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All editorial and business correspondence should be addressed to

The Editor
Points of View
KH/127, New Kavi Nagar
Ghaziabad--201 002 (U.P.), INDIA
Telephone : (0120) 4700365
E-mail: profkks01@sify.com

POINTS OF VIEW

Volume IX **Number 1** **Summer 2002**

CONTENTS

S. Viswanathan	The Crux, *Castiliano vulgo* (*Twelfth Night,* III.i. 42-43), Yet Again: A Note	1
M.K. Naik	A Forgotten Anglo-Indian Masterpiece : F. Anstey's *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.*	4
Rajat K. Srivastava	The Echoes of Aristotle, Bharat, Keats and Arnold in Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent"	17
K.G. Srivastava	T.S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" 11.124-129: A Note	27
Yogesh K. Tiwari & N.D.R. Chandra	Ecocriticism and Robert Frost's Poetry	31
P. Dhanavel	The Interhumanism of Robinson Jeffers	44
Tapati Lahiri	Childhood in Tagore's *The Crescent Moon*: A Study	52
Meena Sodhi	Kamala Das's Reinventing Self	60
A.G. Khan	Meena Alexander: Creative Versatility	67
R.K. Sharma	Women Bonding in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*	74
Archana Kaul	The African-American Fictional Female: A Metafictive Look at Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982) and *Bailey's Cafe'* (1992)	79

S. Armstrong	The Irony of National Borders in Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*	91
Kh. Kunjo Singh	Growth, Structure and Fictional Strategies in the Post-Colonial Novel	97

BOOK REVIEWS

M.S. Kushwaha	*Oedipus Trayee of Sophocles* Translated by Kamal Naseem	109
H.C. Gupta	*Raja Rao: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* Edited by Ragini Ramachandra	111
P. K. Panda	*Beyond Protest: A Critical Examination of Contemporary African American Fiction* by E. Raja Rao	115
Bernard M.Jackson	*The Wayside Piper* by Srinivasa Rangaswami	118
K.K. Sharma	*New Critical Approaches to Indian English Fiction* by O.P. Mathur	121

Contributors 126

THE CRUX, *CASTILIANO VULGO* (*TWELFTH NIGHT*, III.I. 42-43), YET AGAIN : A NOTE

S. Viswanathan

Sir Toby: ... What, wench! *Castiliano Vulgo:*
for here comes Sir Andrew Agueface.
Enter Sir Andrew Aguecheek

Sir Toby's phrase, though perhaps too akin to drinkers' cant to have a distinct meaning, has been the subject of varied conjectural annotation and emendation by editors and scholars since Steevens.[1] But the occurrence of a cognate phrase in a closely similar context in the then popular, anonymous comedy *The Merry Devil of Edmonton,* a play near-contemporary with *Twelfth Night* and a Globe play very much in the repertory of Shakespeare's company,[2] has gone unnoticed, and a look at this phrase may provide a cross-illumination in which the Shakespearian crux may appear less obscure.

In *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (II.i.), Banks the Miller of Waltham, Smug the Smith of Edmonton and Sir John the Priest, drinking companions all in their cups, are planning to steal venison at night in Waltham Forest, and await the arrival of Blague the Host of St. George's Inn to join them.

Sir John: ... Now we want none but the company of mine host Blague at the George at Waltham; if he were here, our consort were full. Looke where he comes my good host, the Duke of Norfolks man! and how? and how? a hem, grasse and hay! wee are not yet mortall; lets live till we die, and be merry; and the's an end.

Enter Host

Host: Ha, *my Castilian dialogues!* and art thou in breath still, boy? Miller, doth the match hold? Smith, I see by thy eyes thou hast bin reading little Geneva print: but wend we merrily to the forest, to steale some of the Kings Deere.

II.i. 53-66[3] (Italics mine)

The Host's phrase 'my Castilian dialogues' obviously means 'my boon companions in drink and conversation,' considering the drinking cant associations of the term 'Castilian' which Steevens pointed

out[4] and which eminently fit the context; the word 'dialogue' would seem to be used in the passage in the sense of 'dialogist,' 'fellow-participant in conversation,' thus suggesting a tattler or gossip. *Castliano vulgo*, which is Sir Toby's 'look-where-he-comes' sort of stage indication of Sir Andrew's entrance may, on the analogy of 'Castilian dialogues,' be seen to be a phrase through which Sir Toby heralds Sir Andrew as his companion in drink and dialogue (*vulgo* being, in Sir Toby's 'tongue,' 'in ordinary speech, parlance or casual talk'), in the process implicitly suggesting through the term *vulgo* that his *Castilian* companion has low speech abilities, is capable of utterance in the 'vulgar tongue' only and is of poor attainment in it, at that.

The conversation between Maria and Sir Toby till this point in the scene has been about Sir Andrew and about Sir Toby's bibbing and babbling in his company. No wonder that Sir Toby in half-earnest, half-jesting defiance of the three-parts mock admonitions of Maria expresses brazen pride in his drunkenness and in his calculated cultivation of Sir Andrew's company, and gloatingly signals Sir Andrew's arrival exactly at that time. Even as the scene abounds in references to heavy drinking, and epicurean razz-matazz, and thus prefigures II.iii., so the dialogue that ensues after this in the form of turns between Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria revolves on an exploitation of Sir Andrew's deficiencies of vocabulary and utterance, such as his being clean beaten by the term 'accost,' his question, 'what is *pourquoi?*', and his regret that he did not bestow attention on the acquisition of 'tongues' (with Sir Toby 'mistaking the word' as 'tongs'). Thus, *Castiliano vulgo* would make sense in its dramatic text without any need for emendation.

Another possibility which may be suggested is that Sir Toby, in a deliberate apeing of courtierly or knightly courtesy with his perverse emphasis on conviviality cites the authority of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, well known in its translation as *The Courtier* (1561) by Hoby, in mock defence of courtier-like, symposiac drinking and conversing together in rough analogy with the quasi-Platonic

sense of the phrase 'my Castilian dialogues' as 'my fellow symposiasts' is quibblingly present in its use in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*.

Moreover, it is not unlikely that the phrase 'my Castilian dialogues' in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* is itself a reminiscence of *Castiliano vulgo* in *Twelfth Night*, for the anonymous play has many echoes woven into its web of earlier plays like *Dr. Faustus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

NOTES

[1]I use the New Arden text of the play (ed. J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik); the edition takes into account the earlier glosses. The emendations suggested include *Castiliano volto* which amounts to a call for a change of countenance to seriousness and solemnness like that of the Castilian, *Castiliano volgo* which means 'I think of a Spanish ducat, i.e., of Sir Andrew's money', *Castiglione voglio* which gives the sense 'I want some Castiglione, an expensive wine.' Molly Mahood in her New Penguin edition of the play (1968) annotates the phrase as meaning 'Talk of the devil (and he will appear)' [from the proverb, 'Talk of the devil and he will appear'], with reference to Sir Andrew's entry at that stage moment. Professor Mahood cites the play *Grim the Collier of Croydon or The Devil and his Dame* of around 1600 in which Castiliano is the name assumed by the devil Belphegor when he comes to earth. J.F. Killeen, *'Twelfth Night*, I.iii.42.' "Castiliano Vulgo," *SQ*, 28 (1977), 92-93, curiously omitting all reference to Mahood's annotation, suggests the meaning 'Talk of the devil and he will appear' and adds that Shakespeare may have depicted Sir Toby as drawing upon some 'passing Italian cant phrase' (p.93) in which *Castiliano* was the word denoting 'devil' in the proverb.

[2]Though the play was printed only in 1608, and went into no fewer than five more editions till 1655, it must have been on the Globe stage well before 1604 in which year it is mentioned by T(homas) M(iddleton) in his *Black Book* as a popular play.

[3]I use the text in C.F. Tucker-Brooke, ed. *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1971 edn.); quotation from p.271.

[4]The New Arden edition note cites Steevens.

A FORGOTTEN ANGLO-INDIAN MASTERPIECE: F. ANSTEY'S *BABOO JABBERJEE, B.A.*

M.K. Naik

Who reads Anglo-Indian fiction now ? The answer is perhaps, 'No one, or very few.' And what does one actually remember of Anglo-Indian fiction, except E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Kipling's *Kim* ? But there is at least one work of fiction in the hyphenated history of Anglo-Indian literature which has been undeservedly neglected, and practically consigned to oblivion, though it can be said to be the only work of its kind in the corpus of this literature.

F. Anstey's *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* (1897) is unique in that it is perhaps the only prominent example of a work of fiction by an Anglo-Indian writer, which deals exclusively with the life of an Indian in England. Curiously enough, British novelists writing about India and the Indians have apparently never thought of doing this, except occasionally, and in passing. The most prominent example of this is Rummun Loll's brief English sojourn in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1853-55). Thackeray, one remembers, was born in Calcutta, and had probably had Anglo-Indian blood in his veins; as far as Indian material is concerned, he seems to rest content with following the beaten track, seldom venturing beyond portraying the British adventurer in India (*The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan (1838)* and the Anglo-Indian (i.e. the English officer who has served in India)--e.g. Joseph Sedley, the ridiculous Collector of Boggley Wolah in *Vanity Fair.*

Again, the stark contrast between Indian customs and manners and social mores and their British counterparts is a motif touched upon by many Anglo-Indian novelists. But since he makes an Indian his protagonist, Anstey has been able to exploit the comedy of this situation far more fully. Similarly, the Indian's encounter with the English language and the humour arising out of this is another obvious source of comedy, and here again, Anstey is able to do full justice to this, because his hero is an Indian.

Baboo Jabberjee, B.A. comprises thirtyone brief essays written by Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee, B.A., a young Bengali gentleman, who has come to England 'for purposes of being crammed through Inns of Court and Law Exam.' Jabberjee tells us that he had offered to write for *Punch* essays on lofty topics such as 'Civilisation' and 'Superstition,' but that the Editor asked him instead to 'devote my pen to quite ephemeral and fugacious topics and merely commit to paper such reflections, critical opinions, and experiences as may turn up in the potluck (sic) of my daily career.'

Jabberjee's experiences are many and varied, while he moves about in London, once moving out of it for a brief sojourn in Scotland. We see him at the theatre, hear him orating at a Ladies' Debating Club, and watching a Boar-race and a Glove-fight. We find him making 'a pilgrimage to the shrine of Shakespeare,' and attending a British wedding as a guest. Finally, we see him engaged to the enterprising daughter of his land-lady, much to his astonishment. His protests land him in a court of Law, where, though he loses the Breach of Promise suit, he escapes with a nominal fine. At the end, Jabberjee decides to return to India, where, we learn, his 'time will be too exclusively taken up with forensic triumphs for any further jottings or tittling for *Punch.* or similar periodicals! (We are given to understand that his 'essays' have appeared serially in *Punch.*). He concludes on a typically Jabberjian note: " 'Notwithstanding my cessation as a contributor, I shall, on my arriving in India, infallibly recommend *Punch* to all my innumerable aunts, families and friends, as a highly respectable periodical, provided that the munificent and free-hearted generosity of those Hon'ble Misters, the Editor and Proprietors, shall account me worthy to draw a monthly pension for my distinguished services.' (271)

The comedy in *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* is threefold. It is both a comedy of situation and of character. Jabberjee being what he is, lands himself in one contratemps after another. And the hero's many and varied crimes against the English language constitute another fruitful source of humour.

In Jabberjee, Anstey has created one of the most memorable

comic characters in Anglo-Indian fiction. The comedy rests mainly on the contrast between Jabberjee's glorious self-image and the inglorious reality seen by those who come in contact with him. Jabberjee sees himself as 'a cultivated native gentleman (sic) high-class university degree, and an oratorical flow of language which was infallibly to land me upon the pinnacle of some tip-top judicial preferment int he Calcutta Court of justice' (p.93). But this is not how the reader of Jabberjee's narrative comes to see him. In the reader's perception, the Baboo ultimately comes to be seen as a simpleton, anegregoius fool, whose folly is compounded by the fact that he thinks himself to be wise, for no fool is more foolish than the one who thinks himself to be all-knowing. It is this self-conceit that makes Jabberjee all the more ridiculous. In incident after incident, he blunders his way through London, dropping social and linguistic bricks, and making an ass of himself in various ways.

Jabberjee is so simple that he does not even know when he is cheated. His encounter with the two British rogues--Tomkins and Johnson is a representative example. Tomkins thrusts himself on Jabberjee, and flatters him that he found in the Indian a 'striking resemblance to my dear friend, the Maharajah of Bahanapur (53). The two adjourn to a pub, where they are joined by Johnson, whom Tomkins informs that he has come into legacy, one curious condition of which is that he must distribute ten thousand pounds amongst young deserving foreigners. Jabberjee is convinced that the gift is now as good as his; but Tomkins stipulates that there is a small test: they must prove their confidence in each other. He says to Jabberjee, 'Here, you, Sir, take this *portemonnaie* (coin-purse) out into the street for five minutes or so, I trust your honour to return it intact.' Jabberjee, too keen to establish his bonafides, emerges successfully from the severe ordeal.' The rogue now asks the Indian for a *quid pro quo,* and the gullible Jabberjee ghastily produces all his money and adds to the pile 'a valuable large golden chronometer and chain of the best English make,' which Tomkins accepts 'after repeated refusals.' After Jabberjee has waited in vain for a long time, Johnson, the other rogue, pleads that his friend is very absent-minded, and so he should better go in search of him. When Jabberjee

says he wants to accompany Johnson, the quick-witted rogue says, 'Capital. Then if you go to the right, and I to the left, we cannot miss him.' (59) Needless to add that Jaberjee never meets either Mr. Tomkins or Mr Johnson again.

The comedy of situation here is intensified by the fact that to the end Jabberjee refuses to believe that he has been duped, though his friends tell him so. His reaction to this is: 'It is egregiously absurd that my puissance in knowledge of the world should have been so much at fault' (p.59). He is sure that the two 'gentlemen' are 'still diligently seeking for me, having omitted owing to hurry of moment, to ascertain my name and address' (*Ibid.*); and at the end of the episode Jabberjee makes an appeal to Mr Tomkins to return the thousand pounds to him at his residential address or care of the Editor of *Punch.*

Time and again, in situation after situation, Jabberjee goes on making an utter fool of himself, and on top of it he is blissfully unaware of this; in fact, he is convinced, on the contrary, that he has covered himself with glory. Thus, at the shooting expedition on the Scottish moor, he observes that as soon as he raises his gun to fire, all the other members of the party fling themselves upon their stomachs in the heather, until he has finished. He taunts them on their timidity, and adds, 'Yet English and Scotch (*sic)* alike accuse us Bengalis of being subject to excessive funkiness. What about the Pot and the Kettle, Misters ?' (p.198).

Jabberjee's folly springs mainly out of his inexhaustible ignorance, as also from his ignorance of his own ignorance. This actually forms the basis of each of his inglorious adventures in England, making his entire narrative a 'Fool's Progress' or the Odyssey of an oddity. His 'first adventure' sets the tone for the entire narrative. An acquaintance from the Temple casually says that mey must meet once. Taking this as a firm invitation, Jabberjee goes to his house (without apparently an appointment) at 9.30 in the morning. After the preliminary civilities are over, Jabberjee finds that the gentleman is now addressing him 'by fits and starts and *longo intervallo',* but is convinced that the English man is 'displaying

so manifest and absorbent delight in my society that he could not bring himself to terminate the audience, while I was to conceal my immense weariness and ardent desire I had to conceive to leave him' (p.8).

After an ordeal of three and a half hours, the Englishman suddenly remembers an appointment 'to take his tiffin' and dismisses his visitor, 'inviting me cordially to come again.' Jabberjee's frank comment on the episode is replete with unconscious irony: 'If... it is expected of me that I can devote three hours and a half to ceremonial civilities, I must respectfully answer with a *Nolo episcopari*, for my time is more precious than rubies (*Ibid.*).

When he visits an Art Gallery, this is how Jabberjee reacts to the paintings by the Old Masters: 'I must persist in denouncing the penny wisdom and pound foolery of the Academicals in foisting off upon the public such ancient and fish-like articles that have long ceased to be *bon ton* and in the fashion, since it is undeniable that many are over fifty years, and some several centuries behind the time' (28).

In the Hyde Park, Jabberjee observes several cyclists riding their machines effortlessly and tells his companion, Jessica that 'no skill was required to circulate these bicycles, which, owing to being surrounded by air-cushions, would proceed *proprio motu* and without meandering' (35). When, at the earnest entreaty of Jessica, Jabberjee tries to mount the machine, he unfortunately perceives himself 'under a total impossibility of achieving its ascent.... It all proved as the labour of Sisyphus, for the seat was of sadly insufficient dimensions and adamantine hardihood.' At last, up in the saddle, and grasping' the handles like the horns of a dilemma,' he finds the machine picking up speed on a slope, and he cries out, 'Help. I am running away with myself ! Half a rupee for my life-preserver' (He doesnot obviously place too high a value on his own life).

Next, invited to a Ladies' Debating Club, where the subject for discussion is Ibsen, Jabberjee, volunteering to speak, begins by declaring that he had not even heard the name of Ibsen so far but nevertheless he is convinced that the modern dramatist is inferior

to Shakespeare in 'versical blankness; and knowledge of several sciences including 'Chronology, Pirenology... Zoography, Nosology (and) 'Chiropody' (68).

Then, to quote Jabberjee himself, 'I sat down, leaving my audience as sotto voce as fishes with admiration and amazement at the facundity (sic) of my eloquence, and should indubitably have been the recipient of innumerable felicitations but for the fact that Miss Spink (whom he has escorted) suddenly experiencing sensations of insalubriousness, requested me without delay, to conduct her from the assemblage.... I would willingly make a repetition of my visit and rhetorical triumphs, only Mess Soink informs me that she has recently terminated her membership with the above society' (68).

Equally diverting is the description of Jabberjee's experience of the Intercollegiate Boat-race. His original discoveries include the following: the Boats ('vessels' to him) are called 'eights,' owing to their containing passengers, the ninth being called the 'cock,' who is a mere supernumerary; the race is of religious and ceremonious origin, for only 'good' men are permitted to compete, and none who is a wine drunkard, a gluttonous (sic) or addicted to any form of tobacco. Moreover, they are to observe a strict fast and abstinence for many weeks prior to the ordeal.'

Jabberjee then proceeds to misinterpret the Coxswain's instructions to the crew completely, taking them literally, as when censures the Cox for taunting an oarsman for 'being short,' 'as though he were capable of adding the cubic inch to his stature.' Later, when he goes to a 'Sportish Club,' to watch a 'Glove-fight,' Jabberjee is disappointed to find the proceedings 'lacking in sensationality, since they were of very limited duration, and totally devoid of blood-shed. For it is not reasonably possible for a combatant to make a palpable hit when his hands are...'muzzled, being cabined, and confined in padded soft gloves' (79).

Jabberjee betrays his social ignorance again when he goes to dine at the home of the Allbutt-Innetts. He complaind that 'the lighting... was with old-fashioned candles and semi-obscured lamps, instead

of the more modern and infinitely more brilliant illumination of gas' (122). The last ten chapters of the narrative are devoted to the comedy of the Breach-of-Promise suit brought against Jabberjee, and his final escape with a nominal fine, thanks to a shrewd judge, who sees through his accuser's game.

While the comedy of Jabberjee's inglorious exploits is diverting enough, a discerning reader should be able to see another kind of comedy--though a totally unintentional one--being enacted, simiultaneously, as Anstey goes on heaping ridicule on the poor Indian. This is the comedy of how Anstey unconsciously enacts the inglorious role of the 'pucca Sahib', in portraying Jabberjee. Anstey looks at Jabberjee through the blinkered eyes of the typical 'Anglo-Indian' of the colonial days, when Queen Victoria was in her Buckingham palace and all was right with the world in British perception. Practically every British writer of the Empire (with the honourable exception of E.M. Forster) inevitably had an outsize colonizer complex, and his view of the 'native' naturally was illustrative of the 'Prospero Principle' according to which the 'base' Indian was ugly, uncouth, uncivilised and ungrateful Caliban. Rudyard Kipling at one place calls the educated Indian 'this Caliban we have worked to make' (Kipling, 1913, Chaudhuri, 1987, 672).

Since writers have rightly been called 'the antennae of a people,' it is only fair to add that these writers were only expressing what for their people of the times were universally accepted beliefs which had the force of almost revealed truth. For Anstey Jabberjee is a Bengali, who is a cowardly, pompous, crude, ignorant and half-literate Indian, whom he projects as a figure of fun. In this he is only echoing the judgment of several influential writers of the Nineteenth century. For instance, James Mill, whose *History of British India* (1940) was virtually the Bible of all aspirants to the Indian Civil Service then, was convinced that the 'Hindu, like the eunuch, excels in the qualities of a slave' and that Indians were 'distinguished by a greater deficiency in the important article of practical good sense than any people above the rank of savages' (Mill, Thomas, 1975, 326). According to Macaulay (about whom Lord Melbourne once said, 'I wish I could

be as cocksure of any one thing as Tom Macaulay is of everything'), 'What the horns are to the buffalo, what sting is to the bee... dedit is to the Bengali (Macaulay, Chaudhuri, 382). G.W. Stevens even made the astounding anatomical discovery that 'The Bengali's leg is the leg of a slave (Stevens, Chaudhuri, 673). These pronouncements sound almost absurd today, and Anstey's portrait of Jabberjee comes perilously near being in the same class, though the privilege of exaggeration, which every comic writer claims is certainly an extenuating factor in his case.

The theme of the foreigner in England and his encounter with British society had been handled earlier by Oliver Goldsmith in his *The Citizen of the World* (1762), and it is interesting to see how a change in the perspective makes for anartitic sea-change. Goldsmith's aim was to expose the shortcomings of British character and society, and hence his foreign observer is a mature, wise Chinaman; in Anstey's narrative, it is the foreign observer who is the butt of ridicule.

But Jabberjee's antics form only one aspect of the comedy in Anstey's book. Equally significant is varied linguistic humour in *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* The entire narrative is indeed a 'well of colonial English orientally defiled. Jabberjee's style is a Bible of Babu English, illustrating virtually all the peculiar ties of this style. First, it is decorative and ornate, gaudy and flowery. Thus, Jabberjee describes his landlady as a 'majestic and magnificent matron' (3). Euphuistic orotundity and circumlocutuon are everywhere. For instance, being asked to deposit umbrellas at the Theatre cloak-room is described as 'We... were peremptorily commanded to undergo total abstinence from our umbrellas' (27); and the humdrum operation of having tea and biscuits is transformed into moistening 'the drooping clay of our internal tenements at the aerated Tea Company with a profusion of confectionaries' (32).

Jabberjee's passion for the ornate and the decorative is so strong that time and again it overcomes whatever little sense of propriety he may possess. Hence, in his 'Congratulatory Ode to Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate, he tells the poet, 'You are now perched

with phenomenal velocity/On vertiginious pinnacle of poetic pomposity' (21). Bathos of another kind is produced when there is an unconscious change in Register, as in: 'I have accomplished the laborious perusal of your transcendent and tip-top periodical' (ix), where the sudden descent from the lofty 'transcendent' to the ordinary 'tip-yop' is highly comic.

Equally comic, though for another reason, is Jabberjee's entirely misplaced use of honorifics ('Hon'ble William Shakespeare,' p.125); but a reader from an oriental culture will easily understand the rationale behind this usage. Most oriental cultures have always valued formalities in which politeness is highly prized as a prime virtue. Hence, one learns that there are about a dozen forms of polite address in Urdu. But of course this kind of a formality appears to be only ridiculous in a modern context.

Jabberjee's crimes against the English language are many and various, outdoing in places even the great Mrs. Malaprop. We can always trust him to use the wrong word, when he actually means the opposite. His introductory address to 'To the Hon'ble... Punchbegons with 'Venerable and KLUDICROUS SIR' (ix). Later, he refers to 'notorious ancient author of the name of Terence' (11), and the 'effeminate intellects' of the Ladies' Club (64).

Phraes also are mutilated severely: Jabberjee talks about 'the gab woh which I am gifted' (60), and throwing money away 'on drakes and ducks' (55). But he is perhaps at his ludicrous best when he runs amok among English idioms, which he does practically on every page. Here are a few representative samples: 'I shall be enabled to crack the Gordian knot (56); 'I had put my foot into a cul-de-sac' (90) 'being desirous to hide under a bushel' (109); suffering 'the grass of inaction to grow upon her feet' (182).

Proverbs are man-handled from time to time as in: 'Honesty is my best politics' (146); 'do not hesitate to strike while the iron is incandescent and bleed freely' (xi); 'pocket the root of all evil' (2). Jabberjee's misuse of allusion and qutation is another source of comedy: so, we are told that 'Shakespeare asserts there are more things in Heaven and earth than the Horatian philosophy' (44); 'after

Curfew has taken its toll frok the parting day' (34) and 'Dr Ben Johnson, gifted author of Boswell's Biography' (64) and 'Poet Shakespeare has shrewdly observed that 'a true love never did run a straught course' (143).

Anxious to parade his learning, 'as an able B.A. of a respectable Indian University', Jabberjee lards his narrative with Latin quotations, words and phrases, the accuracy of which is equally suspect, as is clear from the way he attributes the well-known quotation from Terence: Homosum; humani nil a me alienum puto' to Plato, besides misquoting it. Jabberjee's French is not better. In the Bicycle riding episode, he wants to say that cycling is quite easy, and he would be able to master it in no time. So, he tells us, 'I should speedily become a chef-d'oeuvre (=masterpiece).

Owing mainly to its linguistic humour, *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* invites comparison with G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), now a classic of Indian English literature. Desani's book came more than half a century after Anstey's, and it is quite possible that he was familiar with *Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* It should be remembered that Desani had lived in England for twentyfive years and that he was a well-read man. It seems extremely likely that Desani borrowed the idea of the colonial Indian's comic encounter with the English language from Anstey; but if he did so, he certainly improved upon the original in two ways. He made the encounter far more varied, and also geared it to serious concerns.

In order to make the encounter more varied, Desani invents two Indian characters--Y.Beliram and Banerjee--who assist his protagonist Hatterr in torturing the English language. But in a sense, all the three are only difffernt avatars of the Colonial Man, and hence there is an unmistakable family likeness in the way they (mis) handle the English language. Desani's linguistic pyrotechnics are far more spctacular than Anstey's. Jabberjee confines his maltreatment of foreign languages to Latin and French. Hatterr spreads his net far wider, misusing Spanish, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Scottish, Welsh, Italian, and oriental languages including Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Kannada. Hatterr' use of jargon is also far wider in range and scope.

It is in turn medical, chemical, legal, nautucal, commercial, astronomical, musical and tantric.

Some of the more obvious features of 'Babu' English which Anstey uses are inevitably replicated in Desani. For instance, the sttiff and stilted, artificial and bookish and ornate and orotund elements in it. Again, if Jabberjee talks about 'Hon'ble Shakespeare,' Banerji refers to Mr. Marlowe (42) and 'Dr. John Keats' (272). Muddled and misplaced quotation is the speciality of both Jabberjee and Hatterr-Banerrji-Beliram, as in 'The Bard has rightly said, A horse. A horse. My kingdom for a horse. I am myself entirely devoted to the turf' (67). But Desani travels much farther linguistic byways than Anstey. The use of outlandish Indian oats, curses, imprecations, terms of abuse etc. makes Hatterr's style so colourful. For obvious reasons, all these must have been a closed book to Anstey. (e.g. 'Son of a hen,' Hatterr, 145' 'O equal to the first-born of my wife,' Hatterr, 57).

In his ubiquitous employment of word-play also Desani leaves Anstey far behind. There are few example of word-play in Anstey: 'I shall be enabled to crack the Gordian nut' (56); 'Hoisting the engine-driver on his own petard' (67). Desani's word-play is for more varied. There are Orthographical puns ('Eaten' for Eton, (103); etymological puns: 'talking French frankly' (65); bilingual puns in which several languages are drawn upon: Latin--'dame paradise' (36); French—'mudham' (101); German—'min Hair' (100) and Hindi--Bee Bee Jaan (206). Even Technical terms are subjected to word-play, as when the symbols 'Oi hh 1/2d' are made to suggest 'Oi, You, H.H.' Other linguistic games played include preposterous etymology (the Sanskrit word 'Sukarah' (which actually means 'pig') is solemnly declared to be the root of the word 'sugar' (306) and absurd translation ('*Nala Samy*', which is (bad) Kannada for 'no sir' becomes 'Good Sam' (109).

The chief factor that makes *All About Hatterr* far more substantial narrative than *Baboo Jabberjee B.A.* is that it has far greater thematic substance. The comedy of colonial English in it is hitched to the star a significant theme, viz. colonial experience, its complex psychology and the diverse personality patterns it creates. The three

main characters in Desani's novel represent three prominent aspects of colonial experience. Y. Beliram is the foxy native who has learnt from both the East and the West just enough to feather his own nest; Banerrji is the cowardly cringing native, very much like Anstey's Jabberjee; and Hatterr, the Eurasian, who falls between two stools--the two halves of his being. It is this that makes him a half-comic and half-tragic character. His gullibility and lack of commonsense are comic, but at the same time his nagging sense of insecurity and his desperate need to belong enlist our sympathy. It is precisely this complexity that Anstey's portrayal of Jabberjee lacks. We laugh at Jabberjee, but while we find Hatterr a butt of ridicule, at the same time we pity him.

But it is hardly fair to Anstey to fault him for what he has not done, when what he has actually achieved is significant enough. The East-West nexus has been a staple theme in Indian English fiction, as in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope,* Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters,* Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Dream in Hawai,* and several other novels. A common feature of these novels was that they treated the theme of the Indian abroad (perhap all too) seriously. It was as late as in 1991 that Anurag Mathur first exploited the comedy of the situation in his *The Inscrutable Americans.* And this is precisely what Anstey did almost a century earlier. And if *Baboo Jabberji, B.A.* is not in the same class as *All About H. Hatterr,* it is possible to maintain that Anstey played Marlowe to Desani's Shakespeare.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]A complete stylistic analysis is not attempted here since it would be the subject of a separate enquiry, which can best be carried out by a qualified linguistician.

[2]For a fuller analysis of this, please see my essay, 'The Method in the Madness: *All about H. Hatterr*' in *Studies in Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sterling Pub., 1987).

[3]*Baboo Jabberjee, B.A.* was published serially in *Punch* in 1897, and appeared in book form in the same year, published by J.M. Dent & Sons, London in The Wayfarer's Library. All page references are to this eidition.

[4]Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987)

[5]James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: 1840), Abridged Ed., ed. William Thomas (Chicago, Uni. Press, 1975).

[6]G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr* (Penguin Books, 1972).

THE ECHOES OF ARISTOTLE, BHARAT, KEATS AND ARNOLD IN ELIOT'S "TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT"

Rajat Kumar Srivastava

"Tradition and the Individual Talent" is regarded as the first significant critical prouncement of T.S. Eliot. It appeared for the first time in the magazine called *The Egoist* in the year 1919 in two parts, the first part appearing in the October issue and the second in the December issue of the magazine. John Paul Pritchard is clearly wrong in giving 1917 as the year of the essay's first publication.[1] Eliot reprinted both parts of the essay together in *The Sacred Wood* in 1920. About "The Study of Poetry" of Matthew Arnold Eliot said that it is "a classic in English criticism; so much is said in so little space, with such economy and such authority."[2] This statement holds good equally in the case of his own essay. We can gauge the significance of the essay from the fact that whenever an anthology of modern critical statements is brought out in America or England, it invariably finds a place in it. No doubt, the essay contains the essence of Eliot's criticism as a whole; the critical stands taken by Eliot in this essay were not recanted by him later as was the case with several of his views expressed in many of his other essays.[3]

It is generally believed that Eliot's aim in writing "Tradition and the Individual Talent" was to create a critical atmosphere, congenial to his own poetic practice which was wholly opposed to the prevailing trend of the time in American and English poetry written under the influence of such ultra-romantic and anarchic movements as Dadaism and Futurism. Allied to this aim was the urgency to dispel the suspicion of the readers of his own poetry that he was making a complete break with the past. With this twofold aim in view, Eliot took up the most significant critical question of all times, namely, the question of the relationship between tradition and individual talent, that is to say, between the literature of the past and the orginality of the individual poet of the modern times. The thesis propounded in the essay is that truly great poetry can be written only by a poe

who has imbided the spirit of the entire literature of Europe, written in the past, and regards all the writers of the past as if they were his contemporaries. But how to imbibe the true spirit of the past ? Eliot's answer to this rather ticklish question is that the modern poet must learn the art of continual self-sacrifice. Eliot's advice to a poet, aspiring to be really great, is that he should submerge himself in the ocean of the literary consciousness of the whole of Europe by means of achieving total impersonality in the spirit of a scientist. This leads Eliot to the discussion of the expression of emotions in poetry--the kind of the emotion to be expressed in poetry and the method of expressing it. Eliot proceeds with the universally acknowledged fact that poetry is the expression of some experience or the other. But the experience of poetry, according to Eliot, is of two kinds--emotions and feelings: and it is unlike any other experience whatsoever. This implies that the kind of emotions that poetry seeks to express are not the daily emotions of actual life; they are art-emotions, so to say, having a complex structure of their own, which is the outcome of a peculiar combination of themselves with a number of what Eliot calls "floating feelings." Clearly, what a sensivite reader of poetry looks for in a given poem is not the personal impressions and experiences of the poet but rather for the way they have been structured into it. This is why Eliot asserts: "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality." Thus in the poetic theory, propounded by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," there is no scope for the eccentric, wayward or great emotions. The emphasis is on the poet's concentration on the *working up* of the ordinary emotions themselves into the medium of his art with the help of a great number of experiences acquired by him from his wide reading of the great masterpieces of the past whose spirit he has imbibed and also from life. But the concentration that Eliot requires of the true poet is not a conscious and deliberate concentration; it should be the product of his continual surrender of himself to the literature of the past, making new combinations of the acquired experiences to be used automatically as and when needed by the exigencies of the poetic creation. Thus Eliot deflects our attention from the poet to the poem

and pleads for the separation of the man who suffers from the artist who creates. But a question may naturally arise here as to what the role of the individuality of the poet is in the creation of poetry. According to Eliot, the role of the individuality of the poet is analogous to a catalyst whose presence causes the birth of a completely different substance out of the combination between two other substances. It is to be borne in mind that in a catalytic process the catalyst remains all unaffected; it is the substances that react upon each other that bring about the birth of the third substance, the catalyst only ensuring the resultant reaction to take place and itself remaining inactive. The mind of the poet, in like manner, remains passive and neutral but while it does not take any active part in the expression of the poetic emotion, the expression fully depends upon it because in absence of the poet's mind the new combinations of the emotion and the attending feelings cannot take place. The better the mind of the poet, the intenser will be its concentration on the medium through which the emotion gets structured and is rendered artistic.

In the foregoing paragraphs I have summarised the argument of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." I am not going to point out the weaknesses of the critical concepts formulated in it. I will rather argue that the critical ideas of the essay are not so original as they are usually projected to be. In my humble opinion, the essay is eclectic in nature. It has the echoes of Aristotle's *Poetics,* Keats's ideas regarding negative capability, Arnold's emphasis on the "permanent emotions" and even certain ideas of Bharat's doctrine of Rasa and of course many of the thoughts of Irving Babbit, Charles Maurras and T.E. Hume and above all Remy de Gourmont whose books *Le Probleme du style* and *La Culture des idees* had influenced the early Eliot very profoundly. Ants Oras has dealt with some of these debts in his book *The Critical Ideas of T.S. Eliot* (Tartu, Esthonia, 1932).

F. O. Matthiessen has also clarified Eliot's use of the ideas of most of the above-mentioned writers and thinkers in his excellent book *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot* (third edition, Oxford University Press, 1935). However, no scholar, to the best of my knowledge,

has so far located the ideas of Aristotle, Keats and Bharat in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Arnold's kinship with Eliot has been acknowledged in several quarters and yet I have included the name of Arnold in the list of Eliot's critical mentors here simply because there still persists in certain quarters, especially in India, that Eliot was contemptuous of and hostile to Arnold whereas the fact is that Eliot had a high regard for his Victorian counterpart and used many of his critical ideas in his writings including the essay under review.

So far as Aristotle is concerned, Eliot has expressly used a sentence from *De Anima* to serve as epigraph for the third and concluding section of the "essay." That goes to prove that Aristotle was very much there when Eliot formulated his principles of poetic creation. Eliot's concept of tradition in terms of imbibing the spirit of the entire literature of Europe of the past ages can be traced to Aristotle's theory of *Mimesis* or imitation as interpreted by the Renaissance humanists according to whom poetry was the imitation of the ancients. But to be fair to Eliot, his notion of the literature of the past means all the books written before a poet undertakes to compose a poem; his "past" is not the "antiquity" of the Renaissance humanists. However, Eliot's direct debt to Aristotle is in his theory of the poet's impersonality--and in his insistence on the reader's concern with the poem rather than the poet. The first clause of the very first sentence of the *Poetics,* namely, "I propose to treat of poetry in itself"[5] suggests that the proper approach to poetry should be a cosideration of poetry *per se* and not as a record of the private impressions, likes and dislikes of the poet. This stand of Artistotle becomes amply clear in Chapter 25 of the *Poetics* where he discusses the validity and the invalidity of the charges against poetry. According to Aristotle, only those charges are valid that pertain to the essential nature of poetry. His statement that "the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art"[6] and the observation that "But if the failure is due to a wrong choice — if he (i.e. the poet) has represented a horse as throwing out both his off legs at once, or introduced technical inaccuracies in medicine, for example, or in any other art — the

error is not essential to the poetry"[7] are sufficient to prove that in his considered view poetry ought to be considered as poetry and as nothing else. And as regards Eliot's theory of the poet's impersonality, its roots can be found in the following remarks of Aristotle:

1. "As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation, so he too first laid down the main lines of Comedy, by dramatising the ludicrous instead of writing personal satires."[8]

2. "Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all."[9]

3. "It clearly follows that the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions."[10]

4. "Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own."[11]

5. "In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will disvcover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies."[12]

6. "Again, the poet should work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures; for those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent; and one who agitated storms, one who is angry rages, with the most life-like reality. Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper

self."[13]

All the quotations listed above emphasise the objectivity of the poet, his surrender of the self, his total engrossment with the subject of his poem and with his medium. Aristotle is thus to be credited with being the first propounder of the theory of impersonality of art.

Eliot's notion that a mature poet deals with the common ordinary emotions and not with grand, wayward or eccentric emotions seems to have been derived from Aristotle's theory of the universality of poetry, expounded in the ninth chapter of the *Poetics*. There Aristotle remarks: "Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is--for example — what Alcibiades did or suffered."[14] Here Alcibiades is an example of the uncommon, the wayward, the eccentric. Poetry, according to Aristotle, should eschew the amotion or action of a character like Alcibiades and should instead deal with the emotions which are normal and not out-of-the way. But the guiding principle of the poetic expression of the emotion should be the observance of the twin principles of Probability and Necessity. For, it is the observance of these two laws of poetry-making that renders the emotions of poetry universal. Here it should be made clear that what Eliot calls "Emotion" is Aristotle's "Praxis" or action. It is the motivating force of the poet; we can call it the vision of life or the conception of life that propels a poet to write his poem which is nothing but the expression of that vision in an objective form. For Eliot it is analogous to a "Catalyst" and for Aristotle it is the soul or "Energia" of poetry.[15] Thus Aristotle seems to be at the root of all the major critical concepts of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." This should not appear surprising if we bear in mind the facts that Eliot regarded the Stagirite as perfect critic, that he had studied this perfect critic at the feet of his teacher at Harvard,

Professor Irving Babbit and that he uses a statement from the *De Anima* as an epigraph for the concluding section of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" itself.

The impersonal theory of poetry as propounded by Eliot also reminds us of Keats's theory of Negative Capability expounded in his December 21, 1817 letter. The theory is very difficult to grasp. So I quote below its exposition provided by the most authoritative biographer and critic of Keats, Walter Jackson Bate:

> Hence (i.e. in the letter of December 21, 1817) he tells of meeting a group of clever literary men, each absorbed in his own "identy," and affectedly intent on saying "things which make one start." Probably in reaction to them, he became convinced that what is most needed for a "Man of Achievement," especially in literature, is the ability to negate or lose one's identity in something larger than oneself. In other words, a full view of the uncertainties and perplexities of life teaches us that no system or formula can contain or explain everything. What is needed, then, is an imaginative openness of mind and a heightened receptivity to reality in its full, though elusive, concreteness. This, however, involves negating one's own ego, or submerging the self-centred consciousness of one's own identity, in favour of something more important: an awareness and savour of the reality outside us.[16]

Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry enjoins upon the poet to surrender himself to the spirit of the literature of the past and Keats recommends the negation of the poet's own self in favour of the reality outside him. If we substitute "literature of the past" for "the reality outside us" both theories become identical. This becomes amply clear when we recall Keats's definition of the "poetical character" given in his letter to Richard Woodhouse, dated October 27, 1818:

> As to the poetical character itself ....it is not itself--it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—it has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen.... A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity—he is continually in for (? forming)--and filling some other Body—the sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures.[17]

Just as Eliot assails in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" the highly individualistic tendency of his contemporary poets, Keats also attacked the poets of his day because in his view they were obsessed with their narrow selves. In his letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, dated February 3, 1818, he says:

> Modern poets differ from the Elizabethans in this. Each of the moderns like an Elector of Hanover governs his petty state, & knows how many straws are swept daily from the Causeways in all his dominions & has a continual itching that all the House-wives should have their coppers well scoured; the ancients were Emperors of vast Provinces, they had only heard of the remote ones and scarcely cared to visit them.[18]

In this passage Keats is eulogising the Elizabethan poets at the cost of his contemporaries on the ground that the former were impersonal whereas the latter were self-centred. The thinking of Keats and Eliot is thus very similar. The earlier poet, in all probability, influenced the latter in the formulation of his poetic theory. This belief gets strengthened by the praise lavished on the critical acumen of Keats by Eliot: "There is hardly one statement of Keats about poetry which ...will not be found to be true; and what is more, true for a greater and more mature poetry than anything that Keats ever wrote."[19] Moreover, there is one internal evidence, too, to prove the fact that Keats was very much in Eliot's mind when he wrote "Tradition and the Individual Talent." This evidence is to be found almost in the middle of the second section of the "Essay" where Eliot pays tribute to "Ode to a Nightingale" for its successful fusion of diverse elements.

So far as Arnold is concerned, he had many critical ideas whose reverberations we can easily hear in the essay under consideration. Arnold's insistence on the "permanent actions" serving as the proper stuff of poetry seems to me to be at the back of Eliot's assertion that it is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting." And if I have interpreted Arnold's theory of "Higher Seriousness" aright in my article published in *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies* (Vol.12 No.1, 1987, pp.99-111) then its echo is unmistakable in Eliot's view that "The emotion of art is impersonal.

And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done," for "Higher Seriousness" properly understood implies the poet's submergence with his work, his total involvement in his creation.

Now, I should like to discuss Eliot's debt to an ancient Indian literary theorist, Bharat, whose famous "Rasa-Sutra" seems to have influenced Eliot's theory regarding the way emotion is to be expressed in poetry. The idea of what Eliot calls "floating feelings" is, so far as I can see it, unknown to the West. It is, I think, Eliot's translation of "Sanchari-Bhavas" and "Anubhavas" taken together, emotion itself being the "Sthayibhava" of the "Rasa-Sutra." Bharat's concept of "Sanyojan" is very close to Eliot's notion of "Fusion." That which Bharat calls "Rasa" is Eliot's "Art Emotion." Eliot knew sanskrit and it is not improbable that he had a direct access to the *Natyashastra* and if that could be ruled out then he could have learnt of the "Rasa-Sutra" from Sylvan Levi's *Le theatre indien* which had been in print since 1890. In any event, the concept of the "floating feelings" can be fully understood only in the light of the "Rasa-Sutra."

What does this study of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" reveal ? It reveals, and very clearly, that Eliot was cultivating the habit of surrending himself to the literary consciousness of the world even in his criticism. The "Essay" dramatises how a mature mind receives ideas from the literature of the past and makes new wholes out of those ideas which are employed effortlessly and naturally at the time of setting forth some principle of art, having a universal appeal and significance. Eliot has evolved in the "Essay" certain principles of poetry-making after collecting significant concepts not only from European critical tradition but also from the Indian tradition. But the overall effect of the piece is that of a new creation altogether, having its own life and individuality born out of an artistic fusion of diverse elements, detailed above.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]John Paul Pritchard, *Criticism in America* (Lyall Book Depot, Ludhiana, 1970), p.233.

[2]Cited by Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom, ed. *Victorian Prose and Poetry* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1973), p.233.

[3]See for details George Watson's *The Literary Critics* (Penguin Books, 1963), pp.190-193.

[4]See Gerald Frank Else, "Imitation" in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey), p.3.

[5]All the passages from the *Poetics* cited in this paper are from S.H. Butcher's excellent translation-cum-critical essays entitled *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (Dover Publications, INC, 1951), p.7.

[6]Ibid., p.99.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p.17.

[9]Ibid., p.27.

[10]Ibid., p.37.

[11]Ibid., p.93.

[12]Ibid., p.61.

[13]Ibid., p.63.

[14]Ibid., p.35.

[15]Ibid., p.27. The Greek word that Aristotle actually uses is "Psyche".

[16]Walter Jackson Bate, *Prefaces to Criticism* (Anchor Books, New York), p.146.

[17]Quoted from the letter reproduced in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (Oxford University Press, New York, 1973), pp.777-78.

[18]Ibid., p.770.

[19]Walter Jackson Bate, op.cit., pp.144-45.

[20]See Arnold's "Preface" to the *First Edition of Poems* (1853) available in *Victorian Prose and Poetry*, mentioned in N.2 above

T.S. ELIOT'S "THE DRY SALVAGES" 11.124-129 : A NOTE

K.G. Srivastava

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant--

Among other things--or one way of putting the same thing:
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a
Lavender spray
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.

I feel that notwithstanding a long line of exegesis of the *Four Quartets*, the first five lines of the third section of the third movement of the volume, called "The Dry Salvages," remains enigmatic. That the passage refers to the Hindu scripture known as the *Bhagavad-Gita* is clear from the use in it of the word "Krishna" (1.124) as also from the 1.166, namely, "So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna/ On the field of battle." Evidently, Eliot had in his mind some doctrine propounded by Krishna in the *Gita* or some statement made by the Lord in the *Song Celestial* as Edwin Arnold called the Hindu scripture, when he composed the lines, under discussion. But the Hindu text has numerous doctrines, scattered over its eighteen chapters, couched in about seven hundred shlokas, some of which are quartrains while the majority consists of couplets. So the question is which particular doctrine of Krishna Eliot is alluding to in the passage at issue here; this is indeed a matter of serious concern. Most of the Eliot scholars think that the poet is here referring to the doctrine of *Nishkamakarma* or Disinterested Action that Krishna impresses on Arjuna so forcefully and persuasively. Mr. E.L. Black, the editor of *Nine Modern Poets* (Macmillan, New York, first published 1966, 1970 edition, p.203), for example, observes:

> In this particular third movement Eliot now turns to the future, and expresses its relationship to the past, by means of a reference to the religious literature of the Hindus: Arjuna is about to attack a related tribe when he is stopped by the words of Krishna, his charioteer, who is an incarnation of Vishnu, the preserver god. Krishna said that if we are to attain salvation through dutiful action, then that action must be free from the effects of personal desires

> disinterested detachment which is like leaving the body and the world. We must not take too much thought for the future.

This explanation of the passage concerned is, I confess, beyond my head. Helen Gardner reports Professor Bonamy Dobree's statement on Eliot's explanation of the symbol of "rose" in the "Little Gidding." Eliot had explained the significance of the rose-symbolism thus: "There are really three roses in the set of poems: the sensuous rose, the socio-political Rose (always appearing with a capital letter) and the spiritual rose: and the three have got to be identified as one." At this explanation Professor Dobree commented: "I must confess I was not much illuminated. (Vide Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (Faber & Faber, London & Boston, 1978, p.137). My reaction to Mr. Black's explanation of the passage concerned is precisely the same. But the tragedy is that almost all Eliot scholars are one with Mr Black on the issue. Helen Gardner's position is no better. (See pp.56-57 of her study, mentioned just now.) However, the explanation of the passage in terms of the doctrine of disinterested action, set forth in detail in the fourth chapter of the *Gita,* and most succinctly in the 47th verse of the work's second chapter, is, in my considered view, quite irrelevant and unsatisfactory. For, there is absolutely no connection between the doctrine of disinterested action, on the one hand, and the relationship that Eliot establishes between past and future on the other--the subject-matter of the passage. Mr. Black is quite right when he maintains that the theme of the third movement of "The Dry Salvages" is the relationship between past and future. This being the case, we must look for Krishna's treatment of the same theme in the *Bhagavadgita.* This theme has been dealt with by Lord Krishna very clearly in verses 32-34 of the eleventh chapter of the *Gita*, especially verse 33. I quote the English translation of John Davies (London, 1882, Indian edition, Calcutta, 1954, pp.74-75):

> Lo! I am old and world-destroying Time
> here manifest to slay the race of men.
> Of all these warriors, formed in hostile ranks,
> Except thyself, there shall not one survive.
> Wherefore, arise! gain glory for thyself.

Subdue thy foes and gain an ample sway!
My arm already hath destroyed them all.
Be but my instrument, left-handed one
Strike thou at Bhishma, Drona, Karna, too.
At Jaydratha, and the warriors all,
For they are slain by Me. Be not dismayed.
Fight! thou shalt conquer in the field thy foes.

(emphasis mine)

I feel convinced that if any passage from the *Gita* has bearing on the passage from *The Dry Salvages,* under discussion, it is this. Here the Future has been suggestively described as a faint copy of the Past. Krishna, the symbol of the Eternity, affirms that all that is in the womb of the Future to be done by man has already been done by Him in the Past and thus He is the ultimate and final cause of everything while man performing any deed at any point of time is only an apparent or instrumental cause. Eliot, too, states the same thing when he describes the Future as a faded song that had been originally sung in the past; it can also be described differently as a big-sized Rose (Royal Rose) or a lavender spray, pressed between the yellow leaves called Past and Present, belonging to the book called life whose real owner is God who never opened it after once placing between its leaves (of Past and Present) the Royal Rose whose original fragrance was smelt by Him and whose faded fragrance would be wistfully smelt by the not yet born generations of men. I believe that this reading of the passage makes some sense and fits the context very well.

In the *Gita* Lord Krishna brings home to Arjuna the truth that God is the real and ultimate cause of all human destinies while man is just an apparent or instrumental cause (Nimittakarana) and therefore man should rest content with his subordinate role as the divine instrument (nimittamatra) and go on doing his work dispassionately. The same thought has been expressed in the passage from "The Dry Salvages," under discussion, through the depiction of the Future as "a faded song" etc. the implication being that human destiny has already been decided by God in the past and whatever man would do in the future will be only a reflection of the Divine Decree. The only course left to man is, therefore, to "fare

forward" as Eliot puts the case very succinctly in 1.168 which is the last line of the third movement of "The Dry Salvages."

It would be very interesting to place on record here that the Doctrine of Disinterested Action, too, has been alluded to in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages." But that Eliot does in 1.161 which reads as follows:

> And do not think of the fruit of action

and not in the passage, under discussion. Moreover, when Eliot exhorts us to "fare forward" he alludes to the famous Vedic injunction--"charaiveti." I hope the interpretation of the 11.124-129 of "The Dry Salvages," put forward here, will remove the enigma of the lines once for all.

ECOCRITICISM AND ROBERT FROST'S POETRY

Yogesh K. Tiwari &
N.D.R. Chandra

"Ecocriticism" is a new movement, of the 90s really, still at an early state of unfolding. Although the term was coined twenty years ago, critical readings of literary texts and movements in relation to ideas of nature, wilderness, natural science, and spatial environments of all sorts have been pursued for the better part of a century, only in the last decade has the study of literature in relation to environment begun, quite suddenly, to assume the look of a major critical insurgency. In the mid-eighties, due to the collaborative undertakings by the scholars, the field of environmental literary studies was planted, and in the early nineties it grew. In 1985 Frederick O. Waage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources,* which included course description from nineteen different scholars and sought to foster "a greater presence of environmental concern and awareness in literary disciplines" (Waage. 1985:viii).

Also during these years several special sessions on nature writing of environmental literature began to appear on the programs of annual literary conference, perhaps most notably the 1991 MLA special session organized by Harold Fromm, entitled *"Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies,"* and the 1992 American Literature Association Symposium chaired by Glen A Love, entitled *"American Nature Writing: New Approaches."* In 1992, at the annual meeting of the Western Literature Association, a new Association for the study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was formed, with Scott Slovic elected the first president. Its main mission was to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world, and to encourage "new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and an interdisciplinary ecological research. By 1993, the ecological literary study had emerged as a recognizable critical school. The origin of Ecocriticism as a critical approach thus predates its recent consolidation by more than twenty years. Now the question may be

raised as what is Ecocriticism? Simply speaking, Ecocriticism is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as Feminist Criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist Criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.

Ecocritics and theorists ask questions like the following: How is nature represented in a poem ? What role does the physical setting play in the poem ? In What ways has literacy itself affected humankind's relationship to the natural wolrld ? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture ? What bearing might the scienice of Ecology have on literary studies ? What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse ? Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman (Glotfelty. 1996 : xix).

Literary theory, in general, examines the relation between writers, texts, and the world. In most literary theory the world is synonymous with society—the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of 'the world' to include the entire Ecosphere connecting everything to everything else. Further, in *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972) Joseph W. Meeker introduced the term literary ecology to refer to "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species" (Meeker. 1972:9). The term Ecocriticism was possibly first coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay *"Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism."* According to Rueckert ecocriticism means "the application of ecology and

ecological concepts to the study of literature" (Rueckert. 1978:71-86). Rueckert's definition is concerned specifically with the science of ecology, which includes all possible relations between literature and the physical world.

Many critics write environmentally conscious criticism without needing or wanting a specific name for it. Some scholars like the term 'ecocriticism' because it is short and can easily be made into other forms like ecocritical and ecocritic. Additionally, they favor eco over enviro because, analogous to the science of ecology, ecocriticism studies relationships between things, in this case, between human culture and the physical world. Furthermore, in its connotations, enviro- is anthropocentrc and dualistic, implying that we humans are at the center, surrounded by everything that is not us, the environment. Eco-, in contrast, implies interdependent communities, integrated systems and strong connections among constituent parts. Ultimately of course, usage will dictate which term or whether any term is adopted. Regardless of what name it goes by, most ecocritical work shares a common motivation; the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the basic life support systems of the planets. How then can we contribute to environmental restoration, not just in our spare time, but from within our capacity as scholars of literature ? The answer lies in recognizing that current environmental problems are largely of our own making or a by-product of culture, as historian Donald Worster explains:

> We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (1993:27)

Answering the call to understanding, scholars throughout the humanities are finding ways to add an environmental dimension to their respective disciplines. Worster and other historians are writing environmental histories, studying the reciprocal relationships between

humans and land, considering nature not just as the stage upon which the human story is acted out, but as an actor in the drama.

John Elder, one of the most influential ecocritics, author of one of the most significant contributions of the American phase of the movement *Imagining the Earth* (1985), deeply believes in reconciliation of the categories of "nature" and "culture." Elder's long interest in the life and writings of Robert Frost and of American nature poetry more generally, together with his commitment to coordinating formal literary study with the life practices of environmental immersion and education, not only give his work a distinctively American turn but also identify him with the distinctively anti-institutional thrust of a sizeable number of American ecocriticism's first fomenters and practitioners. "Elder aims to discover the basis of Frostian aesthetics in the internalization and reminiscence of agrarian work-rhythms that ecocritic is to discover not just through vicarious identification or scholastic investigation but also, indeed ever more crucially, by reenacting them" (Buell. 1999 Summer: 701).

Robert Lee Frost is recognized as one of the foremost American poets of the twentieth century because his settings and subjects are usually the landscape and folk of New England. Frost was once considered a simple farmer-poet. However, critical revaluation has centered on the complex themes and profound philosophic issues beneath the deliberately rustic surface of his poems. Frost's best work explores the fundamental question of existence amongst indifferent environment for man, depicting with chilling starkness the loneliness of the individual in an indifferent universe. While critical opinion concerning the importance of his poetry has varied, most critics agree that Frost's poem can be read and enjoyed in the light of ecocritical theory.

Robert Frost has carried the label of "nature poet" continuously from the publication in 1913 of his first book, *A Boy's Will*. Most criticism of Frost as a nature poet has sought similarities and differences between Frost and such precursors as Emerson and other transcendentalists, Wordsworth in particular among the

Romantics, and Lucretius among the classical poets. The ecological crisis of the 1980s and the ideological battles between those who fight for the integrity of ecosystems and those who consider the earth a resource to be exploited for human ends have now made it important to reassess the attitude toward nature we have absorbed in our literature. Frost, as probably the most popular American poet of the 20th century, particularly deserves examination as MacDowell writes:

> It may be asked whether the attitude toward nature expressed in Frost's work agrees with our recent and rapidly growing understanding of ecology. In other words, does Frost's presentation of the relationships between human beings and natue encourage a balanced, harmonious ecology? (McDowell. 1991:1)

Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival: Study in Literary Ecology* first most clearly raised the question:

> If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behaviour and the natural environment—to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and the world around us. Is it an activity which adapts us better to the world or one which estranges us from it? From the unforgiving perspective of evolution and selection, does literature contribute more to our survival than it does to our extinction? (1972:3-4)

The question deserves consideration even more today, with ecological disasters increasing in frequency and severity, while we slowly understand the interconnectedness of global warming, deforestation, species depletion, ground water contamination, and other effects of human attempts to tame nature.

Robert Frost's approach to Nature differs from the approaches of Wordsworth and Emerson, the two poets to whom he is most often compared. His perception of nature is far from uniform or homogeneous. Since the main objective of Ecocriticism is to enhance the fundamental premise that human culture is entirely connected to the physical world, it is worthy of consideration to seek the interconnections of human and nonhuman in Frost's poetry. Many poems, such as "The Wood Pile," "Birches," "Tree at my

Window," "After Apple Picking" imply that nature constantly attempts to reclaim everything upon which human beings have imposed a temporary order. Whether Frost fears nature is less clear than the fact that in his poems nature threatens to undo all that human beings do. Frost often praises those who make an effort to create order out of nature's continual movement toward anarchy as in Frost's short poem "Pertinax":

> Let chaos storm !
> Let cloud shapes swarm !
> I wait for form (Lathem. ed. 1967: 179).

Frost believes that the universe is indifferent to the fate of man. He emphasizes this fact again and again that Man cannot and should not try to escape his circumstances, the ecosystem where he lives in, he must make the best of things as they are because ecologically both the entities are interconnected.

Frost's two collections, *Mountain Interval* which contains such famous poems as "Birches," "Hyla Brook," "The Gum-Gatherer" and "The Sound of Trees," and Pulitzer Prize winning *New Hampshire* which includes "Fire and Ice" "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things" furthered his reputation as a major poet revealing his ecological imaginative faculty. In "Birches" the persona wonders whether a bent birch branch was caused by a child at play or by natural elements and metaphorically links tree-climbing with aspirations for heaven. This poem has got a beautiful poetic part full of nature images and descriptions: the swinging of the birches shaken by the ice-storms, and watched by a boy, in the early hours of the day, till

> ...the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
> Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust
> Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
> You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen. (Frost. 1949: 152)

These lines make a real appeal to the reader. It is a striking picture of nature. Here the poet has observed the phenomena minutely, and his description is vivid and picturesque. The play boy who swings the birches shrewdly and carefully suggests metaphorically to the poet that he himself is weary of consideration and wishing to get

away from earth awhile, partakes of the same experience. He indicated that man must train himself through the experiences of life; only in this way can he balance his aspirations with the realities of life. Frost hints that in his weary and baffled condition, life appears to man to be a pathless wood. The image of the torments of lonely man in the woods of life intensifies the effect of this statement:

> It's when I'm weary of considerations,
> And life is too much like a pathless wood
> Where your face burns and tickles with a cobwebs
> Broken across it, and one eye is weeping. (Frost. 1949: 152-53).

The baffling complexities and harsh realities of life may lead man to the verge of desperation and he may long for an escape, but Frost is not in a favor of rejection of life; he would never like to leave this earth permanently and would like to return to it again and again, for

> Earth's right place for love
> I don't know where it's likely to go better. (Frost. 1949: 152-53)

There is no denying the fact that by using outer facts Frost has represented inner meanings; he has been successful to present a balanced relationship between human beings and nature. It has been accurately pointed out that Frost's poems usually explore the relationship of human beings in nature. We see human beings interacting with nature. The evidence of Frost's poetic output as a whole does not bear out his avowed preference for a benign nature. His poetry does not record a homogeneous pattern of human and non-human relationships. It embraces the whole gamut of feelings that arises from perceiving both the beauty and terror in nature. Even when reveling in the sensuous charms of Nature, Frost is not long unaware of the sinister and the ugly that may lie hidden beneath the surface. John F. Lynen, in this connection, states:

> Even in Frost's most cheerful Nature sketches there is always a bitter-sweet quality. Admittedly he can and does enjoy Nature. His flower, trees and animals are all described with affection, yet none of the nature poems is free from hints of possible danger, under the placid surface there is always the unseen presence of something hostile. (Lynen. 1964: 402-403)

In "Two Tramps in Mud Time" the menace of nature is referred to in the form of the water transforming itself into ice:

Be glad of water, but don't forget
The lurking frost in the earth beneath
That will steal forth after the sun is set
And show on the water its crystal teeth. (Frost 1949: 358)

Frost is conscious of the hostility of nature as is clear in above-mentioned lines and remarks that man shows himself best in his spirit of contrariety to nature.

"Desert Places," published in *A Further Range,* 1936, is one of the better known poems of Frost and conveys his terrifying sense of man's 'cosmic loneliness' in an indifferent and unfeeling universe. The field, which the persona views in the poem, is almost covered by snow (except for a few herbs and stalks showing themselves). The woods around the field are also characterized by desolation. The persona feels inevitability and infinity of loneliness both in the universe and human spirit. Frost is conscious of the fact that human loneliness does not recede; it rather increases. The snowfall will continue and all nature will soon be covered with a blanket of whiteness, which will grow more intense and destructive with the passing of time. The physical features of hill and dale would soon be levelled down and it will all be one uniform white like a face without any expression with nothing to express. This ghastly sense of natural phenomena, a sense of 'empty stellar spaces,' might terrify Thomas Hardy, but it does not terrify Frost, for he has 'desert places' within himself:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces.
Between stars-on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places. (Frost 1949: 386)

Thus the 'natural loneliness' is but a reflection and symbol of his own inner loneliness. Frost indicates man's complete isolation in an indifferent universe, an unfeeling environment. There is no denying the fact that Frost has been successful to maintain cross-fertilization between human and non-human world. He indicates that wisdom lies in a realistic approach to nature. At the same time, he makes us aware of the fact that it is only by acknowledging the threat of nature positively that man would be in a position to understand a definite loss of reverence for nature, and value the ecological balance

and wholeness. In Frost's work nature is neither a stimulus for reflection and rapture nor a means to transcendental fulfillment. Frost's posing as a hugger-mugger farmer residing in between urban gentility and real wilderness suggests that he fits the traditional stereotype of a small farmer, who knows nature only as one who uses it for anthropocentric ends and who attempts to subdue it to human will in a never ending battle.

A serious reader of Frost's poetry can also feel the undercurrent of the antagonism between man and machine which may give the unnerving tension to the persons concerned as in "The Egg and the Machine." In the poem, the speaker ruefully narrates how the railroad has invaded his natural retreat. The confrontation occurs because, according to him, the machine stands for a mode of living that is based on a high degree of science-oriented social organization, and it somehow ruins the tranquility enjoyed by the solitary seeker in unspoiled nature. Just after the train passes, the speaker notices a track made by a turtle. Following the track he discovers a nest of eggs buried in the sandbank besides the railroad. His immediate reaction is that—nature has given him a more powerful agency to equip himself in defiance against the antagonist. He says:

> You'd better not disturb me any more
> He told the distance, I am armed for war
> The next machine that has the power to pass
> Will get this plasm in its goggle glass. (Frost. 1949: 349)

The man forgets for a while that nature remains unaffected by his misery and intentions. He allies himself with nature against the alien force of the machine while both of them seem to co-exist peacefully. His gesture of hurling eggs at the locomotive, apparently, will not produce any effect on the engine. On the contrary, it spoils the life contained in the eggs. Frost's poetic output as a whole does not bear out his avowed preference for a benign nature or Deity. His poetry does not record a homogenous pattern of man and nature relationship. It embraces the whole gamut of feelings that arises from perceiving both the beauty and terror in nature. As a matter of fact, many of Frost's poems can be read as contrastive representations of different aspects of life. They may be thought to

offer a comprehensive version of ecological reality.

The concern of Ecocriticism is with the 'category' of place and hence with the ideal of reinhabitation, the sense, that is, that who we are and who we continue to be, is radically tied to what our 'surroundings' are and continue to be. When a person speaks, water speaks—this may be the most profound implication of the ecocritical position. The Ecological awareness, and the sense of the possible wholeness, health or integrity of perceiver, perceived and medium are quite plain in Robert Frost's poetry.

"Directive" presents man as a seeker. It is true that Frost had witnessed the ecological decay and degradation of New England rural culture with the advancement of industrialization and urban culture. Here in this poem Frost does not want to send anyone back to the past or even to the country atmosphere. The destination turns out to be a brook, cold as a spring, the water of the house that once flourished at the top of the hill. The poem shows frost's awareness of 'The confused present' but it points to no shortcut through current problems. What the poem affirms is the difficulty of finding a true source of spiritual strength by drinking from the Mountain Brook:

> Here are your waters and your watering place.
> Drink and be whole again beyond confusion. (Frost. 1949: 521)

These lines illustrate how Frost perceives the decay and expresses a sense of transience and faith in survival; he is quite aware of the confused present due to ecological disasters, but puts forth a case for seeking spiritual strength.

Nature in Frost's poetry satisfies another need, akin to that satisfied by being scared. It provides some place to become lost. Frost of course doesn't avoid the theme of simple escape into the wilderness, without which he can hardly be American. According to him we need to feel lost, especially lost to ourselves, and nature—here, clouds, storm, and stars--provides the means. Frost plays with the idea of helping people achieve a sense of lostness in "Directive" when he suggests: "if you'll let a guide direct you/ who only has at heart your getting lost..." (Frost. 1949:520). Commenting on the poems "Come In" and "Stopping by Woods on Snowy Evening,"

MacDowell writes that these poems give a different seemingly "contradictory reaction to the idea of becoming lost." Further, he asserts that these two poems

> present nature as a temptation, a lure, to some darker purpose. This kind of lostness Frost's speakers resist; why they resist is never made clear—perhaps because the woods offer an immediate fulfillment of a death wish, or perhaps because the final lostness must be experienced entirely within. It is clear that nature offers an opportunity to lose oneself, and that opportunity, even if never accepted, enriches life. (1991: 96-97)

Now it can be perceived how nature in Frost's poetry satisfies the human need for something that challenges but cannot be conquered, for something to scare us and lose ourselves within, for something we cannot know. But how do Frost's characters most appropriately interact with nature ? What are the proper attitudes toward nature when it is necessary to make a living from nature ? The answer comes in several poems. Behind Frost's depiction of country people making a living from nature, there is a Calvinistic sense that it is wrong to take more than necessary for immediate, personal needs. The Gum-Gatherer of the poem of the same name lives 'a pleasant life' exemplifying moderation in the use of nature which throughout Frost's poems receives favourable comment. The gum-gatherer takes the gum of the mountain spruce by cutting into the bark 'with a little knife' and comes to town with chunks 'like uncut jewels,' he lives his life economically knowing not to destroy the host that feeds him. "The scales on which human beings go against nature makes all the difference in the world. A sort of tithing nature at harvest time is offered in several poems as a corrective to greed when taking from nature" (McDowell, 1991: 98).

The implication involved in above-mentioned ideas is well illustrated in the poem "Unharvested" when the speaker asks:

> May something go always unharvested
> May much stay out of our stated plan.
> Apples or something forgotten and left
> So smelling their sweetness would be no theft. (Frost, 1949: 400)

The people in "Rose Pogonias" raised a simple prayer that the meadow of flowers they come upon be saved from 'general mowing.' The idea of confusion appears in a favourable light even in this early

poem as a means to preserve some of the beauty of nature. Even streams recognize the universal tendency to tithe, to give something back to the original giver. In another poem about human relations, the West-running brook sends a white wave against its current, and 'it is this backward motion towards the source' we are told, that is, 'the tribute of the current to the source.' Even better than moderating our use of nature and always preserving some of nature, as we like from it, we should leave nature to itself. In "Build Soil," Frost condemns those who, instead of showing moderation in using nature, act selfishly and brutally. Frost's mouthpiece, Tityrus, advises farmers to

> ...plant, breed, and produce
> But what you raise or grow, why feed it out
> Eat it or plow it under where it stands
> To build the soil. (Frost. 1949: 428)

Throughout all these poems, using farming metaphors there is a strong sense that 'to market 'tis our destiny to go.' And even those who might scorn trade for its soiling effect must make a living:

> Frost's pleas to withold from market some of whatever nature produces and to return it to nature, and even to delay going to market suggests a livable balance between needs of nature and the needs of human beings. (McDowell. 1991:99)

"The Need of Being Versed in Country Things" lectures us that there is nothing to be sad about human endeavors coming to naught in the struggle with nature. The house that has burnt until only its chimney remains, the barn with broken windows, the dry pump, and the fence post with a strand of wire lead human beings to 'sigh from too much dwelling on what has been.' Without human life, nature takes care of itself, as the lilac and the elm renew their leaves for the birds. Frost wants to emphasize this fact again and again that human beings need a special sophistication particularly 'country sophistication' as opposed to the urban sophistication to do justice to nature to maintain an ecological balance. In "The Need of Being Versed In Country Things," Frost offers a corrective to our projecting of human values upon nature. His implied lesson in the last two lines is:

> One had to be versed in country things

Not to believe the phoebes wept. (Frost. 1949: 300)

Frost is conscious of the fact that we all need to learn 'country things' to be able to see and judge nature clearly. Frost generally presents a balanced relationship between human beings and nature, one that implicitly asks us to acknowledge the human needs that unconquered nature meets, and teaches us to use nature moderately, giving it back to itself, or leaving it alone. We always know, in reading Frost, that our inadequate desires have no place in nature. Finally it may well be asserted that Frost is a sincere and honest creative writer who could seize Ecological Imagination in his poetry and his poems can be interpreted and enjoyed in the light of ecocritical theory. He is certainly a distinguished and valuable poet, who has earned a place of distinction at home and abroad as a well-known ecological American writer.

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THE INTERHUMANISM OF ROBINSON JEFFERS

P. Dhanavel

The recent revival of interest in the poetry of Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) can be attributed to two major factors: environmental activism and critical pluralism. While the environmentalists have found good use in Jeffers for their cause and brought him to the centre stage of life and polity, the students and teachers of literature have attempted to re-assess Jeffers in the light of ecological facts. It seems appropriate, therefore, to open up a dialogue on Jeffers' concept of humanism with the help of a broader notion called interhumanism, a useful term suggested by one of Jeffers' poems entitled "Hands."

Ecology is "the study of plants and animals in relation to their environments." As a biological branch of enquiry, it examines the geographical distribution as well as the historical development of organisms in relation to their surroundings. It is also a popular activist movement around the world for preservation and promotion of nature in all aspects (Durbin 1988:79-81).

Literary critics have appropriated some of the principles of ecology for the study of literature. Joseph Meeker, for instance, has inaugurated a new critical field known as literary ecology in his book *The Comedy of Survival.* He defines it as "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works" and adds "it is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of human species" (Meeker1972: 9). His ecological interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are quite revealing and much meaningful in the context of criticism and theory today.

Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader* represents ecological criticism as a significant movement. It is an anthology of both theoretical and practical essays, demonstrating the necessity of ecocriticism. Of special interest is William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". Rueckert combines theory with practice admirably and argues that any piece of writing is a poem only. He considers *King Lear* and

Moby Dick poems. What is a poem then? According to him, "a poem is stored energy, a formal turbulence, a living thing, a swirl in the flow" (Rueckert 1996: 108). There are many such statements which in effect are variations of the four laws of ecology given by Barry Commoner (1971:33-45) in *The Closing Circle.* The most often quoted law is the first: "Everything is connected with everything else."

Long before the ecologists came out with their startling and disturbing studies, literary artists had been concerned with ecological problems. In the American context, Leo Marx (1988: 151) asserts convincingly "if there is a single institution which has consistently criticized American life from a vantage like that of ecology, it is the institution of letters." He reasons that the ecological perspective of writers is due to "their heightened sensitivity to the unspoiled environment, and man's relation to it, as the basis for an alternative to the established social order (ibidem: 153). The basic understanding of the ecologists and the writers is that man must learn to humble himself before the magnificent earth and live a simple life.

Born in 1887 to a Calvinist theologian, Robinson Jeffers traveled widely and studied at various places. He graduated from the Occidental College, Los Angeles. Thereafter, he pursued different subjects like literature, medicine and forestry one after another but did not complete the courses at any time. His only steady activity was writing poetry. He married Una Call Kuster and settled at Carmel, California. He built the Tor House on the Pacific Coast with his own hands and lived in close proximity with unspoiled nature.

His first impression of the Californian coast is described in his "Foreword" to *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers.* The poet says:

> ...for the firs time in my life I could see people living--amid magnificent unspoiled scenery--essentially as they did in the Idylls or the Sagas or in Homer's Ithaca. Here was contemporary life that was also permanent life (Jeffers 1938: xv-xvi).

The Idyllic land in Carmel and elsewhere was soon transformed into a lifeless land. Man was the agent who brought about the destructive transformation. Hence, the poet started satirizing man's predatory habits. Though he criticized the greedy nature of man overtly, Jeffers

became a celebrity but his popularity declined soon due to his severe condemnation of the American involvement in the Second World War.

Critics from many quarters attacked Jeffers' ecocentric poems. The poet was accused of nihilism, pessimism, sadism, sex, violence, fascism and so on. Therefore, he was constrained to spell out his views on man and nature unambiguously. He then introduced the term inhumanism to describe his philosophy in his "Preface" to *The Double Axe and Other Poems*. Contrary to the denotative meaning of inhuman, he defined inhumanism as "a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence" (Jeffers 1977:xxi). He also defended his outlook thus:

> This manner of thought and feeling is neither misanthropic nor pessimistic ....It involves no falsehoods, and is a means of maintaining sanity in slippery times; it has objective truth and human value. It offers a reasonable detachment as a rule of conduct, instead of love, hate, and envy. It neutralizes fanaticism and wild hopes: but it provides magnificence for the religious instinct and satisfies our need to admire greatness and rejoice in beauty (ibidem).

Obviously Jeffers adopted the Emersonian transition from "Me" to "Not Me" from man to nature, radically but avoided most of the transcendentalist overtones by accommodating a variety of thinkers like Lucretius, Nietzsche, Freud, Lao Tzu, and the Buddha. His uncompromising naturalistic and scientific inhumanism has served as a bulwark for many environmentalists. No wonder the renowned ecocritic John Elder begins his landmark treatise *Imagining the Earth* with a discussion of Robinson Jeffers.

The poem that best illustrates Jeffers' inhumanism is, of course, his long poem "The Inhumanist". It is a poem of fifty-two sections resembling Whitman's "Song of Myself". The "old man with a double axe" of the poem is the caretaker at the Gore Place as Jeffers was at Carmel. In fact, Hotchkiss (1977: 180) suggests that the inhumanist is "both an idealization and a caricature of Jeffers". Whether the poem is autobiographical or not, it contains most of the favourite views of the poet.

"Man is no measure of anything" (Jeffers 1991:264) is the main argument of the poem. It is in direct opposition to the fundamental tenet of Western humanism that man is the measure of everything. Jeffers utilizes the services of science to mount his attack on humanism. The two world wars and the impending third world war have proved beyond doubt the abysmal inadequacies of humanism as a stable outlook for life on the earth. The basic problem with humanism is that it is essentially and exclusively anthropocentri whereas in reality the earth and other planets do not require man for their existence at all.Hence, Jeffers identified anthropocentrism as an almost incurable disease of man. At the end of his life too, Jeffers lamented that to see the human figure in all things is man's malady and declared, "To see the inhuman God is our health" (ibidem:479). Jeffers' inhumanism is thus an antidote to the Western humanism and its offshoot, the environmental crisis confronting man today.

Kurtz, the protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* wrote in his seventeen-page report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs as a postscript: "Exterminate all the brutes" (Conrad 1989:65-66). Evidently, Kurtz is eurocentric and opposed to the black people of the dark continent. While Conrad portrays an ironic contrast between the "superior" whites and the "inferior" natives, Jeffers presents a paradoxical conflict between man and nature, and points to the fact that man is a "spoiler" (Jeffers 1991: 399) who has to be removed from the earth. Hence, Jeffers' protagonist prays to God fervently:

> Exterminate
> The race of man. For man only in the world,
> (except a few kinds of insect),
> is essentially cruel.
> Therefore slay also these if you will, the diver ant
> And the slave-maker ant, and the slick wasp
> That paralyzes living meat for her brood: but first
> The human race. Cut it off, near the stump (*ibidem*:308).

Cruelty is the major characteristic of man (and of some insects) that Jeffers deplores vehemently. Some readers find his satirical stance unpleasant. But then truth is often bitter. Though many writers have pointed out this problem of evil in man, few have taken the radical

position of Jeffers' inhumanism.

The same anti-man and pro-nature attitude is seen in a number of poems. In "Hurt Hawks", for instance, the poet expresses his preference for the hawk, a symbol of freedom, to man, an image of tyranny. Without indulging in circumlocution, he says: "I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill man than a hawk" (Jeffers 1988: 377). It may be noted that the poet himself "nursed a broken-winged hawk once and its savage individualisn caught my fancy" (Nolte 1978:25). This poem was appreciated by no less a critic than Yvor Winters (1991: 86), though he set the trend of negative criticism against Jeffers.

Did the Buddha not feel for the dove that was wounded by his cousin? Did the Buddha not protect the wounded bird, inviting his cousin's displeasure? Did the Buddha not renounce his wife, child, and kingdom to seek the true knowledge, the ultimate reality? Perhaps it is true that "only tormented persons want truth" as Jeffers (1989:608: says in his poem "Theory of Truth". The Buddha and other seekers of truth have been tormented by problems of life. Jeffers is also a seeker in this sense, though he knew that the enterprise was "foredoomed and frustrate" (*ibidem*). However, he believed that man could learn to be free from the torture of truth by turning away from himself to nature. It is a psychological as well as geological movement from mind to nature, which is all inhumanism about.

If man has to move from mind to nature, he has to remove humanity from himself. According to Jeffers, liberation from the bondage of humanity itself is the goal of life. He articulates such a philosophical outlook in "Roan Stallion":

> Humanity is
> the start of the race: I say
> Humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break
> through, the coal to break into fire,
> The atom to be split. (Jeffers 1988:189)

The poet has emphasized this disconcerting idea again and again. Sometimes he has used almost the same words in other poems. For example, he quotes himself, though not exactly, in "Prelude" to

The Women at Point Sur:

> Humanity is needless.
> I said, "Humanity is the start of the race, the gate to
> break away from, the coal to kindle,
> The blind mask crying to be split with eye-holes." (*ibidem*: 240)

The break away from the mould of humanity also means to unmask it and dislocate it from its Olympian pedestal. Jeffers often goes back to the Hellenistic and Hebraic traditions and uproots the myths to achieve his inhumanistic purposes.

It is true that the strength of Jeffers's inhumanism lies in the glorification of nature in all forms. This much misunderstood term can, however, be approached differently and appreciated through the concept of interhumanism. First, it can provide the space for all kinds of humanism, including anti-humanism, to enter into a dialogue Second, it can also highlight the extremity of Jeffers as a need for moderation in man' life on the earth. In other words, interhumanism can operate like the concept of intersubjectivity (Bateson 1972:9). Though it may have some trace of anthropocentrism, it can offer a new platform for understanding Jeffers' inhumanism.

The term interhumanism was suggested by one of Jeffers' own poems, "Hands". A poem of twelve lines, it describes the 'paintings' on 'the vault of rock' in a cave near Tessajara. These 'paintings' have the appearance of man's palms. As there is nobody to explain what they mean or how they came about there, the poet conjectures what these hands would have said:

> Look: we also were human; we had hands, not paws. All hail
> You people with the cleverer hands, our supplanters
> In the beautiful country; enjoy her a season, her beauty and come down
> And be supplanted; for you also are human. (Jeffers 1989:4)

The immediate context of these lines is the encounter between the Red Indians and the White colonizers. The Whites considered the Native Americans animals with paws and dispossessed them of their lands by cruel and cunning means. The handful of hands in painting on the rock seems to indicate that the Whites will also be dispossessed and destroyed because all those who are humans will be supplanted.

At another level the interaction takes place between the rock and the humans. In Jeffers' poetry rock is a symbol of strength and solidity. In "Hands" the rock is imprinted with pictures of human hands, resulting in the union of nature and man. This artistic unitive process, in fact, suggested the idea of interhumanism. It appears that Jeffer transformed his inhumanism into interhumanism in this rock. Man is not completely exteminated. On the contrary, he is embedded or interred, so to say, in the rock. It is interesting to note that Jeffers identified himself with the Tor House which he built with stones.

From an ecological perspective, it may be noted that the use of rock is an infringement on the "freedom" of the rock. Given the poet's tendency to repudiate man for his abuse of nature, it is possible to infer that even art on rock—inscriptions, sculptures, frescoes, etc. — is a violation of nature. Thus this poem "Hands" initiates a dialogue on Jeffers' concept of inhumanism towards a broadbased ecological understanding of both nature and man through interhumanism.

Ecological concerns today have contributed to a revival of interest in Robinson Jeffers' poetry. His concept of inhumanism as a shift from man to not-man is the basic ecological understanding towards an ecocentric vsion of the world where both human beings and the earth could stay alive. Owing to his extraordinary sensitive nature, Jeffers could foresee the ecological disasters and desired that humans should be eliminated from the earth. However, in some poems like "Hands" Jeffers suggests the possibility of coexistence. His old inhumanist also lives. If the community of inhumanists can live, Jeffers' inhumanism can be understood as interhumanism, for it offers the ecological space for both man and nature.

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CHILDHOOD IN TAGORE'S *THE CRESCENT MOON* : A STUDY

Tapati Lahiri

Rabindranath Tagore wrote abundantly not only poetry, novels, short stories, plays in both prose and verse, essays, memoirs, literary criticisms and travelogues, but also a number of poems and short stories for and about children. One of them is "Shishu," his masterpiece. Later he translated them into English that became known as *The Crescent Moon,* a short volume of child-poems, published by the Macmillan Company in 1916. All the poems were written in 'frankly prose' and Tagore did it purposefully in order "to make them simple with just a suggestion of rhythm, to give them a touch of the lyric, avoiding all archaism and poetical conventions."[1] Seen in this context, *The Crescent Moon* is Tagore's remarkable achievement.

Earlier Tagore wrote "Shishu" in Bengali in 1903 at the hill-station, Almora near Nainital, after the death of his wife, Mrinalini in 1902. The poet composed the series of the poems in order to entertain his motherless children. Being a man of fine sensibilities Tagore was led from the known to the world of the unknown, to the cosmic world of the eternal childhood growing into boyhood. The image of childhood in relation to the crescent moon is beautifully envisioned in the book. The imagery that is associated with the crescent moon indicates the process of gradual development from one state into another. The process signifies a journey from the state of babyhood into that of boyhood. We see in Blake's poetic reflections the sun symbolizing eternal childhood. To Tagore, childhood is the crescent moon leading him to see the glory of God and the first existence of the soul. In the present paper the emphasis is mainly on the two aspects of childhood—the divine and the playful. From this point of view the paper is divided into two parts, the first of which discusses the poet's vision of childhood. The second part studies the striking changes in the behavi infancy into boyhood.

I

Tagore looks upon a child as *Bholanath*, who is also *Shiva*, one of the Hindu trinity. 'Bhola' is of Bengali word meaning unforgetfulness, unmindfulness; and 'nath' means Lord. Thus, the word 'Bholanath' indicates the nature of *Shiva* who is also an ascetic, meditative Yogi and destroyer of all things. Moreover, the naked body of *Shiva* indicates that He is free from attachment to the material things of the world. The poet skilfully associates the nature of *Shiva* in all these aspects with that of a child. *Shiva* is also depicted as wearing his long matted hair in a topknot, in which is fixed the crescent moon that looks like a curved slice of a silver platter suggesting "the waxing of the latent faculties in childhood."[2] Herein lies the idea of the quality of his thought in choosing the title of the book.

For Tagore, the child is 'Heaven's first darling' in the world. Wordsworth also says, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." And it is here that Wordsworth eulogizes the newly born child who is blessed with divine light. Tagore's heart was also filled with an ineffable joy when he saw children's faces gleaming with heavenly bliss. Tagore, unlike Dickens, does not use a child as a device to unravel the then social ugliness and injustice related to those ill-fated children who fall prey to them. Nor does he provide a picture that casts a gloom over the child's heart. His conception of childhood, however, is fundamentally based on his religious thought as he deals primarily with the sanctity of a child's soul.

Like a 'seeker,' Tagore discovers the Supreme Being neither in any temple nor in any doctrine but truly in the soul of a child. In "Benediction," for example, the poet ardently asks his readers to

> Bless this little heart, this white soul that
> has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.[3]

The word 'little' symbolizes the purity of a child's soul. A reference may be made to the Holy Bible. When his disciples questioned Jesus, "who is the strongest in the kingdom of heaven ?" Jesus replied, "A little child." The child is a divine soul, the inherent characteristic of a child, rerely found in worldlywise men. Similarly, the image of 'white soul' emphasizes the divine attribute of a little child. The

poet thus builds his faith that

> Baby... dwelt in the land of perfect bliss. (p.8)

His love for children is stressed in another prose-poem "The Judge":

> I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my *little* child. (Italics mine) (p.22)

Invariably, however, the love may be interpreted as symbolic of the divine love for the human soul. The child is called angel:

> Let your life come amongst them like
> a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure,
> and delight them in silence. (p.80)

The child is considered to be superior to man. Wordsworth also reiterates "The Child is father of the Man." In another way Tagore points it out clearly that those people who, living in "an alien cartesian world under the jurisdiction of doubt' fail to realise the inner light or anything transcendental in the pranks and other attributes of childhood. Such people cannot be happy as they

> ... are cruel in their greed and their envy,
> their words are like hidden knives thirsting
> for blood. (Ibid.)

Again,

> They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair,
> they know no end to their wronglings. (Ibid.)

It is as though the poet tells his child to inspire them and soften their aggressive and unfriendly manners. It is no wonder, and Tagore does not give us the implausible. The poet believes that the mere strokes of a child's soft hands, his sweet kisses and gleaming visage cheer up even the mind of a hardhearted man. The influence of a child's divine nature is undeniably great.

There is also another side of symbolic childhood in the image of the sea that Tagore configures in "On the Seashore":

> On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.
>
> .....
>
> They build their houses with sand, and they play
> with empty shells. (p.3)

The lines echo Wordsworth's idea propounded in "On Intimations of Immortality":

> And see the children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters
> rolling ever-more.[4]

Through the image of the sea Tagore, like Wordsworth, can catch the glimpses of 'the endless world of the child.' In such a world children enjoy endless happiness while men cannot enjoy themselves as they are awfully engaged in hoarding, and lastly they become miserable and unable to understand that what they accumulate is all trivial like sand castles. Tagore believes that play is the source of happiness and makes man free from the worldly bondage. Another poem "The Last Bargain" ultimately reveals to him the truth of the same kind.

II

Early childhood that is infancy is indeed a period of one's life which is also a source of great pleasure. Tagore skilfully traces in *The Crescent Moon* the evolutionary process of a child from its infancy into boyhood. The image of an infant in its mother's arms is perhaps best expressed in "Baby's Way":

> He loves to rest his head on mother's bosom, and cannot ever bear to lose sight of her. (p.7)

Tagore does not forget mentioning a baby's engaging smile and 'little cries' to draw the mother's yearning heart to it. The baby always delights us in that way. Then the baby-talk is beautifully noted in another poem "The Beginning." The baby asks its mother "Where have I come from, where did you pick me up?", the mother answers half crying, half laughing, and clasping the baby to her breast:

> You were hidden in my heart as its desire. (p.14)

Such a picture of a mother with her baby is by all means universal. No poet is likely to describe 'the baby's world' quite in that way.

The mother-child relationship is remarkably treated in *The Crescent Moon*. Tagore places his child together with his mother in such an environment, homely and pleasant, that brings to us a typical image of Indian motherhood. Indian mothers are fully occupied with nurturing their children and never feel tired. Instead, they derive perennial joy almost like the spiritual joy that a holy saint untiredly

seeks for. In Wordsworth's poetry the relationship between mother and child is framed in the lap of the foster-mother, Nature. Tagore treats mother as a human mother who feels a sense of joyful exaltation beyond and above the pleasures of the senses. "Sleep Stealer" portrays the typical character of an Indian mother:

> Who stole sleep from baby's eyes ? I must know.
> Shouldn't I give her a good lesson if I could
> only catch her; (p.12)

Mother's joy knows no bounds. When she kisses the face of child, her darling, to make him smile she surely understands

> ... what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings to my body. (p.19)

The image of such deep and tender feelings of mother thus manifested bear a striking note of similarity with that of Yashoda, the foster-mother of Krishna. Yashoda derived immense joy while bringing up little Krishna. To quote A.L. Basham:

> The cult of the child Krsna made a special appeal to the warm maternity of Indian womanhood; and even today the simpler women of India, while worshipping the divine child, so delightfully naughty despite his mighty power, refer to themselves as "the Mother of God."[5]

Steeped in such pranks that Krishna had played during his boyhood days, Tagore cannot but express his joy equivalent to warm maternal feelings. He records his feelings in "The Unheeded Pageant":

> What is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud ?
> Mother smiles at you standing on the threshhold.
> She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd. (pp.9-10)

This is what is called ecstasy that a mother experiences in her 'little corner of a heart' for her child. To put it in another way: have not all great Rishis (Saints) realized God as *anandam* (Bliss) in communion with Him ? So, too, a mother gazes upon her child's face with the overwhelming mystery and becomes absorbed in rapture:

> What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine ? (p.15)

This is love what Tagore places higher than knowledge. In Hindi Literature Surdas was also deeply influenced by the pranks of the child Krishna. His love for the child finds expression in a string of

poems.

But there is still another side. When a child unfortunately dies, his mother grieves more than the other members of the family as the mother's tie with her child is unbreakable, alive in her memory, moving in her sleep and following her everywhere:

> Dear auntie will come with *puja* presents and will ask, "Where is our baby, sister ?" Mother, you will tell her softly, "He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul. (p.67)

Boyhood is a stage full of mischiefs. Boys' ready mind for irresponsible, playful activities causes their mothers' troubles and worries and all these aspects are worked out in some of Tagore's poems. "The Rainy Day" is one of them:

> Sullen clouds are gathering fast over the black fringe of the forest.
> O child, do not go out.
> .....
> Our cow is lowing loud, tied at the fence.
> O child, wait here till I bring her into the stall. (p.36)

The repetition of 'O child' intensifies the degree of a mother's fear and worry.

To turn to another aspect of the child, the child's funny and childish talks, coming from his puny mouth draw the attention of the poet in a special way. The poet succeeds in trapping the typical tone of a child's voice that adds flavour to the mood of a reader:

> I shall write from A right upto K.
> But, mother, why do you smile ?
> You don't believe that I can write as nicely as father does! (p.62)

Such talks are reinforced to evoke laughter. The poem reminds us of the talkative nature of Mini in the short story "The Cabuliwallah." The poet makes us share the jollity of a child when he talks about his catching the full moon getting entangled among the branches of a tree. The child could almost touch it if he could stretch his hand just a bit:

> But dada laughed at me and said,
> "Baby, you are the silliest child I have ever known. The moon is ever so far from us, how could anybody catch it ?" (p.25)

The lines ring in the child's true voice.

Tagore depicts the child's creative imagination, dream, fantasy and hope. "The Hero" is a long poem of this type. Out of his fantasy the child invents a plot for the story in which he plays the role of a giant hero who mentions it to his mother after vanquishing the giant. The mother was proud of her child and the village would all say in amazement, "Was it not lucky that the boy was with his mother ?" The story takes us on to the world of Walter de La Mare's poems for children. De La Mare unfathoms the mystery of the child mind in every child poem he has composed. Like him, Tagore is also thoughtful and deep in the insight of children. The story unfolds its actions just like scenes in drama. In it is revealed the character of a hero who is capable of awakening the reader's imagination and self-esteem.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of "The Hero" is its monologue which represents engrossing moments that arouse our curiosity and sense of adventure. When the poem is read aloud, the reader's mind takes a leap forward. In this regard, Louise Belts Egan's remark is worth quoting:

> Poems are like fireworks--they're little packets of verbal energy waiting to be ignited by the human voice. Poems work best when read aloud.[6]

It is interesting to note, judged from this viewpoint, how Tagore could trap an exciting experience of an imaginative venture of the hero in just a few monologues. Edward Thompson is right in commenting that " 'The Hero' is spirited and true."[7]

To conclude, *The Crescent Moon,* taken as a body of Tagore's childhood poetry, is better than much of child-poetry written in varied languages. Thomson's remarks is worth mentioning:

> It is not strange that *The Crescent Moon* was felt to be a revelation of a child's mind, comparable to the best that any language had seen.[8]

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[1]Quoted in William Rothenstein's *Men and Memories* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1932), p.301.

[2]C.N. Sastry, *Whitman and Rabindranath Tagore: A Study in Comparison* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1992), p.63.

[3]Rabindranath Tagore, *The Crescent Moon* (Madras: Macmillan India Limited, 1988), p.74.

Subsequent references to this text are absorbed in the body of the article and given within parentheses.

[4]*The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (OUP, 1914), p.590.

[5]A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1954), pp.307-11.

[6]*The Classic Treasury of Children's Poetry*, ed. Louise Belts Egan (London: Courage Books, 1996), "Foreward".

[7]Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore : Poet and Dramatist* (Delhi: OUP., 1989), p.197.

[8]Ibid.

KAMALA DAS'S REINVENTING SELF

Meena Sodhi

The outcry raised over the conversion of one of our exceptionally talented poets and also "one of the first fine modern writers to assert her femininity as a human in Indian literature," compels the readers of Kamala Das to re-read her poems and also the story of her life in a new perspective. Perhaps we can discover some clues in her past writings, which may help us in focusing on her present frame of mind. There are no definite clues except that the dominant note only too apparent in all her writings continues to be the urge for freedom, the need to establish her identity and liberation as an individual and as "one of the most electric women in India."

If we consult newspaper reports and magazine articles, we find that the response to her problematic action has been largely emotional. But as, we shall do better if we try to analyse some of the reasons behind her conversion, which can be interpreted from many remarks made by the poet, who still believes in always recreating herself. She has become the target of many attacks and insinuations and her detractors coolly ignore the fact that it was essentially and totally her personal decision. They keenly emphasise the flexibility of Hindu religion, which, they insist, grants any individual the right to read either the Koran or the Bible. Some of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders planned to "seek judicial redressal" and condemned certain remarks of the poet on Hinduism.[1] The allegations and indictment do not stop at this point and Das is censured for showing her obligation to the International film-maker, Ismail Merchant, who is reportedly making a film on her *My Story*.

Perhaps Kamala Das exults in creating a storm of sorts and being in the centre of it. But this time she has become involved in a controversy, which can have far-reaching repercussions. In an interview given to *The Times of India* (19 December 1999) she claimed that she was attracted to the orthodox lifestyle of the Muslim women and hence her decision to embrace Islam. Though she had resolved to convert some twenty-seven years back, she restrained from doing

so as her children were not settled in life. She found Hinduism "too lenient" and it permitted her plenty of freedom. Wasn't it this freedom, which had spared her for writing not only numerous bold autobiographical poems but also an exceptionally flamboyant and revealing account of her life in *My Story*?

A retired Professor and a CPI (M) activist Nabeesa Ummal has observed, "I challenge her to write a book like *My Story* now. She will face the same fatwa and fate as Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen."[2] However, Kamala Das's remarks emphasise her dare-devil attitude. In keeping with her exhibitionist, bold and reckless attitude, she attended a seminar on "Indian Muslim agenda for the 21st century" organised by the Khair-Ummat Trust on January 24, 2000 and proclaimed:

> I will not run away like Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasreen did from their motherland. I am born an Indian and will die as one.[3]

Kamala's conversion shocked the Keralites who were made to retort: "It hurts the pride of the layman and the literate alike; we nurtured a rebel of sorts in our midst for so long, and look how she rejects us for the aliens." Perhaps they fail to realise that everyone needs to reinvent oneself and it is very likely that Kamala Das wants to do it more frequently. Now she seems to have found her "misplaced father in Allah."[4] May be the Hindu tolerance is unable to approve the conversion of a woman's libber, who had till now endured her outspoken, saucy, strip-tease style of writing. But she has not been the target of abuse only, some people have applauded her for her "bold" decision. Being bold and uninhibited comes naturally to Kamala Das and she has for long written on subjects related to sex, which were always considered a taboo not only for women but for male writers too. With the publication of *My Story* in 1976 there emerged a new kind of women's writing, which was not only daring and tantalising but also presumptuous and self-assertive. Here was a writer who defied all conventional models to retaliate against the worn out social values and traditions, which forever hinder and retard the development of a woman's personality, emotionally as well as intellectually.

The autobiography aimed at redefining the male-female relationship and was not only a challenging account of the writer's experiences of her life but of her body as well. In Kamala Das we have a woman conscious of her femininity and determined to vindicate it against the male supremacy. The autobiography emphasised the personality of Kamala Das as it had been made by the dictates of the society. Thus a "good" girl was made to rebel against the established socio-cultural barriers of feminine modesty which at times shocked the conservative readers. The frank and confessional language, which helped in transcending her "marginal self," prompted her critics to brand her as an exhibitionist.

Now her admirers are nostalgic for the "musty smell in the attic of Nalapat home" with which they had become as familiar as did the readers of R.K. Narayan with Malgudi. Bibi Suraiya has overturned all that. Her statements regarding the Hindu Gods and Hindus at large are not in the right taste. Hindu deities, she says, punish and Allah, she feels, forgives all the sins: "Hindus have only hurt me, scandalized me. This is a new birth for me."[5] Speaking to *The Hindu* she was at pains to emphasise that she could not feel that she belonged to any religion till she converted to Islam:

> How long can I remain an unclaimed parcel with the address stamped on me. There should be someone to claim me. I want love from all.[6]

Her conversion with "Allah's mercy" made her feel well and healthy once again. She has not lived an easy life and has always been searching for solace, safety and contentment. Let us review what Kamala Das has to say about the state of her mind after taking over the burqa:

> "From the first birthday of memory till today, this life was a red hot desrt. Now I walk after shedding my heavy load, toward the mirage in the desert with date palms, clear pools. The home of Allah, the empire of Love of Allah.... I have always been searching for God. I found him in Islam and I took shelter under it. I did not expect such a furore over it. I never thought so many cases would be filed against me simply because of the change in religion. Conversion is a simple procedure. It is a search for God."[7]

Her penchant for truth made her react in anger at her critics: they are speculating the reason for her newfound happiness, more so

after her surprise announcement that she planned to get married again ! But the name of the prospective suitor has been kept a closely guarded secret. She always desired to be completely possessed by a man:

> "Even if it had been a poor, labourer who said to me 'I want nothing else but you,' I would have followed him.... Even my Krishna poems, I think, were attempts to realise that."[8]

She shuns the concept of old people visiting only temples and passing their time in prayers.

Autobiographical writing for women has always been a way of exploring their sense of identity and the process helps them in redefining their own lives too. Kamala Das continues to redefine herself even without writing a sequel to her autobiography. *My Story* is the work of a poet, famous for her honesty. The life narrative depicts some very intensely personal experiences including "her growth into womanhood, her unsuccessful quest for love in and outside marriage and life in her matriarchal rural south India after inheriting her ancestral home. While at home, the rich families try to kill her with magic because they fear that her writing will reveal their immortality in it."[9] She alleges the Keralites for "treating her shabbily and spurning her with contempt."[10]

The writings of Kamala Das have by and large been egocentred, as was *My Story.* The essence of the autobiography was its authenticity about the autobiographer's feminine sensibility. In it she introduced herself as a daughter, a mother, a wife, a poet; but what was more important in the book was her being conscious of her woman's identity which was an amalgam of all these personalities. Identity to Kamala Das did not mean fitting in a predefined slot:

> "Dress in saris, be girl
> Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
> Be a quareller with servants. Fit in, oh,
> Belong, cried the categorizers"
>
> (An Introduction)

Kamala Das learnt to defy these pre-established canons of feminine identity; for her it was important to be a woman and a lover with a body and a soul. The autobiography became for her a vehicle for

voicing an "inner privacy," and a protest against the senseless restrictions which force a sensitive woman to lead an insipid life.

A significant and important aspect of *My Story* was the description of such experiences, which only a woman could have. These are the personal accounts of childbirth which, Cynthia Huff, in her essay "Delivery: The Cultural Representation Childbirth," observes is the characteristic of a cultural phenomenon; it also embodies metaphorically physical as well as external creation. Kamala Das's autobiography had three such textual accounts of physical creations, narrated probably for the first time in the history of Indian women's writings in English. The writing was started to distract her mind, to help her recover from a grave illness and also to take care of hospital bills. The time had come when Kamala Das found a voice of her own, but it was only when she realised that she was face to face with Death:

> I wanted to empty myself of all the secrets so that I could depart when the time came, with a scrubbed-out conscience[11]

Autobiographical writing can prove to be cathartic as it can help the writer in coming to terms with her self. In the case of Kamala Das, *My Story* gave her "the courage to move forward into as yet unnarrated and unexplored ways of living."[12] And in the process it also gave her abundant happiness:

> I have written several books in my lifetime, but none of them provided the pleasure the writing of *My Story* has given me. I have nothing more to say.[13]

We read a woman's autobiography for other reasons than we read her novels, diaries, and letters or edited papers. We read these feminine writings to hear from, learn from some specific historical figures about how they found their own voice not only in these autobiographical writings but as a product of historical forces. This is what makes an autobiography a privileged form of historical agency for a woman, an act of finding a voice of her own and expressing it freely. However, now Kamala Das is wary of emancipation and unconstraint and for her the "burqa" has become a symbol of "protection" and at the age of sixty-five she needs it more than ever ! From demanding complete freedom on independence in sexual matters, she has gone back to total denial of freedom by her

conversion to an orthodox Muslim way of life. The freedom, which she enjoyed as a Hindu, will not be allowed to her now. "Who needs freedom?" retorts Surayya. Speaking to a national daily she rejected her earlier demand for freedom:

> I don't want freedom. I had enough of it thrust on me. Freedom had become a burden for me.... I want a master to protect me. I wanted protection and not freedom. I want to be subservient to Allah.[14]

The Kamala Das of earlier days, the femme fatale of Indian Women's writings, had been undergoing a metamorphosis of sorts even earlier to her conversion:

> Before I was the rebellious type I used to move around a lot, involve myself in various activities; most of the time taking risks and living dangerously. Now I have changed. I have become a virtuous, clean woman. A puritan in all senses who prays daily, wears white clothes and is conservative in thinking.[15]

However, she has been transformed into a woman who says she loves the orthodox lifestyle of Muslim women:

> I want guidelines to regulate and discipline my life. I want a master to protect me.... My husband died seven years ago and I am now a lonely widow who is 67 years old. When he was there he provided me with protection. I had not to bother about getting tickets, passport, visas and such other things. I just had to follow him.[16]

It is apparent that the swallow of earlier days had really been tamed and now it misses the master and is lonely. But can the conversion also be viewed as an evolution of a woman who has come full circle? Her comments in her other writings seem to suggest that she may have longed for a more circumscribed existence for some years now. Nevertheless, what needs to be questioned is the sincerity of her decision not only now but in her earlier life too. How genuine were her expressions in *My Story* and how sincere are they now? They may be "bold" and "unconventional," but somewhere in the mind of the reader there lurks the doubt to regard all her statements and actions, flamboyant gestures as publicity gimmicks. Nevertheless, we cannot but agree with Dom Moraes's recent remark that "much may be forgiven those who write well."

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MEENA ALEXANDER: CREATIVE VERSATILITY

A.G. Khan

Keats said that poetry should please us by a fine excess. Meena surprises us by finer excess. She in her multiple roles such as wife, mother, poet, novelist memoir writer and a world citizen brings a bouquet of rich experience that she gathered as a child in Kerala, then as an adolescent in Sudan (Africa), a graduate student in England and now as Professor of Creative Writing in America. She has trampled four continents and has been a frequent visitor to India. She taught as college lecturer in Hyderabad and New Delhi. She has been in Madurai for a month as a writer-residence conducting a workshop on creative writing. Her recent visit had been in 1996 when she participated in an international seminar at New Delhi. She, therefore, brings a happy union of an academic and a poet, one role illuminating the other.

She considers poetry as a social concern. It provides one with illumination for struggle and a meditative poise.[1] Hers is not an armchair concern of a detached academician. She recalled her social activist role when she staged a protest in Hotel Akbar in New York where the BJP activists were raising fund for Ram Temple after the demolition of Babri Mosque at Ayodhya. She was manhandled by the mob and was rescued by the police. She feels that the rape of Muslim women at Surat in India in one hemisphere of the globe has a reenactment in form of a white girl raped in America in the other hemisphere of the globe. Her poem pathetically laments the predicament of women:

> I imagine Draupadi of the 'Mahabharat' entering my kitchen in New York city
> and longing to be freed of the limitations of skin, colour and race.
> Back against the kitchen store
> Draupadi sings
> In my head Beirut still burns
> The queen of Nubia, of god's Upper Kingdom
> The Rani of Jhansi transfigured, raising her sword
> Are players too. They have entered with me
> Into North America and share these walls.[2]

In her poem Muse she visualizes neither the mythical image of Goddess Saraswati nor of the Greek goddess of poetry but an extremely sad story of a drowned woman:

> Furious now, red sari whirling.
> She's naked by the Vagai river.
> But no one cares, neither washerman
> Nor moist buffaloes[3]

Poetry is considered to be a painful toil and it is here she narrates her wrestling with ideas and more vigorously with appropriate language devices:

> Come ferocious alphabets of flesh
> Splinter and raze my page (night scene)
> Our language is in ruins-
> Vowels impossibly sharp
> Broken consonants of bone[5]
>
> The prams are filled with ash.
> These are my syllables.
> Can you understand that[5]

She further explains the problems posed by English as an alien tongue. Her agony is slightly different. She has to write in English because she has poor command on Malayalam as a tool of creative expression. She is very keen on fighting away this burden by "linguistic decolonization. She prefers to use expressions like bulbul, koel, jamun, baingan, amma, musumbi, saughandi, and she even exploits expressions from Malayalam 'uthe orkunondo.'[6]

Landscape, specially river and trees, provided her a springboard for emotional diving. There are emotional states associated with natural scenes:

> As I thrust the little one apart
> Something burst is me.
> Slow and terrible like the sea.[7]

or

> Petals licking the hump backed tree
> 'saughandi' I love that scent
> less piercing than jasmine
> and sticky somehow' ....
> And I smelt a mortal fragrance binding me quick silver

Like grand mother's hair blown free
And sticky as the scent of the saughandi tree[8]

John Oliver Perry regards her writing as a sublimation of her sexual urges. In a lengthy paper titled "Sexual Identity Driving Meena Alexander's Poetic Sublimity," Perry tries to perceive the creative urge as a part of repressed sexual desires. Her memoir, though not as frank and candid as Kamala Das's, yet objectively tells of her repression and experience with different men.[9] *Faulty Lines* narrates her infatuation with a man; then with a Dutch student in Nottingham and then, finally, her marriage with David Lelyveld.[10] Perry feels that, to some extent, her novel *Nampally Road's* heroine Mira Kannadical behaves in almost similar manner. To some extent this novel is an autobiography.

However, let us remember that she is not a full-throated feminist. On the contrary, she rejects this kind of a high pamphleteering. This does not mean that she is blind to exploitation of women in society. She believes in a universal kind of sisterhood. Her poem brings all women into one mass:

I see a city filled with women.
.....
I sense the voices of a thousand women.
No longer strangers to each other, singing[11]

When a daughter and mother share a mutual concern the bond of female comeradierie is kept in tact:

Amma, I am
Dreaming my self.
Into you body
It is the end
Of everything[12]

As housewife and even as an adolescent she finds domesticity the inescapable domain a woman has to confine herself to. Her mother provides her several instances:

She saw a child on a swing.
Braids blowing in the heat.
Woman chopping baingan in the kitchen
A jamun tree fruit polished, pealing[13]

Again,

Taught me to/fire a copper pan
Starch and fold a sari
Raise a rusty needle
Stitch my woman's breath into
The mute amazement of sentences.[14]

Hence even for Rani of Jhansi, domesticity is a constraint that her intelligence constantly tries to break loose. While her mother introduced her to domesticity: her rational father made her realize that she had to use her intelligence all the time not to become a prisoner within the kitchen: "My father always encouraged me to use my mind and taught me that woman also have place in the world... experience of domesticity has deeply enriched and nourished my writing."[15]

Death has been a recurring theme in her poetry. She describes the death of her father and equally tragic immersion of child in the sea. We have three important poems narrating this experience:

The newly dead pressed for the morgue gate
Watch me pass
Their features sharp as unripe almond flesh
Their fingers harps as each one
Stretched out skin and bone to me
In a raw music[16]

Again, she speaks of death as follows:

He'd been so ill remember
Right at death's door
Hearts stopped. Doctors
Pumped him hard, ribs, chest[17]

Then, she writes:

It is as if we all had died
.....
As a burnt dosa on a griddle
As idlis wasting in steam
And having gone.
Cried out for resurrection[18]

As already mentioned, she has moved from one continent to another. This, on the one hand, provides her immense enrichment, but at the same time a feeling of belonging nowhere:

Creatures of Here and There

we must keep doing
Madurai, Manhattan, who cares ?[19]

She elaborates "...as I have been travelling from one place to another, as something that gives me access. At the same time there is this need always to return, sometimes to a place that is constructed in the mind I mean shelter. Shelters are actual but also become part of what mind makes up, almost imaginary homelands.[20]

While the tradition of the past and the homeland binds her to the norms of a third world society. She finds the challenges of a western metropolitan worth addressing. She feels that she binds Vyas with Homer: "Whether the poet is in Tiruvella or Meerut or Baghdad or Manhattan or London she is aware of this one constant—her changeable, protean core self."[21]

Perry feels that like another globe trotter Naipaul, this feeling of rootlessness make them, though a world citizen yet creates a kinds of centrifugal force which she regards as 'gravity of exile': "Meena Alexander has struggled to create, rather than find spaces where interactions can go on, an imaginative opening, brainpan or womb, for bearing human relationships."[22]

This fact is percolated in her novel, *Manhattan Music* too, where the heroine and her temporary Egyptian love Rashid try to develop a kind of empathy, Rabindra Nath Maharaj describes: "The migrant... is likened to monster Frankenstein cobbled together from mismatched parts and awaiting life... this fractured world burdened by the unreliability of the past and the uncertainty of future."[23] However, one has to manage and control the situation. Because one cannot survive in such mental state pretty long. The heroine "observes a dragon fly struggling away from its pupa and experiences a transformation."[24]

Lakshmi Kannan finds another characteristic in her poems, a wish to express countered by a strong pull to hold back, to leave unshared: "Reticence as against writing for publishing, two proverbial but not uncompanionable enemies, or rather two seemingly different forces that invariably meet at a point."[25]

Thus, we see a multilayered *persona* that surfaces in different

forces and situations. This process of metamorphosis or of 'relocation' of assuming of one identity after another has been described by biological analogy of a snake shedding its skin:

A cobra that pours
Over threshold stones
.....
and we smelt ebony flesh.
The whole darting heat of him,
The blessing.[26]

Here is a writer of promise who continues to add richness to our fabric of multiculturalism. As an expatriate writer Indian diaspora she has been making quite significant contribution.

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WOMEN BONDING IN TONI MORRISON'S *JAZZ*

Rama Kant Sharma

It is the story of African women that Morrison is most anxious to present in *Jazz*. In some ways Violet's life is Morrison's window for viewing the lives of all black women who have been wronged. All African people were in dangers of exploitive conditions caused by the changing U.S. economy in the 1920s--an economy that moved rapidly from slavery to industrialism and the racism that this economy spawned. The results were the worst race riots in the history of America. If the condition for all African people were barbaric and wild, then conditions for African women were warlike.

Conditions of African women were no better in South than in North. The main reason, parents gave for sending their daughters to North, was fear of molestation. As Jacqueline Jones points out:

> Significantly black men mentioned the degraded status of their womenfolk as one of the prime incentive to migrate, along with the low wages and poor educational opportunities for their children. Husband told of sexual harassment of wives and daughters by whitemen and of other forms of indignities woven into the fabric of southern society.[1]

Northern cities like Harlem are not much different from South specially for women. A newspaper can turn your mind, the narrator of *Jazz* says, but Alice Manfred, the character related to Dorcas reads about the violence of the world, and also between the lines finds an angry resistence to it:

> Every weak since Dorcas's death during the whole of January and February a paper laid bare the bones of broken women. Man kills the wife. Eight accused of rape dismissed....[2]

Are these broken women mere victims ? Natural prey ? Easy pickings ? Alice feels that she does not think so. Some are, and no doubt, the novel tells us the story of one of them. Alice's niece Dorcas, a girl who likes to push people to kill herself, is a lady who allows herself to die. There are extended flashbacks in the novel, but its main times are the 1920s or rather a period which Morrison dates from 1917, the year of major riots in Saint Louis. So the women were joining hands to oppose the oppression. Apropos of this Michael

Wood aptly says:

> But other black women in *Jazz* are arming themselves, physically and mentally, and in this way they have caught a current of the times, a not always visible indignation that says enough is enough. It is an indignation that is glimpsed in the new form of protest and political organization and heard in the freedom and sadness and hunger of *Jazz*.[3]

Hence the dire need for gender solidarity through women bonding. Morrison's dedication of *Tar Baby* --

> For
> Mrs. Caroline Smith
> Mrs. Millie Macteer...
> and each of their sisters,
> all of who knew
> their true and ancient
> properties,[4]

--seems to have been realised in *Jazz*. The epithet "their sisters' contains within itself two of Morrison's concerns--the need for a black person to delve into his own culture and understand its "ancient properties" and the need for one black woman to relate to another to seek the true self. Black women's identification and solidarity is most simply the idea of black women seeking their own identity, and defining themselves on various levels--psychic, intellectual and emotional as well as physical--with other black women.

Violet becomes the representative of all black women that remember their ancient properties and have been wronged. Morrison looks at the concept of women relationship with a better understanding in *Jazz* than in any of her earlier novels. Violet finds herself through her relationship with Dorcas, Alice and Felice. It is the identification of self with the black women that leads Violet to discover the real self as she goes out in search of Dorcas' past and encounters Alice, Dorcas' aunt. Unlike Jadine in *Tar Baby*, who rejects her culture and solidarity with those black women who help her confront reality, Violet accepts the influence of other black women on her life.

With Violet, Alice, too, is forced to see not only her niece's lie with Joe, but her own deceptions. She can no longer set herself

apart and pretend to be different from other women-- common women who are enraged by a husband's betrayal. In the face of Violet's assertion that Dorcas is her enemy even in her death and that is why she attacked her, Alice suddenly, though reluctantly, remembers the repressed images of violence against other women in her own married life. Thirty years earlier, she had craved for not her husband's blood but for death and torment to the women, he had chosen instead of her. Alice had not acted but contended herself with the murderous dreams. And because she had been restrained then, now she is fearful of women like Violet who are not fearful until she gets to know Violet.

That is the point Morrison makes through Alice and Violet's relationship. Despite their differences, they are women. Alice's niece is shot by Violet's husband--they find unlikely comfort and friendship with each other. Alice is prepared, when Violet first comes to see her, to look down from the mountain top of superiority and propriety. But Violet will not allow any such unexamined response, "We women, me and you. Tell me some thing real.... I'm fifty and I do not know nothing."[5] She means not to judge her or dismiss her, but to look at her life and tell her what lessons if any she has learnt in fifty seven years that can help her in making her life intelligible:

> "Oh, Mama" Alice Manfred blurted it out and then covered her mouth.
> Violet had the same thought: "Mama, Mama ?"[6]

In that moment they are linked by mutual compassion to each other and also to ancestral women. In that moment, they occupy a space in the line formed by generations of struggling black women. They are resolute women who are united in struggle. Whether they struggle to keep a man, whether the fight is for the room or board or personal dignity, is unimportant. For Morrison they have a single composite pattern. Perhaps, rather certainly, Violet remembers her mother, who had fought for life and lost. Rose dear had scratched out a living in Virginia after her husband left. But with five children and no help, she did not last long. When the Sheriff came and took away everything, including the chair Rose was sitting in, she was

defeated. Four years later, she jumped to her death down a well shaft. Violet recalls her mother's desperation in the wake of her own. Was there one final assault that pushed her beyond the edge of endurance and made suicide the best choice ?

When Violet tries to disfigure Dorcas' face at the latter's funeral, this violent act stuns the entire community, but it is the women who empathise with her. Even a women like Malvonne, Joe's neighbour who admits that she hates Violet, cannot turn her back on another black woman. She tells Joe:

> "Okay, there is no love lost between Violet and me, but I take her part not yours."[7]

Violet has never met Dorcas, never seen her when alive. Her memory is a sickness in the house. Having to live with her memory, she wonders if she is not falling in love with her too. When she is not trying to humiliate Joe, she is admiring the dead girl's hair. Thus Dorcas, the woman who used to wear Violet down, becomes a woman, Violet learns to admire and love.

Finally, Violet convinces Alice as to why she had disfigured the face of Dorcas. She makes Alice realize that she, a woman who never held a knife to harm others, would definitely fight and kill for her man. And Alice becomes the person Violet can sit with and talk to someone who will try to understand her. Alice does understand Violet and the latter soon becomes the only visitor she ever looked forward to. This bonding and sisterhood between Violet and Alice allow them not only to talk but also to cry and laugh--all three signs of healing. Speaking of this, Yamini K. Murthy justly writes: "As Violet, Alice and Felice come together as black women, and discover their own self, through bonding with other black women, they come to an end of a pilgrimage to know and be their own true self."[8]

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THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FICTIONAL FEMALE: A METAFICTIVE LOOK AT GLORIA NAYLOR'S *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE* (1982) AND *BAILEY'S CAFE* (1992)

Archana Kaul

The crystallisation of a native American mythology of the self climaxed in the form of the concept of the American Adam, and Adamic image finally came to permeate the mind, the psyche, and the thematic or the role playing matrix in all American writing. Not only in the first Renaissance, but also right through the optative phase of American imagination and thinking, the Adamic myth continues to be a radical component with every American writer, (poet, novelist, or playwright) right till the present times. The Adamic concept of Huck Finn 'Abroad' remains the inspirational norm with all American modernist and postmodernist fictional protagonists, in any class of writing (Jewish American, Afro- American, Women's or Feminist Literature). What has made this particular obsession most innovative, fabulatory and metapoetic or metafictional is the depiction of an existential odyssey of the Self in order to depict an apotheosis of the protagonistic situation of the central character. The traditional fictional quest has thus evolved into a quest for identity on the part of the main personages. The cardinal issue of identity holds good especially with the fabulatory and metafictional female of the contemporary American novel. The female is in no way the counter part of the weak submissive and pliant fictional heroine of the novels of yesteryears, women who traditionally accepted the status of subjugation imposed upon them by males as lovers, husbands, fathers or brothers. Contrary to this, the Amerafrican fictional female becomes the living embodiment of an aggressive and highly conscious modicum of self-awareness of non-compromising identity and above all a chronic eagerness to settle scores with the males by adopting existentially manly attributes like; violence, disguise, wilful encroachment on the lives of others and even

the Amerafrican feminist novel, especially in postmodernist phase, accrues a fiercely independent and archetypal status, thereby earning paradoxically the sobriquet of the metafictive Female Adam who treats her male counter part on equal footing and at times even goes beyond that. This American Eve develops Adamic aggression and assertiveness to brave against the possibility of getting existentially encapsulated by the immediate social environment, especially male hegemonistic appropriations. Thus, the Female Adam dives deep within the crust of society in order to find an alternative mode of existence. In the process she resolves to become self-assertive and anarchic in her disposition. She has no qualm in being a compulsive rebel, an Alazon or a rebel-victim, as long as she is able to reconstruct the Individual Self.

In the novels of Gloria Naylor the Adamic strain attains a status of a kind of revolt against the stereotype depiction of slave narratives by white writers and even by male black writers. The black woman protagonist, in Naylor's novels, is not a nigger or a Negro but she is an individual being, in search of her identity. She does not only think about herself, her relationships, but also about the female body and its desires. Bell Hooks has rightly pointed out that black women must make use of their marginality and "make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony."[1] Thus the major black women novelists have, in tune with the postmodernist self-reflexive stylistics and structuralizing of human character, increasingly sought to de-doxify the female self, including desire and dream, in order to display the Black Women fictional protagonist as an Adamic figure with a metafictive code of conduct and thinking. Gloria Naylor subtly weaves and fabricates the narrative of her two famous novels, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982) and *Bailey's Cafe (1992)*, in which the identity of the metafictive female Adam gets represented as an existential paradigm operating in contemporary Afro-American writing.

The first novel of Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982), is about an unidentified housing development, the Brewster

Place, a decaying slum dwelling of black Americans, the misfits of the society, who are separated from the white dominance by a wall. The novel records the life of seven black women of different ages, coming from different backgrounds. Confusion, contradiction and circumstances have brought these women with their crippled and deferred dreams to this decaying, dilapidated slum.

The Women of Brewster Place is a novel with seven independent short stories, aptly subtitled as "A Novel in Seven Stories." As the narrator comments, "Like an ebony phoenix, each in her own time and with her own season had a story."[2] The Women of Brewster Place--Mattie Michael, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciela Louise Turner, Cora Lee and The Two (Lorraine and Theresa)--are all burdened by being both black and female. Structurally the novel begins with a Prologue, 'Dawn' and then gets divided into seven chapters with the name of each woman character as the title of the chapter, except the last seventh chapter which is titled "The Block Party." The epilogue to the novel is titled "Dusk", ostensibly the work highlights cyclically the widening chasm between the 'dreams and realities', 'problems and solutions' of the women characters.

In the first chapter titled "Mattie Michael" Gloria Naylor makes use of the tunnelling process to reveal a repertoire of Mattie's endeavour and strength against the arduous circumstances of her life. On her arrival at Brewster Place she smells something akin to sugarcane: "For a moment it smelled like freshly cut sugarcane, and she took in short, rapid breaths of air" (*WB* 8). The nostalgic smell makes her travel down the memory lane, the time when she unwittingly submits herself to a fleeting moment of weakness 'her sexual encounter with Butch Fuller', which sets the pace for her journey to Brewster Place. The narrator recounts the day when her father comes to know of it; he beats her senselessly: "The broom had broken, and he (the father) was now kneeling over Mattie and beating her with a jagged section of it that he had in his fist", and she was a "pile of torn clothes and bruised flesh on the floor" (*WB* 23-24). After this humiliating incident, self-respect and integrity makes

her to move out from her parents place at 'Rock Vale, Tennessee' to her friend Etta's place at 'Asheville, North Caroline', where after five months she gives birth to a son, whom she named Basil, the name of the wild herb which she and Butch Fuller had gone to cut on that fateful day. It was her possessive love and over protection of her son that makes him into a reckless person, with the result she feels totally helpless and exasperated. After her son's arrest for manslaughter, her motherly instinct overpowers her and forces her to raise the money for her son's bail. She sells off the only property she has accrued through the benevolence of an old benefactor, Eve Turner. Eve had come in Mattie's life at a time when everybody around had turned his back on her; in fact she was the mother figure from whom Mattie sought comfort and solace. But after her death Mattie, being alone, was unable to control the downtrend of her son's life ultimately resulting in his running away from home and jumping the bail. Though now penniless, she does not go in search of her fool-hardy son, instead her resilience helps her to move to the walled society of Brewster. Her dream of a comfortable life with her son gets charred, but still she does not give up, she sets herself for a much bigger dream: the problem of womanhood, especially black woman in a society where women are mutilated and abused. Mattie reaches out as a balm, nurturing and comforting them. She is the matrilineal link. Whether it is Etta Mae Johnson or Cora Lee it is only Mattie mothering them. Cora Lee--without a valid identity of her own--goes through its crises. Ceil is abused and grieving mother who lost her two children abruptly, the Lesbians, Lorriane and Theresa-the two social misfits. Kiswana Browne is the community's radical, who did not understand her strong ancestral links and Etta Mae Johnson's tryst with decent life and the resultant disappointment in romantic relationship. Of them all it was Mattie 'the Prometheus bound' who becomes the archetype of all suffering-whether it is her father, who beats her or her lover Butch Fuller, who uses her for his sexual gratification or her son Basil, who makes her penniless by his wayward life style. No wonder that Naylor bestows her with the dream of Black Sisterhood. The overpowering Sisyphus[3] syndrome in Mattie makes her to keep on building the solidarity in black

sisterhood. Though the Dream does get deferred with the rape of Lorriane in the penultimate chapter titled "The Two", the title deliberately does not give the names of the characters, because 'the two'--sensitive Lorraine and strong Theresa--are Lesbians and were looked upon, neither as individuals nor as women, but as aliens to the society. The Dream now takes its shape with more force, vigour and violence in the "The Block Party" when all the women vent out their frustration by breaking down the wall that separated them from the symbolic sunshine of the highway:

> The bricks piled up behind them and were snatched and relayed out of Brewster Place past overturned tables, scattered coins, and crushed wads of dollar bills. They came back with chairs and barbecue grills and smashed them into the wall (*WB* 186).

The wall has been a witness to Lorriane's rape and killing of Ben, the janitor, by mentally deranged Lorriane, for whom Ben ironically had been the only friend.

In breaking the wall Naylor shows that when woman affirms solidarity she can break the stereotyped myth of sexy, racist society, which the wall so strongly symbolized. As Gloria Naylor said, "And for me, that wall symbolized simply racism in this country."[4] With the collapse of the wall, the Brewster Place collapsed, the residents shifted to another place: "So it had to watch, dying but not dead, as they packed the remnants of their dreams and left" (*WB* 191). Mattie's dream remains unreal, but its truth cannot be ignored.[5] Thus the Adamic woman of Brewster Place in breaking the wall breaks the oppression of sexism, as rightly pointed out by Sandara W Holt that it establishes the necessity of sisterhood among black women as the key to survival and leads the road for self-discovery or self-identity.[6] The metafictional self-reflexivity of black women persoanges in the novel becomes instrumental in dismantling male hegemonistic attitude, and Naylor's incisive insight into the human psyche of her black protagonist becomes a crucial factor in all this. It is the interplay of dream and desire, as applied to Mattie Michael and her companions, which ultimately works as a perfect foil or antidote to the 'evil' male depredation. Like her other counter.parts Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Barbara Smith, Gloria Naylor also in *The Women of*

Brewster Place succeeds through the person of Mattie Michael and other female characters in raising a cry of protest and drawing the attention of the reader and society as a whole against the chronic fracture and deferment of dream and desire vis-a-vis the black female protagonist in her novel.

The last novel of Gloria Naylor is *Bailey's Cafe'* (1992), in which the pluralistic narration, the supernaturalism and presentation of reality proves her versatility and concern as a writer. The locale of the novel's action which the narrator reveals is a restaurant in New York, Bailey's Cafe' and its neighbourhood. Bailey's Cafe' owns its name to an unknown personage and the title also becomes synonymous with the anonymous narrator of the novel. *Bailey's Cafe'* has a male protagonist. Bailey is the principal narrator, and in order to avoid inadequacy in conveying the character's multiple experiences multifarious voices are used to expose the diversity of life and to understand different layers of meanings. "When Bailey's voice is insufficient to narrate Mariam's story, both Nadine's and Eve's voices are required."[7] This experimentation of sudden shifting of the narration from one character to another helps Naylor to develop and project the unity and oneness of the community (here not only Black but cross-cultural) to establish an oral conversational relation with the readers by directly speaking to them. Thus, a metafictive assortment of personages helps in establishing a voice for the community, and it marks Naylor's strong belief that only communities can survive successfully not individuals: "...I feel very strongly that we as black people have to be there as nurturing agents for each other, male and female, female and female...."[8] This may be the reason that we experience a real birth of a child (George) in this novel, unlike the other novels where such a thing never occurs at all. Structurally the novel starts with the Prologue "Maestro, If you please...." where the narrator introduces not only himself and his wife Nadine but also gives us a synoptic view of the prevailing social, economic and political conditions of his time. He reveals his love for the baseball game and his sheer disgust and dislike at the racial discrimination practised not only by the whites but also by the blacks, "white baseball

or not. When you love the game, you love it, and mutilation is mutilation."[9] Infact, there is hardly any concern shown by the society to help integrate America whether it is a baseball game or his parents' black employer Mr. Van Morrison and his kitchen staff "...and baseball is not going to help integrate America. Having Jackie Robinson out there with Pee Wee Reese is the same as having my mother and Mrs Van Morrison's maid (swedish girl) trading gossip in the back kitchen...real power getting shared at the top, nothing but a game of smoke and mirrors is going on at the bottom" (*BC* 12). In the Prologue, the narrator also gives a short account of his experience as a reluctant American solider; 'we weren't getting into Tokyo', he divulges that he was not into killing business but was fighting because America needed him in the war against Japan. "Before Hiroshima it had definitely been worth it...but at the very moment of Hiroshima happening, it all stopped being worth it" (*BC* 27). Whether it is the racial discrimination in games or the inhumanity in wars, Bailey unmasks and reveals the degenerated and corrupt face of the society. It is the prevalence of such a debased society that the creation of Bailey's Cafe takes place. It is a cafe which exists nowhere and everywhere "right on the margin between the edge of the world and infinite possibility" (*BC* 76). It becomes an existential oasis, and provides the much needed succour to the helpless and desperate souls, who are wandering aimlessly in the dehumanised urban jungle. It does not matter to them even if the solace is momentary, as far as it allows them a space of their own to reconstruct or end their life:

> ...there are just too many spots where you can find yourself hanging on to the edge just like I (Bailey) was; and unless there's some space, some space, to take a breather for a while. ...(*BC* 28).

The description of the cafe as existing nowhere and everywhere and the 'back empty space' at the back of the cafe invests the narrative with a mystical aura. The infusion of a supernatural motif, and the birth of a child to a fourteen year old virgin girl named Mariam confers the entire episode with a biblical touch of the Immaculate conception and the Incarnation. Such an analogy, obviously, lends the entire thing an air of metaphysical connotation as well as the

Christian scriptural essence.

After giving a cinematic view of the present day society, the narrator then sets on to introduce the characters, who tend to become the victims or rogues of this inconsistent and wayward society. They stand up as perfect representatives of a pretentious, dubious and immoral society. In the chapter "The Vamp", he warns the readers about his characters, "to go below the surface, to take'em one key down" (*BC* 35). He forewarns the readers not to take them and their stories at the surface level but to go deeper in understanding their real intentions. He makes his point clear by projecting the character of Sister Carrie, who on the superficial level is the 'Temple of Perpetual Redemption' praying to Lord Jesus to protect his angel "from the filth and abomination taking over this world". (*BC* 32). But in reality her revealing dresses expose her to the public glare, forever spilling trouble and inviting sin. On the other hand is Sugar Man, a pimp, who openly talks about his business as a pimp but in reality is a decent man especially where protection to women is concerned, as he is well-versed with the exploitative mentality of men.

Further, in the "The Jam", there are seven chapters jammed together depicting the predicament of five female personages, their struggle and their survival. These shunned, exploited, molested, mutilated, defeated women--Peaches, Sweet Esther, Jesse Bell, Sadie and Mariam--all become denizens of Eve's brothel. Their desolate, depressed and dejected souls first try to seek solace at Bailey's Cafe. From here, they are shown the way to the nearby boarding house owned by Eve, so that they can experience some kind of belonging as well as acquiesce identity, whatever it may be. Sadie, a regular customer at Bailey's Cafe, who had a battered childhood at the hands of a drug-addict, prostitute mother, whose deferred dream of a clean, nice home gets dissolved into alcoholism and prostitution. Even Iceman Jones, a regular customer of Bailey's, who offers to fulfill Sadie's dream is not able to stop her from going into the fantasy void of Cafe's back door away from the harsh reality of her life, by giving up her life. But Eve, like Mattie Michael of Brewster Place, is a survivor, who has suffered at the hands of her

god father in Louisiana and is making an effort to unite the women community in her own way, by giving a room in her brothel to these women whose horrific background Eve can relate to. As the narrator says, "And all that I can honestly say is that the women who come struggling in here.... The only thing they have in common is that they need a place to stay (*BC* 81). She like Mattie Michael becomes a mother figure for these fictional females, who are escaping from the emasculating ethos of mass society. It is the resolve and affirmation of women like Mattie and Eve not only to seek an identity of their own but also to pull along with them other weak and feeble women, giving them comfort and assurance to trace out a niche of their own. Thus with sublimation they reaffirm a place for themselves in this ever changing society.

The boarding and lodging at Eve's place is managed by a heterosexual transvestite, Miss Maple (Stanley). Unlike her early novels Gloria Naylor in *Bailey's Café* highlights society's apathy not only towards women but also towards men like Stanley, who never gets a job inspite of having a Doctorate in mathematics and wears woman's clothes as a revolt against the callousness of a dehumanising society.

Gloria Naylor in *Bailey's Café* is highly critical of white and more profoundly of black society who corrupt and destroy the sensitivity of a girl child. She relates through her fictional female characters in this novel the abuse suffered by the girl child, especially those belonging to lower income group, at the hands of callous discerning parents, close associates and society. The mechanism of hope, faith, trust and goodwill does not work with the girl. As she grows, there is a tremendous change in her behaviour and perception of things around. She develops hate, vengeance and indifference in her attitude, especially towards the agents of abuse--men and society at large. Whether it is Sadie, Peaches, Esther or Mary, all of them fall prey to the appropriation of male hegemony. But it has only been at Eve's that they were able to find a world of their own even if that world was a brothel. The Self-Identity they never knew, at Eve's they got the opportunity to trace it but just by being together. Eve

spreads the feeling of kinship and sisterhood among these lost women. The birth of Mariam's son becomes the symbol of that joy of togetherness. Epilogue titled "The Wrap" projects that celebration and hope. Unlike Brewster's Place, here Christ-like birth of a child brings hope and some sense of promise and faith for the future. "And that's how we wrap it, folks, it's the happiest ending I've got" (*BC* 229).

Thus, in both the works, *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Bailey's Cafe* Gloria Naylor as an Amerafrican woman writer has succeeded in portraying her fictional black personages as Adamic figures who incessantly strive to seek a better order of living for themselves, and not merely remain as their stereotype counterparts in the traditional slave narratives. Gloria Naylor has traced out an apotheosis of the black heroines, viz-a-vis the *alazon-eiron*[10] symbolic syndrome and has increasingly sought to de-doxify the Female Self including her dreams and desires. The Adamic personages in these two aforesaid novels exhibit a kind of desperation to escape the travails and tribulations of alienation and angst which the ethos of a mass society seeks to impose on them. As a backlash to this type of existential encroachment, the fabulatory Amerafrican woman personage spawns, through her actions, her being as well as her preferences, all these forming collectively a constellation of inter-related tendencies and values, a repertoire of procedures, mannerisms as well as eccentricities. It won't be an exaggeration to say that Naylor's black heroines truly become metaphoric deep divers, who "dive beneath the frozen crust in order to determine alternative modes of existence."[11] Thus the existential odyssey of the highly self- reflexive and self-aggressive fictional characters in *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Bailey's Cafe* procreate the concept of sisterhood among the black female protagonists. They help break the pillars of societal prejudices, especially the encapsulating and emasculating male order. In the process, these female rebels reconstruct their inner psyche by combating the ills associated with the cardinal issues of identity, race and gender. The image of the Survivor[12] in American fiction thus applies befittingly to the women personages of Gloria Naylor's novels and that's why,

from the perspective of postmodernist problematics, these black women protagonists can also be labelled as Metafictive Female Adams.

With these great works of art Gloria Naylor has established herself as a unique and special writer of the poetics/politics of feminist writings in Afro-American literature. Naylor's fictional women, in a cumulatively existential sense, rarely get 'annihilated' by the ravages of an apostatic or tribulatory society and, more often than not, arise phoenix-like from the "ashes" of their gender--despondency, helplessness and the afflictions imposed by a living angst.

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[1]Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), p.15.

[2]Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place* (Great Britain: Hodder and Sloughton, 1984), p.5. All further reference have been incorporated in the text as *WB*.

[3]Like Albert Camus' Absurdist hero, Sisyphus in *In the Myth of Sisyphus,* Mattie does not easily give up her 'toil.'

[4]William Goldstain, "A Talk with Gloria Naylor," *Publishers Weekly,* 224, II (Sept. 9, 1983), p.35..

[5]Maxine L. Montgomery, "The Fathomless Dream: Gloria Naylor's Use of the Motif in *The Women of Brewster Place," CLA Journal,* 36, I (September 1992), p.10.

[6]Sandara W. Holt, *A Rhetorical Analysis of 'The Women of Brewster Place'* (Michigam: University Microfilms International, 1989), p.167.

[7]Philip Page, "Living with the Abyss in Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Cafe," CLA Journal,* 40, I (September 1996), p.36.

[8]William Golstein, "A Talk with Gloria Naylor," *Publishers Weekly,* p.36.

[9]Gloria Naylor, *Bailey's Cafe'* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), p.11. All further reference have been incorporated in the text as *BC*.

[10]*alazon-eiron*--the Greek words *alazon* and *eiron* are antithetical in meaning. *Alazon* is the complusive rebel-victim, while *Eiron* is the very opposite of this formulation, representing an individual who is meek, gentle, passive and, more often than not, is used to strengthen others, as is done with the figure of the pharmakos, the sacrificial victim.

[11]Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p.107

[12]The image of the Survivor in modernist American fiction is that of a fictional personage who spans across the pages of the modernist American novels, especially in the works of such novelists as Saul Bellow, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, John Updike and Kurt Vonnegut. This Survivour is an Existentialist explorer who, inspite of seemingly insurmountable odds posed by issues related to ethnicity, race, relations, culture and society as a whole, finally succeeds in preserving an appreciable modicum of his/her self-integrity, individuality and above all identity. This Survivour also symbolizes in contemporary American fiction the quality of fighting to the last. Climatically, the Survivour's apotheosis lies in the Reconstruction and Resurrection of the Self.

THE IRONY OF NATIONAL BORDERS IN THOMAS KING'S *TRUTH AND BRIGHT WATER*

S. Armstrong

Thomas King, Canada's foremost native author, is a novelist, short story writer, script writer, editor, photographer, actor, drummer, and a storyteller of the first order. His novels include *Medicine River, Green Grass, Running Water* and *Truth and Bright Water,* and his popular short story collections are *Coyote Columbus Story, Coyote Goes to the Moon* and *One Good Story, That One.* What is most striking about his writings is that they centre on the border theme. His short story 'Borders' in *"One Good Story, That One"* is a graphic example of the paradoxical relationship to the Canadian/American border as a line to be crossed over. King moves from the geographic border crossing to many layers of border in his recently published novel *Truth and Bright Water* (1999). In the beginning, the novel seems like a family story but talks much about borders--geographical, psychological, cultural, and political. The novel also contrasts the artificial world of national borders with the native world of beauty where the physical border never matters. At one point, the two border cities, Truth and Bright Water are described as lands of abandoned church, unfinished bridge, dirty river, beribboned skulls, extinct buffaloes, and broken dreams. At another moment, the visit of the native artist, Monroe Swimmer, brightens the native world. Bright water becomes a land of vibrant colours filled with prairies, idyllic wonders and music. King paints a landscape vividly with the mountains and the river where one can touch the prairies, smell the odours, feel the wind and taste the sweetness of coulees.

As the title suggests, there are two towns, Truth, a town located on the American side of the forty-ninth parallel and Bright Water, north of the border. The Alberta-Montana border here spins around the family of the cousins, Tecumseh, the first person narrator and Lum. The main undercurrent story in the novel revolves around Monroe Swimmer, a famous native Indian artist who has a global experience of rejuvenating fine paintings and restoring museums.

He recreates an artistic world of the native near the White American Town of Truth. He gives a new shape to the Church by landscape painting with his "magical brushes." He restores the extinct buffalo and erects iron models and nails them in the prairies thereby giving a new life to the native art, which has been erased by the landscape artists. Monroe takes his young helper, who lives in Bright Water, and performs a ceremony by the river, which divides Canada from the US, and the Blackfoot from Blackfeet.

The main focus of the striking figure in the novel is to expose the irony of national boundaries. The river, the ferry and the ironic description of the unfinished bridge bring out the ridiculous nature of physical borders that separate people physically. King points out the ludicrousness of borders in the following passage:

> Monroe walks to the lip of the coulee and looks out across the river. "There is Canada," he says. Then he turns and spreads his arms." And this is the United States." He spins around in a full circle, stumbles, and goes down in a heap. "Ridiculous, isn't?" (King 1999: 131).

Earlier, Monroe's performance of a ceremony by the river with his young helper is yet another irony of geographical borders between these two countries. Native ceremony has a healing touch and the ceremony of Monroe is a symbolic bridge building process to unite the natives of either side. Except this native ceremony and culture, no border can hold the people apart. As King said in a private conversation "artificial bridges bridge borders physically but the human experience can be bridged only psyclologically." For Monroe the border becomes a place where not only "something stops"—nations are separated—but a Martin Heidegger put it, the border is that "from which something begins its presencing" (Bhabha 1994:1).

The space of border has many dimensions in this novel. King exposes the meaningless nature of the borders over the life of the Indians. His description of native life in the border cities is an attack on the stereotypical ideas of native Indian tradition. It is also to be noted that the physical separation of natives in the name of nationalism and national division is a destruction of their culture, land, tradition, and aboriginal history. National boundaries symbolize a cultural violence, which has been exercised to appropriate the

native cultural traditions and their lands.

King's view of the physical border and its meaningless existence is somewhat similar to the image of "border land" in Gloria Anzaldua's book *Borderlands*. She derives this term to describe in-between places, which challenge physical and conceptual borders. Anazaldua's attempt to describe the borderland is a counter—hegemonic portrayal of the dominant powers that which subordinates the margins. One can also find the image of the border in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* where Sherry Ortner also discusses the image of the "borderland" as a powerful presence in contemporary culture. In this way, King finds the predicament of border crossing in the lives of the First Nations or native peoples. For them, the issue of border, which is a European machination, operates in all levels and keeps the First Nations always outsiders in the politics of nationality and national boundaries. Keeping the sons of the soil outside by false lines of control is ridiculous and ironic. National divisions always produce nagative effects for the underprivileged in the world. For the First Nations or for any other underprivileged, borders do not hold. Homi Bhabha in his seminal book *Nations and Narrations* argues much of these cultural borders and proves how the opportunistic nationalisms and the so-called nationalists divide and oppress the subalterns around the world. It is very much seen in India where the British technique of "divinde and rule" is still exercised by the dominant casteists. The situation is much more for the Dalits, the oppressed communities in India. It is this kind of separation in the name of "Borders" in another cultural form is the subject of analysis in the novel *Truth and Bright Water*.

The unfinished bridge in the novel portrays the irony of national boundaries. In contrast to the physical and the unfinished bridge, the ferry on the river becomes a natural bridge which, literally bridges people and bridges borders. The people in the border area experience a Fanonian "cultural undecidability." (Fanon 1969). The people of Truth and Bright Water lose their identities and culture are divided for making the myth of a nation. For them, the myth of nation making and national division is all arrogance and violence to their tradition and cultural authenticity. The only figure who tries to bring out the

culture and identity of the native people is Monroe, the artist who is "just giving shape to" it.

Borders of nation can not politically and geographically destroy the culture and identity of the natives. The double colonization of the natives in the borders in the two cities is only a political entity. The cultural oneness of the two communities as either border of in Bhabha's word "the nation's finitude" (Bhabha 1994) can not appropriate the minds of the natives. The novel is significant in that the two border cities become characters and participate in the life of the cousins, the narrator, Tecumseh and Lum. The people of these two cities share a common culture and the boundaries become obstacles to carry on their culture for their future generation. This geographical isolation can not be a socal isolation to them. All these borders demonstrate the inadequacy of divisions and an artificial and unfinished bridge will not bridge the psyche of the people. It rather divides the minds of the people politically.

The role played by characters such as the grandmother who gives life to storytelling is also significant. The narrator's grandmother also urges her young grandson to look beyond the river that separates Canada from the United States which is linked by a ferry and in her words: "pay attention to the river." This observation reminds one to rethink the existence of fluid national border in the forty-ninth parallel. It is also quite ironical to note that artificial bridge is set unfinished and the ferry, which floats on the river, is quite calm and complete and bridges the borders between the cities dutifully.

King in his own humorous way mocks at the division in the name of border and resists it in all his previous works as he does in this novel. A bridge, which is unfinished, ironically describes the geographical border between Alberta and Montna and the readers are in doubt whether the two cities are linked or separated. Apart from the portrayal of the physical border, the novel also seems to attack the borders in humours and the divisions in it. While describing the complication of humour tradition in this novel, Jennifer Andrews observes:

> *Truth and Bright Water* is a book that complicates easy definitions of English-

> Canadian humour tradition by incorporating aspects of Canadian, and Native North American humour within its scope.... The border itself, is a site of closure and fluidity that undermines easy nationalist definitions of humour and demands another look (Andrews 1999: 10).

King attempts to bring out the rich humour that the native traditions treasure in the Canadian/American border and the fear of its destruction in the name of national divisions and political boundaries. This is also indirectly portrayed in a conversation between Monroe, the artist and his young helper boy, Monroe asks: "You know what's wrong with this world?... He himself answers, "Nobody has a sense of humour" (King 1999: 199).

A note of sadness and a note of happiness wrap up the novel and each character comes up with his own views. As Suzanne Methot, a Cree writer, observes of the novel:

> *Truth and Bright Water* is an elegy, a bitter brilliant elegy that triumphs in its small-scale repatriation scheme. Every character in this book has an idea about what is wrong with the world: all the reasons are different, and all are true. But the unfinished bridge between the communities of *Truth and Bright Water* proves that most of them are thinking too small (Methot 1999:60).

Though both the artists, Monroe in the novel and King the author, have not been completely successful in their efforts to bridge the culture of the two border cities, the process of restoration of life in the form of idyllic land, artistic reinstatement, painting the church and nailing the iron models of "three hundred and sixty" buffaloes are successful attempts to bring back the native tradition into life. He says: "I had them made up before I left Toronto. It's my new restoration project. I'm going to save the world." (King 1999:130-131). An artist has the power to save the world and the world of the natives from the clutches of man-made political borders and national boundaries. The novel achieves a variety of balances, and King goes beyond the borders; of art and reality, of the artificial world in town and the idyllic prairie world of reserve, of the native and the non-native, of the departure and the arrival of Monroe, the artist, of threading the tale within a tale, the tale of the cousins and the tale of the artist, of the oral mode and the graphic mode, of the native grandmother's world of wisdom and the young native's world of

learning. King resists borders in all kinds and goes beyond borders to set the world right and to bring back the native Indian world back into life in this novel, *Truth and Bright Water.*

What Matus, a border-rights activist of America and Mexico border, observed about the native peoples such as Yaqui, Tohono O' odham, Cocopah, Yavapai and Kickapoo about the bisection of their homelands without their knowledge, is suitable for the border people living in the America and Canada border and about whom King describes in this novel. He says:

> The land is sacred. It is more than just geography; it is home to deities, medicines, ceremonial sites and countless generations of ancestors. No colonizer's line drawn in the sand and fenced with steel walls and barbed wire can extinguish the reality of their shared bloodlines and cultures (Matus in www.northamericaninstitute.org)

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GROWTH, STRUCTURE AND FICTIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE POST-COLONIAL NOVEL

Kh. Kunjo Singh

To begin with the growth and development of the post-colonial novel we may quote M.M. Bakhtin's prophecy of the future of the novel:

> The process of the novel's development has not yet come to an end. It is currently entering a new phase. For our era is characterized by an extraordinary complexity and a deepening in our perception of the world; there is an unusual growth in demands on human discernment, on mature objectivity and the critical faculty. These are features that will shape the further development of the novel as well. (1981, 67)

Indeed, Bakhtin's prophency has come true with the development and growth of the novel of colonial consciousness. The colonial situation particularly favours this genre because of the encounter of two or more cultures, languages, world views, etc. This fact can be understood with reference to one of the earliest Indian novels in the English language, *The Slayer Slain* (1859) by Mrs. Richard Collins of Cottayam. It was written for religious instruction in the protestant Church. It is highly critical of the given social reality and pleads for a change through the character of a woman who is an exampler of reformation. It is the story of a slave converted to Christianity by the English missionaries, and it highlights the conflict between the different denominations of the Christian Church and the relations between the landlords and their slaves. *Indulekha* (1889), the first novel written in Malayalam by Chandu Menon and later translated into English by Willoughby Dumergue, was a product of the Indian Renaissance and an offshoot of India's contact with the West.

In India the novel was popularised by Bengali novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and several others. Bankim's *Rajmohan's Wife* was serialised in 1864 in the Calcutta weekly, *The Indian Field*. It is taken to be the first Indian English novel. However, as mentioned by M.K. Naik

in *History of Indian English Literature* the earliest fictional efforts in India were in the form of tales. Examples are Kylash Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of 48 Hours of the Year 1945* (1835), a story of an imaginary unsuccessful revolt against the British rule a hundred years later, and Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Republic of Orissa: Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century* (1845), a fantasy showing how the British defeat leads to the establishment of a democratic republic in Orissa. In this way, the tales and the novels in India were written in the controversial colonial space.

In Africa, the Caribbeans and African America also, the growth of the novel is similar to that of India. The first Negro novel *Clotel* written by William Wells Brown was published in 1851, but the slave narratives expressing the anxiety, anguish and anger of the enslaved had appeared in America much earlier. The novel, however, flourished during the Harlem Renaissance of 1920s. The African English novel (Afro-English novel) in Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia, Ghana, South Africa and many other erstwhile colonies was also born in the colonial space of confrontation, mainly after 1950s. A product of the ethos of militancy and engagement, it is belligerant in tone, where the message takes precedence over the medium. In the Caribbeans too, this tends to be true of the novel.

Colonialism/slavery/racism is the direct cause of the emergence of the novel in India, Africa, African America and the Caribbeans. The colonial novelist, native or expatriate, is almost always engaged in thematizing the colonial intrusion or the confrontation of the two cultures or the East-West encounter. While the expatriate novelist concerns himself more with the economic and political exploitation of the colonized, the native writer's chief concern is with the emotional exploitation of the colonized and the assertion of his manhood and culture. He tries to acquire self-knowledge through his experience and the experiences of his community.

East-West encounter has produced different reactions among different native novelists. For example, G.V. Desani in *All About H. Hatterr* has a mock-comic defiant attitude towards both the East

and the West. In *The Serpent and the Rope* Raja Rao challenges the West with a spiritual authority. Achebe also defines the past of his people to assert that the Africans had culture much before the Europeans came to Africa with their self-proclaimed civilizing missions.

Charles Larson in *The Novel in the Third World* (1976) traces the development of these novels on the basis of their depiction of cultural confrontation. The first stage of this confrontation is the historical confrontation destroying the native cultures. *Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God,* and *One Man One Wife* are novels of this kind. Since culture dominates and dictates the literary form of these works, they are full of anthropological material. They also focus more on situations than on characters. Once the colonial forces acquire supremacy, the native culture tries to adapt and accommodate itself to the changed reality. Novels dealing with this state of colonial intrusion, like *The River Between*, are less anthropological in nature. Since the chief concern of the protagonists even at this stage is to save the community, collective consciousness dominates the content of such novels.

Those novelists who have compromised with the colonial reality, unable to escape it, have thematized cultural reorganisation by projecting the native culture positively. George Lamming in his *In the Castle of My Skin* takes up an archetypal situation of the growing awareness of the colonized to present a composite picture of a community by using a multiple point of view. By shifting his point of view from community to the consciousness of the protagonist, Lamming successfully orchestrates the pains of colonialism and the individual's effort at cultural reorganisation. Similarly, the three parts of Jean Toomer's work *Cane* focus on the tenacity of the black American culture which has survived in spite of white oppression.

Likewise, cultural renewal from the age-old strengths of Hinduism is the theme of almost all the novels of Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. Cultural revival through a liberal humanist historical perspective is the strength of Mulk Raj Anand's novels. The Indian novels are more concerned with cultural-reorganisation and cultural renewal.

Disillusionment with post-independence Nigeria forms the subject matter of Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah,* and Soyinka's *The Interpreters.* Similarly, Ngugi's *The Petals of Blood* expresses his disillusionment with post-independence Kenya and the betrayal of the people by its politicians.

According to Larson, the most important distinction of the post colonial novel from its Western counterpart is its "situational plot," ideally defined as a narrative in which the central character's importance is replaced by a collective group of people undergoing a commonly shared experience (Larson, 1976, 11-12). The focus of this novel is not on character, but on situation which usually involves a group. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or Anand's *The Village,* the story involves all the people, the whole community of Umuofia or Nandpur, which forms the collective consciousness of the novel. Similarly, the main characters in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat,* Raja Rao's *Kanthapura,* Aluko's *One Man, One Matchet,* Mulk Raj Anand's *The Village* are the villagers of Thabai, Kanthapura, Ipaja and nandpur. These reflect the communal consciousness of these villages, even when they portray certain individuals.

Things Fall Apart is archetypal because it represents the breakdown of the culture of the colonized under a heavy attack of the colonizer's culture. It presents a complete picture of the traditional life-cycle of the Igbo society through a painful transformation due to colonial intrusion. The situation is repeated in Ngugi's *A River Between.* The two ridges on the Honia river are trapped in a significant moment of history, the history of colonization. They have existed peacefully for centuries, but now with the arrival of Christianity, the things are falling apart. Aluko's *One Man One Wife* takes up a similar theme but with a slightly different conclusion. Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1971) tells the story of disintegration of the small community of Ilmorog due to white colonialism and black capitalism. It is the microcosm of Kenyan community covering the history of Ilmorog community from its nomadic past to its agrarian civilization and finally to its contemporary black capitalistic set up. Ngugi dramatizes

quite comprehensively the evils of gross materialism eating into the vitals of Kenyan civilization.

Novels which do not have a central character at all form another variety of situational novels. *The Interpreters* and *A Grain of Wheat* are but two examples of this variety. In fact, *The Interpreters* has no plot in the conventional sense. There is no orderly progression of events. But the repetition of scenes and images has given a form and pattern to the narrative. By using multiple flashback and often a flashback within a flashback, both Soyinka and Ngugi have successfully focused attention on events which make up the situation. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi weaves a pattern in time "with the present as the warp and the past as woof" (David Cook, 1977, 95). Thus, by interlocking these phases of time, he provides and examines all kinds of evidence to focus on the central event: the betrayal of the village community by individuals in the event of Uhuru. By constantly shifting the narrative focus from one character to another, Ngugi points out the complexity of the theme of betrayal of the community by individuals, its political, moral and emotional aspects, as also the fact that no individual can be reduced to a simple formula. The use of first person plural "we"--telling the story from the point of view of a whole community--makes *A Grain of Wheat* a typical example of the "situational novel" like *Kanthapura.*

Things Fall Apart and *Arrow of God,* being situational novels, are full of anthropological details about the Igbos, and about birth, marriage and death--the three major events which form the cycle of life. In *Arrow of God* festivals like the Feast of the Pumpkin and New Yam Feast, marriage celebrations, pregnancy rites, and wrestling matches are described graphically to paint a picture of the past of the Igbos. Similarly, *Things Fall Apart* gives anthropological details about the Igbo life: New Year Yam, wrestling matches, rituals of marriage, bride-price, supernatural "ogbanje" children, egwugwu dances, a traditional funeral, etc. In Ngugi's *The River Between* a detailed description of the circumcision ceremony serves the dual purpose of depicting a ritual central to the Gikuyu way of life. Here Ngugi uses irony to depict a gentile society in Africa that holds more

fanatically to circumcision than did the early Jewish Christians. In *Kanthapura*, the celebrations of the religious festivals like "Sankara-Jayanthi" and "Ganesh-Jayanthi" fulfil the religious and emotional needs of the villagers. "Harikathas," mixture of legend and history, forming the central structure of the novel, form an integral part of the "*Sthalapurana*" literary tradition. But Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, although it is an absorbing tale, does not contain anthropological material about the "baigas," the "gonds" and the "pardhans." Joshi fails to create a worthwhile picture of this community. Billy's abandoning of civilization to be with Bilasia is in the tradition of the Western love story and lacks authenticity found in the stories of Achebe and others.

In the novels of Achebe, Ngugi and Raja Rao, anthropological material forms an integral part of the very structure of these works. But this does not happen in the novels of lesser artists like Anand, Aluko, Ekwensi and others. There is a preponderance of anthropological material in African fiction. As against this, African American fiction is sociological in nature and is not stuffed with such material. Indian fiction, except for the works of Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai and a few others, is not even sociological; it relies heavily on mythology.

Anthropology and sociology are used for the purpose of cultural re-organisation and revival. By adopting the narrative strategy of fictional documentation of cultural and sociological details, the African novelists try to correct the romantic view of Africa. The Indian novelists, particularly R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, write within a continuous living tradition, and hence re-create a picture of their society through mythology, instead of anthropology.

But having no historical roots in America, most of the black novelists of America do not concern themselves with anthropology. But nonetheless they have "a consistent and built-in-mythology to draw on, one formed out of difficult and often ugly and brutal elements, and one in which the gods frequently behave as demons." (Rosenblatt, 6). Ralph Ellison denounces the role of the sociologist in the making

of black fiction. He moves beyond protest and probes into the inner personalities of his characters. However, most of the African American literature of 1960s and especially the women's writings of 1980s are not a literature of social protest, but of affirmation and even of celebration of black womanhood. The two typical novels expressing this new mood are Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* and Alice Walker's *Color People. The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* by Ernest Gaines deals with the concept of "black peoplehood." Miss Jane, who is 110 year old, is a legendary character who has "endured" the history of the suffering of the blacks in America. It is a novel in the guise of the tape-recorded recollections of Miss Jane's long life and is special in scope and intention, for it summarizes the history of her race. The novelist uses the first person narrative technique to tell the story from the point of view of Miss Jane who is a critical observer of all the major events in the history of her race. The innocent remark from a girl of ten (now a narrator of the age of one hundred and ten) brings home the truth of the great American lie.

Both Miss Jane and Achakka, the woman narrator of *Kanthapura,* are archetypal grandmother figures of the traditional oral tales all over the world. Both voice the communal consciousness of their people. Achakka chooses the first person plural "we" for her narration, but Jane prefers the singular "I". While the former is more individualistic in its approach, the latter is more communal. Achakka relies on the intellectual wisdom she finds in the *Upanishads,* the *Ramayana* and other Hindu scriptures. But Miss Jane attains self-knowledge through patient suffering and endurance. Their heroism lies in endurance and the strategies of survival that they evolve in order to have their being in a hostile world.

Okonkwo and Ezeulu are also heroic characters like Miss Jane and Achakka. Like them, they are the recorders of the tensions of their race and preservers of their traditions. While Miss Jane and Achakka are the grandmother figures of the oral tale tradition, Okonkwo and Ezeulu are the archetypal pre-colonials. According to

Charles Larson, there is a general lack of "character growth" in the novels of Achebe, Aluko, Soyinka and Ekwensi. Almost all the characters of these novelists are wooden and stereotypical. Some of the Ngugi characters, however, do show some growth. This lack is attributed by him to the situational plot of these novels which focus more on events than on characters. Larson extends his generalisation to include the whole of the "novel in the third world" in it. But he argues that one day the novel in the third World will gain this character growth as is done by R.K. Narayan in *The Guide.* Achebe in his heroic novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God,* does not celebrate the individual consciousness of his people.

Collective consciousness, as defined by Lucian Goldmann in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel,* is "a dynamic reality, oriented towards a certain state of equilibrium." It is implied in the overall behaviour of individuals who participate in the economic, social, political and other aspects of life. He argues that the novel is characterised by a "radical rupture" between the hero and the world and the resultant degradation of the fictional world. In a typical African novel dealing with the colonial situation, the rupture is not caused by any individual (except in the *Voice*), but because the hero asserts his individualism in the corporate African life. An individual is "atypical" in African fiction. However, African novels dealing with post-colonial situation generally have a "problematic" hero who experiences a "radical rupture" between his ethical vision and the fictional world as is the case with Odili in *A Man of the People* and Ikem in *Anthills of the Savannah.*

In the situational novel even when the novelist tells the story through the consciousness of one of his characters as in *Weep Not Child,* the focus still remains on events. Ngugi's main concern here is relationship. Ngugi uses the technique of character introspection for portraying his characters. In the opening chapter Niroge is told by Nyokabi, his mother, that he could go to school but wouldn't get a mid-day meal because of their poverty. Thereupon he remarks:

> "I understand."
>
> "You won't bring shame to me by one day refusing to attend school ?"

Now Ngugi enters the child's mind and reports:

> "O Mother, I'll never bring shame to you. Just let me get there, just let me."[3]

These words remain unspoken, because they are the innermost thoughts of Niroge. All that he tells his mother aloud is: "I like school"(3). Ngugi later on shifts the point of view of Niroge to the third-person narration.

R.K. Narayan's characters follow the pattern of order-disorder-order of the Sanskrit literature. They oscillate between the two *gunas: taamsik* and *saatvik*. Narayan is objective in their delineation. The classical Indian pattern of the two *gunas* interests him. With the arrival of the railways and industrialisation, Raju the village boy becomes Raju the railway guide. His small bookshop gave him the opportunity for self-education. Raju's love for Rosie marks the second phase in the development of his character. He symbolizes the warmth of life to her and she symbolizes the liberating experience that real art is. Together they symbolize the "problematic hero" who rebels against society to justify his own set of values. After Rosie leaves Raju, he lands in jail. About the growth of Raju's character M.K. Naik in *The Ironic Vision* (1983) remarks that Raju's transformation from a tourist guide into a transcendental guru, from "Railway Raju"... into recluse Raju: from a forger into a fakir: from a picaro into a pilgrim, and from a fake sadhu into a famous martyr" (54) is a highly complex process of the growth of a character achieved in five distinct stages. Beginning with comic irony, it ends in tragic irony. This process brings victory to the people, as also victory to the Swami: "Raju becomes significant only as the annonymous 'Swami'. His identity is affirmed, but his individuality is annihilated in the will of the people and in the determined universe" (Holmstroms, 1973, 73) of Hindu ethos.

In the same way, Krishna, the protagonist of *The English Teacher,* evolves "singular consciousness," after passing through various stages and crises. Krishna's archetypal quest ends up in his metamorphosis because of the ontological nature of his problems. While Raju is ironically trapped into sainthood, Krishna achieves it through hard work. In these characters the private agony forming

the individual consciousness becomes communal consciousness, and Narayan's achievement lies in making their private history move backward "into the main stream of public history" (Larson, 1976, 164).

In Okara's novel, *The Voice*, a similar effect is achieved. Okolo, the protagonist of *The Voice*, is a problematic hero who tries to authenticate a set of values implicit in his undefined search for "It." His rebellion is not so much against the self-seeking, grossly materialistic political bosses with no "shadows," as against the corruption of words. According to Ravenscroft, *The Voice*, is as much "a gloomy parable of political and social life in Nigeria soon after Independence," as it is "a parable of the artist's moral (not moralistic) function in his society (188). Okara makes an experimental use of language, semantically, syntactically and even grammatically. By changing normal English sentence patterns and the syntax, he introduces the linguistic characteristics of Ijaw into English. *The Voice* is poetic in conception and scope. In it Okara relies heavily on suggestions. Okara uses the technique of "It" in building up the concepts of "inside" and "shadow." By avoiding conventional terms like "spirit" or "soul" for "inside," Okolo plays the role of the poet whose job is to "purify the dialect of the tribe," and through it to purify the society of its socio-political corruption.

Soyinka's *Interpreters* deals with the theme of the artists' moral function. The failure of the "Interpreters" to locate the problems facing their country is due to the moral paralysis and political corruption which are the hangover of the erstwhile colonial rule. The situation has been aptly described by Sagoe when he looks at the crowd chasing an alleged thief near Hotel Excelsior: "Run, you little thief or the bigger thieves will pass a law against your existence as a menace to society" (114). The same is true of *The Voice* also where Okolo has to die because he has become a menace to the "bigger thieves." Okolo, of course, is no thief; and neither is the running boy in this novel a thief. Divided into two parts, the novel is dramatic because it incorporates a number of small playlets with very effective

dialogues written in English. *The Interpreters* cannot be easily understood if we do not understand Yoruba metaphysics, particularly its pantheon of gods, on which the book is based. The theme of disintegration has been powerfully brought out through the character of Egbo. Throughout the book there are recurrent poetic and highly memorable episodes where Egbo is exposed to the consciousness of disintegration and the experience of the void.

The Interpreters, The Voice and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are not the development of the old form, but signify a new departure for examining post-colonial realities and dilemmas of Africa. This is made clear in *Search Sweet Country* (1986), B. Kajo Laing's first novel, which is about changes in the post-colonial society in Ghana. According to Jaydeva, *Search Sweet Country,* a novel written in the post-colonial discourse, "beggars description, defies explanation.... Its sweep is epical; its mode is carnivalesque; its humanity is overwhelming and its prose is simply dazzling. It seeks comparisons with the achievement of the very greatest in fiction—Rebelais, Dickens, Joyce. Its nearest kin is *Ulysses,* although it rightly avoids choice's technical extremities. *Search Sweet Country* almost forces one to commit the ultimate blasphemy: it is perhaps better than *Ulysses*" (1989, 124).

Through the use of multiple point of view, Laing successfully reflects on the issue involved in the change from a rural to an urban, colonial to post-colonial and traditional to modern society. Adopting appropriate fictional strategies of parody, allegory, carnival, language play, and avoiding ideological certitude, the novel inspires God's laughter at the post-colonial situation which is so varied and confusing that no universal solutions can be prescribed. "Thus, adopting 'change' as a structural principle in *Search Sweet Country,* Laing takes the novel of colonial consciousness farther than the novels of Wole Soyinka and others who extended it to express their sense of disillusion with the post-colonial situation satirically or otherwise" (Om P. Juneja, 1995, 134).

To conclude, it can be said that the novel of colonial

consciousness, lacating itself in a situation, focuses on the collective consciousness resulting in the birth of post-colonial novel.

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BOOK REVIEWS

KAMAL NASEEM (TR.), *OEDIPUS TRAYEE OF SOPHOCLES*

(New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2000)

M.S. Kushwaha

Translation is often regarded as a species of sub-literature. It is commonly believed there is nothing creative in translation, it is just a mechanical process of reproduction. Only the form changes. What is said or written in one language is reproduced in another language and idiom. But those, who have had an experience of translation, know very well that it is not so simple. Translation is not a reproduction, it is rather a re-creation. The works of one language are not photocopied but created anew in another language. This makes the job of a translator more difficult than that of a creative writer. While the latter enjoys unlimited freedom, the former is cribbed, cabin'd and confined by the original text. The translator has to be faithful to the source material, yet his/her translation should have almost the same literary weight as the original. It should not read like a translation but as a piece of original writing in the target language. The translation of a poetic piece, for example, should not be a mere translation, it should also read like poetry.

English literature, fortunately is very rich in translations. They have greatly contributed to its present eminence and catholicity. Keats's tribute to Champman's translation of Homer ("On first looking into Chapman's Homer") testifies to the influence that these translations have exercised over the imagination of the creative writers in English. Unfortunately, Hindi scholars have not yet realized the significance of translation and accorded it due recognition. Very few works from foreign literatures have been translated, and that too, not by competent hands. There is an acute need for good translations and translators in Hindi.

Dr. Kamal Naseem's translation of the Oedipus trilogy of Sophocles is a significant step in this direction. Her translation is not only faithful to the text but also poetic without being stilted. It

carries with it the lyrical quality of the original. Its literary merit becomes at once clear if we compare it with Dr. Rangeya Raghava's translation. Here, for instance, are the opening lines of *King Oedipus* in Raghava's translation:

> ईडीपस : वत्सो ! पूर्वज कैडमस की नई सन्तानों ! तुम्हारे इस तरह प्रार्थना करने का क्या अर्थ है ? पेड़ों की ये डालें, मालाएं और नगर में फैलता हुआ यह अगरधूम, संकट के निवारणार्थ चारों ओर सुनाई देने वाली तुम्हारी यह आर्त्त पुकार, इस सब का क्या कारण है ? बताओ, मैंने अपने दूतों की बातों पर विश्वास नहीं किया है, इसीलिए मैं स्वयं परिस्थिति की सच्चाई जानने के लिए आया हूँ। मैं ईडीपस, जिसका यश चारों ओर दूर–दूर तक फैला हुआ है, तुमसे इस विषय में पूछता हूँ, बोलो।[1]

They are rendered as follows in Dr. Naseem's translation:

> ईडीपस : बच्चो, कैडमस के पुरातन वंश के युवा
> ये मालाएं, ये शाखाएं, ये हवन के धुएँ में डूबा नगर,
> ये करूण विलाप, पीड़ा के शमन हेतु ये आर्त प्रार्थनाऐं,
> ये सब किसलिए ?
> मैं, ईडीपस, तुम्हारा सम्राट
> सुदूर देशों तक जिसका नाम है विख्यात
> संदेशवाहकों से न होकर आश्वस्त
> स्वयं आया हूँ जानने क्या हुई बात ?

Though both the translations convey almost the same thought, there is a world of difference in their presentation. While Dr. Raghava's translation is flat, prosaic and nerveless, Dr. Naseem's is embedded with a sublimity of style and diction and charged with rhythmic flow. Her translation transmits, not only content, but also the spirit of the original plays. And this is what a really good literary translation must have. She has succeeded in setting up a standard of translation which the future Hindi translators would fain to emulate.

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RAGINI RAMACHANDRA (ED.), *RAJA RAO: AN ANTHOLOGY OF RECENT CRITICISM*

(Delhi: Pencraft International, 2000), pp.190, Rs.350.00

H.C. Gupta

Raja Rao — to borrow the words of A.N. Gupta — whose position is secure as "the most 'Indian' of Indian novelists in English ... as symbolist, myth-maker and philosophical novelist and as an original voice" (p.183) is, to adapt to advantage, the title of his famous novel, the master chessplayer, and his artistic moves are fascinating and baffling at one and the same time. Distinct and distinctive, as the writer and his writings are, they are abstruse and obscure. The subject-matter of his typical fiction is *Purusha, Prakriti, Brahma, Parabrahma,* the Feminine Principle, as *Maya* and *Shakti* — in brief all that which Indian Maharshis and seers have designated *Neti*! *Neti*! 'No end ! No end !.' The conception and creation of *Shabda* as *Brahma,* the deconstruction and the reconstruction of old myths, the use of old symbols in altogether new senses are problematic. His English full of Kannad and Raoian idiom is, in the words of C.D. Narasimhaiah, "a strange dialect called Indian English" (p.98), which I would like to call *South-Indian* or to be more exact *Raoian English.* Other hurdles are the French and Sanskrit texts without their English translations or trans-creations. Raja Rao has not been and shall never be popular with readers either in India or abroad because of difficulties of matter and manner aplenty.

Raja Rao: An Anthology of Recent Criticism is yet another welcome addition to the *New Orientations Series.* It re-presents post-modernist and post-structural critical concepts and representative criticism of Rao's fiction by eminent Indian and Western scholar-critics. The contents that follow give a clue to the quality and riches of the Collection: Shyamala A. Narayan, *"The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories:* Revaluations"; S.C. Harrex, "Typology and Modes: Raja Rao's Experiments in Short Story"; M.K. Naik, *"The Village* that Was Wiped out of Man and Mosquito"; V.Y. Kantak, "Raja Rao's *Kanthapura";* C.D. Narasimhaiah, *"The Serpent and the Rope:* A

Study"; S. Nagarajan, "A Note on Myth and Ritual in *The Serpent and the Rope*"; Paul Sharrad, "Aspects of Mythic Form and Style in *The Serpent and the Rope*"; J. Srihari Rao, *"The Cat and Shakespeare:* A Western View"; R. Parthasarathy, *"The Chessmaster and His Moves:* The Novel as Metaphysics"; Edwin Thumboo, "Raja Rao: *The Chessmaster and His Moves";* A.N. Gupta, *"Comrade Kirillov:* An Appraisal"; and Ragini Ramchandra, *"On the Ganga Ghat:* An Assessment". The "Introduction" by the well-informed and scholarly editor updates the work and gives its quintessential resume. As a whole, the Anthology brings out various distinguishing features and illuminates some dark corners of Raja Rao's fiction — a unique blend of Indian *Sthala-Purana, Shastra,* and *Pancham Veda* and the Western Romance, Allegory, and Fantasy.

Raja Rao makes one of his mouthpieces make an obviously confessional statement: "you must go to the end of philosophy, go near enough to truth... but you must end with a question mark." (*The Serpent and the Rope*). A few observations of the contributors are revelatory in this respect. M.K. Naik mentions "sixty-odd pages of notes added by the author to the recent American edition of *Kanthapura,"* and similar notes added to *The Serpent and the Rope,* which Raja Rao has termed the result of "an unfortunate afterthought" (p.64). S.C. Harrex says of the story, "The Policeman and the Rose", "the personal and private appropriation of traditional symbols, then, is one of the reasons why a reliable reading of the story is difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at" (p.44). He supports himself with a comment by C.D. Narasimhaiah who, as already mentioned, complainingly speaks of "stage dialect called English" (p.98). Writing about Raja Rao's mode of writing, Paul Sharrad identifies the difficult areas in "dialectical oppositions," "ambiguous images," "inbuilt literary and cultural contradictions," "the *Manes* of East and West" and so on. Edwin Thumboo frankly admits: "...still Rao's works are profoundly Indian. Very demanding they are generally more praised than read, posing a major challenge to reader and critic alike regarding how to approach, assess and place them" (p.151). Claudio Gorlier borrows Mikhail Bakhtin's word *chronotopos* to characterize a typical Raoian way—the word means "relationship between time

and place in a single unit" (p.127). He adds, Rao comes "very close to what Jean-Francois Lyotard has defined as *paralogic* (p.134).

Paul Sharrad speaks of the difficulty of finding "logical pattern beneath the apparently rambling tale." A.N. Gupta comments about *Comrade Kirillov*, "The novel has been neglected by the Western scholars on the whole, because most of them have not been able to appreciate the Indian complexion of the novel or because they consider the book as a sort of philosophical treatise parading as fiction." (p.179). Further he points out, "*Comrade Kirillov* demands a highly intellectual and well-read and patient category of readers for its full appreciation" (p.178). All these observations are largely true, and present the difficulties of Rao's readers in India and abroad.

It will be rather presumptuous on my part to comment on the contributors and their contributions to the Anthology that with insight make an in-depth study of in-built thought and writing skills of Rao's major fiction. The claim made in the "Introduction", however, can be safely approved: Rao and his fiction have made "India real not only to Europeans but to Indians themselves (p.11). And another claim can be justifiably made that the Anthology will go a long way in making Rao — the chessmaster, and his moves— intelligible to both the Indian and European readers. They can now explain why Rao holds the pride of place in Indian fiction in English and why his various works are classics, as put together the articles and essays remove reading speed-breakers and provide the readers the password — *open Sesame* — and opens avenues to the hidden treasures of Raoian lore. Undoubtedly after having read the Collection intelligently they will better appreciate Rao's *EIQ* and can do better justice, though not still full justice, (for reasons given) to the operative symbols, philosophical disquisitions and linguistic and technical innovations in the works studied. It makes the reader fully convinced that Raja Rao is an original voice in Indian writing in English and that a typical Rao work is a Pancham Veda, a Puran, though not for the laity.

Now, the more assiduously prepared such a publication is the more exacting become the readers' demands therefrom. Naturally the proofreaders' nods are unwelcome. The divergence

between the periods covered, which in the *General Preface* (having no page number and date) and the blurb is "the preceding twenty years" and in the Editor's "Introduction" "the last three decades" (p.13) looks odd. Similarly, the following lapses: 'Comrada' (p.16), 'Metamorphisis' (un-italicized, p.25); 'story' with small 's' in the title (p.30); 'defferent (p.31); 'Raja, Rao' (*Notes and References* no. 5, p.36); 'he find' (p.47); 'hardly...than' (p.59); 'is the family' (*is* for *in,* p.89); 'on orphan' (p.93); 'O' clock' (p.123); 'over' (for ever, p.126); 'Boothaling a Iyer' (p.132); 'delegitinize' (p.127); 'the author of Kamal' (*of* for *to,* p.175); 'looks' (for books, p.179); 'to longer' (*to* for *no,* p.180); 'Ramaswami' (pp.105-08) and 'Ramaswamy' (pp.109-21); 'undarwinian' and 'neo-Darwinian' (p.172); 'Secretariat' (with small and capital 's', p.123); 'Secretariat-clock' (with and without hyphen, p.123); 'Shiva' and 'Siva' (p.99); 'Kshatriya' (italicized, p.114 and un-italicized, p.120); 'brahman' (with small 'b' *Notes,* p.120); and 'The Serpent and the Rope' (un-italicized and italicized *Footnotes* No.11 and 12, p.120).

To conclude this reiview, this discerning collection of essays and articles, when all discriminations are made, must remain very useful. All of them without any exception are exceptionally explorative and illuminating; to be precise, they read like the *Conclusions* of as many dissertations and *Bhasyas* (commentaries) on Rao's writings which artistically intermingle the Indian and Western traditions in thought, culture and writing skills with the specific purpose of doing good to mankind as a whole. The collection is a virtual *Jnan-Ganga* on Rao and his works. It must inspire other Rao scholars to take up new aspects of his creative projects and artistic achievements. Predictably, it will serve as a handbook for college and university students and as a lighthouse for all readers, critics and scholars in India and abroad. The readers must feel jubilant and highly obliged to the editor of making Rao's *oeuvre* readily accessible to them. The book, as it serves the purpose of making readers appreciate the riches and share the results of so pioneering an Indian writer as Raja Rao's creativity, is worth its weight in gold.

E. RAJA RAO, *BEYOND PROTEST: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN FICTION*

(Delhi: Academic Foundation, 1993), Rs.330.00

Prasanta Kumar Panda

Beyond Protest is a delicate study of five novelists from a general lot designated Black Writers in America. Their cultural background and their literary output need a thorough understanding of their inner circle of myths, legends and symbols which shape their thought processes as opposed to the eurocentric ideologies that threaten to find their way into all the cultures of the world as intruders. Prof. E. Raja Rao ventures to investigate the base on which the superstructure of Afro-American fiction stands aloft and demands equal status as other mainstream writers in the English language.

Beyond Protest encompasses five writers of Afro-American origin and spans two decades for its survey of changing social milieu reflected in these writers' works. His choice is unique in the sense it claims to be a "reading of the dynamic symbiosis of its theme and form." Probably Prof. Rao is the first critic to give equal importance to the theme as well as form in this reading of the literary outputs of Clarence Major, Ishmael Read, Cyrus Colter, Charles Wright and Alice Walker during two decades, namely, Nineteen sixties and seventies. With a footage in semiotics he is able to justify his stance that the recent Afro-American writing is not a mimetic representation of the European tradition of writing fiction rather with its indigenous 'signifying' practices these writers are able to generate a process of their aesthetic tradition in creating an epoch of their own in the literary world in general.

Prof. Rao presents these five authors' perceptible differences in voicing the protest in five different chapters in this book. But what is common to all of them is a consciousness of individual suffering as a continuum of the sufferings of the earlier generations. In a way, this book disseminates, implicitly though, the psychic residue of the characters in question; be it Colteris Clotilda in *The River of*

Eros (1972) or Alice Walker's Maridian in the novel *Meridian* (1976), dealt in an analytical discourse that forbids the casual reader of these novels to take any dogmatic judgement. Here one is reminded of Alice Walker's novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) in which the major character Tashi, who is under psychiatric treatment, feels the pain of circumcision as a continuum of pain of all the girls in the past who have undergone the same crude operation on their bodies. In her being she makes individual suffering a matter of political concern—pertaining to the then Afro-American Feminist slogan, "personal is political."

As the author himself suggests in the "Introduction", "It is difficult to separate the novels of such black American novelists as Ishmael Reed, Cyprus Colter and Charles Wright from those of Thomas Pychon, Kurt Vonnegut and Donald Bartheme. Therefore, it is appropriate to suggest that fiction by Black American writers has finally come of age after passing through the rigors of experiment and uncertainty" (26). In fact, this statement proves to be valid when one comes to know, after reading *Beyond Protest,* about the philosophical foregrounding of the novels. For example, Cyprus Colter efficiently incorporates the existentialist vision of Camus and the efficacy of freedom for the narcissistic and grotesque characters who are victims of their individual follies. Similarly, Ishmael Reed's use of 'mythopoesis' as an art form is beautifully exposed by Prof. Rao. According to him, Reeds' vision is "deeply steeped in the Dionysian spirit" (81) which tries to dispel the dichotomy between the Black and the White. Also, he believes, Reeds' strength as a novelist lies not only in his reconstruction of the *Osiris—Isis* myth, but more importantly in the transfiguration of the ancient myth in terms of contemporary history.

This book envisages Clarence Major as a novelist in the major trend of the "nouveau roman" dealing with characters exhibiting an extreme sense of individualism. As perceived by Prof. Rao, "By destroying the conventional notion of reality peddled by Christianity, Major has created in his fictional world a type of reality which is sustained by its own inner logic of coherence, a reality propelled by the characters' own actions and desires" (128). Charles Wright, in

this book, is described as an experimental novelist and a black humorist. In his writing, as assessed in this book, we again feel the manifestation of the idea of the "personal is political." The following statement would make it clear: "Charles Wright, as a serious artist, seems to be uncomfortable in the limited canvas of Afro-American Humor, but he utilizes some of these features to exploe truth of his reality and then to transcend that reality to encompass the absurdity of life in general(151).

In Howard Walf's opinion — who has written the foreword to the book *Beyond Protest* — in a country like America which has celebrated her 500th anniversary in 1992 there is a need to look back objectively and find out where the "cultural and aesthetic fault-line does exist." And Prof. Rao has the tenacity to probe into the deep-rooted socio-cultural basis of the relationship between the whites and the people of African origin which has been nonchalantly exhibited in the novels of these five novelists in question. The tools in the hands of these authors are many and Prof. Rao has been keen on recording every available trope to register his thesis statement in the neutrality deserving of any true scholar.

This critical document *Beyond Protest* will prove to be an important addition to the studies by a few critics of international acclaim in the field like Gates Jr. Greene and Kuhn, who have given deep insightful account of Afro-American fiction. As Prof. B.K. Tripathy has assessed, this book will play an important role to make the students of different universities where Afro-American authors are included in the syllabi. At the same time this book will prove to be an authentic research output that provides us the ideological bases of the five authors in question.

SRINIVASA RANGASWAMI, *THE WAYSIDE PIPER*

(Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 2001), Rs.120.00

Bernard M. Jackson

We live in a world of rapid change and frequent chaotic upheaval. Modern technology has revolutionised our lives to such an alarming degree, and in so many different ways, that we can only find increasing difficulty in keeping abreast with the resultant so-called scientific advancement. Our Mammon-centred world has turned its back on former spiritual values and seems intent on languishing in the transitory comforts of a basely-established materialistic society. In the international arena of stalemate foreign policies and escalating warfare, our politicians are endlessly seeking effective Peace measures through their cleverly-deployed inter-governmental diplomatic initiatives. All to little avail, it must sometimes seem ! But the poet and the dreamer will tell you most emphatically that true Peace springs from within, and that it is a God-given gift to be used for the well-being of others. The light of Peace is essentially that same light as the common bond of Humanity; and the symblic representation of its entirety is to be found within the mystical simplicity of the Rainbow, a truly divine manifestation which we all share and love. I mention this because, while reading that sparkling newly-published poetry collection, *The Wayside Piper* by Srinivasa Rangaswami, I was intrigued to discover that his work is, in fact, arranged within seven inter-related sections, a spectrum in effect, so that its spiritual significance is immediately apparent.

Over quite a number of years, Srinivasa has led the literary field in India in his varying capacity as review writer/critic and scholar. Despite his advancing years, his poetry (indeed, all his writings) evince a youthful exuberance, which gives an agreeable tone to his authoritative statement and expression, generally. More importantly, Srinivasa has proved himself the true friend of all poets, regardless of caste, creed and nationality. With regard to creativity, he observes:

> There is verily a hidden purpose and a plan
> in all of God's creation. Only we do not....

> Every end presages a new beginning
> in a grand cycle of perpetual renewal
> and evolution. So that this our Earth
> shall remain
> forever new and young.

Srinivasa's work is hallmarked by a characteristic modesty which adds greatly to its sense of appeal, for here is genuine sincerity; and yet his writings are presented with meticulous precision and lyrical fluidity. Like the celebrated poet, Robert Frost, this writer can use simplicity of vocabulary and imagery to such powerful effect as his title poem clearly shows:

> How well I play, well or ill, it is not for me to say;
> how it pleases him that passes by, it is not for me to worry about.
> I sing as songs come to me, in the wildness of my heart
> because I am happy apiping.

As a fellow musician (clarinetist) I am in entire sympathy with those words. Whether he plays the pipe or expresses himself in poetry, he knows that he is utilising a God-gift, and finds fulfilment in this, regardless of external acclaim from those who might witness his performance. And here again is the line (from the above poem) that I love:

> I sing as songs come to me, in the wildness of my heart.

The collection has a superb "Foreword" by none other than Dr. Krishna Srinivas, President of World Poetry Society Intercontinental, who speaks of the Blakean simplicity and Pindaric excellence with which Poet Srinivasa Rangaswami has carved his name in the monumental edifice of Indian Parnassus. Indeed, he goes further to say:

> His poetry is lyrical, his feelings flame as images and he has the stamp of unique personality. This makes him the finest and most sensitive of contemporary poets.

Praise indeed ! But Srinivasa is not one who yearns for praise or public honours; his poetry essentially expresses the love of his Creator and love of Humanity. The poetry within this collection covers a number of inter-related themes, the most piquant of which are those poems in treasured memory of a departed loved-one. Even the very titles of his poems show a startling brilliance--titles like, "I Ride on Pinions of Winged Horses" and "The Bombay Monsoon Is

Like My Heart."

In the third section of the book, there are some fine descriptive poems, most of which (the poet informs us) were written during his boyhood years. These early poems, romantic in style, are well-constructed with careful attention to alliteration and assonant appeal. The poet includes these particular poems as he considers them to be very much a part of himself in that they manifest that childlike quality that the mature poet ever strives to regain, or at least to maintain:

> Beautiful is the bird's-eye view
> and like a bird's the spirit raised,
> from restless rest to the burning blue,
> flutters, flits, and wingless flies away.
>
> ("How Beautiful Are the Plains")

To Srinivasa, poetry is the elixir of Life itself, and in his poem "Young I Am," we see yet another facet of this poet's make up, a puckish sense of humour that has stayed with him throughout his life:

> That dream-eyed boy by the puddle
> I can join, to launch on voyage paper galleons
> to virgin shores forlorn
> beyond boiling pirate-infested seas.
>
> ("Young I Am")

But without a shadow of a doubt, the very pinnacle of his poetry has been attained in the beautiful simplicity of his address to a loving Creator, in his poem "I Cannot Ask for More". And though I am tempted to quote lines from this lovely poem, I feel that it must be absorbed and appreciated in its entirety. The collection is completed with a delightful selection of Haiku — each one a little gem !

For those many admirers of Srinivasa Rangaswami's inspired writings, here is a veritable feast of poetic insight sensitively presented by Writers Workshop in a superbly hand-crafted hard-backed publication. Here are writings that will long survive the tests of time. I shall treasure my copy for many years to come.

O.P. MATHUR, *NEW CRITICAL APPROACHES TO INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2001), pp.146+viii, Rs.300.00

K.K. Sharma

Like his earlier two books on Indian English fiction — viz. *Modern Indian English Fiction* and *Indian Political Novel and Other Essays* — the volume, under review, unmistakably evinces Professor O.P. Mathur's close, immaculate understanding of Indian English fiction. The book has a broad sweep, and thus includes critical essays on the pioneers like Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan as well as on the recent fictional voices, such as Jhumpa Lahiri and the couple Anand and Ranu Khare. It consists of sixteen essays in all.

The volume opens with the article, "Anand's Trishul of Tears," and rightly so because he is the seniormost modern Indian fictionist writing in English. This compact piece is an appraisal of Anand's widely read work, *Two Leaves and a Bud,* which the novelist calls "a poem in suffering." The learned critic interprets the highly suggestive title of the novel by stating that it not only stands for the strident of Lord Shiva but also suggests the feelings of love, bitterness and hope aroused by the condition of the coolies of the tea-plantations as painted by the novelist in the book. So many other symbols permeating the narrative have also been brilliantly brought out. The river and the hills are shown as symbolic of humanity ruined by clashes and conflicts. The entire world of nature is saturated with symbolic significance. Professor Mathur's conclusive statement is worth citing: "The symbolic vision of man is multiple, revealing him both in his littleness and glory, opening up vistas of the ultimate victory of man over his multifaceted environment"(p.4).

The second paper, devoted to R.K. Narayan's major female characters, is quite relevant to the present Indian society deeply concerned with the feminist issues of all kinds. The three women, studied in it, are Savitri of *The Dark Room*, Rosie of *The Guide* and Daisy of *The Painter of Signs* who represent the early, middle and later periods of the novelist's career. Savitri revolts against the tyranny of her husband, though, in the end, she, for the sake of her children, returns to him. Like a true feminist, she raises her voice

against the male domination: "I am a human being ... you the tyranny of her husband, though, in the end, she, for the sake of her children, returns to him. Like a true feminist, she raises her voice against the male domination: "I am a human being ... you men will never grant that .... Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose." Also, she rejects patriarchy and the entire male world when she is determined not to take away with her, while leaving her husband's home, even the things given to her by her father simply because "they are also a man's gift." In Rosie we have a liberated woman. She is highly educated with an M.A. degree in Economics and is an outstanding dancer. For the sake of realising her Self, she rejects her neglecting husband, falls in love with Raju the guide, and becomes a professional dancer. She attains her Self after shattering the shackles of marriage with Marco and love affair with Raju. Different from Rosie, Daisy is an embodiment of the dilemma of a modern unwomanly woman. Though against marriage and procreation, she develops an unromantic love for Raman. In fact, for her an independent individuality is of supreme value. The article ends with the convincing observation that "in the novels of R.K. Narayan the awareness of Self in the grumbling but helpless 'feminity' of Savitri evolves into Rosie's realization of her potentiality of independent life and ultimately into Daisy's Self of a missionary zealot becoming all the more hardened because of a temporary aberration" (p.13).

The essay, "*The Guide*: The Novel and the Film," is perhaps the best part of the book. Professor Mathur, in about one page only, writes effectively almost all about the essence of literature and cinema, which is the acme of the audio-visual arts. He rightly asserts that the film,*Guide* (directed by Tad Danielewski in English and by Vijay Anand in Hindi) is not as much a version as a 'conversion' of R.K. Narayan's *magnum opus*. But he analytically establishes the fact that the film version of the novel, despite many deviations from the original, is a great work of art. He does not fully agree woith R.K. Narayan's resentment at the change of the locale from Malgudi to Udaipur by the film director for the sake of picturesqueness. He justifies the film director's

introduction of a few new incidents for the purpose of exterioising the characters. But he is against the ending manipulated in the film because it is unrealistic. What is admirable about this article is the incisive assertion that though both the novel and the film are excellent works of art in their respective genres, the former scores over the latter. And this is a universal phenomenon with regard to a literary work rendered into a film. Professor Mathur justly avers: "The plays of Shakespeare will last longer than their film versions which keep superseding one another.... The film *Guide* too is now rarely revived ... while R.K. Narayan's novel ... continues, and will continue to be read and enjoyed for generations to come" (p.24).

Arun Joshi has been studied from three different angles in the next three articles of the book. In the first one, the novelist's deep interest in the *Gita* has been brought out. Time and again, Arun Joshi refers to this timeless scripture in his fiction. His protagonists attempt to transcend the dark labyrinths of the soul to attain genuine self-realisation and self-fulfilment. Also, they are conscious of the higher self and succeed in smashing the tangled web of the lower self. The only drawback in this article is that it does not even touch Joshi's last novel, *The City and the River*. The second one of these critical pieces on Arun Joshi is a detailed examination of his first novel, *The Foreigner*, from the viewpoint of existentialism and *karamyog*. Professor Mathur lucidly reveals the progress of the protagonist of the novel, Sindi, from a Sartrean existentialist figure to a *karmayogi* as presented in the *Gita*. The last paper on Joshi is a comprehensive analysis and appraisal of the imagery and symbols in his novels. *The City and the River*, his last novel, which has been left out in the first article, has been thoroughly discussed here, and that is the best part of the study of Joshi. The title, central theme, characters, major episodes, scenes, etc. are deftly examined with a stress on the functional significance of the images and symbols studded in the novel.

Salman Rushdie is a very complex and tantalizing fictional phenomenon, and it goes to the credit of Professor Mathur to deal with a baffling novel like *Shame* so competently and lucidly. The

surface realities of Pakistani society and politics have been comprehensively and transparently brought out, but more than that the academic critic has focused on the basic reality, the very core of Pakistan which is essentially horrifying. Rushdie's artistic use of devices like symbolism, exaggeration, pretension and denial to delineate oblongly this realistic side of Pakistan have been fully exhibited in this brilliant piece of criticism. If the note of alarm, sounded in *Shame*, is not heeded by mankind, it will inevitably result in its destruction, and this Rushdie has vividly painted "through his symbols of terrifying nightmares, mindless bloodshed and the final cloud of nothingness itself" (p. 80).

Shashi Tharoor's masterpiece, *The Great Indian Novel,* has been analysed from the standpoint of tolerance, a great human virtue by all standards, Eastern and Western. Tolerance, as Professor Mathur asserts, is the central concern of the novelist who opines that it is an intrinsic part of the Indian concept of 'Dharma' and hence it is not negative but highly positive. The artticle effectively highlights the spiral-like movement of time, and the three spots of time in the novel, namely, the mythological, the historical-mythical, and the present in the context of Indian life from British period upto the nineteen eighties.

The two essays, devoted to Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, present two aspects of the novel: an "intimacy with elsewhere," to quote the words of A.K. Ramanujan, and the Indian ambience. The first piece demonstrates how all the phenomena in this vast universe are interrelated and how only illusory and shadowy lines divide what appears to be opposites or different realities. Thus, the demarcation between the present and the past, silence and speech, one country and another, religion and humanism, the ordinary and the extraordinary, man and man, nation and nation, or the human and the divine is just shadowy. The flimsiness of the lines of demarcation is also shown by employing different allegories. As compared to this essay, the second one is considerably simple, since it concentrates on the external Indian reality, particularly the communal disharmony which, as the novelist admits in a conversation, made him write this book.

Amitav Ghosh takes into account the entire contemporary Indian social scene — the varied classes, traditional customs,etc. — spreading over a period of four generations.

The nauseous and the ecstatic sides of sex form the subject of the essay examining Kushwant Singh's *The Company of Women* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* Professor O.P. Mathur takes immense pains in depicting the similarities and dissimilaities between the two novels, and justly concludes that while the popular Indian novel is an account of a man's obsession with the physical side of sex, the great English book presents the divine nature of sex called "phallic reality"

Professor Mathur is a little laudatory in his last five critical essays. The piece, "Arundhati Roy's Paradoxical Celebration of Smallness," is perceptive, but eulogistic. The statement that she is Keatsian in ways more than one does not sound allright. Even after five years of the publication of her masterpiece, she has not produced anything notable. The same is true of the article on Jhumpa Lahiri's frail collection of nine short stories which the critic calls"meaningful whispers," and asserts that her art is "the art of silence suggestive of a 'stream of conscience', both Indian and universal at the same time..." (p.128). These two female fictionists will have to go a long way before they deserve this kind of praise fron an academic critic of the stature of Professor Mathur. The last two small pieces are not worthy of a place in this critical endeavour of high merit.

To end, Professor Mathur's book, by virtue of the King's English and deep critical insight, is a commendable contribution not only to Indian English fiction criticism but also to the contemporary criticism in English all over the world. It is marked by strikingly new critical approaches to some of the celebrated Indian English fictionists who have doubtless given new dimensions to modern fiction both thematically and technically. The artistic, meaningful dust jacket and the reasonable price of it further add to its value, and I deeply desire that more and more books of this kind should appear in the years to come.

CONTRIBUTORS

S. Viswanathan is Former Professor of English, University of Hyderabad.

M.K. Naik is Former Professor & Head, Department of English, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Rajat Kumar Srivastava is Lecturer in English at I.S. College, Allahabad.

K.G. Srivastava is Professor of English, University of Allahabad.

Yogesh K. Tiwari is Research Scholar, Department of English, Nagaland Central University, Kohima, Nagaland.

N.D.R. Chandra is Head, Department of English, Nagaland Central University, Kohima, Nagaland.

P. Dhanavel is Assistant Professor of English, Anna University, Chennai.

Tapati Lahiri is Reader in English, Arya Mahila College, Varanasi.

Meena Sodhi is Professor of English, B.H.U., Varanasi.

A.G. Khan is Professor of English, Vikram University, Ujjain.

Rama Kant Sharma is Reader in English, S.S.V. College, C.C.S. University, Meerut.

Archana Kaul is Teacher-Scholar, Department of English, University of Jammu.

S. Armstrong is Lecturer in English, L.N. Govt. College, Ponneri, Tamilnadu.

Kh Kunjo Singh is Associate Professor, Department of English, Manipur University.

M.S. Kushwaha is Former Professor & Head, Department of English, Lucknow University.

H.C. Gupta is Former Professor of English, Jiwaji University, Gwalior.

Prasanta K. Panda teaches English at S.S.D. College, Cuttack.

Bernard M. Jackson is a well-known British poet and critic.

K.K. Sharma is Former Professor of English, University of Allahabad.

POINTS OF VIEW

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