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CONTENTS

S. Viswanathan	The Application of <i>Dhvani</i> to Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i>	3
K.E. Razdan	Postmodern Problematics: The Literary Sisyphus	20
O.P. Mathur	Nayantara Sahgal: The Emergency through the Riches of Human Conscience	26
Asha Viswas	Alienation in the Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel and K.N. Daruwalla	34
P. Dhanavel	A Postcolonial Perspective on Manjula Padmanabhan's <i>Harvest</i>	41
Miti Pandey	Motherhood — Sublimity or Subjection: Shashi Deshpande's Major Novels	49
Rashmi Gaur	Self and Society: Sunita Jain's <i>A Girl of Her Age</i>	56
Farhad Pakdel	William Golding's Sea-Trilogy: Voyages of Self-Discovery	62
Manisha Gupta	Iris Murdoch and Irving Babbitt as Humanitarians ✓	68
S. Armstrong	Metis as Cultural Schizophrenia in <i>Halfbreed</i> (1973) and <i>In Search of April Raintree</i> (1984) ✓	75

Surekha Dangwal	The Dilemma of South-African Whites in Nadine Gordimer's <i>The Conservationist</i>	82
Attia Abid	The Dizzy World of Ola Rotimi's <i>The Gods Are Not to Blame</i>	88

BOOK REVIEWS

U.S. Rukhaiyar	K.V. Surendran (Ed.), <i>Indian English Fiction: New Perspectives</i>	102
H.C. Gupta	K.K. Sharma, <i>Four Great Indian English Novelists: Some Points of View</i>	104
J. L. Rao V.	Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, <i>Death Perception - Life Perception</i>	106
Patricia Prime	K.V. Raghupathi, <i>Small Reflections</i>	108
Amar N. Prasad	Hitesh Parmar, ' <i>Paradise Lost</i> ' and ' <i>The Divine Comedy</i> ': A Comparative Study	110
Vijay K. Sharma	B.R. Nagpal, <i>Realism and Revelation in Graham Greene</i>	112
M.R.Verma	Pashupati Jha, <i>Cross and Creation</i>	114
K.K. Sharma	R.W. Desai, <i>Shakespearean Latencies</i>	116
Vikram Chopra	Basavaraj Naikar (Ed.), <i>Indian Response to Shakespeare</i>	122
H.C. Gupta	Emken (M.K.Naik), <i>From Anne Bradstreet to Main Street and Beyond That</i>	125
Contributors		128

THE APPLICATION OF *DHVANI* TO SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

S. Viswanathan

Among the Shakespeare plays, perhaps *Macbeth* is one most amenable to an approach through the Sanskrit literary-critical category of *dhvani*, a critical concept formulated and instituted as a leading principle of literary and dramatic interpretation by Anandavardhana (9th century) and by Abhinavagupta (10th century) with his *Dhvanyalokachana*, a classic commentary on Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*. Though the concept can be distinctly recognised and perceived for what it is, it has a comprehensive sweep of significance which covers almost the whole gamut of the range of viable imaginative response to drama and poetry. In other words, it includes almost all legitimate modes of response to imaginative literature. Thus the critical category of *dhvani* is not in any real conflict with other Sanskrit literary-critical principles such as *guna-dosha* (quality or its violation); *riti* (style in the organic, holistic sense); *aucitya* (decorum); and, above all, *vakrokti* (strikingness through deviation in expression), but subsumes these categories. No wonder *dhvani* is a cardinal principle of Indian criticism. It is also in close association with the other major principle of Sanskrit criticism *rasa* (sentiment, its relish), and the two go together, *rasa* making itself felt through *dhvani* and *dhvani* justifying itself through *rasa*, so much so that it is termed *rasadhvani*. Generally translated as suggestion, suggestivity or suggestiveness as *dhvani* is, its definition or description is not perhaps so relevant for an attempt to apply it to *Macbeth*¹ as the connotations of the principle of suggestivity or rather the suggestiveness of suggestion. Some ways and modes of operation of *dhvani* in our response to *Macbeth* are our present concern.

Abhinavagupta was the classic exponent and instaurator of the critical category after its discovery formulation by Anandavardhana; both of them are outstanding and masterful in their grasp of and insight into the nature of literary and dramatic

experience in its essentials. Abhinava laid the utmost stress on the imaginative response of the *sahrudaya*, the kindred-spirited reader or spectator. Such a one will be able to tune in aright and develop a rapport with the work before him and savour its effects of many-dimensioned suggestiveness. Abhinava offers a vigorous vindication of the status and reality of *dhvani* as a critical entity and a major one in literary discourse against the logician-like arguments of those who might and did question its *locus standi* and tried to apply Occam's razor on it. As he amply establishes the point, it is the 'logic of the imagination' and not the logicians' logic that is to be followed in literary response, and that alone will enable one to recognise and receive the *dhvani* effect. (It is a different matter, though, if Abhinava in his rhetorical defence of *dhvani* against the logicians employs the logicians' logic to refute them.)

Suggestion, Otto Jespersen the linguist pointed out in *The Philosophy of Grammar* (p.390), is 'impression through suppression.' We may also remember that Maurice Morgann in late eighteenth century in his *tour de force* of *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* presented the insight that 'Shakespeare contrives to make *secret* impressions upon us' in his drama. It is such secret impressions that make for the quality of *dhvani*. More important, it is the 'fit' audience (though not always or necessarily 'few') of the *sahrudayas* who can be most receptive to *dhvani* in the dynamic of the artistic transaction.

Although it is true of other Shakespeare plays also, the poetry and the total theatre language of *Macbeth* would in particular seem to specialize in a sensational or at times even visceral or subliminal mode of communication and impact. So it abounds in qualities many of which would seem readily to yield to a response in terms of *dhvani*. Put another way, it is the predominant suggestivity of the play, not so much its plain meaning or character or action by themselves, which lends it its dimensions of greatness as tragic drama. The opening scene and its stage effects set the mood. Indeed, the play opens with 'thunder and lightning,' that is, with *dhvani* in its literal sense of the sounding of rolled

drums by way of off-stage noise to suggest thunder on the Shakespearian stage, accompanied by the visual suggestion of lightning with fireworks of some kind and also perhaps stage-smoke for 'fog and filthy air' through which the Witches hover. All these together with the cryptic utterances of the Witches suggest equivocation and a reversal of values.

Fair is foul, and foul is fair. (1.1.11)

In the very next scene (1.2.), the stage image of the 'bleeding serjeant' and his rhetorical narration of Macbeth's valour followed by Rosse's report of Macbeth's feats of loyalty to King Duncan, and Duncan's response of ready and warm appreciation and reward for Macbeth are rich with ambivalence and irony in hindsight of what Macbeth subsequently is to do. The stage blood on the 'bleeding serjeant' figure starts the considerably significant strain of blood imagery, verbal and visual, in the play. Importantly, the blood imagery has a duality of significance as the blood references or instances of stage blood across the play communicate at subtler levels than that of a drama of blood and thunder and evoke the sense as much of the positive associations of blood like lifegivingness, creativity, nobility and curativeness (through bloodletting) as those of horror, cruelty and crime.

Similarly, the ironies which underlie the utterances of Duncan and his approbation of Macbeth as his saviour are ultimately to be recognised to be not merely verbal or situational ironies, but to be the ironies which build up towards the central tragic irony of the play, brought home in the oblique mode of suggestion, that Macbeth in the very process of his strenuous if not agonizing desensitising of himself for the murder of Duncan and the ones to follow is made to reveal, in that very process till the point of its completeness is reached, his essential sensitivities of mind and conscience. It is not simply that Macbeth is poetic in his sensibility or, as Bernard Shaw put it, he is a 'nervous gentleman in galligaskins.' Even as he might assert

'twere best not know myself (2.2.70)

all along he fully knows himself despite himself in the sense that

deep within he is aware enough of what he goes in for yet he proceeds in the name of ambition, which is, again ironically, shattered as if a moment sooner than it is achieved, fuelled by the inspiration from Lady Macbeth who goes almost into a sustained state of possession by spirits in the 'great business' as well as from the equivocating Witches' prophecies. Macbeth may also be seen as trying to perform the murder of Duncan and the subsequent acts as though he were an actor playing a role as much assigned to him by the script and stagemanagement, between the two, of the Witches and Lady Macbeth as consciously chosen and adopted by him. He puts on appearances, in one sense, to conceal and in another, enact the all too stark and dire realities as if these were semitheatricalised, detached action and acting. The suggestions are there, among other things particularly in the recurrent motif of a deliberately willed divorce of 'the heart' and 'the eye' on the one side and 'the hand' on the other on Macbeth's part.

Yet, amidst all this, Macbeth has a nagging sense of the 'borrowed robes' of power and kingship, actor's costumes in the theatrical and stage context, not sitting well on him. The choric observer characters in the play also express this opinion almost in tune with a now not sufficiently recognised Renaissance convention of belief and thought in relation to the idea of clothes. The convention finds expression in Renaissance courtesy books like Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governor* (1541) which Shakespeare and his audience were familiar with. The formulation by Elyot runs like this:

If he (a king or 'magistrate') have an ancient robe left by 'his ancestor it diminisheth his praise to them which know ... the virtue of him that first owned it. If he that weareth it be vicious, it more detecteth how he is unworthy to wear it, the remembrance of his noble ancestor making men to abhor the reproach given by an evil successor.

(S.E. Lehmberg, ed. Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governor* [London, 1962], p. 105).

Such nuances in the question of the 'fit' of Macbeth's kingly robes² are more complex than Caroline Spurgeon's linear interpretation of the clothes imagery which she was first to isolate. Her reading is that the off-size garments idea suggests Macbeth to be taken

as a 'dwarf in giant's robes.' Indeed the nuances of suggestions, noted so far, could all be regarded as instances of sustained effects of *dhvani* in the play. Such intimations are precisely the ones that, far from letting us view Macbeth simply as 'dead butcher' or for that matter as degenerate sinner going to his damnation, bring upon the reader or spectator who is a *sahrudaya* a sense of Macbeth's dimensions of tragic value and tragic greatness and evoke the imaginative apprehension and response which would preclude a reductionist understanding or uncritical sentimentalism.

In other words, Macbeth's aliveness to what his deeds involve by way of a violation of nature, natural order and the sanctities and pieties of life and of a total upset of values, comes through in terms of suggestivity in the dramatic rendering of the hero-villain's deliberately wrought commitment to evil. The truly responsive *sahrudaya* is enabled to perceive this central feature of the play through the underlying suggestions the operations of which can be apprehended as the function and effect of *dhvani*. Often, such oblique connotations function as a counterpoint to the more obvious denotation. The emphasis laid by the great exponent of the *dhvani* theory on the *sahrudaya* response, based on kindred-spirited receptivity tuned in on the right wavelength as it were, as the essential requisite is relevant. It is especially so when we recognise how necessary yet how hard it is to avoid the fallacy of reductionist or partisan reading, none too uncommon in critical interpretation now as then. The question does pose itself whether the concept of the *sahrudaya* is not too elitist for one's consumption. Some of the terms Abhinava employs to characterize his idea of the *sahrudaya* do give the suspicion that exclusivity or being one of the elect few let alone the select few is a mark of such a one. But the concept in its basic significance is not essentially elitist when set in its true context of cultural life, that is, in a context where cultural unity can coexist with social stratification without a dichotomy between 'high culture' and 'low culture.' More important, we should be mindful enough to take Abhinava's concept of the *sahrudaya* with his other central concept of *sadharanikarana*. The two are in his reckoning the twin key fac-

tors in the process of dramatic and literary response, and the complementary relationship between the two in their implications needs underscoring. By *sadharanikarana*, Abhinava meant to indicate the psychological-cum-experiential transmission and reception of the impressions and effects, individually and collectively, which brings about a vicarious participation on the reader's or spectator's part in the poem or play. Customarily, the term is rendered as 'universalisation,' but it has been usefully and valuably glossed as 'transpersonalisation' (Mohan Thampi) and as the process of 'raising the emotional complex to the aesthetic level of common enjoyability' (K. Krishnamoorthy). Presumably, it was Bhatta Tauta, Abhinava's teacher, who conceived the idea and broached it and offered valuable insights into the theatrico-dramatic transaction on its basis in his treatise *Kavyakautuka* which, unfortunately, survives only in a few fragments. Abhinava develops the idea, and offers insights on the lines of his teacher, in his *Lochana* and his commentary on Bharata's seminal *Natyasastra* called *Abhinavabharati*. Whatever the exact meaning of the term used to denote the concept, the first factor to note is that it points to sharing in common of feeling and experience at once between the play event or poetry utterance, on the one hand, and the spectator or reader, on the other, and among the spectators or readers themselves in like fashion. The experience thus is intersubjective say between spectator and character and, to a great or less extent, among the spectators. Such implications of universalisation in *sadharanikarana* will sufficiently offset whatever exclusivist bias that the *sahrudaya* idea may seem to suggest. Moreover, the process in Abhinava's envisionment would lend support to the phenomenon of collective audience response guided often by a community of basic values and basic sensibility.

The two other immediate factors to note about the basic artistic transaction, as Abhinava emphasises these, are as follows. First, it is an entirely present-oriented process, however, beneficial the results of the experience may be for the future. In this sense, though not in the Paterian aesthetic sense, the experience itself, not the fruit of experience, which counts. Abhinava

uses the metaphor of a 'magic flower' which appears and disappears, implying thereby the existentiality of the experience. Second, a common enjoyability, a joyfulness, and also 'joy in widest commonalty' though this last in a limited sense, distinguishes the experience. Although Bhatta Tauta in the *Kavyakautuka* fragment, philosopher that he was, seems to err on the extreme of etherealizing drama by denying that the staging is a physical occurrence or phenomenon at all, he would seem to have well recognised something like what a critic like S.L. Bethell identified as the 'multiconsciousness' of the audience of the actor on stage as character and the actor as actor at one and the same time. On the basis of this feature, Bhatta Tauta places a play and its happenings in a kind of midway 'third realm' between pure actuality and pure ideality, which factor provides fruitful imaginative access to it. This mild-location of drama or, for that matter, literature in general somewhere between the ideal and the actual brings about its virtual or non-ontological status and invests it with what Susanne Langer, in the twentieth century, called 'virtual life' or virtual reality well before the advent of the cyber age.

An even more relevant implication of this finding is that drama, as Bhatta Tauta and Abhinava seem to have insisted, is 'representation' (*sadrśya*) rather than 'imitation' (*anukarana*), that is, more of a re-presentation than impersonation. In terms of spectator reaction, it amounts to, as Viswanatha a later theorist well pointed out in his *Sahityadarpana* (*The Mirror of Literature*), the spectator feels that, as the character engages his or her imaginative sympathy, the experience of the character is the character's, but not entirely only the character's and that the experience closely touches the spectator himself or herself, but also this not altogether. It is what makes for a right balance of simultaneous engagement and detachment or of sympathy and judgment.

The foregoing longish intervention on Sanskrit dramaturgical theories entailed in the central idea of *dhvani* or *rasadhvani* will help particularly in clarifying our response to a play like *Macbeth*. On such critical premises as sketched above, we should be able to perceive the limitations which the old historicist or the new

historicist and cultural political readings of *Macbeth* because of their 'local' orientation may be prone to, though we should not discount the perceptions on the play which such readings bring us. We may be able to see for example the limits of the relevance of King James I to the play, and refrain from offering a King James version of it, sometimes with the Gunpowder plot foregrounded. We may also remember not to bring the Witches and the contemporary ideas of witchcraft and of the supernatural quite centre-stage while we should by all means accord these their due place.

What is centrestage is Shakespeare's presentation of both the 'night's great business' (though the murder of Duncan itself is an offstage one) of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and the further deeds of Macbeth on the one side and the repercussions, personal as well as interpersonal, national as well as cosmic, and the reaction phase which Macbeth provokes. The ramifications of the sort of suggestiveness, *dhvani* one can call it, through which Shakespeare effects the communication may be felt to have the overall consequence of an evocation of the *rasa* or sentiment of an 'unknown fear.' It is a 'fear' which comes to pervade the individual characters, the protagonists Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and others including the choric figures, and finally gets communicated to the viewer as *rasa*. In the case of the protagonists it leads to a 'see-sawing' between fear and security which when false is 'mortals' chief enemy.' It pervades the whole nation once it gets under Macbeth's regime in the form of the atmosphere of mistrust, and is carried into England by the exiles. Whether it is the poetic-dramatic evocation of the 'airy dagger' envisioned by Macbeth in phantasmagoric fashion or the mysterious voice crying out 'sleep no more' to Macbeth or the nine-times-repeated 'knocking,' all these in the theatre language of verbal, aural and visual force communicate a sense of 'fear.' So do, at a more subtle and more generalized level, the active poetic-verbal and visual-stage suggestions and associations of hell in the scene of the porter 'at Hell gate' and in some of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking utterances. A suggested semblance to the souls in Hell and Purgatory rising to the trumpet call on the Judgment Day emerges in the

disposition of characters onstage immediately after the discovery of Duncan's murder when they all crowd around in their night-gowns, in their 'naked frailties.' Not that one should in the manner of Lily B. Campbell play it solely by the books of Elizabethan psychology and the pathological symptoms of fear described in these. It is 'fear' in an aesthetic and also moral rather than in a psychological sense. (Wilbur Sanders [*The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, Cambridge, 1968], Ch.13 has a penetrating if intriguing account of this quality of 'an unknown-fear' in the play). Yet the irony that 'Bellona's bridegroom,' the great warrior-hero who has ideas of 'manliness', should subject himself to such 'fear' as also that with his keen feeling into the enormity of his violation of the basic pieties Macbeth should commit himself to evil is what E.E. Stoll called the 'steep tragic contrast' that makes for tragic effect.

In the immediate prelude to Banquo's murder and to his son Fleance's great escape, a murder which he plots without taking Lady Macbeth into confidence as part of his swift retreat into isolation from her too and into loneliness, because

Our fears in Banquo

Stick deep

(3.1.48-49)

Macbeth speaks to his wife in dark hints and guesses about what he has planned.

Macbeth:

... ..

... ere the bat hath flown

His cloister'd flight, ere black Hecat's summons

The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums

Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done

A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macbeth: What's to be done?

Macbeth:

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,

Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,

And with thy bloody and invisible hand

Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond

Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow

Makes wing to th' rooky wood

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
 While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
 Thou marvel'st at my words, but hold thee still;
 Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill. (3.2.40-55)

Shakespeare so ordains the evocative afflatus of these lines that the deliberately mystifying, all but, but not quite or really, poeticizing theatricality of Macbeth's utterance is called attention to in the indicated response of his onstage listener. 'What's to be done?', 'Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still.' The drift of Macbeth's vaunt is that as the 'secret'st man of blood' he would have Banquo's elimination smoothly accomplished in the secrecy of night; such suggestions of a 'nocturnal' genre for the play recur across it. Here again, through the undertones of the utterance there emerges the speaker's keen aliveness, despite the overt hints of cruelty, to the positives implied in the very items he conjures up as a catalogue, replete with sensuous auditory and visual suggestion, of the horrors of the night. These very natural phenomena are representative of the regular natural order and rhythms which Macbeth recognises in his subconscious, though all he does is in violation of the spirit of these. And he knows it only too well.

The multiple force of suggestion in the apparent statement
 Light thickens, and the crow
 Makes wing to th'rooky wood

has been the subject of intricate and detailed comment, as witness those of Empson in his *tour de force*, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. There is no need to rehearse these, except perhaps to remind oneself of the fund of associations of the bird on its flight to its treehome, of the associations of gregarious and chattering (rooky) togetherness, secure, restorative rest in the protection of the rookery though in misty surroundings, all conveying the idea of sleep and peace which Macbeth fully recognises as what he misses. It is interesting that the Sanskrit literary theorist Bhamaha (7th century) (*Kavyalankara*) who propounded the idea of oblique expression in poetry which was later developed into the theory of *vakrokti* (deviated, striking expression) being the hall-mark of poetry by Kuntaka (10th century), cited as

a hypothetical example of direct descriptive verse which does not at all qualify as poetry the lines

The sun has set, the moon has risen
and the birds fly to their nests.

Bhamaha's contemporary Dandin (*Kavyadarsa*) took issue with him. He maintained that such a collocation of words could take on rich poetic power if used in a context and a manner in which they produce effects. Exactly, Shakespeare's lines for Macbeth uncannily testify to Dandin's point and, as Sigurd Burckhardt, an original critic, stated with reference to Shakespeare, many meanings have a single word in such instances rather than a single word having many meanings. This last perception was expressed long ago by Bhavabhuti the ancient Sanskrit dramatist, often paired with Kalidasa, in a verse to the effect that if in the case of the wise of the world word runs after sense, with the seers (the great poets in that reckoning being synonymous) sense rushes after word.

Again, Macbeth's much-discussed speech soon after hearing of his wife's death is remarkable for the positive impression the utterance of stark nihilism conveys in its overtones alongside and in spite of our recognition of the fearfulness of this 'full look at the worst' and of our moral bearings on the situation, on the wages of sin and crime which Macbeth for all his tragic stature is seen to have brought upon himself.

Macbeth:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time.
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (5.5.19-28)

We may not share the celebratory, romanticizing tone and attitude of Lascelles Abercrombie (*The Idea of Great Poetry* [1925], pp.176-177) to the passage. In his classic comment indicating

the positive thrust of the speech, Abercrombie said that because of Macbeth's mastering of his terrible awareness of the meaninglessness of life, acquired by generalization from his case,

Macbeth's personality towers into its loftiest grandeur ... we see not only what he feels, but the personality that feels it; and in the very fact of proclaiming that life is a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing personal life announces its virtue, and superbly signifies itself.

The point, however, is well taken that the effective poetico-dramatic conception-cum-communication of the deep-felt awareness of the hollowness of life achieves the irony of bringing home that feeling and at the same time a vindication if not an affirmation of life through the sense it conveys of the dimensions of greatness of Macbeth's tragic awareness beside that of the moral values which should govern our balance of imaginative sympathy and judgment. It is Shakespeare's mastery over the power of poetic-dramatic suggestivity that brings impressions where apparent opposites are harmonized. It is accomplished by the poet-playwright's subtle manipulation of diction, rhythm and movement and his superb exploitation of a flurry of three-stranded imagery and imagistic associations and their implications in their live theatrical context. It should suffice to consider in brief one or two of these. The emblematic image of the candle reinforcing the brevity of life shades off into a particular form of the then ubiquitous world-as-stage metaphor. It takes the form of life being a 'walking shadow.' It is not so much the light-candle-shadow train of associations as the synecdoche of an insignificant actor, 'shadow' who has only an all-too-brief speechless and walk-on-and-walk-out part to play on the stage that draws our attention, an actor who is nothing, the very nihilism of life. But on the live stage as the lines were spoken by Burbage the leading tragic actor in Shakespeare's theatre, the actor's stage-presence, performance and delivery would give the lie direct to the insignificance of the actor. The awareness that, clumsy walk-on parts apart, there are actors like Burbage who played Macbeth will not fail to work on the minds of the audience. Similarly, the story that the playwright tells in and through the ongoing and now-about-to-end play of *Macbeth* has been anything but a 'tale told by an idiot

/ signifying nothing' to the responsive spectator or reader. The point is worth noting for our purpose that in a play like *Macbeth* the *dhvani* effects are carried conjointly by the verse and the theatrical dynamic.

This point together with the idea that an attentive and responsive *sahrudaya*-like apprehension is a requisite in order to savour the *dhvani* effect will receive further corroboration from a brief look at the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth* (5.1). Shakespeare, indeed, calls up and subtly guides or manipulates the spectator's or reader's response to the scene in many ways, great and small. He designs the scene as a scene-within-the scene. It is a framed scene with the Doctor of Physic and the Waiting Gentlewoman introducing it, preparing us for Lady Macbeth's somnambulistic performance and providing an illuminating running commentary on its nature, details and import. Our response is all the keener and if anything gets further heightened for its coming through the mediation of such a filter. The marvel is that such mediation renders the immediacy of the total impact on us closer. T.S. Eliot, one may remember, in his early revisionist review-essay on *Hamlet* spoke of what he called the 'artistic failure' of that play (though he later more or less recanted) to find an adequate 'objective correlative' for Hamlet's emotion, and thus introduced a critical term which had its currency for long. This critical term corresponds to the combination of factors required for the realization of *rasa*, the imaginative experience of sentiment, such as the two *vibhāvas* (characters and setting), *anubhāvas* (the physical symptoms of gestural expression of emotions of character) and *vyabhicharibhāvas* (adjunct emotions of the primary feelings of characters) which together almost alchemise the *sthayibhāvas* the primary feelings of characters into the *rasa* experience on the part of the spectator. Eliot in the *Hamlet* essay cited as an example of the successful communication of feeling and emotion through the right 'objective correlative', the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*. It is easy to see why Eliot chose the scene.

Every movement, gesture and utterance of Lady Macbeth in

her sleep-walking state is underscored through the comments of the Doctor and the Gentlewoman who turn the spotlight of attention on the actions and gestures. Incidentally, this would facilitate the audience in the Globe of Shakespeare's day where the large dimensions did not quite make for ideal sight lines. The fearfulness of the pangs of guilt-stricken conscience and of the state of sinfulness and proleptic damnation and hell is carried with force into the spectator's heart. The recurrent stress on the sticking blood on Lady Macbeth's hand which would not go, make as if to wash however hard she might, links with her initial cavalier belief that a little would do the trick and also with the strand of blood references in the play. (Incidentally, few Shakespearians would seem to note a grisly parallel in recent world history. After the atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a contrite Robert Oppenheimer told President Truman 'I have blood on my hands.' Truman replied, 'Don't worry. It'll come out in the wash'). The sighs and starts, and all other sensory impressions besides the obsessive making as if to rub and wash her hands and the confessional blurting out about the serial murders are expressions of the depths of her consciousness in spite of herself. The communication is poetic-dramatic though the scene is all in prose except for the concluding speech of the Doctor, and the poet-playwright demands and obtains attunement from the spectator or reader.

In general, it requires a reader or viewer rightly attuned to the literary text, play-performance or an art object for a rapport, a successful artistic encounter and transaction, to be brought about between the two. Eric Gombrich the art critic and historian used the term 'resonance' to denote such a relationship of rapport between a work of art and its viewer (*Meditations on a Hobbyhorse* [London, 1963], p.56). Also, Abhinavagupta himself traces back the word *dhvani* to Bhartruhari's use of it in a seminal statement in his *Vakyapadiya* that speech emerges as *dhvani* or the resonance as that of a ringing bell led up to by the concatenation of sounds, the process of conception behind these being called *sphota* (the plosion of sound). Abhinava terms the suggested

sense in poetry which is resonant like the ringing of a bell *dhvani*. He calls *dhvani* by other alternative names among which are *dhvanana* (resounding), *dyotana* (flash of illumination), to indicate the workings of the *vyangya* (suggestion) of *dhvani*. Given Abhinava's desideratum of the kindred-souled reader/viewer establishing a true dialogue with the work for *dhvani* to make itself felt, we could say that the phenomenon of the 'resonance' in Gombrich's sense is what Abhinava envisages. For this reason, it may be more appropriate to render *dhvani* as 'resonance' than 'suggestion' as we generally do. For it is not 'suggestion' in any too liberal a sense. It is not any irrelevant or wayward 'suggestion' entertained either subjectively or as a result of critical bandwagonism, but such 'suggestiveness' as can be recognised and absorbed by the *sahrudaya* a culturally equipped and attentive spectator/reader, who is capable of establishing a rapport with the work in and through her or his real, steady and whole, experience of it.

That leads us to consider how, *dhvani* may relate to the critical term and concept, 'resonance' as twinned with the term 'wonder' as 'resonance and wonder' by the leading new historicist critic Stephen Greenblatt and highlighted by him as the twin poles of response to significant art or literature. Greenblatt identifies 'resonance' as 'the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond its formal frontiers to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged' (*Resonance and Wonder, Learning to Curse* [1990], p.170). In the same breath he proceeds to describe 'wonder' in terms such as the power '... to stop the viewer in his tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke exalted attention,' and above all, 'to generate in the spectator surprise, delight, admiration and intimations of genius' (p.170). Now, *dhvani* for all its *alaukika* or non-ordinary or not merely worldly or practical quality, does reach beyond mere formalism or the purely aesthetic. It does so if only in its awakening of moral values. It awakens a sense of not only the cultural forces behind the work but also, beyond these, the cultural-cum-moral (the two being inseparable)

values that govern the cultural energies. In other words, *dhvani* as it could subsume the 'local' much canvassed in cultural political criticism would go beyond the 'local' in emphasis and could save us the distortions that preoccupation with the 'local' may produce. However, *dhvani* could answer eminently well to 'wonder' in Greenblatt's outline. He takes the useful term from the Renaissance critic Minturno who had the term 'admiratio' for it but in the sense of 'looking upon something in wonder.' Minturno's formula 'commiseration and admiration' was a modification of the Aristotelian 'pity and terror' to mark the response to tragedy, which meant to suggest that the spectator/reader feels for the sufferings of the protagonist and, importantly, responds with wonder not only to him but to the playwright's artistry in presentation. Such a formula has its relevant application to Shakespeare's tragedies like *Macbeth*.

An attempt like the present one to apply as a speculative instrument a central principle of Sanskrit poetics like *dhvani* to the interpretation of an English drama classic like *Macbeth* and to some of its problems will help clarify certain issues. The value of *dhvani* as a critical principle and tool lies in the main in that the *dhvani* effects are 'something understood' (in George Herbert's phrase from 'Prayer I') in the sense of being immediately and almost intuitively felt in and through the total experience of the work. The proper *dhvani* response saves us from the predicament of getting the meaning or rather whatever of it one sees, but missing the experience of a play or poem. We justifiably quote in studies by way of application of Sanskrit aesthetic criteria to the Shakespeare plays statements such as that of Susanne Langer (*Feeling and Form* [New York, 1953], p.323).

Some of the Hindu critics ... understand much better than their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotion in the theatre ... the vital feelings of the piece.

This last they call *rasa*; it is a state of emotional knowledge, which comes only to those who have long studied and contemplated poetry.

Or the statement of Ananda Coomaraswamy (*The Dance of Siva*, p.137) that 'The works of Shakespeare are in close accordance with Indian canons of dramatic art.' But it would be very relevant here to quote another utterance by Ananda Coomaraswamy as

cited by L.C. Knights together with Knights's important comments ('King Lear as Metaphor,' *Hamlet and Other Shakespearean Essays* [1979] pp.252-53).

In *The Transformation of Nature in Art* Ananda Coomaraswamy glosses the term *yun* as used by a Chinese writer on aesthetics: 'The idea *yun*, of operation or reverberation, is strictly comparable to what is meant by the *dhvani* of Indian rhetoricians, it being only as it were by an echoing in the heart of the hearer that the full meaning of a word (or any other symbol) can be realised' (P.187). *Dhvani*, he adds, 'is literally "sound," especially sound like that of thunder or a drum, hence "resonance" or "overtone" of meaning' — i.e. the verbal noun 'sounding,' rather than the noun 'sound' (P.198). I am ignorant of Chinese and Indian aesthetics, but it seems to me that this comment throws light on the metaphoric process we have been considering it is only through the reader's imagination responding to the imagination of the poet (bringing 'the whole soul of man into activity') that the work becomes alive the imagination thus conceived is an instrument of knowledge — not 'knowledge of something fixed and definite, but knowledge as a 'sounding,' 'an echoing in the heart of the hearer.'

An approach to a play like *Macbeth* in terms of *dhvani* does bring its reward or rather, it is its own reward. We may not claim that the method has the advantage of uniqueness, granting that there is at all anything like a unique method. But it serves to bring us clearly closer to what we may call the 'feel' and quality of the play.

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¹I cite in this essay the text of the play in the *Riverside Shakespeare*, ed.G.Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974). Accessible editions with translation are there by K. Krishnamoorthy both of Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka* (Karnatak University Press, Dharwar) and of Abhinavagupta's *Dhvanyalokalochna* (Meherchand Lechhmandas Publications, New Delhi). V.S. Seturaman, ed. *Indian Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Macmillan, India, 1992) is a valuable compendium of essays by various hands and excerpts, with translation, from the original texts.

²I develop these and related suggestions of the imagery in greater detail in 'Macbeth in the 'Tiring-house: The Actor and Clothes Motifs in the Play,' *Anglia*, 100 (1982), 18-35 and in my *On Shakespeare's Dramaturgy* (New Delhi: Spantech, 1993), ch.6 'Use of Costume,' 134-36.

POSTMODERN PROBLEMATICS: THE LITERARY SISYPHUS

K.B. Razdan

Postmodernism has aptly been defined as the paradoxical aftermath of modernism. No "Chinese Wall or Iron Curtain"¹ separates the two: one flows into the other like a running stream of water. Problematics as a unique defining norm of postmodernist explosion of literary form, content, theme and imagery, as applied to American and English writings, especially fiction and poetry, defines itself in terms of what has been termed as a 'mass society'. By a 'mass society' what is meant is "a relatively comfortable, half welfare and half garrison society in which the population grows passive, indifferent and atomized."² Such a sociological spectacle becomes also synonymous with what is termed as a "demonic human world"³ in which traditional loyalties, ties and associations "become lax or dissolve entirely,"⁴ and current publics based on definite interests and opinions gradually fall apart. The connotation, vis-a-vis contemporary man, suggests the disturbing reality that the mass society presents humans as inveterate consumers, themselves mass produced like the products, diversions and values they absorb. Northrop Frye, Ihab Hassan, Linda Hutcheon, Michael Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Patricia Waugh, to name a few among the exponents and critical practitioners and diagnosticians of postmodern dedoxification and antitotalizing-totalization, become virtually unanimous in asserting that problematization, contradiction, alienation, anarchy and disorder characterize the portraiture or depiction of the fictional, the poetic protagonists and even present-day man, cast adrift across the turbulent waves of a chaotic sea of life. Postmodern man as represented in the American novels written by such celebrities like Kurt Vonnegut, William Burroughs, John Updike, John Hawkes and Jerzy Kosinski during the late sixties, the seventies, eighties and nineties of the 20th century, represent man as a modern-day Sisyphus who inhabits a world of "bondage and pain and confusion... instruments of torture and monuments

of folly."⁵ This 'secular Sisyphus' also inhabits a world of "the nightmare and the scapegoat,"⁶ a world with amorphous symptoms.

In tune with the contradictory, paradoxical and antithetical nature of postmodernist living and literary representation, what gets evoked is "a number of related cultural tendencies, a constellation of values, a repertoire of procedures and attitudes."⁷ A peculiar typology of culture and imagination permeates postmodernism as a sociological, cultural, literary and technological phenomenon. A precise focus upon literary representation, especially in fiction and poetry (as pointed out earlier) whether American or English, especially the former, cumulatively or in the totality of the human predicament, presents a total reversal of modernism. Certain interesting schematic differences between modernism and postmodernism in terms of literary texts, characters, plots, themes, symbolism and imagery, could be categorized easily. For instance, if modernism presents Romanticism, in postmodernism it becomes pataphysics/Dadaism. Form no longer remains conjunctive, closed but takes the shape of antiform, disjunctive and open. Purpose becomes play, design: chance; centering: dispersal, paranoia: schizophrenia; metaphysics: irony; determinacy: indeterminacy; symptom: desire, to name only a few. Ostensibly, it is this total reversal of what modernism stood for as a concept, that one of the greatest novelistic practitioners of 20th century American postmodernist problematics, Jerzy Kosinski, in his *The Art of the Self*, said: "Today, the basis of horror is often the theft of the self, the fear of having one's identity overshadowed."⁸ The heroes of Kosinski, Vonnegut, Burroughs, Barth, Hawkes, and Joseph Heller, among others, share a common dread of being taken over, of being assimilated into a reality pattern of not their own choosing. Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-five* (1969), *Bluebeard* (1987), *Hocus Pocus* (1991) and *Time Quake* (1998), and even the earlier *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), present heroes, men and women, man-woman relationship, and the fracture of the family as an existential sanctuary, in absolutely disconcerting and upsetting terms. Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There* (1971), *The Devil Tree* (1973), *Cockpit* (1975), *Blind Date*

(1977), *Passion Play* (1979) and *Pinball* (1982), all dish out a cocktail of sex, disguise and violence in no uncertain times. William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1958), *Nova Express* (1963), *Cities of the Red Night* (1978), and *Queer* (1982), depict the same demonic mishmash of metafictional self-reflexivity, inner psychic pain and anarchy while theorizing, modelling, limiting, decentering, contextualizing and historicizing the postmodern. A Kafkaesque ambience permeates the fictional lives of the heroes in these works of postmodernist American fiction. Joseph Heller's *Something Happened* (1973), *Good as Gold* (1982), and John Hawkes's *Death Sleep and the Traveller* (1979), and the earlier *Blood Oranges* (1965), are no different. Metaphorically speaking, this 'literary Sisyphus' reincarnated as the postmodernist hero personifies through his or her culture, actions, and mind-set, a kind of an excremental culture, a kind of a "final homecoming to a technoscape,"⁹ where a "body without organs... a negative space, a pure implosion, a looking away"¹⁰ defines, qualifies and interprets every human act, choice and determination.

A peculiar blend of "frenzy and sluggishness, amiability and meanness"¹¹ becomes the existentialist hallmark of this postmodern literary Sisyphus. His female counterpart in the fictional works of the aforesaid novelists may be defined as a metafictional female Adam, an aggressive, *alazonic*, *haetara* type of a woman who encroaches upon the lives of men to dismember their families with ruthless and clinical efficiency. The net product of such a formulation comes in the form of a dissolution of traditional centres of authority like the family. As an existentialist sanctuary, the family tends to lose its binding power upon human beings. Central protagonists of the works of American and even Indian English writers become one among a vast number of people who "float through life with a burden of freedom they can neither sustain nor legitimately abandon to social or religious groups."¹² Passivity: resigned passivity and comic anarchy govern and determine the role-playing matrix, making this tendency a widespread social attitude. Vonnegut's Dwayne Hoover, the protagonist in *Breakfast of Champions*, Rabo Karabekian in

Bluebeard, Kosinski's Fabian in *Passion Play*, Laventer in *The Devil Tree*, and Patrick Domostroy and Jimmy Osten in *Pinball*, Joseph Heller's Bob Slocum in *Something Happened*, Bruce Gold in *Good As Gold*: all these postmodernist reincarnations of Sisyphus embody, personify and fully enact the decosifying, antitotalizing totalization, as well as the commodification and decentering ethos of a mass society, in itself a direct corollary to the problematizing and deconstructive nature of postmodernism.

It would also be pertinent to point out here that for an ideally absurdist, ironic and surrealist literary hero of postmodern writing, be it American, English, or Indian English writers like Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, even Shobha De, human opinion is "manufactured systematically and scientifically... opinion tends to flow unilaterally in measured quantities,"¹³ till it "becomes a market commodity."¹⁴ The era of causes, good or bad, seems to have come to an end and even strong beliefs seem to be anachronistic. Nostalgia for the rigours of belief fills even the mind of an agnostic, such is the crippling impact of a dehumanizing mass society.

In theories on the postmodern including Feminism, Gender and Autonomy factor, Linda Hutcheon, one of the current critical exponents and analysts of postmodernism, has included Feminist thought and typology as an important ingredient of the postmodern. According to her, "Feminism of late... has developed a self-reflexive mode: questioning its own legitimating procedures in a manner which seems to bring it close to a Postmodernism which has absorbed the lessons of post-structuralism...."¹⁵ Obviously, feminist writings with a predominant focus upon woman personages with distinct *alazonic* identities as in the works of Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence and Alice Walker, among the Canadian women writers, and Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison among the Afro-American ones, in totality depict that the postmodernist Eve of literary texts must reflect in herself a modified and emancipatory adherence to an epistemological anchorage in any discourse on enlightened or enlightening modernism. The general critical consensus is that Postmodernism is

obsessively concerned with fracture, fragmentation, dismemberment and deconstruction. All the same, as an accepted, real and practised phenomenon (not only in literature, in music, photography, dress-designing, architecture, cyber-technology, etc.) this 'constellation' of values and attitudes defined as the postmodern, either envisions the world of humans as fragmenting or it takes upon itself to explore and discover modes and means which will fracture, dissolve and eventually do away with "old and supposedly exhausted unities."¹⁶

It would be befitting to conclude with the observation that according to the poetics, politics, and ethics of postmodernist thinking, desire and dissent always act as catalysts. In real, day to day life or in the fictional worlds of postmodern writers, desire and dissent predominate. Says Ihab Hassan:

My concern is dissent in postmodern times. But dissent stirs ancient desires even as it appeals to our future being. Rooted in ontological ground, it rises, bole, branch, and blossom, through human society, bearing bright and dangerous fruit. Lucifer cried *non serviam*, and Prometheus stole the red fire from under the nose of Zeus....¹⁷

The contemporary 'Sisyphus,' a helpless and rather pathetic product of postmodernist problematization, has this to say in his ethnically coloured or black form (as a black or postcolonial protagonist) of course in the American context (implicitly in the context of all multi-ethnic, diverse cultures):

Dear white folks,
 Couple of things you should know
 When I born, I black
 When I grow up, I black
 When I go in sun, I black
 When I cold, I black
 When I scared, I black
 When I sick, I black
 And when I die, I still black
 You white fella
 When you born, you pink
 When you grow up, you white
 When you go in sun, you red
 When you cold, you blue
 When you scared, you yellow

When you sick, you green
And when you die, you grey.
And you have the cheek to call me coloured ?

These words symbolize the epicentric matrix of a postmodern human being, a 'mythic' hero without the benefit of a myth, a religious symbol without the benefit of a religion.

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¹See Ihab Hassan, "The Culture of Postmodernism." Excerpt from *Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives* (University of Illinois Press, 1985).

²Irving Howe, "Mass Society and Postmodern Fiction," *Partisan Review* (1979), p.429.

³See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973). Frye uses the term to denote the "hell man creates on earth," as a part of his exegesis on Archetypal Criticism in the form of "Apocalyptic and Demonic Imagery."

⁴Irving Howe, p.429.

⁵Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p.157.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ihab Hassan, p.6.

⁸Jerzy Kosinski, *The Art of the Self* (New York: Scientia Factum, 1968), p.39.

⁹Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyperaesthetics* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1986), p.59.

¹⁰Kroker and Cook, p.59.

¹¹Irving Howe, p.429.

¹²Ibid., p.430.

¹³Ibid., p.431.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Patricia Waugh, ed., *Postmodernism: A Reader* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1992), p.191.

¹⁶Irving Howe, p.432.

¹⁷Ihab Hassan, p.13.

NAYANTARA SAHGAL: THE EMERGENCY THROUGH THE RICHES OF HUMAN CONSCIENCE

O.P. Mathur

Nayantara Sahgal has rightly been referred to as 'Lady Liberty' in the Editorial note on Geeta Doctor's Review of her *Lessor Breeds*.¹ Indeed, freedom has been one of the major "luminous torches"² lighting up much of Sahgal's work, not the least important of which being *Rich Like Us*³ delineating a situation in which even after independence, with which her early work was so much concerned, a democratic leader has usurped full power and almost begins to vie with the erstwhile colonial rulers in repression and economic exploitation. *Rich Like Us* is perhaps the only novel which subsumes the horrors of the Emergency in the consciousness of human beings affected by them. The chief character Sonali acts as the prism through which the reactions of other characters are often filtered. The major characters are both individuals and representatives of their respective classes, and a few of them are also symbolic of the condition of mankind in general. It is the richness of human idiom through which the events are presented and which dwarfs them and puts them in their rightful place in the twin worlds of mind and time.

The story centres round Sonali, a young lady who is Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Industry. Unaware of the secret deal between the Minister and foreign businessman and his Indian collaborator about the setting up of a factory for a fizzy drink suggestively named 'Happayola', she writes an unfavourable note on the file because the project, so unimportant for the country, is wasteful of precious foreign exchange. Poor Sonali does not know that the project is but the tip of an iceberg, for it is really a cover-up for the import and storage of car-parts required for the manufacture of an 'indigenous' car by the Prime Minister's younger son. Sonali is promptly transferred to her home state on a lower post and eventually dismissed from the I.A.S. Ravi Kachru, an old friend of hers, takes over as Joint Secretary. The factory

is now quickly established. The Indian entrepreneur involved in this shady business is Dev (or Devikins), the son of an old prosperous businessman Ram, now totally paralysed. Dev forges his paralysed father's signature and, with the officially inspired connivance of the Bank Manager, withdraws huge sums from his father's account. The real loser is Dev's stepmother Rose who becomes anxious about her own future. She voices her suspicions and anxieties, but before she can do anything, she meets an 'accidental' death (officially dismissed as suicide) by drowning in a nearby well not easy for her to reach. Her death is really the handiwork of the toughs of the youth wing of the governing party. Ravi Kachru, who, by Sonali's wish, tries to intercede in the affair, goes out of favour and is about to be shunted out of Delhi.

The objectives and functioning of the Emergency, its effects on the lives of the common people and as also on those of a few individuals and their reactions have been glaringly exposed with force and sensitivity. Ignoring the judgement of the court and other preludes to the declaration of the Emergency, the novelist plunges direct into its objectives which consist of the totalitarian ruler's ambition of a dictatorship being considered 'natural' and ensuring of hereditary succession which is also considered 'natural' (p.91), for which the ruler's son is being groomed. The country is ruled by "one and a half people" (p.37), and the Emergency is "a disguised masquerade to prepare the country for family rule" (p.29). In fact, as an editor, the press having been already made subservient and the newspapers "newsless" (p.193), puts it : "Madam had in good faith thought it her constitutional duty to over-ride the constitution " (p.94). A lawyer belonging to the now committed judiciary also gives his professional opinion "that the Constitution would have to be drastically amended, if not re-written, to give Madan powers to fight disruptive forces and crush the vested interests *she had been battling against since infancy*" (p.94, Emphasis added). How very ably has the Emergency been defended by these professional people who should have known better!

The civil services too, earlier the steel framework of the

government, have been made to crack so as to support the facade of the Emergency. Sonali's narrative voice, witty and ironical, never rises above the level of decorum and culture, yet scathing the attitude of the civil services towards the Emergency:

We knew this was no emergency. If it had been, the priorities would have been quite different.... We were all taking part in a thinly disguised masquerade, preparing the stage for family rule. And we were involved in a conspiracy of silence.... No one wanted trouble, so long as it didn't touch us, we played along, pretending the Empress's new clothes were beautiful. To put it charitably, we were being realistic. (p.29)

She finds that "the distribution between politics and the services had become so badly blurred over the last few years it had all but disappeared" (p.28). Her old friend Ravi Kachru one of those civil servants who had begun to play politics "as if their lives depended upon it" (p.28) becomes the "chief explainer of the Emergency" in "the current socio-economic jargon.... those tongue-twisters that have banished simple sentences for ever and made experts in one field incomprehensible to all others, and certainly to the public at large" (p.31). It is civil servants like these who become instruments of the political bosses and carry out their wishes, however irrational.

The Emergency is considered by the 'Courtiers' as a sort of millennium headed by a "Mother Tsar" (pp.94-5) with her Twenty-point Programme, in whose support rallies are being held and delegations coming to congratulate her (p.81) — all so ironically described:

And then the emergency was so popular. You could tell by the delegations of teachers, lawyers, school children, and so on and so forth who went every day to congratulate the Prime Minister for declaring it The general public were taken to the lawn. She took a chair and sat looking at the wall above the heads of those facing her There wasn't time before an audience with the Leader to think about anything because at any minute the door might open and the next person be asked to go in. But they shared the mystical glow of people doing the right patriotic thing, or *pilgrims who had journeyed far and haardously to kiss the big toe already worn out with pilgrim kisses.* (p.81. Emphasis added)

There were youths' camps also in which 'elderly' youths, 'toughs with pistols' (p.80), participated.

The excesses of the government with immense powers

comparable to those of the mythological gods (p. 229) consist not only of rapes of common women (p. 246) but also of the oppression of people like KL (Kishori Lal) and even Jayaprakash Narayan. KL, a researcher turned shopkeeper, tries to get over the pain of the torture of being severely whipped for nothing in his own way: "Thank heavens whips were not what one calls torture. Ordinary village school masters used whips and he was grateful now he had plenty used on him." (p. 207). But, as the narrator says, the domain of true torture lay ahead:

Amnesty International's accounts of it proved there was an everyman's library of torture now, classic, illustrated, itemized editions of it passed from country to country, ideology to ideology, knowledge freely shared. (p.207)

K.L. learns in jail how, while those with influence were quickly and honorably released, other prisoners like an American educated boy, arrested on non-existent or flimsy grounds like mere membership of the Marxists Party, remained there indefinitely. KL's reflections in jail make him think, "The Bhagvad Gita said, the Lord speaking, 'Whenever there is decay of righteousness.... I am born from age,' from age to age. But righteousness had decayed and rotted. And there was no sign of renewal or rescue that KL could see" (p.214).

Sonali too, hearing how criminals were being blinded by the police with needles dipped in acid and herself noticing the brutal treatment meted out to a boy on a public road, wonders how people could tolerate what she calls "this bogus emergency" (p.36) and whether "there was a collective will to cowardice" (p.35). Such a comment is indicative only of Sonali's own resentment and anger, for she has herself observed that even within one month of June 26 a month of censorship of the media, artificial silence has started exploding and the facts carefully concealed "shriek out to be noticed" a sullenness building up along New Delhi's heavily policed roads (p.27). The novelist's personal experience of the travails and reactions of the common people being severely limited, she has only given us what she might have got from newspapers, journals and books. The "pity of it" rings rather bookish. In any case, she seems to suggest that the

horrors, if not the agitation in their reaction, are comparable to those under the British rule.

However, this minor flaw has been compensated for by the novelist's suggestive portrayal of how the wealth of the nation is being plundered by a few represented in the novel by the goings-on in the Ramrose family. With Sonali as a family friend, this household has been projected as one representing some of the more shady aspects of the Emergency set out against the best in the Indian tradition as also the serene depths of a universally loving nature and pure conscience. The names of the characters are significant. Ram, a businessman with traditionally business ethics, rises to acquire substantial wealth and two wives — Mona, a religious, trusting and loving Indian woman, and Rose, a foreigner who completely merges into the Indian ethos. With only one son between them, Dev who is Mona's child, they are fully adjusted to each other. Mona passes away early, leaving the care and the impending marriage of the unruly Dev to the looming and grief-stricken Rose. Not much later, his father — Ram, holding a joint bank account with Rose is completely paralysed after a violent quarrel with his son. Dev's monster-like greed makes him withdraw huge sums from that account by forging his father's signature in the full knowledge of the bank manager who has only to go on letting them be cashed (p.235). Dev had already become overnight a highly successful entrepreneur to the amazement of his mother:

What you call enter-prenner-ship, now, or how you pronounce it, is one minute you're nothing and the next minute, you're an enter-prenner and a bloomin' millionaire. Where's all this money come from all of a sudden, I'd like to know? I like maharajas better. (p.12)

The only obstacle in his complete possession of the wealth of his father, the "old fogey," as he considers him (pp.23-4) to be, is Rose, the less educated but much more loving, large-hearted and gifted with a sturdy commonsense, charming both outwardly and in her inner being. And Dev decides to put an end to her life by having her bound and thrown into a nearby well by one of the toughs of the 'youth' camp. The murder is given out as suicide, though Rose could neither walk the distance nor climb to the wall of the well nor had any motive to kill herself. But no questions

are asked. This murder, witnessed by a handicapped beggar, is presented as one of the darkest blots on the Emergency in the novel, for Dev is appointed a Cabinet Minister and even his apparently simple doll-like wife Nishi, meaning 'night,' with all its suggestions of darkness, tries to explain the 'reasons' of Rose's committing suicide to Sonali who was feeling "a freezing baffling anger" (pp.251-52). In fact, Rose had also become somewhat dangerous for Dev, for with her strong commonsense she had begun to develop suspicion about the famous People's Car project and had begun to air them before others. Commenting on Dev's mention of nationalising the 'indigenous' car project launched by Madam's son once a few models are ready, for which, as Sonali knows, parts have been imported from abroad, Rose with her strong commonsense sarcastically comments:

'Sounds like the emperor's new clothes to me. First of all there's no car, and then you nationalize the one there isn't. And in all these years what you're saying is there isn't even a model....' Oo was supposed to be producing this famous car anyway, 'im [i.e. the Madam's son] or the Japanese? (p.235)

Rose had also come to know unwittingly from Nishi that the underground 'bomb-shelters' are really meant to store 'black' money coming from "dummy companies and dealers who are going to exhibit the car when some models are ready" and also to store car-parts arriving from abroad and coming "straight from the airport without clearing customs" (p.236), as also about the manager of the bank "that had made huge advances for The Car," knowingly cashing forged cheques (p.238). The cheques were really on Ram's account which legally belonged to her. Obviously, the gentle and charming Rose had not only become an obstacle in Dev's financial misdeeds but also a political risk. She had therefore to be put out of the way, and she was.

The intelligent and sympathetic observer of all these silent and wicked goings-on is Sonali, with her inner quality of "Burning bright" which influences Ravi Kachru, earlier the "chief explainer of the emergency" (p.260), so much that in trying to speak to Dev about the forged cheques he goes out of the favour of the establishment and is to be soon shunted out of Delhi. Her penetrating observation, sensitivity and low-keyed narration illuminated by a

heroically moral stance seems to make her an alter ego of the narrator-novelist whose telescopic multi-voiced view of the scenario is supplemented by Sonali's close scrutiny of persons and events informed by her memory, reasoning, passion, conscience and idealistic perspective. Their narrations, mostly one following and reinforcing the other, project a sort of binocular, though ethically uni-axial vision of some of the complexities of existence under the Emergency. Sonali herself, dismissed from the highest administrative service of the country, becomes one of the victims of the Emergency.

But at the other extreme end of the social spectrum there is another pitiable victim, a pathetic symbol of the repression of their people and their suggested regeneration. He is the Beggar whose recurring appearance in the novel, often at some crucial moments, keeps us reminding of the horrors of the Emergency, of "the citizens broken on the wheel for remembering their rights" (p.258) — a share-cropper, with his hands chopped off along with those of another labourer, by the landlord's men for making them an example for others not to attempt to claim their shares in future. No law or political party helps them in the landlord's raj during the second year of the police occupation of the village — there is such an understanding between the two. The helpless Beggar makes Sonali feel, "Power had changed hands but what else had changed where he lived? If ever there had been an emergency, it was this" (p.258). Even Rose notices that the Beggar is a living object for the literal practice of Mahatma Gandhi's teaching of wiping the tear from every eye, for the Beggar cannot do that himself (p.128). He also acts as a catalyst in bringing out the inner reality of characters like Nishi, on the one hand, who screams and recoils from him, and, on the other hand, of Rose who feeds him and of Sonali who almost empathizes with him, considering him "the only sane person around" (p.221), and warns him to say nothing about his having seen Rose having been bound, gagged and thrown into the well, for she has discerned, "As regards justice for the dead which would never be done there was no need to imperil the employment and security of the living" and, as she

feels, "the dead Rose too would want him to be safe" (p.256). It is Sonali who gets artificial hands made for the Beggar and talks him with her, "a confident candidate for a new future with artificial hands" (p.257). He is almost a symbol of the Emergency as a whole. Leaving the Emergency behind, he moves towards a positive goal, as does Sonali in an entirely different way, for no longer does she have the hope of Ravi Kachru's returning to grace and her reliving with him "more gently" the long-past days of love making forgetting the Emergency and "the absurdity of it all" (p.262).

Poor Rose is dead, but the other major characters on the side of positive values, the "we" as against the "they" on the other side, get over the trauma of the Emergency in their own ways, the most magnificent of them being Sonali. She now takes up the study of the decorative arts of one of the most glorious periods of medieval India, from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century which, in her own words, reminds her that "I was young and alive, with my own century stretched out before me, waiting to be lived" (p.266).

The end of the Emergency is not shown, nor is it necessary, for it is submerged and extinguished by the swirling richness of the affirmations of the poor Beggar and the upward curve of the enrichment of Sonali's personality, as also under the richness of "the unbroken continuity" (p.264) of our long and mosaic-like history and civilization along with its vast mythology often referred to in the novel. No one is rich like us, and beside all these luminous varieties of richness even the materialistic West is poor and the dark and transient Emergency too, with its stark poverty of conscience, is dwindled and merged out of existence.

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² *Ibid.*

³ Nayantara Sahgal, *Rich Like Us* (Sceptre Edition, 1987). All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and have been absorbed in the text by giving page references in parentheses.

ALIENATION IN THE POETRY OF NISSIM EZEKIEL AND K.N. DARUWALLA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Asha Viswas

Nissim Ezekiel professes that his parents were liberal Jews and his mother was very proud to be progressive. They attended a synagogue that used English for prayers instead of Hebrew, or if Hebrew was used, it was followed by English. Ezekiel's westernized, liberal father was alienated from the Hindus:

All Hindus are
like that, my father used to say,
when someone talked too loudly, or
knocked at the door like the Devil
they hawled and spat. They sprawled around.... ("Background Casually")

Nissim Ezekiel's schooling was in a Roman Catholic school where his friends came from different communities. In an interview with Nilufer Bharucha Ezekiel says:

I ... could not ignore the fact that some of my friends were Muslims, some were Christians, some were Parsis and that I was Jewish. When we discussed this we came to the conclusion that we should remain, what we were, without necessarily claiming to understand the others' religion. So I think I was very serious about this even in my school days. However, a deeper understanding of religions came much later when I was in college.¹

In the twenties and thirties of the 20th century anti-semitism was raging almost everywhere in the world. India remained untouched by it. Ezekiel admits that anti-semitism did not exist in India and there were no problems ever, anywhere either for him or for the entire Jewish community. But in his poem, "Background Casually", he expresses his childhood repulsion for and terror of Hindu boys:

I grew up in terror of the strong
But undernourished Hindu lads,
Their prepositions always wrong
repelled me by passivity.

Here it is his elitism that alienates him from the poor people of one particular community. Later on, when he wrote his Indian English poems, the protagonists of these poems were taken from

this class only.

Ezekiel is not positive about the Jewish diaspora to India.

He says:

The relation between the Jews and the Hindu mainstream didn't produce anything notable. The community existed at a peasant level in the earlier years, and must have found necessary to be isolated, for survival. It was small, insignificant, and just about kept the rituals going. They spoke Marathi for a couple of hundred years, but they were not able to produce scholars, poets, or musicians, not even a theologian. Compare this with the American Jews. It can't be an accident.²

Ezekiel is said to have made a statement that it is his Jewish background that comes between him and India:

I am not a Hindu and my background makes me a natural outsider. Circumstances and decisions relate me to India.³

Thus it was Ezekiel's own statement that started the clinches — 'alienation', 'insider - outsider', roots and 'Indianness' that critics of Indian writing in English use so frequently today. Ezekiel also admits that he cannot identify with India's past. It is only with modern India that he can identify. He justifies his ignorance of India's past saying:

There is no harm in identifying with only a part of the past. There is no obligation to be identified with the whole of it. Even if I were a Hindu, I doubt I would make some facile statement about identifying with the whole of India's past.⁴

In this process of not getting direct emotional access to India's past, he could not have access to the Indic myths. But for Ezekiel these myths make no difference. He shows interest in Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism and Sufism, but India's Hindu past and its myths have no attraction for him. He confesses that in this sense "if first class poetry is alienated, negative, bitter, I wouldn't be put off it."⁵ But in the same breath he does not call it alienation: "As in any country, there are things one must be critical of, even reject. That is not alienation."⁶ This hereditary 'thinness' surfaces many times in his interviews and the statements made are, many times, contradictory. The Jewish racial soul and existence in India give him a divided consciousness. He confesses candidly:

I did have a feeling of things loaded against myself. With no prospects of getting strength and confidence, my background did make me an outsider, but it is too easy to talk of being an outsider. I don't want to remain negative. I feel I have to connect.⁷

Now if we look at his poetry we find the same fragmented psyche. In his poem "Background Casually" he talks of his school days:

I went to Roman Catholic school
A mugging Jew among the wolves
they told me I had killed the Christ
that year I won the scripture prize.

In *Latter day Psalms* (1982) he hits at the Christian and Muslim boys:

They copied, bullied, stole in pairs
They bragged about their love affairs
They carved the tables, broke the chairs
But never missed their prayers.

The above quotes present Ezekiel as an outsider. His attitude towards the three communities is that of an alien. He cannot forget "A Muslim Sportsman" who "boxed his ear" or the "Under nourished Hindu Lads." His attitude to the city is the same. In *The Unfinished Man* and *The Exact Name* he observes the city with the eyes of an elite outsider. For instance, he writes:

Barbaric city sick with slums
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,
Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged,
Procession led by frantic drums
A million purgatorial lanes. ("A Morning Walk," *The Unfinished Man*)

"In India" also we have a negative picture of Bombay—
Ezekiel's Wasteland — , a city of

... the beggars
Hawkers, pavement sleepers
Hutment dwellers, slums
Dead souls of men and gods,
Burn-out mothers, frightened
Virgins, wasted child
And tortured animal....

In another poem, "A Summit", he questions himself:

Do I belong, I wonder
to the common plain? A bitter thought
I know that I could rather
suffer somewhere else
than be at home
among accepted styles.

His urban elitism comes in the way of identifying himself with the others:

I'm forced to listen
to a dozen film songs,
to see
a score of beggars,
to touch
Uncounted strangers,
to smell
unsmellable smells,
to taste

my bitter native city. ("Hymns in Darkness"14)

In a poem "Case Study" the persona says that he

...worked at various jobs and then he stopped
For reasons never clear nor quite approved
By those who knew; some almost said he shopped
Around for dreams and projects later dropped
(Though this was quite untrue); he never moved
Unless he found something he might have loved.

Behind the frequent change of jobs by the persona, one may feel the rootlessness and the consequent restlessness of Nissim Ezekiel himself. After his return from England he tried various occupations — journalism, publishing, working as a factory Manager and eventually teaching. It appears that his own religion also failed to give him the serenity of mind.

The maturing years brought in resignation. I was told by Yohanan ben David that some ten years back when Ezekiel went to Israel, he confessed that he was an Indian. In his prose statements too, made in late seventies, he talks of belonging to India. He accepts the city of slums "as the fruit on which" he has lived 'winning and losing' his life.

I come now to Keki Daruwalla, another minority poet, a Parsi. The only written document on the Parsis in India is the *Kissa-i-sanjan* by Behman Kaikobad Sanjan written in 1600. The present day Parsis are the descendants of those Persian refugees who came to Gujarat in 651 A.D. after the fall of the Persian empire. The Parsis are considered an enlightened community that has contributed its best to this country which has been their home for

more than 13 hundred years.

As a child Keki Daruwalla lived away from the Parsis. In Lyllapur there were just two Parsi families, a few in Junagarh and in Ludhiana none. From "Bombay Prayers" (*Winter Poems*), the reader can have some idea of his Parsi upbringing. Out of the four Parsi poets — Kersi Katrak, Adil Jussawalla, Gieve Patel and Daruwalla — he is the only one who was married within the community. In his poetry he never talks of his religion the way Kersi Katrak does — "it is not my religion any more."⁸ He does not deny his Parsiness as does Adil Jussawalla — "I don't even consider myself a parsi."⁹ There is no fear in his poetry of displacement after partition, as one finds in Adil Jussawalla's poem "The Exile's Story." There is no Gieve Patel-like irony of being deprived of the communal hatred between the Hindus and Muslims. Instead, one finds a keen curiosity in Daruwalla to know the distant past of his race, to retrieve the "remaining fragments". He says:

I took my Herodotus and Firdousi to England and I did intend to write something on Persian history. I have written a lot on Greek and Persian wars and poems on that era, quite a few of which have been published in "Poetry Review", London. There is one section on "After the Coming of Islam." This talks of the forced proselytization of our community, our race. I wrote about forty to fifty pages but then gave it up in 1992 because I thought I was not a scholar of Persian. If I write about Persian or Greek works, I am going back to my personal history; it has a basis.¹⁰

One finds a few oblique references to this past in his poem "The Poseidonians":

They have forgotten the land they set sail from
and the syllables seeded their land
what do they do, except once a year
at a lyre and lute festival,
... grope for memories in the blood
... and weep a little for the Greece they have lost

A sensitive reader may infer that behind this mask of the collective consciousness of the poseidonians, the weeping is for the Persia that was lost.

Such inference may also be drawn from the poem "The Fall of Mohenjo Daro." The last four lines of the poem lament the fate

of the people of this ruined civilization:

So now you find us, Cozy, calcinated
in History's forgotten grooves
The years will not go round for us
threshing seasons under the hooves....

Once again, the sad fate of the Persian race is lamented under the mask of another defeated race. This sad history of the race is part of the consciousness of the Parsis and it is this 'Parsi-hell' that the poet carries within. In "Exile and Chinese Poets" the poet, once again, obliquely, talks about himself:

Wherever they went
melancholy, hung around them
Like a curtain of rain
... they ... wondered how many springs would pass them by before they got
back home.

As 'home' is nowhere in sight, it is in the world of 'dreams' that the poet seeks refuge:

Those who are not exiled from their dreams
Are they really far from home?

In "Living on Hyphens" the poet admits that "a man needs to anchor himself / between dream and landscape." Daruwalla is aware that there are people who can live in two worlds:

They function under two skies
a sky of feeling
for each dialect of love
... and a different sky of history
over each separate past

The poet is happy with 'one sky.' In "Dareios" again the poet goes into the past history of Persia. Thus, apart from this curiosity for and concern with the history of his race, the poet never feels alienated in the adopted country of his ancestors.

Daruwalla's River poems have been criticised for being an expression of an alien sensibility. The fact is that it is the usual flatulent cliches connected with rituals that he punctures, not the true spirituality. Whenever he hits at these unexamined, unquestioned cliches, we find an urgency in his tone, not alienation. There is no Ezekiel-like dilemma in Daruwalla. While Ezekiel is known as an urban elite poet, a Bombaywalla who wrinkles his

nose when he hears "wrong prepositions", Daruwalla is criticized as a "small town poet." His police postings in Dehradun (1960-61), Meerut (1961-62), Agra (1963), Joshimath (1963-66), Ranikhet (1966-68), Barabanki (1968-69) and Fatehgarh (1970-71) brought him in contact with the common masses. Kersi Katrak has criticized him for his "tone poems on the north Indian landscape.... Let him carefully read a recent book titled 'Village Poems' and he may see what I am at."¹¹ With this background Daruwalla can never feel alienated in India. He is very much rooted here.

The attitudes of these two poets — Ezekiel and Daruwalla — towards their situations in India are formed by the geographical mappings of their ancestral shores. While for Ezekiel, Israel still exists as a reality, for Daruwalla, there are memories alone which he traces, digging the layers of history.

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A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON MANJULA PADMANABHAN'S *HARVEST*

P. Dhanavel

Indian drama is no longer at the back stage. For it has come to the front stage with stalwarts like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sarkar and Mohan Rakesh. If the last three are well known in their respective regional languages, Marathi, Bengali, and Hindi, Karnad has chosen to reach out to the world outside with his plays in his own English translation. Of course, the plays of Tendulkar, Sarkar and Rakesh are available in English translation, but they are not brought under the umbrella of Indian English drama for obvious reasons. In this sense, Karnad is a key figure in the transition from Indian drama to Indian English drama in the post-independent India as was Rabindranath Tagore in the pre-independent India.

Two playwrights have come to limelight in contemporary Indian English drama, Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan. The former won a Central Sahitya Akademi award for his play *Final Solutions* and the latter the prestigious international Onassis award for her play *Harvest*. Being postcolonials, situated in the era of liberalization, privatization, globalization, and technologization, especially computerization and communication networks, they deal with postcolonial themes and situations poignantly. While Dattani's *Tara* exposes the blatant discrimination against the female child, Padmanabhan's *Harvest* lays bare the circuit of sales in human organs. Both dramatists call for corrective measures from national and international authorities. Incidentally, Padmanabhan is a globetrotter and composes her writings exclusively on an International Business Machine Personal Computer.

Manjula Padmanabhan (b.1953) is a multifaceted personality. She is a playwright, short story writer, cartoonist, columnist of both print and internet media, painter, besides being an illustrator for 21 children's books. In addition to her short story collection *Hot Death, Cold Soup* and a semi-autobiographical novel *Getting*

There, she has authored five plays: *Light Out*, *The Dowry Show* (later renamed *The Mating Game Show*), *The Sextet*, *The Artist's Model*, and *Harvest*. She was born in Delhi and now lives in Delhi, but she has travelled the West extensively and lived in Sweden, Pakistan, and Thailand for a long time. She knows and uses only English and so like Nizzim Exekiel she is an expatriate and a minority in her own country. That is why she calls herself a "marginal" author. In her column for *The Week*, she explains her position: "By choosing 'marginalia' as the name for this column, I'd like to claim the freedom to write about events from the point of view of a 'marginalien', by which I mean a person who belongs to the margins of society." In Indian society, she is on the margin of those who speak and write in English alone. She is painfully aware of her marginal position, though ironically she is in the privileged group of those who wield power.

Violence, sexual violence or rather gender violence is Padmanabhan's major theme. In his paper on a study of *Light Out* and *Harvest*, Professor Joel Kuortti of the University of Tampere, Finland, notes that "both these plays portray forms which gendered violence can take, moving on global and domestic levels" and adds "they also problematise the attitudes toward violence and the experience of being threatened." If *Lights Out* deals with the gang rape of a woman in an open area producing a horrible spectacle, *The Dowry Show* as well as its changed title focuses on the evil of dowry system in India. *The Sextet* is a set of six plays exploring different areas of sexual life amongst human beings; two of them are called *Bedbugs* and *Against Her Will*. The plight of a woman as model is captured in *The Artist's Model*. All these plays are relatively poor and do not count very much for considering Padmanabhan as a dramatist of great stature.

Padmanabhan wrote her fifth play *Harvest* during March — June 1996, especially for the Onassis international competition. The play was considered for the award as an unpublished play. Later on, Urvashi Bhutalia of Kali for Women, a women's publishing house in New Delhi, published it in 1998. Subsequently, the play has had many performances, starting with the one in

Delhi at the Sriram Centre in July 1998. With the financial support of the Ford Foundation, Director Govind Nilahani filmed the play into Hindi as *Deham*, which means body. The play deals with the theme of sales in human organs from India to the U.S. What does this paradoxical cultural practice imply? The thief is exposed to a wide audience through the thief's own people. It is to punish the guilty or to exonerate the guilty? These subtle questions demand a postcolonial perspective on the play, though postcolonial analysis is itself a tool produced and marketed by the West and vehemently opposed by critics like Jasbir Jain and Avadesh Kumar Singh.

Postcolonial is a convenient critical term in current literary studies. It has come to replace terms such as "Commonwealth Literature," and "Literature of the Developing Nations." Each one is problematic in some way or the other. Even postcolonial has its train of complexities. The very meaning and scope of the term is debatable: after colonial, anti-colonial, neocolonial, and so on. However, its use can be narrowed down for the purpose of this study to an unequal relationship between the rich and poor nations in various domains — social, psychological, political, economic, and cultural practices and patterns — and the articulation of the same in literature.

Postcolonialism is an offshoot of colonialism, in whatever manner the post is interpreted. In the words of Terry DeHay, it is "the social, political, economic, and cultural practices which arise in response and resistance to colonialism." He observes: "Postcolonial texts will incorporate culturally specific details often not offering translations or explanations of non-European practices, decentering the European-based reading" and adds that "the texts very often decenter the white characters, who become faceless, nameless representatives of a dominating power, shifting the power relationship within the text." From this angle, Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* is indeed a great postcolonial drama.

Perspectivism in philosophy means a theory, which promises that things can only be known from an individual point of view at a particular time, and in literature and the arts it refers to the use of subjective points of view. Such subjectivity in the

analysis of a play may look paradoxical since what the play achieves is through objectivity. However, the marginal subject position of the playwright and of the characters in the play as also of the present reader is amply evident. Therefore, the postcolonial perspective on Padmanabhan's play *Harvest* has to be necessarily a perspective, though other perspectives may converge on several counts. What is presented in this study is then a postcolonial perspective on the unequal power relationship between the rich and the poor and its logical conclusion, its subversion.

Harvest is a postcolonial play in the sense that it points to and portrays, to use the words of Professor Paul Brains of Washington State University, a "movement to expose and struggle against the influence of large, rich nations (mostly European, plus the U.S.) on poorer nations (mostly in the southern hemisphere)." The U.S. is the rich nation and India is the poor nation in the play. The civilized and advanced citizens of the former control and cannibalize the "uncivilized and backward" citizens of the latter with the connivance of the intermediary from the poor nation. At the end, however, the dramatist suggests that the poor lady Jaya has a victory of her own over Virgil, the faceless and bodyless American.

Om Prakash and his family represent the Indian side. Om Prakash is about twenty years old and is jobless, for he has been sacked from his job as a clerk. He is the breadwinner of his small family of his wife, brother, and mother. He is married to Jaya Kumar, a nineteen-year-old woman but she looks older than she really is. He has his mother Mrs. Indumati Prakash, who is just called Ma, a sixty-year-old lady. He also has his reckless younger brother Jetten Kumar, who is generally indentified as Jeetu. The responsibility of maintaining the family is on Om. When every avenue fails to get him a job, he decides to sell parts of his body for a price and thus gets employed after a rigorous examination by InterPlanta Services, the agency that buys and sells human organ.

When the final hour of reckoning comes, Om's legs refuse to move and he cries almost like Faustus: "The smallest pimple on my chin is more precious to me at this moment than a dia-

mond mine in someone else's fist! Oh — how could I have done this to myself? What sort of fool am I?" (p.53). Om begs his mother not to open the door: "Leave that cursed door alone! Seal it with cement and fire! I cannot bear to see its gape, admitting those vile, those cruel, those vicious guards! (*groans*) Ahhhh..." (p.53). The guards are sent by InterPlanta Services to take away Om for the removal of his body parts. Though there is an implicit comparison between Dr. Faustus and Om Prakash, they belong to two different worlds, one of rich colonizer and the other of poor colonized. There is no God for Om to turn to for mercy and forgiveness. He is irredeemably lost. Along with him his brother, his mother, and finally his wife are also lost.

Om agrees to be a slave for his white master whereas his brother Jeetu does not want to exchange his freedom for anything. In fact he allows his body to be used for a price but owns himself. He tells Jaya: "I don't mind being bought — but I won't be owned" (p.32). He is proud to be so. Even this pathetically proud citizen of India is mistakenly taken away for Om and then changed completely by the seductive appearance of Ginni. After the removal of his eyes by InterPlanta Services, he feels that he is "in a place worse than death" (p.75). However, when he gets the video image from Ginni, Jeetu is excited by her beauty and her beautiful palatial home. Finally, he turns out to be a worse slave than Om. Now he can say: "Anything you want is fine with me, Ginni" (p.79) and remain her ever obedient slave. He does not listen to Jaya who explains the real situation in which Jeetu moves with his borrowed eyes. It is ironical that he says to Jaya: "You don't understand! I was blind. And now I have a chance to see again" (p.80).

Ginni, a sweet and sexy youth goddess, and her technological devices represent the American side, though at last it turns out that Ginni is the genie of Virgil, a rich American who has continuously changed bodies four times. Interestingly, the whole person of Ginni or Virgil is not at all seen. The face of Ginni is seen through the Contact Module installed at Om's tenement room. She appears on the screen and speaks to Om and Jaya now and

then. She also interacts with Jeetu calling him Om. Through her a glimpse of the negative aspects of American society is revealed. It is true that she wants to have her diseased body parts replaced by Om's or somebody else's. At the same time, she appears to long for some sort of human contact. Her words and actions establish her superiority over the Indians. But the underlying fact is that she depends upon Om for her survival.

While this is Ginni's business, there is something more that is disturbing. That is what most postcolonial theorists have described as the Other for the West. Why does Ginni spend so much of her money and time on the poor Indians? The Americans need an Other to ensure that they are a superior lot. She goes on to the heart of the American cultural problem of lack of real human relationship. She explains: "— what I meant, people in my country, at my age, they just don't have any worthwhile friends, you know? Nothing to hold on to — nothing precious. Nothing like... this. I get to give you things you'd never get in your lifetime and you get to give me, well.... May be my life. (*voice goes husky*) You know? That is a special bond" (p.43). The irony of the matter is that Ginni dwells at length on human companionship but downplays her role as a cannibalistic creature who eats up the poor Indians and throws their bones away. The Postcolonial is required for the needs of the West. Otherwise not. The needs may be specified at times and unspecified many times. The contract is with Om for his body parts but Ginni devours Jeetu as well. In her incarnation as Virgil, she goes for Jaya too.

A postcolonial perspective on *Harvest* is incomplete and impartial without an analysis of the conflict between Jaya and Virgil. There is no impersonation or treachery in the case of the Indians whereas it is found that the Ginni who seduced both Om and Jeetu is in fact Virgil, a rich American who goes on changing his body parts continuously. Not only does he want to keep himself alive and young, he also likes to enjoy the pleasures of youth. Ironically, he depends on technology for this most personal relationship between human beings. While he can forget his sense of humanity and act against humanity, Jaya, the wife of Om, who

pretends to be her husband's sister for the sake of the body parts sales programme, asserts her supremacy over the American and his technology.

Jaya proves that Virgil is more vulnerable than she is. First, she compels Virgil to pronounce her name properly and then breaks down the communication channel. The end of *Harvest* suggests that Jaya is preparing herself to take away her life as Cleopatra does in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. She bides time by her seductive words and makes Virgil realize that he cannot inseminate her by his technology. Her end is in fact the triumph of human spirit over the inhuman and subhuman technology. The power relationship at the end of the play is thus drastically subverted to drive home the postcolonial perspective that the Other cannot be smothered by any means, including latest technology.

There is a middle group between the poor Indians and the rich Americans. The Guards and the Agents, who mediate between the receivers and the donors, constitute this middle group. There are three guards, two men and a woman, all of military bearing. They belong to a service organization called InterPlanta Services. They maintain direct contact with the donors through their activities like installing the Contact Module, supplying provisions, taking away the donor for removing the required body parts and bringing them back to their family, setting up domestic infrastructure facilities like toilet, dining table, sofa, TV, and so on. The Agents from a company called Video Couch Enterprises have a limited role to play in the drama. On Ma's telephonic order, they bring a VideoCouch and install it in Om's house. They also put Ma inside the couch and close down the lid, suggesting that Ma does not have to come out of the couch anymore. That means, she has been buried alive. Both the Guards and the Agents are Indian by birth but American by their appearance and life style. They are of the Babu class, which faithfully serves the best interests of the neocolonizer in the worst possible ways.

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*, then, is a postcolonial play that deals with the theme of sales in human organs from India

to the US. It vividly presents the struggle of the postcolonial survival against the cannibalistic onslaught of the West. Though the Americans with the connivance of the intermediaries, who are also Indians, eat up the Indians, the latter put up a show of strength through the figure of Jaya, whose name is victory. Technology may serve the needs of the Americans but the humanistic playwright has opted to reiterate her faith in the female creative spirit, which protects itself in self-destruction. Thus a postcolonial perspective on the play reveals that the postcolonial self asserts itself and refuses to play the role of the other for the West.

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MOTHERHOOD — SUBLIMITY OR SUBJECTION: SHASHI DESHPANDE'S MAJOR NOVELS

Miti Pandey

In India mother comes next to God, who is referred to as a good mother. The words 'Jagatjanani', 'Jagatmata' and 'Jagatdhatri' evidence the elevated position ascribed to mother goddess in Hinduism. Even in the West the ideas of the progressive and elite writers about God's nurturance and fondness are better related to the image of mother. No wonder Sara Maitland opines:

In Christianity birthing is creating new life through hard work and labour and blood. God/mother brought new life, gospel life to birth, stretched out for hours on the cross, autonomy removed by aggressive experts, the external word reduced to cries, bleeding down into the dark, overwhelmed by the sense of desolation, the doubt as to how much you can put up with. And afterwards the joy, the new life, the sense of mystery and distance.¹

The love of the mother for her child is regarded as the highest form of love — sublime love — because it is selfless. The mother provides all attention, care and nurturance to the child without expecting anything in return. The well-being of the child becomes a source of pleasure for her. She finds her life incomplete without a child, who is a fresh bud on a tree or a plant. But the question is: Why is the topic of motherhood constantly debatable? and why do women find marriage and motherhood a device to enchain them? The debate exists among theorists whether the feminine attributes are advantageous or disadvantageous. Judith Kegan Gardiner has summarised the contrary views in these words:

Dinnerstein, Chodorow and Rich describe gender differences in terms that imply women are nicer than men. Empathy, responsibility and interdependence seem preferable to defensive aggression, destructive rage against women and nature and a compulsion for control. However, other feminists evaluate the same characteristics in terms of female disadvantage. For Jane Flax and Jessica Benjamin, women's fluid ego boundaries are a weakness. They see women's chief problems as achieving independence, separation from other and autonomous individual identities.²

This article is an attempt to see whether motherhood helps

woman save her own identity or it compels her to succumb to patriarchal norms, whether it provides sublime joy or ends in subjection of a woman. The novels under study reveal that the man's world has used motherhood as a tool to entrap women. Such are the rules laid down by the society as there is no respite for a woman. If she is barren, she is branded as "inauspicious"; and if she is fertile, her children become a bait to entrap her. Akka in *Roots and Shadows* could never get a child. "Every time she has a miscarriage, her mother-in-law blamed her for it and made life hell for her."³ It is remarkable that mostly such women are cursed by women only. It gives us a feeling that women are the worst enemies of women. But a deeper insight into the social set up reveals that all our norms and traditions are made by men only. Women like Akka's mother-in-law have no opinion of their own. They only follow the principles laid down by men.

Jaya, the heroine of *That Long Silence*, is also a childless woman. She is an intelligent woman with good academic qualifications, a career and a considerable amount of success. But none of these attributes would provide her a respectable position in the eyes of Rakesh who sees her only as a childless woman and nothing else. Shashi Deshpande evinces a deep understanding of the psychology of women when she comments in this novel: "To get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren... they were still for them the only successes the woman can have."⁴ Nayana is another barren woman in this novel. Very soon, we are informed that her husband has married another woman to get a child without caring for Nayana's sentiments. She suffers from guilty conscience and says in an agonised voice: "How could I blame him for marrying again when I couldn't give him any children" (52). Deshpande seems to be raising a question whether Nayana is solely responsible for this barrenness. There is no reference to any medical examination which could prove who is really infertile — Nayana or her husband. Herein lies another question: will he be able to get a child through this woman?

A close study of the psychological state of Deshpande's heroines reveals that they are born with a natural urge for mothering. The

mother-child bond has been presented beautifully by Deshpande in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Saru or Sarita gives birth to a baby girl, Renu. During her stay in the hospital at night, she hears Renu crying and wakes up to get her, to console her, to see what she needs: "Her breasts had felt heavy, full and hard.... And when she had put the inexperienced greedy seeking mouth to her nipple, the satisfaction had been enormous."⁵ It seems that the force of mothering as an instinct is so strong that a woman is ready to undergo all suffering right from the conception to childbirth. Otherwise the very thought of labour pain and other associated problems can keep a woman from motherhood.

Even when Saru is in her father's house, she thinks of her children only. She quite often recalls 'Abhi's tears' and 'Renu's face and questions'. She remembers how "...Abhi refuses to go to bed until I (Saru) cover him with a blanket" (147) and Renu "...who will not go to school unless I am at the door at the moment of her leaving" (163). All this shows that basically motherhood is the highest form of joy for a woman. Patriarchy has used this purest form of love and joy to entangle woman. It is the society which has made child-bearing and rearing the sole responsibility of a woman and snatched away from it most of its beauty. With all the patriarchal manipulation of motherhood, it remains a joy for a woman.

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande we find how children are the preoccupation of a woman in India. She merges her identity in that of her children. Sunanda Atya in *Roots and Shadows* is portrayed as an anaemic woman. Indeed, she needs rest and care, medicine and proper nutrition. But she carries the child on her back and moves around despite her physical inability to do so. In *The Binding Vine* when Urmila visits Kalpana in the hospital, Shakutai tells her that she has done all kinds of dirty works so that her children could grow up, go to school and lead a better life than hers. After her husband has left her, her sister, Sulu, asks her to give Kalpana to her. She accepts the offer keeping the welfare of Kalpana in mind. While narrating her past story to Urmila, Shakutai says: "I did it all so that my children could grow

up, that they could go to school, live better than me."⁶ So far we have seen that love and sacrifice go side by side in the cases of mothering and motherhood. A mother sacrifices her personal interests and desires, for she loves her child. It is this love of the mother that makes her superstitious and fearful. This fear arises from love. Urmi or Urmila in the same novel always prays to God for a long and happy life for her children. Urmila is quite correct when she says: "Parenthood makes you vulnerable"(78). Since Anu's death she is very much cautious about Kartik. Sometimes evil thoughts haunt her. She always thinks what will happen if Kartik too becomes ill and dies.

This shows that a mother loves her child blindly. Whether she is uneducated or educated, she becomes superstitious because of her love for the child. Sometimes the baby looks very cute and beautiful to the mother. The affectionate mother starts gazing at the child out of pure love. So when Kartik is busy in stirring red jelly with earnest concentration, Urmi observes him keenly. But the next moment she is alarmed and remembers how her mother put a black dot on Amrut's cheek after his bath "to ward off the evil eye." Suddenly she says to herself: "A mother's look is the worst..." and asks herself: "Did I do that to Anu? Is it because of me...?(69) that she died. Urmi's mother, Inni, too, loved her as she loves Anu, her dead baby daughter.

Shashi Deshpande depicts mother-child relationship as a very close and emotional one. Mother's love for her child is, beyond doubt, the purest form of love and self-sacrifice. Urmi is forced to have a life-in-death sort of existence because of the death of her dear little Anu. She is always haunted by the thought of her dear dead Anu. Even when she is asleep, she has hallucinations. She feels "soft snuffing sounds" of Anu's breathing. Sometimes she smells her "sweet baby flesh", and also she feels her head over her shoulders. Moreover, Urmi says: "my breasts feel heavy and painful as if they are gorged with milk"(92). Inni, Vanna and Kishore make desperate efforts to engage Urmi's attention so that she may learn to live without Anu. But Urmi is a mother; Anu has been closest to her, and not to her father. Whenever they ask

her to forget Anu, a white hot rage explodes in Urmi; she becomes almost mad with anger. But how long can she live in a world of her own imagination where she can have her Anu with her? She has to accept her destiny and live in this world without her little baby-girl. As she herself says: "I have to live with the knowledge that it's real, that Anu's gone, that she will never return. It's cruel to leave the dead behind and go on but we have no choice"(128).

Sometimes a living child also brings pain and suffering to its mother. In *The Binding Vine* we see that Shakutai is glad to send Kalpana to Sulumavshi. But Kalpana can not stay with her aunt for long. Her return pains her mother very much. On being forced by her mother to go back to Sulumavshi, Kalpana becomes protesting and refuses to go. As an intelligent and sensitive girl she can very soon sense that her uncle, Prabhakar, is casting an evil eye on her. Poor Shakutai can hardly think of it. She tells Urmi: "My children have become a burden to me, Urmila, they have become a burden"(85). However, it is the mother who is held responsible for whatever the children do. Not only this, the mother herself feels guilty for the misdeeds of the children. Kalpana's rape has been the result of her oversmartness according to her mother. Shakutai has repeatedly warned Kalpana against using lipstick and gaudy dresses. But she has not listened to her. Now Shakutai is accused of her daughter's tragedy. The mother's disappointment is reflected in these words: "what can you expect... of a girl whose mother has left her husband?... And I have to listen to such words because of this girl. She's shamed us, we can never wipe off this blot. And Prakash blames me"(39). Such is the irony of motherhood. The daughter has brought a bad name and suffering to her mother. Still the mother is found sitting by unconscious Kalpana who has been brought to the hospital after her rape. Kalpana's own brother and sister, Prakash and Sandhya, start forgetting her as they are back to school. Only Shakutai is beside her daughter, watching her beauty, admiring her tone, and recalling her childhood when she was delicate and fair.

Sometimes a mother may find herself ruined on account of her children, but there are many instances which prove that moth-

erhood also provides courage and strength. It is this strength that enables Jaya in *That Long Silence* to look after her children. Similarly, Mohan's mother prepared fresh food for his father at night. In the meantime, if the baby woke up and cried, she fed him also and made him sleep. In the same novel we come across an instance which proves that the daughter-in-law and grand children also become a woman's responsibility, if the man does not take care of his family. All this reveals the inner strength of a woman. Thus, though motherhood seems to make woman vulnerable, it, in fact, provides her with inner strength. Jeeja's son, Rajaram, is a drunkard and beats his wife, Tara. So Jeeja, Rajaram's mother, accepts the challenge and does whatever she can for her daughter-in-law and grand-children. However, there are certain exceptions, too. In the same novel, Dilip's sister, Venu, never takes pains to look after the children. The positive and negative aspects of motherhood, as shown by Deshpande, are the two sides of the same coin. Undoubtedly, the problems involved in motherhood are elaborately delineated by the novelist. Sometimes mothers appear to be fed up with their roles. But does it bring an end to their urge for maternity? Perhaps not. It is always present in a woman. And when the time comes, all feminist sayings about motherhood as a hindrance in an individual's growth are unconsciously cast aside, and the mother wins at last.

Motherhood, as we have seen, is a very controversial subject. It gives weal and woe, pain and pleasure simultaneously. But in this world a mother has to be realistic. Before bringing a new creature, she has to think about its upbringing. In this matter family planning is of immense help to a mother. Vimla, Mohan's sister, tells Jaya about Avva whom she has always found pregnant during her childhood. As she had lost four or five babies, she did not want anymore of it. Nayana is also found pregnant for the simple reason that she does not plan her family. Had these women planned their families, they would have led a better life. Indeed, child bearing is, more or less, a mother's responsibility. But if there is a separation between the spouse, it becomes a great problem for the woman. Her life becomes a prolonged story

of dependence, misery and suffering. The word 'divorce' becomes frightening to Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* because she has children to look after. For a better upbringing of them, she needs Manohar. A deserted woman with children becomes a burden to herself and on the society. Motherhood is, no doubt, an instinct, still girls are taught to mother children. In *That Long Silence* Mohan's wife Vimla is forced to miss her school after Prema's marriage to help her mother and look after her younger brothers and sisters. Similarly, her elder sister, Prema, has to leave her school when Sudha is born.

In conclusion, it may be said that the topic of motherhood, mothering and nurturance is multifaceted. Some claim motherhood to be an ideal, while others hold that it causes suffering. In Deshpande's projection of women like Saru, Indu and Urmi motherhood has been subjected to multivalent treatment. It is certainly a real joy, but at the same it involves tremendous responsibility.

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³Shashi Deshpande, *Roots and Shadows* (Hyderabad: Diksha Books, 1992), p.70.

⁴Shashi Deshpande, *That Long Silence* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989), p.52.

⁵Shashi Deshpande, *The Dark Holds no Terrors* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1993), p.147.

⁶Shashi Deshpande, *The Binding Vine* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1993), p.117.

SELF AND SOCIETY: SUNITA JAIN'S *A GIRL OF HER AGE*

Rashmi Gaur

Sunita Jain is a bilingual fictionist and poet who requires no introduction. She has been the recipient of the Vreeland Award, 1969, and Marie Sandoz Prairie Schooner Fiction Award, 1970 and 1971. She has also been awarded the Nirala Namit Award, 1980, Sahityakar Samman, 1996, and Mahadevi Varma Samman, 1997. Her novels possess shades of an evanescence which one usually thinks uncapturable. Jain possesses an evocative language, a creative faculty of form which differs from what is ordinarily called construction in the same way as life differs from mechanism. She creates resonant impressions in the readers' mind, showing the kaleidoscope of life shaken into a momentary plan — its vagueness, casualness, chaos and order result in a splendid impressionism. Her protagonists are intuitive and sensitive girls and women, who live in several worlds at once ; while they are presented to us, we are always kept oriented in time and space. Her protagonists are suffused with the emanations from the things they see, hear, feel and what is presented to them in a complex of life, of which character and background are animate elements. The sense of a reality emerging from individual lives assumes a poetic aspect in Jain's novels, which record not so much a general judgment on life, as a moment of serene illumination, a state of soul, a resilient understanding of life.

A Girl of Her Age, though published in the year 2000, was written earlier against the background of 1960's Delhi. The novel traces the process of growing-up of a girl within a caste bound traditional society. Mukta, the teen-age protagonist of the novel, experiences the first stirrings of sexual awakening when she meets Chander Mohan, brother of her tenant's wife. Her love is reciprocated with equal intensity, yet she is unable to transcend the rigid caste-norms and surrenders before them. Still, it is difficult for the reader to condemn Mukta's inane surrender categorically, as strangely the surrender itself is based on an act of courage

and consideration for others. The absence of any clear-cut authorial denouement enriches the inherent suggestivity of the novel and forces the reader to make a moral choice.

The story thread of the novel is developed in a linear and chronological manner. The novel provides intimate glimpses of a middle-class family, its concerns, struggles, attitudes and preferences. One of the charms of Jain's narration lies in her ability to exploit fully minor happenings which appear insignificant but hold vital clues for the development of thematic motifs and understanding of the milieu of the given setting. She holds to minor, seemingly unimpressive and random events, such as small talks, finishing the home-task, socializing, etc. The world picture she has presented in the novel imaginatively constructs a stark reality, our society is unable to change or modify even today.

A Girl of Her Age describes the sexual initiation of Mukta and her awareness of the traditional exploitative forms of social structures. A woman's sexual initiation, particularly in a constrictive society, reflects the complexity of the feminine situation. The environment and the social climate within which feminine sexuality awakens also moulds it — the patriarchal society attaches several taboos and inhibitions to the erotic experience of girls and reinforces their subordinate position. Simone de Beauvoir has rightly commented, "... the male assumes his (awareness) easily and with pride in its desires; for the female, in spite of her narcissism, it is a strange and disquieting burden."¹ Unruly social climate further strengthens this unease. Mukta feels stiff and recoils in fear when faced with "a pair of ugly leering eager eyes."² As she grows up, surrounded by her books, music, family members and daily chores, she feels a void within her. When she looks at Chander Mohan, Bojyu's brother, for the first time, she feels strangely stirred, "... a single recollection filled the whole vacancy of her mind. With it came surprise, a sense of joy, and a feeling of curiosity, also anger. Her spine tingled deliciously, also strangely, as she thread over in her bed "(29). Mukta does not struggle against her feelings. She accepts her love towards Chander Mohan with a natural ease; the "Radha of her heart melted help-

lessly, and danced on her two bare feet, danced shedding her cloak, and finally fell forward to pluck the flute from the charmer's lips"(30).

Mukta's love is reciprocated by Chander Mohan, though social constraints forbid any open dialogue. Clandestinely they continue their correspondence, and share some moments during Chander Mohan's visits to Delhi. Jain has deftly created the social milieu of the 1960's metropolis which discouraged any open manifestation of intimacy between the sexes. To receive letters from boys was taken as a stigma. When Mukta receives Chander Mohan's first letter at her college address she is cautioned by Veena, "No, this has not been censored. As you never receive anything, they are not suspicious. But a few more and they will ..." (53). Through such minor episodes Jain shows how women are at a disadvantageous position in an orthodox set-up which gradually stifles their very awareness of autonomous selfhood. Socio-familial constraints not only curtail a girl's independence, but also encourage her to imbibe the value of traditional submissiveness propagated by a male-dominated order. The total pattern of a girl's life prohibits emotional and/or intellectual independence. In her college debate Mukta gets first prize for vociferously advocating love marriage. But her liberated ideas are only skin deep. She strictly advises her friend Asha not to get carried away by her love: "At least look carefully before you ..." (22). The contradiction in speech and behaviour is a result of social pressures which mould the very thinking of girls and make her non-communicative about her real needs and desires. The questions about identity, free choice and commitment trouble her, but do not become the critical focus of her thinking. In a constrictive society the social context determines her relationship with the self and others. Unable to transgress her gender roles she has a number of means to engage herself in, but such engagements are not occupations, they only fill up her time without imparting a sense of fulfilling and meaningful activity. Mukta is also aware of some vague cravings in her psyche, but her externalist actions are governed by her social self only. She is stirred by Bojyu's statement that the social context of individual lives is significant. She contradicts it, but Bojyu's final words leave her baffled and confused: "Yet it is my

firm, solid belief, dear, that without the blessings of elders and the agreement of all concerned, a marriage will never be and has never been a success"(25). Even though she is yet to face her first enchantment, Mukta staggers and becomes depressed.

A major change in Mukta's life comes when she becomes aware of her longing for Chander Mohan. She is taken by surprise by the intensity of her own emotions. But she, as well as Chander Mohan, is keenly aware of the compulsions of social propriety. They avoid talking to each other in the presence of others; expression of their desires is limited to letters only, conversation is somehow conducted in snatches. Chander Mohan is firm in his resolve to marry Mukta, while she is nervous about social pressures, different caste and unacceptability by their families and is hesitant despite her love. His mental independence and assurance can of course be linked to his privileged position as a man and as an independent earner. The patriarchal civilization defines woman as a marginalized creature and her destiny is always defined with deference to man. The same society imparts fullest autonomy to men, instilling pride in them for their manhood and independence. Social attitudes give courage to men to face difficulties boldly. Passivity is treated as an essential characteristic of femininity, but a boy/man is encouraged to undertake, invent, dare and achieve self-realization. A traditional society imposes a destiny upon a girl from outside and encourages a boy to carve out his own. The patriarchal system enforces a mystique which suggests that the highest fulfilment a woman can attain is possible only through a man. Such societal perceptions generate diffidence and escapist attitudes among women and make them unsure of themselves. In situations that need decision-making, they are easily swayed by social norms and unsaid pressures. The difference in the behaviours of Mukta and Chander Mohan can also be understood accordingly.

Mukta feels frustrated when she comes to know about her friend Asha's case. Asha, a bania by caste, loved Shekhar, a Punjabi. Her family could not adjust to it. Her father does not allow her to study further and sends her to an uncle's far-off

place. This incident unnerves Mukta and her faith in Chander Mohan falters:

All the stories of treachery and deception that she had read, all the movies in which villains tricked girls into infamy or blackmailed them the rest of their lives, all the tales she had heard of condemnation of girls who talked to boys, came back to her. Her overwrought, taut mind conjured up a million situations of compromise, shame and insult. (77)

She immediately writes to Chander Mohan to send back her photographs and letters and entreats him not to write to her again. Chander Mohan urges her to find courage to tell her family about them. He also proposes to write to her brother about his readiness to marry her; but Mukta is unable to transcend her fears. The idea of rebelling against her elders' desires appalls her, making her unduly submissive and inactive. When Bojyu finds them together on the roof, Chander Mohan assures her: "You are not to worry. Leave it to me ... remember I will not let you down, no matter what" (92). Throttled by her own fears Mukta now finds the whole affair wrong; shame and misery make her weak. An upset Bojyu tells her about Chander Mohan's childhood, stressing her parents' sacrifices and their hopes to settle down with him peacefully in old age. Though she immediately receives Chander Mohan's letter urgently assuring her of his determination, she takes a unilateral decision to terminate her relationship with him, accepting her weakness: "... all that passed, was folly, a mirage, it must cease.... call me a coward, for I am afraid of reality" (95). Refusing to listen to Chander Mohan's arguments, she calls him a selfish person who does not care for his parents' sentiments. She is finally married to Biraj in an ostentatious ceremony. Naren, her brother, neatly sums up the situation when he tells Mukta: "If marriage is a necessity for boys in our country, it is a compulsion for girls" (103).

The caste system is a process of social stratification and differentiation. A caste is a closed group denying inclusion to outsiders and forbidding its members to marry outside on account of an inexorable social law. Though to some extent the rigid norms are being relaxed now, particularly among the educated classes, they still become a constricting factor in middle and lower class sections

of the society. The shock and horror of intercaste marriage unfortunately is not dated. Even in contemporary society we come across barbaric acts being perpetrated in the name of caste purity. In his Foreword to the novel R.W. Desai has referred to a news item which had appeared in *The Times of India* of January 30, 2000, with the caption "Villagers Hang Lovers". It reported that the villagers cruelly hanged lovers who had not parted ways despite their family's opposition. Such barbaric incidents underline a cruel facet of our social reality which still wants women to live their lives according to age-old dictates and prohibits any spontaneous burgeoning of their personalities. Sunita Jain's novel suggestively deals with the genesis of such mind-set and presents it sensitively.

Jain has skilfully presented the realities of the caste-ridden Indian society. Without presenting unnecessary details about her characters, she delves deep into the psyche of her characters and poetically lays bare their inner strifes, struggles and limitations with a rare profundity. She has posited the evanescent happiness of Mukta which could not be imparted a permanence owing to social compulsions. Jain has not tried to present the more politically correct notion of an emancipated or uninhibited womanhood in the novel; without any specific or conclusive answers she has vividly presented the contradictions which rule our society and cannot be easily escaped by ordinary individuals. She has probed into the sufferings, love and passion of ordinary men and women and presented them with a rare sensitivity. She, it seems, has avoided any direct authorial denouement, and in its inscrutable ambiguity lies the novel's strength — the story turns into a mirror, reflecting the reader's self, enabling him to discover new truths about himself and compelling him to reevaluate the existing social practices in a modern context.

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WILLIAM GOLDING'S SEA-TRILOGY: VOYAGES OF SELF-DISCOVERY

Farhad Pakdel

William Golding's writing is different from that of most of his contemporary novelists in Britain. He was not a follower of the realistic mode which has been paramount in the English novel for two centuries. His writing was concerned with metaphysical issues, and his narrative is mostly referred to as fable, allegory and myth. This mode of writing has not been part of the mainstream of English fictional tradition since the eighteenth century. However, Angus Wilson admires *Free Fall* for in it Golding had "shown a need to do what I also believe to be necessary — that is, to wed his sense of a transcendent evil and good to the fully felt social novel that the English have constructed in their great tradition" (1967 : 190). Golding's "normal" kind of novel started with *Free Fall*, and followed by *The Pyramid*, *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*. Although variety and unpredictability are quite evident in Golding's career as a novelist, yet there is at the same time a consistency of purpose in which all his novels are about the nature of good and evil. This paper is focused upon Golding's sea-trilogy which after his first novel *Lord of the Flies* is his best known work. These three novels were written between 1980 and 1989 and belong to the later period of his writing career. Hence we find in these texts a matured concept of evil and "the darkness of man's heart" which had haunted his novels from the very beginning.

Golding's three novels *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989) constitute the sea trilogy entitled *To the Ends of the Earth: A Sea Trilogy* (1991). *Rites of Passage* is the journal written by Edmund Talbot as he starts the adventure of his adult life. He begins the voyage to Australia, hoping that in the course of this journey he will find materials that would be of interest to the godfather to whom this journal is being written. He mentions the young person, Robert James Colley, as a source of humour and diversion. Colley

becomes the main figure in Talbot's journal. Colley is severely humiliated in the "Crossing the Line" ceremony. He gets drunk, behaves inappropriately and dies of shame the next day. Colley's main folly is a sexual misdemeanour which is caused partly by the burning heat of the tropics and liquor that he drinks. Throughout the voyage Talbot gets to know about his own darkness, and we become aware of the darkness below decks on the ship of the state. Although it is a sea-voyage, we are indeed in Golding country. Talbot's awareness of Colley's folly, and his realization of the prevailing darkness in mankind makes him resemble the Ancient Mariner's wedding-guest, a much sadder although wiser man.

Rites of Passage is set not only in the age of Byron and Coleridge but also that of Jane Austen in terms of manners and the class-system. Talbot is interested in illusions, especially the illusion that civilization (i.e. things as they are in Britain) is beneficial to man. It is clear that most of its benefits go to the high-class people to which he belongs. Colley's misfortune is partly due to his illicit desires, and partly because he is an upstart who has just risen from the lower orders to the elevated class. Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor mention that "Colley, raised by his cloth from the lower orders — also through patronage — betrays the *Parvenu* in every detail of appearance, manner and speech and, like his counterpart in Jane Austen's Mr Collins, is riding for a fall..." (1984:270). Colley's spiritual commitment is genuine, whereas most of the Austen's clergymen do not have the devotion and commitment that we find in Colley. *Rites of Passage*, apparently, seems to mock Jane Austen's class-conscious world by drawing on the sordid areas of human life which are ignored by Austen. In Austen's *Persuasion*, the sailors are well-mannered. Talbot in *Rites of Passage* enjoys learning the habitual filthy parts of the sailors' language known as "tar." We hardly hear any obscenities in Jane Austen's world.

In *Rites of Passage* Golding crosses the bounds of decorum in search of truth. The novel resembles those of Austen's in the sense that it deals with the issue of class. Austen confirms the classist values by mocking the *Parvenu* and ignoring the lower

orders of society. Golding sees such classist values themselves as obscene. Talbot is a decent and generous person, but he has classist attitudes which are disgusting and harmful. In *Rites of Passage* Talbot hardly sees the common sailors of the fo'c's'le as human beings, and feels contempt for Colley as a *parvenu* whose tragedy to him is a class-regression or "back towards his own kind" (277). Although the book claims to be the "true story" of a young hero and it also reflects on life, death and morality, yet we do not get the feeling that the story is literally true. We get the feeling that we are placed in the world, or at least in the world-view of the early nineteenth century. Golding standing behind his narrator (Talbot) is careful enough to recreate the style of the classist young man of 1813-14. He does it successfully, but gives us a biased account of the voyage. Certain aspects of the book such as antiquated type-set, "olde worlde" design of the title-page, etc. give us the feeling that the book is a stylistic forgery. Golding insists that the novel is not a true history of a sea-voyage, unlike its claim. It seems that the novel is mocking the idea that a novel can tell nothing but the whole truth. In *Rites of Passage* Talbot is asked the question that " 'who killed cock Colley?' " (248). The answer to the question is not that simple. It is recorded in the captain's log-book that Colley died of "a low fever" (263). Golding himself said in an interview with John Haffenden that Talbot kills Colley "in a subtle way" (1980:9). Colley gets abused by the common sailors in the "Crossing the Line" ceremony, and they play a role to the act which ultimately makes Colley to give up his will to live. It looks as if the entire world of the ship has a part in Colley's death.

Talbot represents the "moral legislators of our (British) society" — those who make circles and draw lines, those who decide which acts are natural and which acts are unnatural. The difference between Talbot and Colley, according to Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, is like that of Augustan and Romantic world-views. S.J. Boyd elaborates on the issue and sees them like "the learned and urbane against the naive, the patrician against the demotic, the socially-oriented against the nature-worshipping, the deco-

rous against the exploratory" (1990:163). Underlying this we may find the conflict between Dionysus and Apollo, the tension between instinctive needs and the forces of law and morality which consider them as filthy and repress them. The agony caused by such a repression leads to tragedy. Talbot's attitude and language towards the world are based on class. He is rather interested in the preservation of the *status quo*. He speaks of the Revolution in France with distaste. Captain Anderson is the illegitimate son of a lord and that is why he dislikes Talbot's lordly behaviour. It irritates him. The issue of class certainly has a large place in *Rites of Passage*. Property and money are two important elements at the bottom of the issue of class. They create privilege and give power over others.

Close Quarters and *Fire Down Below*, the two concluding novels of the trilogy of Edmund Talbot's sea-voyage, may be considered to be operatic because they appear to represent examples of extravagant entertainment in some ways. They may be characterized more accurately as soap-operatic for they seem to go on endlessly, piling episode upon episode. The trilogy appears to be bulky but its thematic freight and intellectual ballast are not quite well sustained throughout. The frequent use of allegory in *Rites of Passage* is notably reduced in the last two novels of the trilogy. The problem with the trilogy is that it leaves the reader wondering what is going to happen next to characters with whom he has already become familiar. There are elements of humour in both novels as well. Indeed, we can say that the voyage turns away from the darkness in *Rites of Passage* towards romance and comedy. We come to see that there is a happy ending for Talbot.

Byron's name is mentioned several times in the latter parts of Talbot's voyage. The wife of the captain of the ship, Lady Somerset, is a follower of Byron. She develops some sort of a love affair with Lieutenant Benet. There are hints that Talbot's adventures are to be compared with Byron's *Don Juan*. The trilogy touches upon the science of navigation to a good extent. It deals with the position or point of view of the person who makes

observations. It is not an exact science. Edmund Talbot also makes observations but his observations are of the people around him. Thus we come to know about his point of view and also about the people through his observations. As we read through the trilogy we notice that not only Talbot's angle on things keeps changing but everyone around him changes too.

In the last two novels of the trilogy, the characters appear to be different from what Talbot made us think of them in *Rites of Passage*. We see the world of the ship turn slowly upside down as it passes the equator, so also Talbot's view regarding some of the passengers. In the beginning of *Close Quarters* Talbot is still stiff in his political views. He believes that in a civilized community the electorate should always be from "highly born, highly educated, sophisticated professional" (11) people. For Talbot, it is the people of high class (i.e. his class) who are the right people to handle the key-posts of the state. The culmination of change in Talbot takes place after his encounters with the egalitarian philosopher Aloysius Prettiman. In *Fire Down Below* Prettiman himself seems changed from a figure of fun into an old impatient man but with moral grandeur. In the early pages of *Close Quarters* Talbot comes to realize that his behaviour is somewhat selfish. He tries to improve himself. In *Fire Down Below* we see him changed. Talbot of *Rites of Passage* who disapproves the idea of being arm-in-arm with a common sailor dresses up and behaves like a common sailor in *Fire Down Below*. Talbot notices that the line on deck at the mainmast has been washed away towards the end of *Close Quarters*. He thinks of it as a fact that should be seen as "a metaphor of our condition" (277). In a review on *Fire Down Below* Stephen Medcalf suggests that Golding's trilogy resembles the three parts of the *Divina Commedia* known as "Inferno," "Purgatorio" and "Paradiso" (1989:267-8).

It is true that the sea-voyage for Talbot is purgative. His initial mentality of seeing people in terms of class is gradually reduced to a great extent. He is partially cleansed by the voyage and his encounters with Mr. Prettiman become devoid of prejudices to a great extent. Although he is purged considerably, he

still attempts to achieve further promotion in society, for which some armour is a must. Prettiman is against conventional society. Talbot is rather infatuated by Miss Chumley, whom he had got transferred from *Alcyone* into captain Anderson's ship. After a separation he had again met and married her. Golding gives us a happy ending for we come to know from a distance of many years that their marriage has been happy and successful.

The sea trilogy is thus a voyage of self-discovery. In the first novel of the trilogy the narrator (Talbot) experiences the prevailing darkness (or lack of innocence) in the world of the ship. His own attitudes also represent the existing darkness. But in the subsequent two novels of the trilogy he undergoes the process of self-discovery. He is changed radically, and becomes a different person. We see him transformed into a person who finds his true self ("holy self") through the notion of his oneness with people. This notion of oneness with people is achieved by the annihilation of the self. While in *Rites of Passage* he represents a self-centred (loss of innocence) attitude, in *Fire Down Below* he sees other people like himself.

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IRIS MURDOCH AND IRVING BABBITT AS HUMANITARIANS

Manisha Gupta

Born in Dublin and educated at Oxford and Cambridge, Irish Murdoch is one of the most prolific and the most popular of serious contemporary novelists. Her profession as a philosopher is reflected in many aspects of her fiction. She has written on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and her interest in, and dissent from, Sartre's existentialism is evident in her first two novels, which treat existential issues of identity and freedom. She introduces religious themes and addresses ethical questions. Although her works are novels of ideas, they combine this with elements of the grotesque and supernatural and touches of social comedy. They are well structured, both by the use of symbolism and by the patterning of shifting personal relationships filled with humanity.

In fact, some of the most troubling objections to her work are ethical in nature. For example, R.L. Widmann sees Murdoch's "light treatment of ... serious problems (in *Under the Net*) unethical and immoral."¹ Hena maes Jelinek expresses a similar opinion that Murdoch is different from "other novelists, who, even when they revolt against morality, recognize it implicitly by rebelling against it, whereas she simply ignores it."² There are also critics who acknowledge the discrepancy between the austere morality of Murdoch's essays and the novels. William Van O'Connor refers to the difference between Murdoch's "essentially strait-laced morality" and the "amoral world... [where] her symbols become radiant."³ But the most illuminating critical remarks on this subject are those of Olga M. Meidner who tries to justify "the impression of chilling detachment" in Murdoch's fiction as a symptom of an authorial endeavour to be "scrupulously fair."⁴

It is better to present an ontological interpretation of the problem by comparing Murdoch's ideas with the new humanism of Irving Babbitt. Babbitt's systematic observations are particularly useful in establishing what is traditional and what is unusual about Iris Murdoch's own brand of humanism. Babbitt's writings

display a consistency and fidelity to ancient thought, which is especially helpful in isolating the eccentricities of Murdoch's thinking that has caused so much confusion.

Babbitt and Murdoch are most similar in the reactionary gusto with which they have attacked what they feel are the moral degradations associated with romanticism. Indeed, much of Murdoch's criticism of this movement reads like a synopsis of Babbitt's more extensive polemic in *Rousseau and Romanticism*.⁵ Throughout "The Sublime and the Good" Murdoch echoes Babbitt's attack upon Kant's aesthetic of free play, or as Babbitt puts it, the idea that "art is to have a purpose which at the same time is not a purpose" (p.42). Both humanists feel the effect of this equation of art and play. Babbitt's chapter "Romantic Morality: the Real" states, and Murdoch's *An Unofficial Rose* implies, that this divorce of art and ethics led to the later phenomenon of Nietzsche nihilism. They feel that this nihilism was largely a result of the vacuum created by the substitution of the "expansive impulse" of the ego (p.53) for the "background scale of [humanistic] ethical values" (*Rousseau and Romanticism*, p.125), or what Murdoch refers to simply as a "background of values." Both thinkers are critical of romanticism for destroying the Greek and Christian "hierachy of values" (*Rousseau and Romanticism*, p.142 and *The Sovereignty*, p.25) in order to enshrine the single, dubious principle of the sovereignty of the self.

Murdoch and Babbitt are particularly concerned with the ramifications of this development insofar as it has tended towards the reduction of morality to feeling. Babbitt calls this aspect of romanticism an "aesthetic morality" (p.131). The shortcoming of this inclination "to base conduct upon feeling and ... identify the good with the beautiful" (p.131) are of central importance in all the novels. What Murdoch feels the difference between ethical and aesthetic values is in *The Black Prince* where the narrator speculates about the antithetical relationship between a personal sense of style and the self-abnegation of morality.

The most revealing chapter in *Rousseau and Romanticism* regarding the agreement of Murdoch and Babbitt about romanti-

cism is entitled as "Romantic Love." There the contrast between love as an expansive of the self and love as the recognition of otherness is most extensively discussed. Babbitt's account of Rousseau's monodrama *Pygmalion* is especially revealing of the way romantic love and art converge in an aesthetic that is precisely the opposite of Murdoch's equation of art and love with the recognition of otherwise. It establishes an even more precise relationship with Iris Murdoch's reflection on the solipsistic end of the romantic quest for purely subjective experience. Babbitt's reference to the blue flower as the "dalliance of the imagination with its own dream" (p.225) is reminiscent of Randall Peronett's attempt to breed a "blue rose" in *An Unofficial Rose* (p.223). Babbitt agrees with Murdoch that this dream is symptomatic of the symbolist fascination with infinite yearning and the corresponding solipsistic isolation of the self.

There are, of course, positive aspects of Murdoch's and Babbitt's thought which are distinguishable from their attack on the romantic liberation of the imagination. The main tenet of Babbitt's new humanism, or what might properly be called classicism, is the utilization of the imagination for the right imitation of reality. He articulates this definition by distinguishing it from the romantic emphasis on the spontaneous aspect of creation: "The supreme thing in life, the romanticist declares, is the creative imagination, and it can be restored to its rights only by repudiating imitation. The imagination is supreme the classicist grants but adds that to imitate rightly is to make the highest use of the imagination" (p.69). Babbitt's theory of humanism is identifiable with a faith in the superrational powers of the imagination to illuminate reality in a way that neither the reason nor the senses can achieve (p.168). He distinguishes his humanism from both the neo-classical aesthetic that reduces the imagination to the reason and the romantic tendency to identify it with the whims of pure sensation.

This definition of humanism recalls Murdoch's theory of the imagination, especially as she wishes to distinguish herself from the romantic indulgence in purely subjective fancy. Her typically

British call for a proper commingling of imaginative brilliance and fidelity to reality is concisely rendered in Babbitt's description of humanism as "imaginative reason or inspired good sense" (p.176). This theory of the imagination involves the paradoxical coordination of creative genius with the Christian humility or the classical decorum (*Rousseau and Romanticism* p.127) it requires to acknowledge the subordination of the self to a transcendental reality. What has instead in the writing of both humanists is reliance upon criticism of existing works according to prescribed standards. In other words, they discuss art in terms of the degree to which it confirms with or deviates from classical norms without ever attempting to render an account of exactly how the imagination can at once create art and discover reality.

The "ethical art" (*Rousseau and Romanticism*, p.202) of the humanist is based on the Greek belief in a cosmic, moral order (p.190) which can only be appreciated by a radical disposition to negate the importance of the self. In practice, this involves the constant insistence that the "ordinary self" of instinctive appetites and desires (p.183) be subordinated to the moral criteria of a higher self. This higher self is realized to the extent that the natural self is disciplined and restrained. This concept of humanism is not an easy-going appreciation of human nature as such, for it is precisely this idea that Babbitt and Murdoch have identified with the amorism of romanticism. The most extreme manifestation of this kind of humanism is in the stoical self-abnegation of a Simone Weil, where the exercise of self-restraint borders on masochism. Thus, in the most austere cases, the humanist actually tries to obliterate the most human aspects of his nature.

It is also this stress upon the inadequacies of the ordinary self that inclines Murdoch towards the satiric mode, which prevails in her fiction. The Manichean "civil war in the cave" which Babbitt refers to in insisting on the moral struggle of the individual (p.130) becomes the basis of the grotesque behaviour of so many of her characters. Instead of the idealized models of humanity she calls for at the conclusion of "Metaphysics and Ethics" (pp.122-23), what we usually have in her novels is an account of a series of events

that occur long after all the civil wars have been lost.

The most important way Murdoch's writings can be illuminated by those of Babbitt has to do with the ontological attributes associated with the classical moral order for which they express so much nostalgia. Babbitt is quite explicit about what he feels is the ideal, transcendent, eternal realm for which the moral agent, and the artist, must strive.

Where Murdoch deviates from Babbitt's devotion to the classical norm of proportion and form is in her temperamental distrust of systematic thought. Even though she sees herself as a sort of Platonist, there is nothing less Platonic than her bias for contingency. Instead of projecting a classical preference for "the normal and the representative" (*Rousseau and Romanticism*, p.61), Murdoch recommends a realism that stresses the contingent, the eccentric and the unique. Except for this "Nostalgia for the Particular," as she entitles one of her early essays, Iris Murdoch would be, in theory at least, a good example of a contemporary new humanist. It is this general similarity to what Babbitt recommends that makes the appearance of all those grotesque characters in her fiction such a startling phenomenon. In short, Murdoch is guilty of what Babbitt calls "intellectual romanticism" (p.11) in his discussion of the metaphysical poets of the 17th century.

We can perhaps best understand the implications of Iris Murdoch's deviation from this classical norm of probability by examining another of Babbitt's definitions. In the chapter "Romantic Morality: The Ideal" he distinguishes between the romantic wonder of novelty and the classical sense of awe at the unity of being: "I have said that it is a part of the psychology of the original genius to offer the element and surprise awakened by the perpetual novelty, the infinite otherwiseness of things, as a substitute for the awe that is associated with their infinite oneness; or rather to refuse to discriminate between these two infinitudes and so to confound the two main directions of the human spirit, its religious East, as one may say, with its West of wonder and romance" (p.148). Babbitt equates the infinite wonder of multiplicity with the amoral, expansive response of the child, while he sees the

awesome appreciation of the oneness of beings as typical of the "peace, poise and centrality" of the enlightened mystic (p.150).

It is the confusion between this sort of epiphany and the mystical intuition of oneness that preoccupies Irving Babbitt throughout much of his book. Aside from the merits of his discussion,⁶ the implications of his disagreement with Iris Murdoch are of enormous importance. Perhaps even more basic than this disagreement about the one and the many is the identical way both humanists conceive of the problem according to mutually exclusive metaphysical categories. It was not until *The Black Prince* that Murdoch deviated from her tendency to conceive of reality according to a rigidly dichotomous ontology. In that novel, she finally manages to explore universal aspects of human experience through the introspective ruminations of an individual persona. "No sensitive and educated person can deny that the meaning of his existence ... and indeed, his own existence, to emphasize the point ... has been greatly illuminated and revealed by the giants of culture."⁷

Iris Murdoch's willingness to consider the possibility that the most profound aspects of individual experience might also be the most universal, did not come easy or early in her career. And yet there is evidence of this tendency to see the universal in the particular even in her early fiction, though it is not manifest in the depiction of the characters. Her descriptions of ideal aesthetic experience are particularly illuminating. Perhaps the most striking of these is the episode in *The Bell* where Dora Greenfield has an epiphany in the National Gallery. When she arrives, she is in one of her typically vague moods of solipsistic stupor. It is the contemplation of some of her favourite paintings that disrupts the "insufficiently reflective" (p.8) mode of her consciousness.

The modern era is the era of the severed head insofar as we have fallen away from the Greek ideal of humanism into a concept of form that is disembodied from the concrete, incarnate ground of being. The severed head is emblematic of the modern dissociation of the sensibility that Murdoch had observed in her remarks on the modal extremes of contemporary fiction. Murdoch's fascination with

Shakespeare's last play is indicative of a similar tendency to reduce human nature to either the ethereal fey-like quality of Ariel or the sodden flesh of Caliban. Similarly, when she fails to create convincing examples of humanity her characters are grotesque caricatures, while her plots begin to look mathematical equation. As is so often the case with Murdoch, we can best appreciate the character of her sensibility by examining what she has to say about Sartre. The charge that he tends to reduce complex issues to simplistic, mutually exclusive categories (*Sartre*, p.52) is equally applicable to her own thought. As a philosopher, and a metaphysician, she is subject to what she refers to as the temptation to be consistently Platonic by creating the sort of artistic forms that would most nearly approximate Plato's transcendental essences. As a moralist, however, she feels it would be a sort of blasphemy to presume she could capture more than an ironic reflection of those idealised forms in the stuff of her art. This insistence on the incomprehensible nature of human experience is represented most consistently by the views of the saints in her novels.

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**METIS AS CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIA IN
HALFBREED (1973) AND
IN SEARCH OF APRIL RAINTREE (1984)**

S. Armstrong

The subalternized voices of the First Nations people begin to be proliferated everywhere in the globe as an iconoclastic clarion call against the reinforcement of the hegemonic cultural imprints. These submerged, subjugated and subordinated voices merge to question the authority to assert their presence, identity and quest for recognition. The important First Nations people are: Natives, Indians, Metis, Inuits in Canada, Aborigines in Australia, Maori of New Zealand, Beothuks in Newfoundland, Blacks or Negroes in South Africa, Dalits and Tribes in India, Indians in North, Central and South America, Welsh in USSR and New Guinea, Ainu of Japan, Basques in Spain, Lapps or Sammi in Scandinavia and Norway and Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland. Though the people are geographically separated, they are politically, socially, culturally and psychologically united. Their identities are localized but sufferings and discriminations are globalized. They are, by and large, politically weak, territorially isolated, economically marginal, culturally stigmatized and socially subalternized.

The common problems of these First Nations people are genocide, forced assimilation, internal colonization, racial segregation and persecution, double dispossession and displacement, cultural discrimination and appropriation, and the complete denial of land rights, language rights and human rights. The recent judgement in the Australian High Court is a standing example to show how the Ngarrindjeri aboriginal people of south Australia lose their land rights. The court has ruled that laws which are unfavourable to aborigines are constitutional. As *The Hindu* quotes:

The Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act overrides aboriginal concerns about the site and allows the construction to go ahead. A lawyer for the Ngarrindjeri people, Mr. Stephen Kenny, said he would consider taking the case to the international (U.N.) Human Rights Commission under treaties on the grounds that the Government had discriminated against aborigines.¹

As the Australian aborigines, the other Othered people also face the same problems around the globe. These indigenous people are geographically Natives, politically minority and culturally 'internally colonized' people. These people are not immigrants but the original inhabitants of lands and territories. These anthropological interpretations to treat them as "Fourth world people" is a further marginalization, and hence the term 'First Nations' is an apt terminology to name them since they are supranational peoples of the soil. 'Metis' is such a kind of First Nations people in Canada.

The article is an attempt to interpret how the Metis writers Maria Campbell in *Halfbreed* (1973) and Beatrice Mosionier (Former name Beatrice Culleton) in *In Search of April Raintree* (1984) describe the protagonists as "cultural schizophrenias" since they belong to halfbreed community. The phrase had already been referred to Jewish race by Frantz Fanon. These two Canadian Native Women writers consciously or unconsciously describe the protagonists as schizoid selves in a particular context.

In the multicultural Canadian society, 'Metis' is the term of abuse and subordination as the figure of 'Metis' (half-caste) embodies racial ideology of mixed-blood (Ojibway/French, Cree/Scottish). The biological determination in the Metis race is used to inferiorize and savagine the people in the Canadian society. As such, in Campbell and Culleton, the female protagonists, the Metis, figures as cultural/racial schizophrenia with the split off manifestation of hybridized racial engineering. The internal pent up emotions and anger against the hegemonic cultural domination have been manifested in Maria, April and Cheryl.

Maria Campbell's autobiographical novel, *Halfbreed* (1973), marks the avenue of Metis voice. Campbell portrays her own story through Maria, the protagonist, as a Metis child in Northern Saskatchewan and of her life as a young woman in the city. The insidious canker of racism, sexism, alcoholism, prostitution and many other forms of social abuse in Canadian society haunt the life of Maria. She opposes the Canadian society which determines itself to be patriarchal, white and Eurocentric. Campbell's

quest for self-discovery and self-portrayal adopts the first person narrative "I" which writes all the past experiences in the larger quest for cultural identity.

Maria's halfbreed background and the problems she faces in the Canadian dominant cultural set-up make her psychologically a split personality. As a woman and as a Native woman, Maria experiences gender and cultural split at one side and the inner racial split at another. Campbell, in the characterisation of Maria, seems to valorize the cultural identity of Halfbreed and she also challenges the Euro-American belief that "blood" is the determinant of characters and experience. The double genetic entrenchment in the Metis race, its double dispossession of race and gender, the hybridity of paternal and maternal biological make up pave way to interpret the notion of cultural schizophrenia in the character of Maria.

As Homi Bhabha writes, "the display of hybridity," its peculiar "replication" terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery at the dominant cultures can be interpreted as an outlet of the Metis inner schizophrenic nature which makes them to mock at the white. In Fanon's words, the aim of colonial violence is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the cultures (as quoted in Bhabha). The 'agony' in the postcolonial text is much deep and psychological. Bhabha's notion of hybridity permits the possibility of reading textual agonism as mode of resistance to the unifying pressures of colonial subject effacement and constitution.²

The process of attaining cultural totalization is the prime motive of the Metis character, Maria in *Halfbreed*, from her schizoid self which has been 'Not-Selfed' as Terry Goldie said. The Natives are othered in the Canadian multicultural society.³ The final paragraph of the novel reveals how Campbell finally finds the deeper level of awakening and healing unification self in the future generation and not her in life. She says:

The years of searching, loneliness and pain are over for me. Cheechum said, "You will find yourself, and You'll find brothers and sisters." I have brothers and sisters. I no longer need my blanket to survive.⁴

By dismantling the cultural, racial and sexual boundaries, Maria inscribes the above passage a "demassification" of the problematic of "difference,"⁵ of her split selves which would imply the two Metis racial worlds. The expression "my blanket" refers to the intercultural amalgamation of the schizophrenic Metis genetic background.

The fictional autobiography of Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* is a spontaneous, cathartic truth-telling. The authorial fictionalization in this novel is shocking but it is a revelation of Canadian Metis Woman's torrent of painful experiences. Memory and nostalgia help the narrator, April, to record her retrospective experience. She opens the novel from her memory lane. The narrator-protagonist female hero's conscious attempt to "go back" in her life is a radical effort on the part of the submerged, the bastardized, the marginalized, the othered to introduce her own nationalism (Metis roots) in Canada. It is radical in Marxian terms: "To be radical is to go to the root of the matter. For man, however, the root is man himself."

The doubling of protagonists through April and Cheryl confounds the question of identity. April represents the schizoid self of Cheryl with a surrogate white identity. Cheryl, the younger sister, represents the Native people who assert that she represents the Metis Indian Community. Cheryl feels destroyed by impersonal foster parents, social workers and history books. She represents the Canadian Native voice. She is an ideological and an inspirational worshipper of Louis Riel, the past Native Metis hero. Cheryl glorifies the youth and energy as well as the political legislative accomplishments found in Riel and J.F. Kennedy. She becomes a medium to portray the hegemonic construction of native reality. She combines identities by multiplicity. She replies:

But you are not exactly Indians, are you?

What is the proper word for people like you?

One asked. "Women," Cheryl replied instantly

"No — no — I mean nationality?" "Oh — I'm sorry.

We're Canadians."⁶

Cheryl by acceding to neither designation, locating herself in a

floated myth, disrupts the binarism that naturalize such identity crisis. Not occupying a shadow space in Canada, the Metis activist-female hero, Cheryl, dismantles the fabricated system of assimilation.

Henry Raintree and Alice, the parents, are survivors uprooted from the unremembered, erased part of the Metis, victims of progress brought in by the process of confederation. They are literally reduced to nothing in the Canadian society. Neglected even by the marginal space in the Canadian society, the Metis people are texted in privileged "authorized public spaces."⁷ It is in that site both April and Cheryl get texted in a schizoid manner as individuals. Forcibly separated by Canadian welfare officers, the two Metis sisters are torn psychologically to the extreme. Intending to become a white, April marries a whiteman to lose her Native identity but meets a failure. Cheryl, who is mistaken for April, is raped. With one identity unreal and its alternative mistaken, Cheryl challenges assumptions of a fundamental self. "The self constructed in the novel is multiple, provisional, discontinuous, and shared. To the demand for a 'proper word' to identify people like Cheryl and April, *The Search of April Raintree* withholds an answer."⁸

The novel describes the dual queries of authorial and fictive identities. Culleton has characterized the novel initially alcoholism in her conception, as ultimately about identity.⁹ April-Cheryl's struggle with identity can be read as a quest for the true self. April's story is both sloughing off false personae (only at the end does April realize her mistake of trying to become a white person) and a final embracing of an authentic self. Thus April's identity is transparent. She at the end resolves to embrace her real heritage. Margaret Clarke, by contrast, emphasizing a feminist reading of the novel, suggests that for Culleton the experience of female identity and Metis identity are inseparable.¹⁰ Culleton's authorial identity is double since the novel has a revised edition. The "author" of the revised edition is less simply the subject of life experiences similar to those in the novel than is the "author" of the original edition. As a successful professional in the revised

edition, Culleton problematizes again the notion of a singular, unified intrinsic identity. The undermining of unitary and essentialist discourses of identity in the novel countermands notions of the author's original identity and the authenticating imprint of her experience.

The novel is a duplicitous admixture of identities. It also describes the self and racial identity crises. Reality constitutes both self and racial identities. Culleton's experimental confrontations are split through April and Cheryl. The narrative voice through April becomes fluid and inclusive. Cheryl's voice is interpolative, transformative and radical. The novel thus has a narrative ambivalence which is split into two figures, Cheryl and April. Cheryl lacks unified, coherent subjectivity. "I wish we were whole Indians."¹¹ April internalizes the split between two totalities of difference that do not intersect. She produces a dislocation in the representation of a unified, coherent subjectivity.

The novel concludes by reconstituting a totality in the figure of 'a people.' Henry Liberty Lee becomes the new hope of Metis community. It was tragic that it had taken Cheryl's death to accept April's identity. But Cheryl once said: "All life dies to give new life."¹² In the figure of April, Culleton reclaims identity over difference. Cheryl's death assures an effacement of difference that April could never accept. If authenticity can no longer be claimed in the figure of the 'Indian' for the Metis, it can be claimed in the production of another sphere of identity, a third position, a new synthesis of the split narrative of subjectivity constituted in Cheryl and April: the Metis. But this synthesis ultimately produces a new order of unification and reconciliation. Jullia Emberley argues that the ending marks a reclaiming of "identity" over difference... a new synthesis of the split narrative of subjectivity constituted in Cheryl and April... a new order of unification and reconciliation in which the 'Indianness' of Cheryl is absorbed into the whiteness of April. Finally April gains her Native identity sloughing off her former surrogate white identity."¹³

Both in *Halfbreed* and *In Search of April Raintree*, Mettisage of Maria, April and Cheryl becomes the narrative mode. These

two texts expose the fake white identity in the Metis Community and debunk the force of white acculturation on Native people. The world of the Native Metis in Canada is split not only as the Manichean aesthetics of rich versus poor, the whites versus the blacks, the coloniser versus the colonized and pure versus evil but goes beyond these Fanon's binarism, Bhabha's hybridity, Bakhtin's dialogism and Spivak's double dispossession. The characters of Maria, April and Cheryl are the cultural paradoxes of Metis split off personalities and this article is a simple attempt, but a deeper analysis of schizophrenic forms could be developed in future study.

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THE DILEMMA OF SOUTH-AFRICAN WHITES IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *THE CONSERVATIONIST*

Surekha Dangwal

Black literature is a product of suppression and oppression. Black writers are bound in boundaries of racism. Racism can be defined as "racial prejudice backed by power and resources."¹ White domination is rationalized by the belief that the inferiority or superiority of a group's abilities, values and culture are linked to physical characteristics such as skin colour. The black fiction is about the anguish and pain of black soul. Richard Wright suggests that blacks wrote novels and poetry to win favour in the racial world. From its beginning Black literature is marked by an overwhelming tragic sense. There is something in Black fiction that distinguishes it from that of white literature:

What distinguishes the black character's situation is not that he is oppressed, but that a great part of the nature of his oppression is prescribed by a physical characteristic. Because of his colour the black character is denied full underdog privileges.²

Black writers have always been made aware of a white civilization which imposes its domination on the black mind and body. The domination may be physical as the failing of blacks and of psychological kind in which values accepted by whites come in opposition to black values. Whether he is African or American at birth, the black writer by the condition of his existence has been made intensely aware of a white civilization. Conditions have always been unfavourable for the blacks. The long history of the white's domination over blacks resulted in detribulation of the blacks all over the world. The pain that the blacks had to suffer at the hand of the white society propelled many writers to write in reaction against the whites.

But the case of South Africa is entirely different. It consists of a literature of a tremendous significance but with the entry into the door which had been opened to the world a decade ago. Now South Africa has entered into a new era of independence and

democracy. The era of legalised racial discrimination had thus ended and a new era had begun in which South Africa is reborn as a free nation after nearly three hundred years and has returned to the fold of civilized nations. The political freedom of the blacks of South Africa through a peaceful electoral process is the most significant event in the annals of human history for self-rule since the independence of India blazed a trail of departure of colonial powers from Asia and Africa. The case of South Africa is even more significant. Elsewhere on the continent, the formal colonial master withdrew to Europe. But the whites of South Africa who gracefully accepted a democratic dispensation, knowing full well the consequences of being a minority have earned the gratitude of all who value democracy.

South African writers with their peculiar history of 'apartheid' and the consequent political, cultural and psychological situations gave birth to a pure protest literature, and a portrayal of the hostility between the world of the white man and that of the black. To some extent, this conflict has killed the soul of aestheticism. 'Art for Art's sake' does not fit into the reality of South African literature. There is no possibility for "Art for Art's sake in a book," feels La Guma, "based upon the truth about apartheid."³ In the mind of a western man "a sense of loss" is very strong "under a white skin."⁴ On the other hand, the black writers are attacking the whites. The literature of South Africa is nothing but a "Conflict between the white conquerors and conquered black, between white masters and black servants, between the village and the city."⁵

The black writers are totally ignorant of white man's experience in his alien land, and the same applies with a white man and his understanding, sympathy and consideration of the black man's experiences of his native land ruled by the whites. "Each in turn finds himself shut out,"⁶ and Gordimer accepts it as a "mutual loss of them as writers."⁷

The white writers of South Africa who are internationally known are Jack Cape, Dan Jacobson, Olive Schreiner, Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer. When these writers refer to black protagonist, they do so as outsiders with an even more limited

knowledge of the native's everyday experience than black writers have. But because of the political pressure, the black writers are always between "the fear of expression and the need to give expression."⁸ Despite the fact Gordimer has always been writing with African sensibility and this very quality makes her different from other white writers. What is special about her is that she has not only defined the cultural roots of black race, but has also probed many facets of the interrelationship of sexism and racism in the black society. She not only demonstrates the fact that sexism exists in black community, but also challenges the prevalent definition of women, especially in relation to motherhood and sexuality.

Importantly, Gordimer is a white, writing for the cause of the blacks. So her whiteness is also a living reality like her romantic African sensibility. Her belongingness and accountability as a white is examined in this paper. Gordimer has described herself as a "romantic struggling with reality."⁹ And it is Gordimer the romantic who is aware of the western man's longing for the soil beyond his conscious identity, and is in search of a vital centre, a primal wholeness and vigour, within the limits of Africa, i.e. within his own psyche. As a white liberal Gordimer has always found herself an outsider in her country. In her *The Late Bourgeois World* which was banned in South Africa, and got Nobel Prize in 1991, she has attacked on apartheid. She knows that any form of slavery degrades oppressor as well as the oppressed. "It would be uncritical to study the works of African and non-Africans," says she, "without references to each other and neither group has a monopoly on the truth."¹⁰

In Gordimer's fiction, white characters are questing for their individual identity and their Western European selves as well. They are luckless Europeans who found only graves, not gain and glory in Africa. In one of her novels, *Occasion for Loving*, Jasse Stilwell insists on seeing herself as "intact alone."¹¹ In *A Guest of Honour*, James Bray, the Englishman, who returns to Africa to set up a modern educational system in the country, "fades away behind the insect-stained wind-shield of the car carving him to a violent death."¹²

The Conservationist was published in 1974. The Booker prize winner novel is the romantic longing of Mehring, a practical man of business, for his identity in the land of the blacks. His sexual partner Antonia, an anti-government political activist, self-exiled in England to avoid arrest, laughs at Mehring's idea of being buried in his farm, in his purchased soil. His idea of preserving his identity after death is futile because Antonia predicts that the natives will take back the land from Mehring's children and "no one'll remember where he is buried."¹³ Antonia mocks at Mehring's futile hope of insuring the survival of his name by passing the farm on to his son, "the four hundred acres isn't going to be handed down to your kids, and your children's children."¹⁴ He wants to plant trees that probably will not take roots in African soil. It seems to be omens of the approaching end of the white man's history in the continent.

The whites are enjoying life in South Africa only because of the labour and hard work of the blacks. Despite her quest for universal brotherhood and harmony, Gordimer's protagonist is also governed by the South African feelings of a separation from the whites. Antonia does not identify many 'connection' between her body and Mehring's ego. After making love "it was always necessary for her ego to establish the difference, the vast gap between herself and a man like him."¹⁵ To her it seems to be "bridged itself in pleasure."¹⁶ This feeling of separation is a clarion call for the whites to quit the continent. Mehring, the businessman, boss and seducer, is the most insecure person among the blacks. His sense of security is under pressure and forces him to "sell the place."

The symbol of "egg" is used frequently in Gordimer's fiction. In the *Soft Voice of the Serpent*, a teen-age girl is quite disturbed about her future and loss of childhood. It takes a depressing form of "egg-smeared dishes into the sink"¹⁷ of her married sister. And in another story in the same volume, a disloyal housewife tries to cope with the fear of her husband, "triggered by a kiss from his husband's egg-flecked mouth."¹⁸ *The Conservationist* starts with "pale freckled eggs." It is a symbol of regeneration for both

the whites and blacks. "The eggs are arranged like marbles" and it is a hope for both "eggs and children."¹⁹ Mehring likes the 'egg' that can break and run like the "guinea fowl eggs,"²⁰ held by the black farm children.

Mehring wants to protect the 'egg' or his masculine dominance from time's effect. He stands naked before the "calendar with a picture of a white woman without clothes."²¹ He wants unbreakable eggs and Antonia is his ideal as she does not come under the spell of wine. Mehring claims his possessions and wishes to pass them on to the later generations of white lords of the African land, but fails when at last he thinks that "guinea fowl eggs will never hatch."²² The indefinable girl's remark to him as a "pig iron" businessman cracks like an egg into his ear and he feels the impressions of African soil deep into his heart.

Nadine Gordimer's developing consciousness of history through her novels contributes to the history of the consciousness of South Africa in the last four decades. Each of her novels is related to the cultural and social moment from which it emerges, and from which it, in turn, offers an inside perspective. However, despite such self-reflectiveness in her fictional mode, it is Gordimer's 'split historical situation' that accounts for a deeper history of South Africa. Many have been only too aware of her paradoxical social situation, i.e. a white living in privilege, and yet writing for the cause of the deprived blacks. Though the ideological implications of her work are populist, yet the modes of expression are elitist. She is unable to project a black future in anything other than "formalistic and transcendental" terms, i.e. in the image of the 'resurrection' of the black corpse in *The Conservationist*. In South Africa death is a "final bankruptcy"²³ for the whites and is symbolic of a belief that the European has no future in Africa. Gordimer's prophetic vision has an end and finally South Africans are living in harmony with equal opportunities for both the whites and blacks. The power is in the hands of the blacks. And the independence of South Africa is a realization for a white man that he "must lose himself in order to find himself."²⁴

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THE DIZZY WORLD OF OLA ROTIMI'S *THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME*

Attia Abid

The euphoria of Nigerian independence in 1960 brought with it a renaissance of creativity in the urban arts oriented towards new African forms and a rejection of colonial influences. This resulted in a creative confidence in literature, and popular theatre or the "people's theatre" came to be influential throughout Africa. Itinerant Theatres, loosely known as Yoruba Companies or Yoruba Folk Opera, took to the road. Dura Ladipo and Ogunmola broke new ground, and though they died in 1970, their influence continued as decorated trucks carried Yoruba Opera Coys to one-night stands in towns and villages. The Yoruba musical drama *Obaluaye* (1970) by the composer Akin Euba added a theatrical sophistication to idiom, and influenced dramatists like Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi "who broke away from the restrictions of European theatrical forms into far richer fields... and fused an international language with a local traditional art form," and made creative use of music and drama in their plays. Both of them are literary playwrights and have spent years as university playwright-directors, and their skill at staging their own works has given them a theatrical viability lacking in many others. Emmanuel Gladstone Olawale Rotimi is a Nigerian scholar and dramatist who has not received much critical attention. Besides the play under discussion, he has written historical tragedies like *Karunmi* with the Yoruba Wars as its theme, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* dealing with the sack of Benin, *Our Husband Is Gone Mad Again* a satirical comedy, to mention a few of his works. In directing his plays he has made brilliant use of dramatic movement, music and dance, because of which he has succeeded in drawing enthusiastic response from both intellectual and popular audiences. He has evolved what is called "theatrical English" enriched by African proverbs and idioms. Though *The Gods Are Not to Blame* was first published by the Oxford University Press in 1971, it had its first performance in Nigeria at the Ife Festival of Arts in 1968 and

was awarded the first prize in the Arts d'Afrique playwriting contest in 1969. The publishers write: "In this play the theme of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is skillfully transplanted to African soil. King Odewale's progress towards knowledge of the murder and incest that must be expiated before his kingdom can be restored to health is unfolded with a dramatic intensity heightened by the richness of the play's Nigerian setting."² Addressing some students of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Ola Rotimi admitted that the play had for its perspective the Biafra War and the ravages and havoc caused by ethnic conflict; like many of his contemporaries, he too was trying to come to terms with the Civil War.

In 1969 Gerald Moore wrote: "The last three or four years have seen a perceptible darkening of tone, notably in Nigerian writing, as the first promise of national independence evaporated in the fierce heat of regional hatred, political intimidation, arson and military violence. And this darkening of tone was to some extent prepared for in works, which, though not tragic in overall intention, conveyed in their satiric detail the spirit of critical and creative impatience which was stirring in the young generation of artists.... The hope that Africa's new nations would demonstrate in practice the unique humanism which many found in African tradition has not been realised...."³ Prior to the Civil War in July 1967 there were regional governments: the Northern People's Congress comprising Muslim Fulani-Hausa emirs whose native administrations had been fostered by British indirect rule; the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, a radical nationalist party dominating the Ibo east; the Action Group of the Yorubas with a puppet Prime Minister. There were alliances and counter-alliances among these three, while dissatisfaction among the civil servants and army officers (mainly Ibo) was brewing. Law and order broke down, and in 1966 there was a coup engineered by Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu and other young Ibo officers who assassinated the Sardauna of Sokoto, the Federal Prime Minister Alhaji Abubaka Tafawa Balewa, and some political agents. Gen Irons took over, and the over-mighty regional governments were re-

placed, but this was not to the liking of the rank and file of the fighting troops or leaders of the traditionalist North who were suspicious of the Ibo Christians. In July 1966 there was a Mutiny and Gen. Ironsi and other leading Ibo officers were killed. Though under the young Gen. Gowon, a Northern Christian, order was restored, there was increasing hostility and resentment against the prominent role being played by prosperous Ibos in administration, technical services, and commerce of the region. This resulted in the Program of September 1966 in which some 10,000 - 30,000 Ibo people were massacred in the Northern Region, and perhaps 1,000,000 fled as refugees to the East from where non-Ibos were expelled. Wole Soyinka was some three thousand miles away in Europe at the time, and he charged the autumn imagery of death and decay with the whole force of outraged humanity at the indiscriminate slaughter so that even the acorns beneath his heels explode like the heads severed and smashed by matchets.⁴ On 30th May, 1967, Gen. Ojukwu declared the region a sovereign and independent republic, Biafra. This secession was not recognised, and under the leadership of Gen. Gowon the Federal Forces closed in on the newly created state, so that by 1968 starvation, death and disease followed; estimates of mortality during this bloody Civil War range from 500,000 to several millions. Finally the biafran forces were routed between Dec. 1969 - Jan. 1970, and while Gen. Ojukwu fled, the remaining Biafrans surrendered to the federal troops. All these themes of pride, wrath, intrigue, greed, usurpation, aggression, massacre, isolation form the perspective of Rotimi's severe indictment of his countrymen in *The Gods are Not to Blame*, an adaptation of what D.H. Lawrence called Sophocles' "finest drama of all times."⁵

The Prologue to the play is in mime with choral singing, dancing, music, and the Narrator, Royal Bard, purblind seer, Baba Fakunle, the hero, Odewale, giving the background of forty-two years for the main action which covers barely twenty-four hours and takes place in Katuje. A son is born to King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola. It is their first-born so according to custom, nine days later he is taken to the shrine of Ogun, "the God of War,

of Iron,/and doctor of all male children"⁶ to seek his blessings and divine the future of the child. Baba Fakunle, "the oldest and most knowing/of all Ifa priests in the world"(2) tells them the boy's "mission from the gods to carry out on earth." It is not a happy future and the Townspeople sing a dirge —"he will kill his own father and then marry his own mother"(3). Such an unlucky messenger must be killed, and so the Priest of Ogun ties the boy's feet with a string of cowries meaning infanticide and sacrifice to the gods who have sent him down to earth. He is given to Gbonka, the King's special messenger who takes him to the "evil grove" in the bush. Thirty-two years later King Adetusa meets a "rough death." Seizing the opportunity the people of Ikolu destroy the peace and quiet of the land. Far far away, during his countless wanderings in search of peace, Odewale heard rumours of their wailing and plight, and found his way to the "strange land." He inspired them: "Get up ... not to do something/is to be crippled fast. Up, up... / to lie down resigned to fate/is madness./Up, up, struggle: the world is/struggle"(6). Under his able guidance they regained what they had lost, and Kutuje prospered. In their joy they broke their tradition and made him, an outsider of the Ijekun tribe, King. According to custom he married the "motherly queen," Ojuola, and had four children by her. Eleven Years thus passed happily, but again there was trouble in the land.

Act I, Sc 1 spells out the problem and shows Odewale as a father figure, a guide, guardian and leader of his people. There is "raucous lamentation," "moaning" and "keening" among the Townspeople who are losing their loved ones, and feel that their King has let them down and is not doing enough to assuage their suffering. He goes in their midst and tries to console them telling them that sickness is like rain and spares no one, and so they must not give up hope. Under no circumstances must they give up, for "life is a struggle"(15). He informs them that he and his Chiefs had made sacrifices to Soponna, the god of poxes; Ela, the god of Deliverance; Sango, the god of thunder; and his eldest son, Aderopo, had been sent to "Ile-Ife, the land of/Orunmila, to ask the all-seeing God why we are in pain"(12). They had also

sent for the greatest of all medicine men, Babu Fakunle, to help them in their hour of trial. All this restores the confidence of the people and a new spirit enters them.

Sc 2 begins with the return of Aderopo. After great effort and much prodding he informs the congregation that the Oracle has said "there is a curse in this land,/and until that curse is purged, our suffering will go on"(19). The person responsible is the murderer of King Adetusa and "it is fearful to know that that same murderer still/lives in peace in this same land"(21). The Chiefs and Priest are shocked and want nothing less than "life for life," but Odewale pronounces "slow death." Soon after he suspects intrigue, and voices his insecurity:

My people, I fear, I tremble. Suspensions,
heavy suspicions fill my heart....
It would be me next. Me an Ijekun man, a
stranger in the midst of your tribe. (23)

People try to reassure him but he is convinced that evil is being plotted against him. Pulling out the matchet from the Shrine of Ogun he swears an oath that before the feast of the God of Iron, to commence at sunrise the next day, he would expose the murderer and put him to shame.

Act II, Sc 1 begins with the Chiefs who are resentful, disgusted and mortified at the allegations made by the King. Baba Fakunle, stooping with age, is led in by a small boy. In spite of eulogies and a lot of pleading, he refuses to divulge the name of the murderer. However, he drops a hint. Odewale, in his impetuosity, is rude and accuses the seer of conniving with the murderers and conspirators. Thus insulted and manhandled, Baba Fakunle calls Odewale a "murderer" and "bedsharer." He yells at him and asks him to "go sit down in private and think deep before darkness/covers you up... think... think... think!"(29). In Sc 2 King Odewale is visibly shaken, and categorically lays the blame on Aderopo for planning to overthrow him and usurp the throne. He accuses Aderopo of corruption, bribery, blackmail, intrigue and subversion, saying that because he did not belong to their tribe the sight of him as their King "gnaws at your liver, and rips your heart asunder"(34). He banishes him as "two rams cannot drink

from the same bucket at the same time ! They will lock horns"(34).

Act III, Sc 1 introduces a scrawny looking old man with Ijekun tribal marks on his cheeks, in weather beaten garb, who claims to have grown up with King Odewale. When the two meet, Odewale introduces him as "friend of all friends,/my brother... no, my master. He taught me/ everything in my father's house in Ijekun"(44). He is no doubt relieved to see a countryman, and confides in him; guilt and escape from it brought him to this foreign land: a farmer, Kakalu, sold him a big yam farm near Ede for five bags of cowries. One morning when he went to the farm, a short old man was there with people armed with hoes, digging up his sweat. Naturally, he was angry, but tried to be calm and reason with the "Elder One" who abused him and his tribe. They fight using charms to mesmerise till Odewale strikes the man with his hoe and "realising the fatal result he backs away overcome with fright"(49). Then, for him "the whole world had ceased to be"(49) and he wanted the earth to burst open and hide him. He crossed the seven rivers in search of peace and came to Kuteje. In Sc 2 the climax is reached. Queen Ojuola is trying to console her distraught husband and tells him that the seer cannot be trusted because he had earlier said that King Adetusa had been killed by his own blood near Ede, at a place where three footpaths meet, eleven months before Odewale's arrival in Kuteje; that information had contradicted the robber-theory put forward by the bodyguards of the King. Hearing this Odewale is taken aback and confused, saying: "Voices! There are too many voices now!"(55). He sends for the bodyguard, Gbonka, to get firsthand information for himself so that the mystery surrounding the former King's assassination can be solved once and for all. Sc 3 reveals another phase of Odewale's life. He had been working on his father's farm in Ijekun when, paying obeisance to an old man, whom he had known to be a paternal Uncle, he prostrated himself only to be snubbed. Odewale went to the Priest to confirm who he was, and the Oracle told him that he had a curse on him:

You cannot run away from it, the gods have willed
that you will kill your father,
and then marry your mother!

To run away would be foolish. The
 snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay
 where you are. Stay where you are... stay where
 you are....(60)

However, with such an impending doom he could not continue to stay with his parents, and so fled like a madman telling his friends Alaka to locate him only after the demise of his parents. Alaka had come to inform him that two years ago his father "became heavy with years/and so let the earth receive his body"(58) but his mother refuses to follow though she is getting very old. To the "lifeless" Odewale this is good news and he proclaims:

Our hearts and heads are sick with too much
 leaning on the Powers. Henceforth, my people,
 we struggle on-by ourselves, with our hands, our feet,
 our.... My people bear
 witness: the gods have lied.(59)

But he is not destined to have the last laugh, because his friend tells him that had he known that that was the reason why he left home he would have tied him down by revealing the truth that the hunter Ogundele and his wife Mobike were only his foster parents and had not actually given him birth. Odewale's response is typically aggressive—hurling Alaka to the floor, he pins him down amidst general commotion.

The story is gradually revealed that while Alaka was hunting deer with his master, Ogundele, a man came limping with a child whose hands and feet had been tied with strings of cowries, implying sacrifice to the gods. He was an Oyo man from Kuteje and worked as a messenger. While Odewale is trying to unravel the rest of the riddle the Ogun priest collapses onto a stool in fright and Ojuola "rises to her full height, turns round, her face a mask, and without a word strides with measured ominous dignity into the bedroom"(64). Once they recall the name of the messenger — Gbonka — and Alaka verifies that the cursed baby boy is no other than Odewale himself — hunter returned home — the Priest tries to pull the king away. In Sc 4 Gbonka enters and is recognised by Alaka. He admits that he took pity on the baby and gave it to the hunter Ogundele in the bush at Ipetu. The Ogun

priest then reveals who gave birth to Odewale:

She. The woman who has just gone into the
bedroom. Bearer of your four children. She too is
your.... mother!(68)

With the unravelling of the plot the action freezes as things are absorbed. "Odewale drops his matchet, then dazedly goes from one chief to the next, arms held out as if ready to embrace. But he goes past each, avoiding being held or steadied. The round completed, he picks up his matchet and shuffles dreamily into the bedroom"(Ibid.). He pulls the curtain slowly open and reveals the body of wife and mother, Queen Ojuola. The Chief says that he had seen many deaths but never before had he seen such a death of a woman "with a knife pushed deep by her own hands/ to reach her very womb"(69). Meanwhile, Aderopo has entered and is being held back by the chiefs. He wrenches free and rushes into the bedroom, flings the curtain wildly open only to be confronted by his brother and step-father, King Odewale, "groping about... his eyes gouged out and oozing blood"(Ibid.). The Chief says that he had tried to stop him, wrestled with him, but he had the strength of "a hundred vexed lions." Before departing Odewale has a message for his people:

Do not blame the Gods...
Learn from my fall...
They knew my weakness: the weakness of a man
easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others.
.....It was
my run from the blood I spilled to calm the hurt
of my bribe, that brought me to this land to do more
horrors. (71)

Taking a promise from the Priest and Chiefs not to make further mockery of Queen Ojuola's womanhood and give her a burial of honour and dignity, he departs as part of the last sentence pronounced by him on the criminal. With his four brothers and sisters/children he starts on a never-ending journey of banishment, a self-imposed exile. The people of Kuteje crouch in deference to the man "whose tragedy is also their tragedy"(72).

Odewale thus is a hero on Greek proportions, his tragic flaw, hamartia, being hybris in the form of "hot temper, like a disease

from birth is the curse that has brought you trouble"(29). His impatience was seen with the Townspeople who were not doing enough to combat the illness plaguing them but complaining, and also with Aderopo who was rather hesitant due to discretion on returning from Ile-Ife, and again when Odewale was falsely accusing him of plotting against him due to ambition. Odewale himself admits to hotness of blood like the gorilla, something Sango, the thunder lion, taught him. This 'excess' rises in defence of his tribe and results in 'violence'; the passion and purpose, seen in the perspective of ethnic conflict, and his "otherness" are his undoing. It is Odewale that is conscious of his coming from a different tribe. Ojuola tries to reassure him, but he refuses to accept and reiterates time and again that he is a "tramp," "a stranger" in their midst. The chiefs also appeal to him saying that they can have nothing against him as his tribe has done them no harm, but he still feels alienated:

The mangrove tree dwells in the river,
but does that make it a crocodile?(51)

This "otherness" became his Achilles heel and precipitated his downfall.

It was not that simple because two most abominable acts had been committed, of course in ignorance, patricide and incest. In spite of Odewale's struggle against Fate, Destiny took its course and all his efforts proved futile. This too is a tragedy of destiny. "Its tragic effect is said to lie in the contrast between the supreme will of the gods and the vain attempts of mankind to escape the evil that threatens them."⁷ However, like heroes of all great tragedies, Odewale redeems his position at the end. In the crucible of tears and fire he realises his inherent weakness, and comes to terms with the fact that it is not external forces that are responsible for his downfall, but his own failure to rise above pettiness, parochialism and jingoism. What C.M. Bowra said of a Sophoclean tragedy applies to its adaptation as well: "The central idea is that through suffering a man learns to be modest before the gods.... When [the characters] are finally forced to see the truth, we know that the gods have prevailed and that men must accept their own insignificance."⁸

In a male-dominated, patriarchal society, Queen Ojuola gets the fittest compliment from her macho husband:

Great woman !

.....
 Gods ! What a woman !...

Give me some of her patience...

... some of her cool heart....(39)

She rises to the occasion and tries to reason with the Chiefs to resolve the crisis arising out of Baba Fakunle's accusations. She is held in high esteem by the Townspeople, Priest and Chiefs, and they realise that she was at the receiving end, her womanhood mocked in the bargain.

Chinua Achebe had said: "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten."⁹ Ola Rotimi puts words into the mouth of Odewale: "What is the matter, fellow, aren't you a Yoruba man? Must proverbs be explained to you after they are said?" (32) However, keeping a foreign audience in mind Rotimi does use cushioning. In the play almost two score proverbs have been used. Referring to the Ibolu invaders, Odewale says: "He who pelts another with pebbles/ asks for rocks in return"(7). Eulogising Odewale, the Royal Bard says: "It is not changing into the lion that is hard,/it is getting the tail of a lion"(Ibid.). Again referring to Odewale being cherished by the people of Kuteje, the Royal Bard says: "Kolanut lasts long in the mouths/of them who value it"(Ibid.). Asking Odewale to act as a King since they have made him one, the citizens say: "When the chameleon brings forth a child, is/not that child expected to dance?"(9) Asking their King if the richness of kingly life has changed him, the citizens again say: "When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash/off its spots?"(10) Alaka wants to reveal Odewale's parentage to him alone, but the latter is insistent that it must be made public: "Secrets of the/ owl must not be known in daylight"(62). Being cut off from his roots, and going into exile with his offspring, Odewale says: "When/ The wood-insect/ Gathers sticks,/On its own head it/ Carries/ Them"(72). By just reading these proverbs one can piece together the theme of the play. "The proverbs are not merely poetic cliché and a mild commentary on the action, but, as typical

of African society, they are for firm codes with the force of judicial precedent."¹⁰ In fact, an independent study of imagery and its sociological reflection of society would be a fruitful and rewarding exercise.

The proverbs, imagery, music-dance, choral singing, rhythm of the God of Iron-dance, shrine of Ogun, native gods, musical instruments — kutelu, bata drums — gong, matchet, hoe, mortar and pestle, grinding stone, basket, domestic animals, wild animals, creatures in fables are all familiar to this pastoral community just as the herbs — asufe eiyeje, dogo-yara leaves, lemon grass, tea bush — and trees — Opa, Oriri, Omoluwere — and different tribal marks. For a foreign audience, however, they are exotic and romantic. Besides the eulogising, onomatopoeiac expressions such as "erhh", "gira, gira, gira" are used particularly by the hero. Colloquialisms and expressions characteristic of Nigerians, particularly Yorubas, are scattered throughout: "Aha", "Ha", "Hmm", "Ehn", "Hunh", "Oohh", "A-ah", "Ehenn", and "Awu". There are songs in dialect too — going to the bush to collect herbs, Ojuola telling her children the story of Olurombi who was fair as palm oil, the nostalgic home song Odewale sings while Alaka dances when they meet after a long separation. The dramatist has tried to reproduce the style of talking too — to prod the memory of Labata, Akilapa, the bodyguard, says: "Don't you know my brother,/Degelu, the son of my mother's brother who married/Motara the sister of your wife's mother, Niniola, who sells palmwine and pounded yam at the market/ near — "(56). Later Alaka is trying to make Gbonka recall because "the man's brain is aged... and it needs to/ be prodded little by little to bring forth remembrance.... / Old One, remember, you even sent us a message/of greeting to the father of your wife who lived in/ Ikoti in Ijekun-Yemoja, home of Atakumosa"(67), and it does have effect because the messenger recalls soon after. Places too are not fictitious, they can be identified on a map — Ilorin, Ipetu bush, Ede, Oshogbo and so on. Names are significant and meaningfully symbolic, be they of people or places: Kuteje means "I cheated death"; Ikolu means "aggressors"; Odewale means "hunter come home." Thus, though the theme is from Sophocles, the play has

a special Yoruba flavour—Nigerian drama coming of age with its own ethos, "local habitat and name."

In the great Greek tragedy, father and son had quarrelled over right of way, something remote for a society based on hierarchy and courtesies, customs and traditions, so Rotimi introduced the ethnic conflict, a very topical theme of the latter half of the sixth decade of this millenium, loaded with a message for his countrymen. The words of the narrator in the Prologue are suggestive, referring to Ikolu invaders:

They killed hundreds
They seized hundreds,
They enslaved hundreds more,
and left behind in the land of Kuteje
hunger, and thirst and fear.(5)

No doubt, the parricide and incest themes are also foreign to the Nigerian mind, but Rotimi has purposely harnessed the most abominable of crimes and sins to drive his point home and indict his people. However, to call the play topical would be to undermine its significance because the tragedy of Odewale could be the tragedy of a Jew, Palestinian, Bosnian, Rawandian, Kosovon or any other. The word "brother" is used as a mere colloquialism whereas in reality, in the universal context, Yoruba, Rivers, Hausa, Ibo, Ijekun, Oyo, Kuteje, and even beyond the boundaries of villages, towns, rivers, and lands — Hutu, Tutsi — if there is a feeling of genuine brotherhood, "horrors" and abominations of such magnitude, crimes against humanity, which one is even ashamed to utter, will not be perpetrated. The Townspeople comment on the political scene vis a vis their woes:

The world is bad
One does not know whom to trust
The good ruler who stands for the people becomes
a victim too soon.
And bad rulers like bad sauce, stay longer!
A world that knows not what it wants
A dizzy world, this.(24)

In the play traditional and modern are combined in more ways than one, be they the chorus, soliloquy, blank verse which is broken and imagic showing power and verve of Rotimi's lines,

freeze, a cinematographic technique, themes of isolation, loneliness, alienation, etc. The levels of interpretation too can be graduated from a simple tragic story to something topical with ironic and satirical overtones, to a universal tragedy of mankind and human relations. *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is different from *Oedipus Rex* in that it is written for a unique audience, and pure dialogue would be the undoing of the dramatist, thereby defeating his very purpose in adapting the great work to Nigerian conditions. Minus the Chorus, the rest of Sophocles is present in Rotimi's play as the skeleton to be filled in — the framework so to say. However, keeping his ethos in mind he has made significant changes: Yoruba gods, Sango and Ogun are invoked instead of Apollo; cowrie strings are tied to the "fig to divination" instead of rivetted ankles or an iron pin which cruelly pierced the feet of the three-day old child to be abandoned on the mountainside of Cithaeron instead of the evil grove. Thus Odewale and Oedipus are both meaningfully different aspects of the same person-hunter returned home, swollen foot. Instead of the deadly monster, the Sphinx, who pitted her ferocity against the wits of man, destroying all who failed to answer her cunning riddle, there are the Ikolu invaders. However, Oedipus was her match and answered her riddle, destroying her power; Odewale too has the ability to solve riddles as he confesses. King Lius went on a pilgrimage whereas King Adetusa went to his mother's farm. Confusion surrounds their deaths; robbers are reported to be the culprits in both tragedies initially. Instead of Oedipus' brother-in-law, Creon, there is Odewale's step-son, Aderopo, who calls the seer, and is in turn suspected. The seer in both stories is blind and is led by a small boy. Oedipus' hamartia is his obstinacy, "refusal to yield", and his harshness in anger; the same is the case with Odewale, only the purpose, the motivation is different. A messenger comes to inform Oedipus about the death of his father on account of ill health and old age, but in the Nigerian version a friend, Alaka, seemed a better prospect. Odewale almost echoes Oedipus when he refers to his parent's demise, "unless it could be said/ Grief at my absence killed him — and so I killed him."¹¹ Instead of shepherds there are hunters because in the Yoruba region that is a com-

moner sight. Instead of Queen Jocasta, it is the Ogun Priest who asks Odewale not to press ahead with the enquiry. The method of death and blindness too is different. When King Odewale is leaving with his children the Chiefs rush to stop him but he says: "Let no one stop us and let no one come with us or/ I shall curse him"(72), but King Oedipus is not immediately banished; he is concerned about his children particularly his daughters whose days he fears "can only end in fruitless maidenhood"¹²; he is not allowed to take them with him either, and his successor, Creon, rather heartlessly says, "Command no more. Obey. Your rule is ended."¹³ In Rotimi the references to incest have not been reiterated so often as in Sophocles. The wise sayings of the great philosopher-poet have been replaced by proverbs, nearer home to an African audience, and almost part of their DNA/genes.

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⁹Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1958), p.5.

¹⁰*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 19, p.309.

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¹³*Ibid.*, p.68.

BOOK REVIEWS

K.V. SURENDRAN (ED.), *INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION: NEW PERSPECTIVES*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), pp.138, Rs.300.00

U.S. Rukhaiyar

Indian fiction in English has now come of age. In a span of nearly seventy years it has gained in both content and form, depth and variety. Some of its classics have got universal recognition and appreciation; some have been awarded at home and some abroad. The realism of Mulk Raj Anand, the poetic-philosophical depth of Raja Rao, the complex simplicity of R.K. Narayan, the sophisticated technique of Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy, the irony and pathos of Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya, the experimentation of Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh have enriched both the range and depth of Indian fiction in English. It has very well tackled the problem of writing on native themes in an alien language. At one time English language was taken as an imposition of alien rule in India. But now Indian English had evolved its own ethos, its own idiom. It has got the smell of the soil.

It has also made use of some of the sophisticated techniques of English fiction, e.g., design and pattern, rhythm, imagery, aesthetic cohesion, metaphoric structure, etc. Anita Desai has successfully practised the stream of consciousness technique. Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* resembles Mann's *Magic Mountain* in a very significant way. Both the books have woven deep philosophical thoughts into the fabric of novel. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* reminds us of Joyce's *Ulysses* in the sense that both deal with the incidents of just one day. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* has made use of irony of various kinds quite artistically. This shows that Indian fiction in English is moving ahead at the right pace. It is trying to embrace every new thing in both form and content seen in English fiction elsewhere.

The book *Indian English Fiction: New Perspectives*, edited by Dr. K.V. Surendran, may be said to be a laudable attempt in this direction. It is a collection of fifteen illuminating critical essays by teachers and scholars from the different parts of our country. Anita Singh's essay "Situating Indian English Fiction in the Ecology of Print culture" has touched upon a new, but necessary, aspect of literary production: "Literature may be an architect, a product of social consciousness, and a world vision, but it is also an industry. Books are not studies of meaning, they are also commodities produced by publishers and sold in the market at a profit." True, this is also an integral, though unliterary, aspect of literary production, which is a part of the print industry.

T.K. Nand Kumaran's essay "Vehicles of Ambivalence in *The Great India*" contains a fine analysis of author's mixing of myth and history, their teasing ambivalences and their transportation in the modern India, as also of irony and dreams as artistic devices. Anita Myles's study of subjectivity, class and feminism in Shobha De's *Sultry Days* is quite penetrating. She has rightly observed: "The culmination of novel in a forceful, traumatic and nostalgic denouement results in striking epiphanies rarely to be observed in modern Indian fiction. It is hamartiac for God, therapeutic for Nisha and cathartic for the readers."

Basavaraj Naikar's in depth analysis of Arun Joshi's novel, *The Foreigner*, is brilliant. More such studies are needed to enrich the criticism of Indian Fiction in English. Ramesh Kumar Gupta's study of Humanism in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Old Woman and the Cow* and Amar Nath Prasad's study of social, political and psychological realism of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* are also quite refreshing.

Almost all the essays in this anthology suggest a sincere urge on the part of the contributors to bring to light some of the hitherto unnoticed shades of their respective topics. Such ventures add to the treasure of standard criticism. I want to thank Prof. K.V. Surendran for having taken pains to bring out such a good anthology. I think it can interest both the kinds of readers, common and specialised.

K.K. SHARMA, *FOUR GREAT INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELISTS: SOME POINTS OF VIEW*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), pp.154, Rs.300.00

H.C. Gupta

Professor K.K. Sharma neatly clinches the issue when he writes in the *Preface*: "No wonder, they [Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Bhabani Bhattacharya] have been placed among the foremost writers of the world today. Hence the perpetual need for fresh studies on their art and ideas" — it is an undisputed fact. The authenticity of details speaks of the genuine interest of the author in the work. The writer has done much useful service to the readers by bringing out together his articles written over a period of years. The collection consists of : 1. "Mulk Raj Anand: A Preface to His Novels"; 2. "Infatuation and Reality: *The Bachelor of Arts*"; 3. "*The English Teacher: An Appraisal*"; 4. "R.K. Narayan's Malgudi with Special Reference to *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide*"; 5. "Raja Rao: An Evaluation"; 6. "The Everlasting Yea: Bhabani Bhattacharya's Vision of Life"; and 7. "Bhabani Bhattacharya's Aesthetics." Quite an obvious features of the articles (5 out of 7) is their division into parts separated by Roman numbers, which vary from III in 4 to XI in 5. The dividing is a great help as each part deals with a major point. Another feature is the writer's resume of the whole in the last paragraph — at times, even in single sentence at the close. For example : (i) "In a word, *The Bachelor of Arts* is a tale of man's infatuation for a young woman and his realisation of the realities of life." and (iii) "The artist's inner compulsion to create a work of art, his social awareness, his unique vision, his command of expression — these constitute the core of Bhabani Bhattacharya's aesthetics."

Even a cursory glance at the articles reveals that the writer has a vast knowledge; the lists of References, as many as 95 in "Raja Rao: An Evaluation" (this list is shorter in others, but is still considerably long) evidence Sharma's painstaking wide critical studies and close reading of the novels. This article is also the longest in the Collection covering 54 of the 154 pages. It is

justly so, as it studies 5 novels and gives an overall evaluation of Raja Rao, an enigmatic philosopher-fictionist. One of these novels, *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, runs into 708 pages.

Another feature corollary to the one last-mentioned is providing enough introductory knowledge on, what I would term, 'related issues'; viz., on the 'Novel', 'Regional Novel', 'Shankara's *Advaitvad*' (monism), Ramanuj's '*Vishishtadvait*', 'the Monkey Theory' and 'the Cat-Theory' of Indian philosophy, Raja Rao's theories of 'word as *Mantra*', the writer as '*Upasak*', writing as '*Sadhana*', etc. Also there are comparisons and contrasts, which seem to me necessary tools of Sharma's polemics between his authors and their works and those of the past and the present.

One of my firm beliefs is that only he who has full command over his matter and expression can be both simple and lucid and elegant and energetic. Here is a book to bear testimony to my long-cherished belief. Before I conclude my review, I would like to show how Prof. Sharma has his own to say and a distinct way to say it for which I quote from the book (*italics mine*) "Thus Raja Rao is a philosophical novelist to the backbone. All the *five* novels he has brought out *till now*, belong to the type of fiction labelled as metaphysical. *Kanthapura* is a Puranic tale and is commonly regarded as a Gandhi Purana. *The Serpent and the Rope* is called a metaphysical novel by the novelist himself and by most of the critics as well, *but in my opinion, it is better to call it a metaphysical tragedy*. His third novel, *The Cat and Shakespeare* is clearly a *metaphysical comedy*, while his next novel *Comrade Kirillov* is a *philosophical tragi-comedy*. In short, the fountainhead of Raja Rao's creative impulse is the rich cultural and philosophical heritage of India. *True*, he is deeply concerned with India in all her variety and essence."

In a word, K.K. Sharma has spoken a lasting inspiration by dint of his courage of convictions. I have no doubt that what he, 'sanctified by reason, and blest by faith', has interpreted, others will love and interpret as he has shown them how. A much useful book for all readers in India and abroad. A veritable boon to all those studying the four Indian English novelists for some specific purpose.

MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR,

DEATH PERCEPTION - LIFE PERCEPTION

Tr. D.C. Chambial (Delhi: Indian Publishers, 2002), Rs. 175.00

Jaya Lakshmi Rao V.

Death Perception - Life Perception is a volume of 50 poems, originally written in Hindi. The poems retain their natural flavour, thanks to the versatility of the well-known poet D.C. Chambial. As the title indicates, the mysterious entity of death and the magical polarity called life preoccupy the mind and art of Bhatnagar. The theme of death and life has always been a source of deep contemplation for writers from times immemorial, and yet it has never lost its freshness due to the mystery that surrounds it.

In the first poem, "Gratitude", the poet gleans a reason to be grateful to death. It certainly is a new perception. The poet says:

Death's given

Man

Life-art-efficiency

Such

Embellishment - adornment.

It is death that makes life beautiful and desirable. So, he offers "Gratitude/ To death/ Life's gratitude." The fact that death equals all is mourned in the poem, "The wheel of death / time."

Dr. Bhatnagar's poems are not for those who look for the romantic and the sensational. There is a deep contemplation, a firm conviction in them. Despite the scientific advancement, death is a "wonderful puzzle" for the poet. He sees death as a conundrum in poems such as "Contemplation" and "A Puzzle". It is the fear of death that urges man to take refuge in God. Yet the poet believes that man's invincibility will make him see "The mystery of death."

In poems like "Life-Death" and "The Opposite" the dividing line between the polarities of life and death are brought to focus. To the poet, they are not separate but intrinsically interconnected. It is futile to think of Hell or Heaven. Suffice to know that in

This manifest world the only truth

Death — a truth

Life — a truth!

The common everyday thought of life and death attains a special significance in these poems because of the complexity of human

emotion and intellectual activity. The poem entitled "The Philosophy of life" is remarkable in this context. Real death is to lose 'internal' motion. The poetic thought continues on to "Excelsior". Here is an echo of the Vedic thought that our life is a pilgrimage and that man is an eternal traveller. The poet exhorts us to keep in touch with the unseen presence of the cosmic power by its physical manifestation in various forms of nature.

"A Prayer" is an insightful poem on the secret of leading a happy life. But we live as much for 'ourselves' as for 'others' because the whole world is a family: *Vasudhaika, Kutumbakam*. "A Call" is unique in that it uses numerous sensory images to celebrate the carnival of life. A number of poems expound the value attached to life. Poems such as "One day", "Proved", "A Healthy Vision" and "Compatibility" sing of peace, victory, glory and pleasure of life. In "The Philosophy of Death", "An Invitation", "To the Fairy of Death" and "A request", there is welcome to death, which is treated as a friend, 'a clever girl' and a neighbour. Thus, there is a metamorphosis in the poet's notion of death as it passes from the stage of being the fearful to that of a much-awaited welcome guest.

In "Comparison" the poet deftly juxtaposes Shiva, the three-eyed god, with shava, the lifeless body. A single vowel shift from 'i' to 'a' brings in a complete difference in consciousness, i.e. from *spandana* to *jada*. "A Blow" shows the futility of involvement. The poet bows out of the stage of life in "I Bow Thee" seeking release from good as well as bad. After going through the purging experiences of life, wisdom dawns on the traveller, and this we see in "An Ascetic". "Last Will" is not to follow established systems, but good faith and good feelings. In the last of the collected poems, "Kritkarma", the poet depicts the man who does duty successfully, and whose 'end' is a 'sign of perfection.'

This collection merits praise for its linguistic novelty too. Myth and metaphor lend strength to the poems. The poet has his own intensities, pauses and quiet places. Yet there is nothing vague or confusing. The rhythm follows the poet's thought and emotion. In spite of being personalized, the poems appeal to all because of the universality of theme.

K.V. RAGHUPATHI, *SMALL REFLECTIONS*

(Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 2002), Rs.100.00

Patricia Prime

K.V. Raghupathi's preoccupation with "vulnerability" has always humanised his poetry and redeemed it from precocity. *Small Reflections* is as rich in honed surfaces and artful indirections as ever. This richness can make the collection's moments of pathos seem mannered. The very stylishness of lines like "... a poet is after all/ part and parcel of God's Imagination" ("To the Poet") virtually cancel out its hint of elegy. Yet the lines distil Raghupathi's vision in the volume. The burnished order of the poems frequently seems to be defending against threats of chaos. So the second stanza of "A Tribute to Namibia"

We are segregated, untouched

Because we are black

The first colour of the unborn universe

Chaos, so chaotic in our living we were we are.

glides beyond the safe world of nature that he has expressed in previous poems in the book.

It is a tribute to the fine tuning of a sequence of love poems at the beginning of the book that so few of the poems strike false notes and so many of them resonate somewhere beyond our normal scale of perception. Take, for example, "Love: III":

Dawn comes, fresh and benign

These massive majestic hills still sleep under the fog like

tired bulls after ploughing operations

Everything stays awfully silent, so deceptive

But life pulsates like water in a hole on the sandy beach

The appeal of this, for me, is multiple: its folklore, fairytale aspect, its evocation of lost, idealized India, its stunning painterly aspect, its crisp diction, well-composed and controlled sounds.

Few poets are so hauntingly oblique, so good at knowing what to say and what to leave unsaid: these poems suggest dangers that won't be tamed by poetry. The menacing suggestions accumulate quietly:

Enough of torture

Man has undergone,

Enough agony

Man has reeled in, ("To the mast of continuity")

Obliquity, though, is nothing without precision. There are times when Raghupathi intimates at too great a distance from experience. Responsive to history, his imagination is, nonetheless, essentially lyrical. He is at once most exhilarating and most close to reality when he manipulates his favourite images:

The sky and earth are one in stimulating copulation

The world rests in an oblivion state of ecstasy

Nothing seems inoperable ("It rains It rains....")

The moment of communion is touched on, drawn out and explicated.

Raghupathi's poems invariably ritualise their subjects; the result can be writing of exquisite poignancy.

Come, young lad, come home on Friday

to the chime of little bells of tiny grieved temple and church

From the locked houses and shops

they wait to give you hero's welcome at the Northern gate

and bid you farewell at the Southern gate

These lines are moving and wholly in contact with reality in their calm, their quickened and abiding sadness, their relevance to the poem's theme. Raghupathi's technique catches the pathos and the verity of the young man going into battle.

Two poems, "Sorrow" and "Search" are tantalisingly associative. In "Sorrow", Raghupathi reverts to his roots and to the myths of his culture. "Search" too has its roots in culture as the poet searches for Buddhahood. In these poems words and context strike sparks off each other. Yet such clarity is achieved at the cost of certain evocativeness. On the other hand, marvellous images thread the poems.

Among the truly complete poems are several in Raghupathi's successful vein of nature poems, as well as those immediately inspired by the young monk lost in a brothel or a beautiful girl or the meanderings of a river. "Musings" and many other brilliant poems fully earn our enthusiasm. *Small Reflections* is a Writer's Workshop production, which is beautifully presented, hand-set, hand-printed, with handloom sari cloth cover and calligraphy by P. Lal.

HITESH PARMAR, 'PARADISE LOST' AND 'THE DIVINE COMEDY': A COMPARATIVE STUDY

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), pp.181, Rs.350.00

Amar Nath Prasad

The main purpose behind writing this book is to show critically how these two great literary figures successfully harmonized and reconciled poetry and philosophy in their poems. Much has been written on both the writers, but their unique blending of poetry and philosophy has received relatively less attention. It is difficult to create harmony between poetry and philosophy, reason and imagination, intellect and intuition. It can be done only by poets like Dante and Milton.

One of the chief features of Milton's poetry is the blending of many opposites, i.e. Renaissance and Reformation, Christianity and Paganism, the Biblical and the classical, etc. In *Lycidas* the poet's puritanism can be seen in the denunciation of corrupt practices of the clergymen. In *Paradise Lost* Milton chooses the theme of the "Fall of Man" because of his puritan outlook. In his famous poem "On His Blindness" he presents his vision of life through powerful images. He gives the image of 'mild yoke' and shows his profound faith in the existence of God. He is of the opinion that only a great devotion to the Almighty can give peace to a restless mind. In *Paradise Lost* he presents the theme of Renaissance humanism through the grand speech of Satan:

... for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallowed up in endless misery.

Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is one of the best epics of the world. It is steeped in religious thoughts. Here literature and religion are blended together as in *Srimad Bhagvad Gita*. We know that both literature and religion are apparently two different spheres of activity; but it is the greatness of Dante that he succeeded in fusing together both in a beautiful way. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is essentially mystical, philosophi-

cal and religious. Milton's poem, on the other hand, is philosophical and religious. *Divine Comedy* is the fruit of Dante's vision of the supreme truth. Throughout the poem, the presence of the poet is felt. Though there are personal feelings of Milton in *Paradise Lost*, still it differs from Dante's poem in the nature of its treatment and form. Dante describes the ineffable through his imaginative faculty and fuses the Pagan and Christian elements in his poem, while Milton deals with the Christian scheme of redemption in a formal manner. Parmar rightly holds the view: "Dante's poem is based on his experience of the Infinite, and therefore mystical, while Milton's poem is the consequence of his speculation and thinking, and therefore philosophical. That is why *Paradise Lost* is more a philosophical poem than a mystical one."

The book, under review, is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, captioned "Poetry and Philosophy", deals with the general definitions of both the terms. One of the chapters, "The Vision of Evil in Dante and Milton", is very interesting and thoughtful. The author raises a great question: If God is the source of good, why does he allow evil to be? This chapter shows how both the great poets, Dante and Milton, employ their strength of imagination to visualise the nature of evil. Milton begins his epic with the portrayal of Satan and his crew. He devotes the first two books to describe the fallen angels and hell. But Dante begins his poem with hell which is present in man. He imagines himself a pilgrim who wants to climb the mountain, but his way is blocked by three dangerous beasts — lion, leopard and she-wolf. These animals symbolize three darker aspects of human nature — pride, avarice and lust which prevent man from climbing the mountain. The chapter "Vision of God in *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*" is equally illuminating. It critically evaluates how both Milton and Dante want to get salvation through the realization of God and how they try to probe into the mystery of God, human existence and the destiny of man in their own specific ways.

Undoubtedly, the book is an asset to those students, teachers and research scholars who want to acquaint themselves with the variegated shades of the philosophy and poetry of Milton and Dante.

B.R. NAGPAL, *REALISM AND REVELATION IN GRAHAM GREENE*

(New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 2001), pp.181, Rs.100.00

Vijay K. Sharma

One has not heard about the prolific and controversial novelist, Graham Greene (1904-91) in the recent past. Greene is the author of more than twenty five novels, a number of plays, short stories, essays, travelogues and reviews and an autobiography. Greene has been the subject of at least three biographies so far. If T.S. Eliot is England's foremost Catholic poet and critic, Graham Greene has the distinction of being England's foremost Catholic novelist. Born on the same date as Mahatma Gandhi, albeit a few years later, the Oxonian Greene had the distinction of being a journalist of repute.

Influenced by the Scottish suspense writer John Buchan and the French Catholic novelist, Francoise Mauriac, Greene's earlier work was characterised "entertainments" as against "serious" fiction. But this arbitrary distinction did not hold good when his subsequent novels appeared. These seriously explored the Catholic dogmas, although the technique and the point of view were not much different. It was the subject matter which changed the perception. Like Evelyn Waugh, Greene was a convert to the Catholic faith. He felt that "with the death of Henry James the religious sense lost the sense of importance of human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension."

It is in this context that B.R. Nagpal's fresh study of Greene's writings comes handy. He reminds us of the iconoclast role Greene played like Mauriac and Waugh. "The anti-establishment, radical stance of all these writers becomes evident in the decanonisation of all the known conventional meanings of Church life, the decentered self," says Nagpal. Yet "neither Greene nor Mauriac can be branded as Manichean, Calvinist, Jansenist as majority of critics are prone to interpret them," Nagpal observes. He finds that the categories of "good and evil turn out to be oblique, irreverent, displacing." Greene's journey towards self-realization is

reminiscent of Dante's threefold stages — Hell, Purgatory and Heaven.... It is spiritual in content and direction. In Greene, sin is not irretrievable, and religion is not sophistry but a lived reality." The socio-political backdrop of fascism and dictatorship in the nineteen thirties, the role of the American super-power, and the capitalists' interference gave a sense of disruption to the Communist minded Greene. Yet, Nagpal claims that "Greene is not a novelist with historical inevitability in Marxism or mythological Christianity but one who explicates in his central motif of divine man in making, a leap into the bright splendour at the end of a curve that makes overstepping one's bounds."

Nagpal documents the wide-ranging possibilities of the novel and how Greene has provided the world of literature with the new frontiers. Greene explores the religious strain of the English novel in its many facets. Nagpal's focus on themes like quest for being, ambiguities and the ambivalent, recognition of the self, affirmation and conformity, and ambivalent, recognition of the self, affirmation and conformity, and regeneration revival makes the discussions vital and wide-ranging, and reveals the scholarly streak in him.

Realism and Revelation in Graham Greene provides with a useful bibliography of Greene's complete works and selected criticism on his writing. It is a useful reading for any student or scholar of Graham Greene. The book has been brought out fairly well and moderately priced by the publishers. What bothers one is inadequate proof reading. But that, in no way, should reflect on the quality of Nagpal's hard work.

PASHUPATI JHA, *CROSS AND CREATION*

(New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2003), pp. 63, Rs. 150.00

M.R.Verma

It is a general conception that poetry is redundant in the contemporary world; but the essential reality is otherwise—amid the deadening effect of too much of science, technology and materialism, poetry may prove to be our only way to salvation. In the prose-preface to *Cross and Creation* Pashupati Jha, therefore, passionately pleads, almost in Arnold-like fashion, for giving poetry a chance because it is creative activities like poetry that can sensitize humanity afresh, making it alive to the problems of others too. It is in this context that the cover page, depicting Christ crucified, looks not only stunning but appropriate too, for nothing can better symbolize the suffering of humanity than the moving scene of crucifixion. It is again in this context only that Jha equates a sensitive poet with the Christ-figure:

O Jesus, when unearned wounds
are daily inflicted on me,
I automatically look to you:
do parts of past always continue? (11)

The contemporary society is beset with problems like growing tension in man-woman relationship and among different communities, increasing isolation of individuals, and the neglect of women and old men. Jha has depicted these problems without being obtrusive or pedantic. The destruction of the joint-family, which used to absorb much of the earlier tension, is now replaced by a nuclear family, which is far from mutual give-and-take:

Number has now declined to four,
yet ego is always sitting at the core
of all our fight and daily noise
explosion and all, without any poise.
This is our small, squabbling home
where everyone largely lives alone. (20)

It is precisely this ego that makes modern man a deserted island amid the vast tossing sea of humanity. A large number of poems in this collection deal with the bitter social reality of the present. The victim of a communal riot and the resultant gang-rape is poignantly presented when the ravished maiden becomes mad with grief: "unmindful of my

welling tears/ they mutilated in minutes all the gifts/ I had preserved for years"(59).

Jha is conscious of gender discrimination too; the helplessness of an over-worked housewife, who bears all exploitation in the name of her mother's parting advice of making sacrifice her only motive of married life, is movingly expressed in these lines:

They regard me a goddess of milk and multitude,
I think me a river of flooding tears,
banked only by my mother's platitude
and the stigma of social fears. (60)

Other important poems on the problems of women in this collection are "An Indian Woman" and "Widow's Woes" which effectively express their ironical situation in a country where goddess of power, wealth and learning are all women. Jha has also taken up the neglect and humiliation heaped on another section of Indian society, old men, in his poems like "A Busy Son" and "An Old Man's Wish." Yet all these poems, depicting contemporary social scenario, do not make this collection a mere exercise in realism; there are many romantic poems, too, touching the deep core of the very being:

I have already burnt my boat,
I do not have a life of my own;
yet I live with hundred smiles
and thousand tears when I am gone. (36)

And then, there are several poems on the art of creation itself. Pieces like "Poetry makes a lot to happen," "That Rare Moment," "Reviving Touch," "To Dullu," "Creation I" and "Creation II" present the manifold process of artistic expression in the most precise and pointed ways possible. There are many love poems, too, but they are not the rapturous rhapsody of a love-lorn young man for whom love is a heady experience; it is, in Jha, an intensely poignant feeling of a mature mind for whom love represents what is best in life.

Although Jha applies the poetic tools of alliteration, irony, comparison and contrast at appropriate places, his poems are refreshingly free from intellectual claptrap. A senior academic, he trusts the sincere language of emotion much more than the conscious sophistication of intellect. *Cross and Creation* is, thus, highly readable and would prove a pride possession for all the lovers of poetry.

R.W. DESAI, *SHAKESPEAREAN LATENCIES*

(Delhi: Doaba House, 2002), pp. 372 + xli, Rs. 270.00

K.K. Sharma

The primary function of a book review in a research journal is to acquaint the reader with the contents and usefulness of the book in such a way as to arouse instantly his interest in perusing it. But it is not easy to accomplish if every page of the book needs serious consideration and the book consists of three hundred sixty-two pages and that too on the greatest creative artist of the world, Shakespeare, by a distinguished academic critic of global fame. *Shakespearean Latencies* by R.W. Desai is such a book, and hence the problem in reviewing it in just six pages.

The author explains the title of the volume in the second paragraph of the preface by stating that the book aims at focusing on the undercurrents in Shakespeare's plays of "the express'd and not express'd," to quote the playwright's own words from *The Merchant of Venice*. He rightly points out that the "not express'd" has not so far been studied adequately. The volume consists of twenty-six essays, covering all those plays which are usually prescribed for study at universities both in India and abroad, and hence its utility the world over.

Following the sequence of the plays in the First Folio, the book opens with an article on *The Tempest*, which is generally considered the last play written by Shakespeare. Popularly known as a dramatic romance, Professor Desai succeeds in establishing that it is a picture of the real world in miniature in which power struggle and subordination are central. He infers that the play "suggests a recurring pattern of possession and dispossession based upon superior forms of power, whether military, naval, economic or, as in the case of Prospero, achieved through his study of 'the liberal arts' ... regardless of notions of right and wrong"(11). The next article is an attempt to examine psychoanalytically the Isabella-Angelo relationship in *Measure for Measure*. It lays bare the various subtle touches through which her weakness for him has been suggestively presented by the dramatist. True, it is her subconscious intimacy

with Angelo that does not permit her to accept the Duke openly at the end of the play; nevertheless, Desai's interpretation of the overt sexual coldness of Isabella and Angelo appears to be reading a bit too much between the lines.

The analysis of *Much Ado About Nothing* from the standpoint of gender disparity is, indeed, brilliant. This play is valuable from the feminist point of view in that it "achieves the delicate balance between feminine intellectual brilliance and feminine 'kindness' ... whereby the precarious male ego may be sustained" (35). This is evident from the fact that when Beatrice sets aside her pride and contempt, Benedick at last finds her — "Lady Disdain" — both fulfilling and fulfilled. The paper on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* concentrates on the historic truth of Europe's interest in India in the 15th and 16th centuries with special reference to England's rivalry with Portugal for having complete control over the spice trade with India.

In the critical piece on *The Merchant of Venice*, Desai propounds the thesis that Shakespeare has a latent predilection for the black complexion, and that Morocco and Arragon, being black, are the marginalized *Other* for Portia who is tan, while she herself is the *Other* for the six northern European suitors who, being white, reject her. The sixth paper in the volume scrutinizes romantic and societal issues in *As You Like it*. The author's comments on the dramatist's theory of art and characters like Rosalind, Jacques and Touchstone are illuminating. The next essay is an endeavour to prove *Twelfth Night* as the acme of Shakespearean comedy. It is regarded more complex and sophisticated than *As You Like It*; its "psychological inwardness," in the critic's words, "... is indicated by the absence of any external barriers that need to be overcome, unlike, for example, *As You Like It* where the usurping duke's hostility to Rosalind and Oliver's designs on Orlando's life are external impediments to the union of the lovers..." (92).

The article on *The Winter's Tale* evinces that "Renaissance notions of ethnicity play a crucial part in the play's aesthetic" (109). It deals with the racial and anthropological aspects of the play, ignored/neglected so far by Shakespearean scholars. The

multiculturalism that the play presents owes much of its significance to the northern Europeans' belief in their superiority over their southern counterparts. Desai opines that Shakespeare deviates from the play's main source, Greene's *Pandosto*, for political and cultural reasons. The next article, which is also on *The Winter's Tale*, reveals Hermione's progress from indiscretion to "better grace", her purging of all that is dross and undesirable in her as queen and wife.

In the essay, "Valiant Jack Falstaff," it is contended that in the scene of the battlefield at the close of *Henry IV Part I* the conduct of Falstaff is not that of a coward but of a brave person who plays a significant role in saving Prince Hal's life at considerable risk to himself. By engaging Douglas in a duel he not only provides sufficient time to Hal to overcome Hotspur but also rescues him from the danger of a joint attack of Hotspur and Douglas. The next article is very striking: it points out a fairly strong resemblance between Falstaff and Hamlet, and thus presents them as two sides of the same coin. The two are greatly concerned with honour and action, and both allow thought to prevail over action. Desai's conclusion is judicious: "Falstaff is not Hamlet, but the two have been stamped out of the same metal, though the insignias they bear are different" (164).

Disagreeing with the critical opinions that *Titus Andronicus* is not by Shakespeare because it is throughout revolting and that it is barbaric but foreshadows some of the basic traits of the later tragedies, Desai argues that it is a masterpiece inasmuch as it explores the latent layers of human psychology in an innovative manner. Interestingly, the next essay on *Julius Caesar* is a penetrative analysis of the play from the standpoint of the politics of power as practised by Caesar and Antony, idealism as embodied in Brutus, and envy as incarnated in Cassius. Again, highly perceptive is the piece, "Duncan's Duplicity." Duncan's duplicity is obvious in his giving Banquo unjustly as much honour as he gives to Macbeth, and then in his proclamation of his eldest son Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland. The king is certainly unfair and ungrateful to his first cousin, Macbeth. No doubt, Macbeth.

who murders Duncan and is responsible for the murders of Banquo, Lady Macduff and others, is a sinner, but, like King Lear, a man "more sinned against than sinning."

Seven articles in this volume are devoted to *Hamlet*, and this is but natural for Desai, who has been publishing the research Journal, *Hamlet Studies*, for more than two decades. The first of these critical pieces concentrates on the doubtful paternity of Hamlet. The critic affirms: "Throughout the play Hamlet's tone and the play's imagery suggest the presence of an element of uncertainty as to his paternity, a factor that if granted would inevitably play its part in acting as a restraining force on his taking swift revenge on Claudius for the murder of King Hamlet, who would then be his uncle" (219). In fact, any son with Gertrude-like woman as mother can/should doubt his paternity. The second essay on *Hamlet* accentuates the truth that in Shakespeare's days the spectators were quite close to the stage and some privileged ones would even sit on the stage, and as such exchanges would often take place between the actor and the audience during the soliloquies of the tragic hero. This accounts for such interrogative contents in Hamlet's soliloquies as "Am I a coward? Who calls me villain?" "What is a man...?" "How stand I then...", etc. In the next essay the author establishes the thesis that Hamlet is "the minister of God to take vengeance on him that doth evil," and this is the reason why he kills Claudius the evil-doer in public in the presence of the entire court, and not in the privacy of his bedroom. In the article, "Hamlet's Insufficient Evidence," Desai stresses the point that the protagonist fails to have the proof of Claudius' murdering the king. The ghost's disclosure of the murder is not a sufficient evidence to the intellectual, philosophical Hamlet; and the play-within-the play brings out Claudius' guilt, but it is only confined to Hamlet and Horatio, and private revenge is useless for Hamlet who, like a true moral being, wants to convict his uncle publicly. The next paper examines W.B. Yeats' assertion that Hamlet has to wear a mask to hide his inner stormy disturbances. "Far from seeing irresolution in Hamlet ... Yeats was struck by his heroic poses, the varied masks he could don

while encountering inimical situations." (264). This is followed by an investigation into the links of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (though written about three hundred years later and in a different literary form) with *Hamlet* in regard to the treatment of the presences/absences of the ghost. The last essay was written on the completion of 21 years of the publication of *Hamlet Studies* with a view to highlighting the Indian political milieu in the 1970s which was responsible for the gestation and birth of the journal.

The critical piece on *King Lear* spotlights the universal truth of the generation gap, the unbridgeable gulf between parents and children. It concludes with the observation: "There are some wounds that can never heal, a lesson that all parents need to learn" (302). But let me point out here that parents have never learnt this lesson nor will they ever learn it, and that children should also learn never to offend parents so much as it may rupture filial ties irreparably. This is followed by "The Tragedie of Iago, Ancient of Venice" which demonstrates that the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona is not as much due to the 'motiveless malignity' of Iago and other factors as due to "two of the most obsessive anxieties that afflict the male psyche: career advancement in pre-middle-age men, and diminishing sexual potency in post-middle-age men. Iago and Othello, respectively, are representatives of these stages in life's journey" (325). The next article argues that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a post-colonial text because it portrays the Roman world through the eyes of the British playwright some fifteen hundred years after England had achieved freedom from the Roman empire. The play represents "Shakespeare's duality of response to the Roman empire that once ruled Britain militarily and politically, and in Shakespeare's time continued to do so, but now in the form of cultural and intellectual influence: on the one hand to be emulated ... both in military might and in the revival of learning..., but on the other, to be castigated for its negative qualities of treachery, hypocrisy, and exploitation of the subjugated" (342).

The last two essays in the volume discuss *Pericles* and the much neglected poem of Shakespeare entitled "The Phoenix and

Turtle." In the former Stevens' debt to *Pericles* is brought to light. The verbal and thematic features of Stevens' poem, "Peter Quince," evince that the poet must have been under the impact of *Pericles* during the period of the gestation and composition of the poem. The concluding essay of the book scrutinizes Shakespeare's poem, "The Phoenix and Turtle," from the viewpoint of gender-equality. The poet deviates from the ancient traditional myth of phoenix as masculine and presents it as feminine while the turtle is masculine, and he transposes the genders to reveal them as "co-supremes" in order to set aside the conventional concept of the male being the active partner, while the female the passive one. Thus the poem "brings to an end the war of the sexes by striking the note of gender-equality" (361).

All in all, the book bears the stamp of Professor Desai's meticulous, sound scholarship which is already known throughout the world via his inimitable *Hamlet Studies* and other writings. What makes it all the more fascinating is the writer's clarity, sanity and urbanity of style. As the latencies of Shakespeare have been illuminated and elucidated in this book and many of the great master's patencies have already been insightfully reconsidered in his much acclaimed research journal and other writings, so what we expect from him now is to unveil and interpret Shakespearean epiphanies or some such deeper facets of the dramatist's unique, baffling world. However, what does not please me in the book is the arrangement of the articles — but for the last two pieces, they are arranged according to the sequence of the plays in the First Folio; it would have been more profitable and interesting for the reader if they had been organized chronologically or dramatic form-wise — comedies, tragedies, histories, last plays, etc. Besides, this collection of essays is not free from typographical errors/ proof-reading nods which I am not mentioning here for paucity of space (I have marked them in my copy of the book, and I shall be happy if the publisher contacts me in this connection). But these remarks do not detract from the intrinsic value and excellence of this truly scholarly book which, I am sure, will be read and re-read in our times and times to come, and will inspire many to try to emulate it.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR (ED.), *INDIAN RESPONSE TO SHAKESPEARE*

(New Delhi: Atlantic, 2002), pp. 253, Rs. 495.00

Vikram Chopra

That in over two centuries of close interaction Shakespeare has become a valued and integral part of Indian sensibility and critical thought, cannot be stated too often. *Indian Response to Shakespeare* celebrates this bonding with the bard in a comprehensive manner. Basavaraj Naikar's book — a collection of sixteen essays by different authors on variety of subjects like "Planes of Perception," "A Hegelian Perspective on Shakespeare's Great Tragedies," "Off-stage Action in Shakespeare's Plays," "A Buddhistic Leitmotif in *King Lear*" and on *Hamlet* and *Pericles* — provides a rich and interesting fare for a reader of Shakespeare. The book was born out of a seminar held at Bhopal in 2002.

R.S. Pathak strikes a keynote in "Indian Response to Shakespeare" and gives an historical account of Shakespeare's appeal to Indians and India's multi-faceted response — emotional, aesthetic, scholarly and philosophical. Ms. Shabiba Khan in "Literary Communication of Shakespeare and Its Influence on the Ordinary Man — Habib Tanveer" describes Shakespeare's vast and deep impact on Indian mind. She also points out how Habib Tanveer captures the spirit of Shakespeare's plays and transcreates them into a common man's language with plenty of folk touches in dialect, music and performance. In "Shakespeare in Kabuki" Mohit K. Ray explains the connotation of "Kabuki" which means "to tilt forward", "Ka" (song), "bu" (dance) and "ki" (skill). Ray further explains Japanese's intense love for Shakespeare and Shakespeare's gradual assimilation into the Japanese psyche and culture emphasising the plasticity and universality of Shakespeare. Taking advantage of his editorial prerogative Naikar includes four of his own articles, though all of them have merits of their own. In "The Jew in Marlowe and Shakespeare" Naikar offers a comparative picture of the figure of the Jew in Marlowe and Shakespeare bringing out that Shakespeare's depiction of the Jew is more

positive, humanistic and comprehensive than Marlowe's. Schiller, Schlegel, Nietzsche, Kant and Hegel constitute a substantive core of the German aesthetical and philosophical thought. In "Shakespeare's Great Tragedies: A Hegelian Perspective" Naikar explains Hegel's greater emphasis on the cause of suffering as more important than the suffering itself which emanates from "the special kind of action" and the conflict of the spirit in the protagonist. The four great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* are analysed in the light of the Hegelian view and A.C. Bradley's differences with Hegel. In "*Raktaksi: An Example of a Cultural Adaptation of Hamlet*," Naikar analyses the skilful attempt by Kannada writer Kuvempu to transfer the *Hamlet* story to the cultural backdrop of a royal family of Karnataka. Naikar also includes his essay on his favourite theme, i.e. "Epic Affirmation" in the last plays of Shakespeare. Here, he discusses the epic dimensions of *Pericles* that reject the negative values of life and instead offer a clear-cut affirmation of an epic vision imbued with transcendental ideals like truth, beauty and goodness.

Narasimha Ramayya N. discusses the growth of universal entropy in *Julius Caesar* from a philosophical perspective. He makes a detailed study of the play's structure, characterization, the conspiracy and a general sense of gloom that pervades the play. Shweta Khanna in "Planes of Perception in Shakespeare: An Indian View" presents a perceptive analysis of the various planes of perception in life: body, mind, spirit and soul and their application in the works of Shakespeare. Quoting from *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*, Khanna finds distinctive echoes of Indian philosophical thought and yogic and mystical elements as defined in the Indian scriptures. In "Predeterminism and Free Will in Shakespeare's Tragedies" Sudhir Dixit draws attention to the dominating influence of Fate in Shakespeare's tragedies leaving little room for Free Will much as it is in the Greek Tragedy. A large number of omens, prophecies, oracles, and references to Astrology, etc. bring out the element of predeterminism.

B.G. Tandon in "Off-stage Action in the Plays of Shake-

speare" points out that Shakespeare was well aware of the rules of on-stage and off-stage acting as prescribed by Plato, Aristotle, Sidney, and Jonson, but Shakespeare was guided by his own dramatic instinct and insight which helped him achieve commendable results. Comparing Kalidasa and Shakespeare, Sri Aruobondo tells us how Shakespeare excels almost in every aspect of the portrayal of life except in the portrayal of mothers. Despite the presence of such mothers as Thaisa, Hermione and Volurnnia, one cannot but feel the want of mothers in Shakespeare. Rama Kundu reiterates the lament that "Mother" which is an important name and concept in human relationship does not get due eminence in Shakespeare. Kundu gives examples from the plays showing the absence or neglect of women as mothers. In "The 'Two Othello': A Flokloric Perspective," Kundu takes up Laurence Lerner's thesis of "Two Othellos", one, a debased murderer and the other, Helen Gardener's "Noble Moor". In "Hamlet: The Only Son and the Lonely Prince," A. Sahadeo Chowgule discusses the gradual alienation and loneliness of Hamlet first from his family because of his studies at Wittenberg and later because of his mother's behaviour, and then from the society because of the undependability of the people, and finally from Self as he finds himself increasingly disgusted with the rotten state. This sense of loneliness and alienation also echoes the modern existentialist point of view. In "*Nirvana* as the Leitmotif: A Study of *King Lear*," Budholia, juxtaposes Buddhistic studies with modern psychological approach and shows how Lear attains nirvana-like state after undergoing severe disillusionment. In "The Spirit of Reconciliation in the Last Plays of Shakespeare" Nivedita Mukherjee shows how the minimization of evil and a broad accommodative spirit reflects a temperamental change in Shakespeare.

Evidently, the collection touches quite many ideas of semi-nal significance, though the treatment is profound at some places and tentative at others. There are some technical and stylistic lapses; a little care in the proof-reading and documentation would have enhanced the value of the book which presents an authentic and distinctive Indian colouring to the study of Shakespeare.

**EMKEN (M.K.NAIK), *FROM ANNE BRADSTREET
TO MAIN STREET AND BEYOND THAT***

(Calcutta: A Writer's Workshop, 2001), pp. 28, Rs. 80.00

H.C. Gupta

Emken's *From Anne Bradstreet to Mainstreet and Beyond That* is his sixth collection of light verse. It is all what is explanatory subtitle claims for it: *An Unorthodox History of American Literature in Comic Verse* — and speaking the truth — something more. The work is a cross-breed between history and comic writing. The history is unorthodox — written in verse instead of prose and aiming primarily at laughter and amusement instead of facts and figures. Some of the clerihews of the collection are from his *Indian Clerihews* and *More Indian Clerihews*.

This is Prof. M.K. Naik's second unorthodox history of literature. His first history *Beowulf and All That* covers a period of English literary history of more than a thousand years in just 125 clerihews, as the present one purviews a period of more than three hundred years since the beginning of American literature to its present day scene in 100 clerihews. A clerihew is an epigrammatic verse form invented by Edmund Clerihew Bentley that usually deals with the character or career of some distinguished person. Obviously, it is rather too ambitious a project — more so, besides being literary history, it is an account of men of letters and their works as well as some important events of American history, episodes in the lives of historical figures, some great army generals and plots, as also some characters of literary works and so on. The verses are surely not light; they are tight, taut and weighty. And as a comic cliché lays down only a historian prodigy of Naik's calibre is entitled to rewrite history.

The book begins with the clerihew "Anne Bradstreet / Ran out into Main Street / Shouting 'Elmer Gantry' / Is hiding in pantry." Unless one knows that Anne Street (c 1612 - 72) is the name of a colonial American poetess, that *Main Street* (1920) and *Elmer Gantry* (1927) are novels by the Nobel Prize winner Sinclair Lewis and 'pantry' means not simply a small room or large cupboard

close to kitchen but something more, one would find the verse all Latin and Greek.

Clerihew 2 reads as follows: "John Smith / Didn't care for Indian myth. / As long as Pochahontas / Had enough brass." The reader is again in hot waters. Even American literary history fails him as John Smith is not any American man of letters, and *Pochahontas* not any work. John Smith is the name of an English colonist captain, and Pochahontas (c 1595-1617) the name of an American Indian princess. She had rescued John Smith from death at the hands of her father. It may be noted that the incident predates the literary history.

Then there are three clerihews on Nathaniel Hawthorne — Nathaniel Hawthorne alone is an author; Roger Chillingworth is the implacable old husband of Hester Prynne, the adulteress, and Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale is the pious young minister who has fathered Prynne's child. 'A' stands for 'Adulteress' as well as 'Admirable'. All these characters are from the novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), the title of which has not been given in the verses.

For all its slim size, the history is quite comprehensive as it comprises almost all the branches of American literature. Almost all the well-known men of letters and quite a good number of little known ones have found a place in it. One thing that easily strikes the reader is that in a number of the clerihews, the writer's focus of attention is the fair sex, sex and related issues. I quote just a few illustrative lines: "When Liz Taylor / Divorced Edward Taylor" (11); "William James / relished sex-games" (48); "Henry James / Was obsessed with sex-games / He invented many a new / Turn of the screw" (49); "Gertrude / Slept in the nude:/ But not Alice, she's too shy / To undo her Button, that's why" (61).

One can find clerihew 32 as an expression of Emken's faith: "Lives of great men all remind us / Every great man has a wife, / Who can with one word make him look / Small before you could say knife." I would like to give my viewpoint with an adaptation of one word in the clerihew 43: "Emily Dickinson describes the Muse / As a 'gift of screws' / One is amazed to find / Such lewd thoughts in a Vanprasth's mind" — the original for 'vanprasth's' is 'spinster's'.

Among non-literary historical figures the clerihews have John Smith, colonist, Thomas Paine, a radical political thinker, generals — Burgoyne, Lord Cornwallis, David Crockett — and Caesar, and so on. There is an abundance of references, allusions, paradoxes, puns, images and other figures of speech. The work calls for explanatory notes.

Some proof-reading nods are: 'Herster' (29); or (for) (52); he use (55); Runyon / Runyan (64); Eying (83). As far as the craftsmanship is concerned, most of the clerihews follow the model rhyme scheme — couplets —, yet here too Emken has been unorthodox in making experiments of all sorts. Clerihew no. 67 has five lines, two within brackets. At places, he manhandles, fractures and even transforms words to suit his need: for example, "Johathan Ed - / wards never went to bed" (74); "Marilyn Monroe / Had only one ro / pe of pearls" (90). There are quotations, misquotations and adaptations. However, it will be a mistake to take Emken's clerihews simply as word-games or linguistic fun. To take just one example: "Gertrude Stein said, 'The American / Is but a merry can, a merry can, a merry can,' / So she opened a Coke can / To study the 'Making of the American' "(60). Emken here has arranged words like objects as Gertrude Stein of the Imagist School did in the way of cubist composition simply for the sake of artistic pleasure. Her language was as full of repetitions as Emken's.

Prof. Emken's diction has supple ease that is difficult if not impossible to emulate. The quality of the work is as high as his reputation. The critic-versifier cum comic-historian is here a taut rope artist. History has been doused with irony and banter. Formulaic, Naik is not a dull historian. A reader must be ever on the alert, else his magic will fail to work.

To sum up, Naik's historical ensemble is amorphous; it lacks flow. Yet one can not help wondering and laughing at the scintillating wit and impish cacophony. Writing history in comic verse is not a child's game. Somewhat irritating, ever comical, what a history! Naik's apparent levity has a profound seriousness. He has added to, what may be termed, a literature of duplicity where many a clerihew means more than it says.

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