF TRIBAL LITERATURE*
(Penguin India, 2002), pp.302, Rs.295.00**

Anand Mahanand

The Adivasis of India have a rich oral tradition. It includes a variety of genres such as songs, lyrics, legends, epics, tales, riddles etc. The oral narratives express their history, rituals, world view, laws, social customs and other forms of cultural practices. There have been attempts made by both colonial and contemporary ethnographers and writers to document and translate these oral narratives. The works of A.G. Archer, Verrier Elwin., Gopinath Mohanty, Sitakanta Mahapatra, Raghunath Murmu, Temsula Ao, Randhir Khare and others in this regard are noteworthy. These writers have collected and translated mainly the traditional oral narratives of Tribal India.

It is heartening to note the recently published *Painted Words: Anthology of Tribal Literature* edited by G.N. Devy. This anthology includes excerpts from traditional oral narratives not of a particular region or a particular tribe, but they are from a number of tribes and from various parts of our country; from Gujarat to

Orissa and from Karnataka to Garwal. North-East for some reason is not represented. Devy mentions that this is not a representative anthology. Though it is not mentioned, one can assume that there might be some valid reason for this omission. A significant feature of this anthology is that it not only includes traditional narratives from oral tradition, but excerpts from tribal writers who have gained mainstream education and articulated their experiences in the form of autobiographies. The noted among them are Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, Kishore Shantabai Kale, and Atmaram Kaniram Rathod. Their accounts present the bare reality of the Denotified nomadic communities from their own points of view.

The anthology is not a mere collection of previously published works, but has a number of pieces which are freshly collected. For instance, the lyrics and epics from different tribal languages are fresh and new to the reader. They are musical and rhythmic. Even the English renderings have retained the rhythmic pattern. The tribal versions of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are unique pieces signifying the cultural diversity of our country. More importantly the introduction to the anthology by Dr. Devy is quite enlightening which shows his long engagement with the tribal world. Dr. Devy as usual is very clear and honest in introducing the subject. Above all, the anthology is a fine blend of both traditional tribal oral narratives and narratives grown out of modern consciousness. It will certainly offer the reader a fresh reading about Tribal India which is largely unknown. The work is accomplished well as it is done under the leadership of a noted academic critic in the person of G.N. Devy who has a long association with different art forms and also the socio-economic reality of the adivasis of Central India.

S.D. SHARMA, *VICTORIAN FICTION: SOME NEW APPROACHES*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), pp.154+vi, Rs.375.00

K.K. Sharma

Science and literature work in unison, not in isolation. Whereas literature provides emotional maturity to us, science makes us rationally perfect. Multidisciplinary approach to the study of literature, especially of fiction, is certainly the need of the hour. Professor S.D. Sharma's *Victorian Fiction: Some New Approaches* is a landmark attempt in this direction: for, the significant scientific theories of the nineteenth century, viz. — uniformitarianism, naturalism, Newtonism and Darwinism — have been applied to the entire Victorian Fiction, and interpretations of far-reaching consequences have been made. Conventional criticism of the Victorian fiction has, in fact, been given a vehement jolt, and literature has been provided a scientific basis to stand on its own. Professor Sharma aptly asserts: "The stream of scientific thought, on having meandered through the initial stages of the Victorian period till having reached its late spectrum, had influenced, during the earlier part, the physical existence of man in particular, and the mental and spiritual existence in general; but during the later part, it had influenced almost every domain of thought." (p.65).

The first chapter of the book deals with *Headlong Hall*, *Melincourt*, *Crotchet Castle* and *Gryll Grange*. A number of flaws by a number of critics have been pointed out in these novels of Thomas Love Peacock. But the author has offered a new criticism of these novels by taking the help of scientific theories. It is in this perspective that he finds little substance in the criticism of the above novels by George Saintsbury, who just terms them not novels but only "tales or contes" (p.19). Reversing this criticism, Professor Sharma infers that "...as a novelist Peacock has a technique of his own, which many writers have found 'inimitable.' Barring a few like W.H. Mallock, Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis, all his zealous students, none has ever to follow his brilliant talk and country houses and their format.... Peacock did

write more for our times than for his own... (pp.19-20).

The second chapter deals with Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Cosmic Consciousness and Immanent Will. The chapter emphasises that "whereas from Darwinism, he (Thomas Hardy) drew the idea of Unconscious Will, he borrowed the concept of Immanent Will from Schopenhauer....For his concept of Cosmic Consciousness he rummaged through the oriental literature particularly the *Bhagvadgita*" (p.41). In fact, Thomas Hardy is perhaps the only novelist of the Victorian period, who is influenced by science much more profoundly than even George Meredith. He has full faith in the physical evolution of man as propounded by Darwinism, but for emotional evolution he takes help of the Biblical Monotheism, and for spiritual evolution he seeks succour and sustenance from the basic teachings of the *Bhagvadgita*. Professor Sharma's observation is worth citing: "...Hardy's Immanent Will is as creative as Darwinian postulate of evolution through struggle for existence. Shorn of any specific nomenclature, Hardy's Immanent Will or Unconscious Will or Cosmic Consciousness is as Omnipresent as the *Bhagvadgita's* Brahma Hardy's Immanent Will in the *Dynasts* is another form of Cosmic Consciousness" (p.24).

The third chapter of the book relates to the impact of science on Dickensian school of novelists that includes, *inter alia*, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, W.M. Thackeray and George Eliot. For this the academic critic makes a sustained and gainful study of the significant novels of all these novelists, including many minor novelists, such as Walter Beasant, M. Russell Mitford, Mrs. Henry Wood, M.E. Braddon, Rhoda Broughton and Edna Lyall. Early Victorian fiction abounds in descriptions of poverty and want spawned by the Industrial Revolution, and Dickens in his novels dealt with this problem quite prominently. Likewise, there were other revolutions, too, such as the movement of Democracy, the movement of reforms, the movement of education and the like. Professor Sharma has connected all these movements to the great movement of science, and he has, accordingly, analysed the major novels of the period by giving a

strong base of science to Victorian fiction. The interpretation offered by Sharma is striking: "...the impact of scientific thought on Dickens, Charles Reade, Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, Walter Beasant, James Rice and Richard Whiteing has been reflected through the industrial movement ... whereas the same impact on Anthony Trollope through ... sociological ... and psychological studies ... on Thackeray through intellectual reality ... on George Eliot through ... scientific positivism"(pp.97-98).

The fourth chapter of the book is titled as "Science and Late Victorian Fiction. It focuses on the novels of William Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins, George Macdonald, William Sharp, Richard Blackmore, William Black, John Henry Shorthouse, George Gissing, George Burrow, Lawrence Oliphant, Richard Jefferies and Miss Ramee in addition to George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. But out of all these novelists, Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Richard Jefferies, Mark Rutherford, George Gissing and Samuel Butler are some great novelists who have reacted to, and approved of, the impact of science in their novels more vigorously than other writers. Thomas Hardy in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Jude the Obscure* profoundly relies on Darwinism. Likewise, George Meredith in novels like *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *Rhoda Fleming*, *Vittoria*, *Henry Richmond* and *Diana of the Crossways* not only accepts the basic postulates of Darwinism, but also attaches sufficient importance to the paramountancy of intuition, spontaneity and spiritual growth of man. Richard Jefferies' novels — *The Dewy Morn*, *The Story of My Heart*, *After London or Wild England*, and *Amaryllis at the Fair* — have also been studied in the light of Darwinism plus Biblical Monotheism. George Gissing's novels — *Demos*, *Thyrza*, *A Life's Morning*, *The Nether World* and *New Gruf Streets* — evidence Darwinism and naturalism, while Mark Rutherford's Novels — *Miriam Schooling*, *Catharine Furze* and *Robert Elsemere* — are very interesting studies of scientific impact on the modern mind. In *Erewhon*, *The Way of All Flesh* and *Erewhon Revisited*, Samuel Butter concentrates "on the Darwinian principles of evolution and their wider

repercussions on human life" (p.126). This chapter is the best part of the book from the point of view of closeness and inter-relatedness between science and literature.

The fifth chapter named "Darwinism in the Novels of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy" is a specialised chapter in the sense that it presupposes that the reader is an advanced reader. The gist of the chapter is that whereas Thomas Hardy accepts Darwinism *in toto*, George Meredith does not. The latter goes beyond the physical evolution as propounded by Darwin. His acceptance of Darwinism is not wholly biological like Hardy's. His is a spiritual approach. Apropos of this, the learned critic succinctly writes: "Meredith believes in creative evolution which practically connotes ... the spiritual evolution of R.N. Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh of India; of Bergson and Schopenhauer of France. Meredith's faith in intuition, spontaneity and free will corresponds with the belief in the immortality and pre-existence of soul of the Hindus; of the Buddhists; of the Pharisees among the Hebrews..." (p.134).

In short, Professor Sharma's book is a pioneering work, which will certainly pave the way for teachers / researchers to undertake research work in areas where science and literature can work together. By virtue of deep analytical and critical insight, syntactically and semantically poised, the book is certainly a commendable contribution to Victorian fiction criticism. If critical approaches to literature hitherto extant are to survive, they must seek a scientific re-interpretation. The aesthetic and artistic jacket and reasonable price of the book add to its value. I fondly hope that the contemporary tribe of scholars would certainly pause a while to ponder over the sterling merits of the book.

**RANU UNIYAL, *THE FICTION OF
MARGARET DRABBLE AND ANITA DESAI:
WOMEN AND LANDSCAPE***

(New Delhi: Creative Books, 2000), pp.269+viii, Rs.450.00

Miti Pandey

The book, *The Fiction of Margaret Drabble and Anita Desai: Women and Landscape*, reveals Ranu's clear and close understanding of the notion of women and landscape in the novels of two great British and Indian novelists — Margaret Drabble and Anita Desai. It consists of thirteen chapters in all, including "Introduction" and "Conclusion". The first six chapters are devoted to the fictional works of Margaret Drabble and the last five analyse the concept of women and landscape in the fiction of Anita Desai. However, the title of the book gives the impression that it is a study of all the works by these two writers.

In "Introduction" Ranu discusses landscape as "an intricate expression of human existence"(12), since the growth of the central character in a work is reflected in the landscape. It is an "...exchange between the historical and sociological message..."(12) that the land carries and the interpretation the artist gives to it. Then she exemplifies how landscape is used as a 'principal signifier' in the novels of Drabble and Desai. This general "Introduction" leads to "Margaret Drabble: An Introduction" where the author traces the life and parentage of the novelist. Very aptly Ranu discovers that Drabble, like Arnold Bennett, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell, refers to North — the landscape of her childhood — only to remember, create and commemorate the lost world.

It is followed by the analysis of four major novels by Drabble in four separate chapters. In the chapter, "*The Waterfall*", the novelist takes up the theme of romantic love. Both Jane Gray and James see each other as their saviours. Here the critical insight of Ranu discovers how Drabble deviates from the traditional romantic love theme in her novel and balances the power relation between the two. Unlike Bronte's Jane Eyre, Jane Gray never aims at marriage nor does she die like Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss* when she doesn't succeed in getting married. Rather

The Waterfall is a study of the "restructuring of male sexuality and sexual relation in female terms"(35).

"*The Needle's Eye*" addresses the question of faith in modern times of religious and spiritual bankruptcy, and explores "...the heroine's bid to situate herself in a landscape of moral convictions"(53). Rose, the heroine, is a rich heiress, yet she believes in simplicity. She has rejected her father and later her husband only to create her own "feminine landscape"(57) in the house where she can analyse her anxieties and nourish her dreams of independence. In her next novel, *The Realms of Gold*, Drabble links with her interest in women and landscape the question of environment and heredity as well. The Ollerenshaw family has had a hereditary depression. Unlike her predecessors, Frances Wingate, the heroine is a fighter and survivor with a successful career as an archaeologist, four children and a loving husband. Due to her interest in literary landscape, Frances explores the different notions of landscape held by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.

Dr. Ranu tries to discover a "between" landscape in the chapter entitled "*The Middle Ground*". She compares and contrasts the condition of the heroine Kate Armstrong who is facing 'mid-life crisis' with Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Like Clarissa, Kate fears loneliness in this age, but, unlike her, she is content to be single. Kate breaks free from her past as a young girl and becomes a woman on her own terms. According to Ranu, "One of the major themes of *The Radiant Way* and *A Natural Curiosity* is the rise of a global consciousness and linked to this consciousness is the attitude to the changing landscape"(119). As Drabble herself describes the third part of this trilogy, i.e. *The Gates of Ivory* as a book "about Good Time and Bad Time"(GI 3). *The Gates of Ivory* is discussed as "a well-researched document"(120).

Anita Desai has been studied in the next five chapters of the book. "Anita Desai: An Introduction" narrates briefly her life and concentrates on her portrayal of women in relation to their landscape. In this process Ranu also exhibits a few traits which Desai shares with Bronte, Woolf and Naipaul. As Ranu comments: "Desai's women are socially well placed but in an existential sense

they see themselves as bordering on the fringes of life. They are poor in spirit"(144). Maya fails to create a liveable space for herself as a wife and woman in *Cry, The Peacock*. To escape this public life she creates a private landscape of desire for herself. It is in the gardens, amid animals, birds and flowers that she seeks to fill the empty space in herself. This chapter is remarkable for the attempt made "to relocate *Gita* in a contemporary context such as to create a modern landscape of transcendence"(164).

The chapter, "*Where Shall We Go This Summer ?*", focuses on "the dialectics within which the island itself becomes a representative of woman's desire to house herself..."(169). *Fire on the Mountain* has been described as the story of a woman struggling to cope with her dreams and fears. It is an attempt to give voice to that "long muted silence which has been a hallmark of Indian womanhood under patriarchy"(191). The fourth novel discussed in this series is *Clear Light of Day*. Bim, the heroine, does not seek and sigh like Maya, Sita, Nanda Kaul and Monisha. It is in the image of Bim that Ranu discovers "a woman's landscape becoming a landscape of affirmation"(208). Ranu sees it as "a novel of female development as much as a novel of female choices"(221).

The last chapter is an attempt to show how the two novels deal with the theme of "voyage out". Their heroines strive to redefine and reconstruct their identity. However, Drabble is seen as a more positive writer. Ranu's observation in the final paragraph is worth noticing: "In their pursuit for self-recognition, women in Desai's and Drabble's novel reach an understanding that absolute freedom like absolute happiness is an illusion and can only be attained with a certain degree of inner equilibrium"(230).

The book, under review, is not free from different kinds of errors. The author has not been careful about some of the basic rules of grammar and documentation. Besides, she has been a little careless in reading the final proofs of the book. I shall be very happy to provide her the list of all these lapses, if she so wishes. I hope she will eliminate all these omissions in the subsequent editions of her book. However, despite these blemishes, the book is commendable, and every page of it bears the stamp of scholarship.

R.S. TIWARY, *MODERN THEORIES OF POETIC CRITICISM*

(Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2002), pp.184, Rs.125.00

R.K. Singh

R.S. Tiwary writes the book with total involvement in, and commitment to, both poetry and criticism which is significant, as the popularity of the former is thought to have declined over the last few decades while the effectiveness of the latter has reduced, threatening a possible loss of interest in literature itself. Tiwary's own views confirm that poetry creates an aesthetics capable of transporting itself through time and space in a way that will almost certainly persist as long as people, language and literature survive. R.S. Tiwary is convinced that "Poetry has mothered poetic theories" even as modern poetic theories "have demooored themselves from their ancestral inheritance" (Foreword).

Stressing that criticism lies in both analysis and evaluation of a work in its totality (cf. pp.14-6; 27), that is, both manner and content (p.17), R.S. Tiwary asserts that literature, especially poetry, despite its commitment to human weal and happiness, has hardly been a force, nor could it ever "produce any sobering influence upon human behaviour" (pp.21-2). Yet, like religion, poetry influences one's inward disposition, imparting a new angle to appreciate and understand life. In this context, R.S. Tiwary also examines the *nature* of literature and asserts that "a literary piece is basically aesthetic in nature and therefore basically *elitist*" rather than populist (p.25).

But I do not agree with his criticism of Northrop Frye. Perhaps, there is some conceptual difference between him and Frye, who is quite sound about his cyclical process, though hardly concerned with value judgement which, as he says, is an illusion of the history of taste. R.S. Tiwary stands for value judgement and follows an eclectic approach. It is essentially his eclecticism that he enunciates the classical Indian *Rass*, *Alankar* and *Dhvani* doctrines to serve as a perspective to the Western poetic theories. In fact, in his literary considerations he includes the ancient

Sanskrit literature, the Vedas, the Upanishads, and a wide range of English Literature, Hindi Literature, regional literatures, and Dalit literature, and refers to a "plurality of talents" to establish his approach. However, it is Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, which incites him to reflect on some basic questions like: what is poetry? why do we read it? how should we appreciate it? and whether it is a force to reckon with. In fact he tries to answer some of the questions Eagleton leaves unanswered (p.59).

The major section of his book, "Modern Theories," begins with a short critique of Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, and moves through Romanticism, post-Romanticism / Modernism, pre-New Criticism (Russian Formalism, Practical Criticism, I. A. Richards) and New Criticism (T.S. Eliot, William Empson *et al*), Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory, Archetypal Criticism (Northrop Frye), Structuralism, Semiotics, Narratology, Post-structuralism, Psychoanalysis (Freud, T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards, Kenneth Burke and Harold Bloom), and surrealism (Herbert Read, Tristan Tzara) to issues of Taste vs Nudity in Letters. The discussion on Taste, which centres round the contemporary practices in Indian English Writing, is very original. He acknowledges the positive aspects of modern European theories and classical Sanskrit poetics, and concludes that it is the critic's job to make the reader understand what the poet's "intended meaning" was, or "what realities battered the poet's soul and how he has given expression to his resultant feelings. But, if the critic chooses to involve the readers's mind in riddling sophistication, he loses his title to be a critic" (p.166).

I believe R.S. Tiwary is one of the most authentic and individual literary critics of the country, and I feel *Modern Theories of Poetic Criticism* should meet the needs of the common learners in the Honours and Postgraduate English literature classes besides provoking them (and their teachers) to hone their professional / critical skills and understanding. Familiarity with classical Indian aesthetics along with Western poetics should help them develop taste with a sense of balance.

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I, K.K. Sharma, hereby declare that the particulars, given above, are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

K.K. Sharma

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