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SHAKESPEARE — A TRIO OF NOTES

S. Viswanathan

I

LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON — A POSSIBLE IDENTIFICATION

Several speculations have been offered from time to time as regards the identity of the play which Francis Meres in his listing of Shakespeare's comedies as examples of his 'excellen(ce)' in that kind in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) referred to as *Love's Labour's Won*. There is, however, the possibility till now ostensibly unexplored of the reference ultimately being to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Both circumstantial and a sort of textual, internal evidence to be found in the play would seem to point to the possibility.

Ever since T.W. Baldwin's discovery announced in his *Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Won* (1957) of a bookseller's binding wrap fragment mentioning the title as one of the six playbooks in his stock in the year 1603, the existence of a play of that title has been confirmed. The postulation has to be either that it is an alternative title of a Shakespeare play or that it is a lost play by him. The catalogue fragment sets out the titles thus:

> Marchant of Venis
> Taming of a shrew
> Knak to know a knave
> Knak to know an honest man
> Loves labor lost
> Loves labor won
>
> (Quoted from the Norton Shakespeare, p. 803)

The diptych-like bracketing of the last two titles in this list as well as in Meres's, will suggest a rough chronological closeness of the performance and printing of the two plays. Meres indeed would seem to list the comedies in a sort of chronological sequence:

> His *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labors Lost*
> his *Love Labours Won*,
> His *Midsummer Night dreams*, his *Merchant of Venice* ...

The title missing from Meres's list is *The Taming of the Shrew* (the Norton Shakespeare, p. 803). The Norton editors of Shakespeare, quoting the Oxford editors, state for some curious reason that the

play referred to as *The Taming of a Shrew* in the bookseller's list is Shakespeare's play *the Shrew*. This would be carrying the Oxford editors' assumption that *a Shrew* is also Shakespeare's own alternative version of *the Shrew* much too far. Obviously, the reference in the bookseller's list is to the Quarto of *a Shrew*, printed in 1594 and reprinted in 1596. Whether it is a 'bad' quarto of Shakespeare's *the Shrew* or a source play or whether both derive from a common, now not extant source, the title *a Shrew* in the bookseller's list refers to the other *Shrew* play, not to Shakespeare's. The likelihood is that *Love's Labour's Won* is both the bookseller's and Francis Meres's identification of Shakespeare's *the Shrew* of which we cannot rule out the possibility of the existence then of a quarto, now lost, sunk without trace, bearing the title in question. After all, it was sheer chance that the existence of the 1592 quarto (Q1) of *Titus Andronicus*, extant in but a single copy, came to light at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Such a possibility acquires credence also in view of the echoes and resonances present in the *Taming of the Shrew* of the idea of a set task, wager or labour being undertaken and fought through by Petruchio with Kate and won. These suggestions resound across the play and would make *Love's Labour's Won* not an inappropriate description of it, a description relatively non- sexist from one angle and from another tinged with chauvinistic irony.

It has come to be increasingly recognised that the apparently fierce initial mutual hostility and incompatibility which persist for some time between Petruchio and Kate are but the obverse of their mutual attraction and liking for each other from the start. Even as Petruchio addresses his proposal to the father Baptista and makes his negotiation of dowry he speaks of 'get(ting) your daughter's love' (2.1.120), and soon after, on hearing Hortensio's report of Kate's shrewish tantrums, declares

> I love her ten times more than e'er I did
> O! how I long to have some chat with her!
>
> (2.1. 162-63)

The complete transformation and apparently abject submission of Kate to Petruchio occurs when on the road back from Venice to Baptista's at Padua Kate willingly agrees to call the sun moon or

sun alternatingly and indifferently to humour Petruchio's whim. Hortensio comments on this:

> Petruchio, go thy ways; the field is won.
>
> (4.5. 23)

However, the remarkable comedic if comic capping peripeteia is couched in terms of a correspondence of the exchanges between the couple at 4.3. 73-85 and at 5.2. 121-23.

Petruchio: .. .. .. It is a paltry cap,
A custard coffin, a bauble, a silken pie.
I love thee well in that thou lik'st it not.

Katherine: Love me or love me not, I like the cap.
And it I will have, or I will have none.

(4.3. 81-85)

and

Petruchio: Katherine, that cap of yours becomes you not
Off with that bauble, throw it underfoot.
Katherine pulls off her cap, and throws it down.

(5.2. 121-23)

In the final scene of the play (5.2) there are several instances of an embedding of the expressions 'love' and 'won' if not 'labour'[1] , this last though in a different sense and context.

Petruchio: Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life,
An awful rule and supremacy,
And, to be short, what not that's
sweet and happy.

Baptist: Now fair befall thee, good Petruchio,
The wager thou hast won .. .. ..
.. ..

Petruchio: Nay, I will win my wager better yet.

(5.2. 109-17)

If the concluding lines of the play make an overt reference to the 'taming of a shrew', as do earlier lines (2.1. 269-70), the covert but significant references to love's wager being won which number several in the last scene and elsewhere as noted, together with the title 'Love's Labour's Won' matching in contrastive correspondence that of the previous comedy, 'Love's Labour's Lost' in terms of theme, tone and plot, make it a plausible speculation that *The Taming of the Shrew* was at one time alternatively entitled *Love's Labour's Won.* Also, such a possibility would make the aficionado Francis

Meres's list of Shakespeare's comedies upto 7 September 1598 a complete one.

NOTE

'Leave alone Kate's reference in her notorious homily towards the close of the play on wifely submission to husband to the 'labour' the husband undertakes by sea or land for the wife's sake (5.2.150), the undercurrent in the play of the metaphor of 'taming' with its suggestions of breaking a wild horse into submission implies ideas of carrying and 'labour' as applied to a married woman. See the 'flyting' between Petruchio and Kate at 2.1.200-206,

Katherine: Asses are made to bear, and so are you.
Petruchio: Women are made to bear, and so are you.
Katherine: No such jade as bear you, if me you mean.
Petruchio: Alas! Good Kate, I will not burden thee;
For, knowing thee to be young and light,
Katherine: Too light for such a swain as you to catch,
And yet as heavy as my weight should be.

II

JULIUS CAESAR (2.1. 101-11)
A POINT(ING?) OF STAGE-ORIENTATION

Decius: Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?
Casca: No,
Cinna: O! pardon, sir, it doth; and yon gray lines
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.
Casca: You shall confess that you are both deceiv'd.
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises;
Which is a great way growing on the south,
Weighing the youthful season of the year.
Some two months hence up higher toward the north
He first presents his fire; and the high east
Stands, as the capitol, directly here.

(*Julius Caesar*, 2.1. 101-11)

The discourse of Decius, Cinna and Casca, and Casca's putting his fellow-conspirators right on directional orientation and on the point of sunrise with a threefold flourish of his sword, would seem meant primarily as a stage-filler during the time Cassius and Brutus stand aside and 'whisper' (s.d. at 1. 100) together thus starting off to

'conspire'. Yet the little inset has its own theatrical function and effect.

In the recently built new Globe in London, the stage has very rightly been set in south west, facing approximately 48° east of north, in accordance with the evidence of Wenzel Hollar's drawing and of the initial excavations at the site of the Globe for the same placing of the stage in Shakespeare's theatre.[1]

Julius Caesar is one of the earliest plays if it is not the very first to be given in the then newly built Globe in 1599. The lines in question may be seen as carrying a clue to the north-east-facing of its stage. Through Casca's overzealous astronomical and directional sense assertively expressed with forceful pointing of sword, Shakespeare could be making an implicit point about the tilt of direction in which the new stage was orientated, by way of alerting his audience to it.

The lines spoken in the afternoon performance of the play, around 3.00 p.m. and in seasons of the year not so youthful, as distinct from the pre-dawn of around March of the play's historical time, which the three characters refer to, for example, in the 21 September 1599 performance that Thomas Platter the Swiss traveller attended and recorded in his diary, would have produced a curious effect in the Globe playhouse. We now know that the afternoon sunlight always fell on the galleries and part of the auditorium, leaving the stage entirely in the shade in all parts of the year.[2] The spectators could savour the intriguing copresence of levels of reference, those of the playworld and its background of history and legend, and of the material stage and theatre and its contemporary historicism.

NOTES

[1]See John Orrell, 'Designing the Globe,' J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewing, ed. *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 54-55; also John Orrell, 'The Globe and the Sun,' *The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 139-57; Alan R. Young, 'The Orientation of the Elizabethan Stage: That Glory to the South West,' *Theatre Notebook*, 33 (1979), 80-85; and on the excavations, Andrew Gurr, 'Discovering the Globe,' *TLS*, 10-17 Nov. 1989, p.1288.

[2]John Orrell, p.55.

III

HAMLET'S 'MICHING MALICHO'

In the scene of the play-within-the-play of *Hamlet* (3.2. 148-149), soon after the dumbshow is over, Ophelia asks Hamlet

> What means this, my lord?

And Hamlet in his customary encrypted mode answers

> Marry, this is miching malicho, it means mischief.

The Folio text reads 'miching malicho' whereas Q2 has 'munching mallico'. Editors have generally adopted Malone's emendation of 'malicho' to 'mallecho' (Spanish for 'illwill'). But there is a possibility of the original F and Q2 expressions spelt 'malicho' or 'mallico' making good and interesting sense as a reference to Mollocco the hero of a very popular Rose theatre play of 1592 and 1593, *Muly Mollocco* which is not extant. Henslowe's *Diary* records no fewer than fourteen performances for the play in the Rose during the two years. Though it is a lost play, there is the evidence of a play on the same personage, coming towards the end of the seventeenth century, Dryden's *Don Sebastian* (1689), from which it can be inferred that its Elizabethan predecessor was also perhaps an 'orientalised' depiction of the Turkish sultan, Muley Moluch, the central figure in Dryden's play, in a manner similar to Dryden's, with a good deal of exotic interest. Dryden portrays Moluch (the variant spellings are those of the Islamic name, Malik) as a tyrant, as a ' ... character of brutality' and as

> ...luxurious, close and cruel,
> Generous by fits, but permanent in mischief
> (*Don Sebastian*, 1.1. 25-26)

The lustful Muley Moluch transgresses by subterfuge injunctions enjoined by Islam such as the ones about fasting during Ramzan and refraining from wedding a married woman.

Hamlet's utterance is perhaps meant to suggest that the ways of the murderer and usurper in 'The Mousetrap' as well as those of Claudius are similar to Molocco's sly and cruel ways, and all three alike spell danger ('mischief'). Hamlet also hints in the same breath that the play will 'catch the conscience' of King Claudius, expose

him and thus pave the way for Hamlet's revenge killing.

Shakespeare may have exploited his spectators' theatre memories of the Rose playhouse hit in this passing, oblique allusion to its play, in the process also suggesting that the 'Murder of Gonzago' he has penned as the inset play is of the same kind as *Muly Molocco* and couched in the same 'old hat' style. The allusion is fittingly put into the mouth of Hamlet who has several speeches in his play, which evince deep and engaged interest in contemporary theatre, acting and dramaturgy.

INTERPRETATIONS INTERPRETED: FOREGROUNDING OF HISTORY IN SHAKESPEARIAN CRITICISM

Maqbool Hasan Khan

It may be of some interest to begin with the generalisation that language, as it is encountered by the literary critic, is open to history but history itself is no more than a language, a system of significations in need of interpretation. The language of history, like language itself, is unfounded, decentred, lacking in structurality. Moreover, history is an ideological construct, the space within which the struggles, conscious and unconscious, between social formations are fought out though remaining unresolved. The subject of history is the medium which, though in command, permits the dissonances of the historical moment to express and realize themselves. History, in short, is text, interacting with literary and critical texts, naturalising, internalising and foregrounding itself within those texts. It is the moment of interaction between texts and history-as-text that gives to the texts of literature their specificity. The "making" in art may assume the form of a struggle -- a struggle between conscious intention and the disruptive force of language, or a struggle between conscious intention and the subversive forces within the subject. In the canonical texts the voices of subversion speaking through language, the cacophony engendered by the play of history and the struggle between ideologies has the capacity to generate values that disturb their interpreters into a fresh recognition of their own historicity in which even the attempt to transcend history assumes a historical role.

In this paper an attempt has been made to see how the foregrounding of history-as-text in *Hamlet* and *Lear* criticism is re-assuring in a way that was not previously possible. It was tacitly assumed all along that critical practice was a march forward, a progress towards a goal, the paradigm for this march forward having been derived from the history of science. Critical practice was subsumed within a millennialist conception of critical history. The foregrounding of history-as-text will perhaps enable us to see that critical practice is meaningful without being conclusive, rewarding

with no suggestion of finality.

Apart from the foregrounding of history in *Hamlet* and *Lear* criticism in two selected examples a brief attempt will also be made to see how subversion speaks through and disrupts the ideological orthodoxies of Shakespeare's greatest tragedy.

Neo-classical dramatic theory as it is presented in the usual histories of criticism seems dead as the dodo. Attempts to resurrect it would be interesting but drastically different from the original. In its own time, however, it was no aberration, the product of no pedantic antiquarianism. It was deeply and intensely cherished, embraced like an article of faith, the "in" thing among the best and the finest of literary circles. It had sound foundations -- Nature and Aristotle. Voltaire was no mean genius and yet his adherence to this theory led him to describe *Hamlet* as most decidedly the work of the imagination of a drunken savage. These facts are well-known, and we may not repeat them. Reference may, however, be made to the fate of the Gravediggers in one of the most famous performances of *Hamlet* in the eighteenth century -- the one given in 1772 at the Drury Lane theatre by the great thespian, David Garrick.[1] Odell's history of Shakespeare in the theatre from Betterton to Irving tells us that *Hamlet* came towards the close of Garrick's great years at Drury Lane. Garrick was nervous[2] because he was familiar with Voltaire's attack on *Hamlet* for its gross violation of the Rules of criticism. Since he was equally anxious to reveal his talent in this great stellar role, he finally decided to do what had been so common since the Restoration: to make changes in the text in order to make it less violative of the Rules. In Garrick's revised version Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not dead. Hamlet's sea voyage is eliminated. Laertes is not killed but, a nobler figure than in the actual play, is made minister of state along with Horatio. The Queen, repentant and remorseful, dies off-stage. The Gravediggers[3] and Osric are totally absent. All this was nothing unusual for the eighteenth century. A few sentences, however, from a letter written by Steevens, the well-known eighteenth century editor of Shakespeare, to Garrick may be quoted :

> I expect, writes Steevens, great pleasure from the perusal of your altered Hamlet .... Dr Johnson allots to this tragedy the praise of variety, but in my

> humble opinion, *that variety is often impertinent* .... In spite of all he has said on the subject, I shall never be thoroughly reconciled to tragi-comedy. This play of Shakespeare, in particular, resembles a looking-glass exposed for sale, which reflects alternately the funeral and the puppet-show, the venerable beggar soliciting charity, and the blackguard rascal picking a pocket.[4] [Emphasis added]

The letter was written fourteen years after Johnson's Preface, and Steevens refers to Johnson's opinion regarding tragi-comedy and to Shakespeare's practice of generic impurity, and yet Steevens is not willing to change his opinion. It is not that Steevens is stubborn, dogmatic or opinionated. It is that the unresolved conflicts of the age of Shakespeare were not the same as those of the seventeenth century French court and its off-shoot in post-Restoration England -- when Racine and Corneille and Dryden wrote under the aegis of the great social compromise. The marginalised were banished to the realm of low comedy and farce and the prototypes of the protagonists of the pseudo-heroic tragedy attitudinised and complimented each other for their commercial ventures overseas. Commercial success undercut tragedy and blunted its edge. Shakespeare's so-called "comprehensiveness" had come when the edge was still sharp, when the nascent British colonialism could still find shelter in the make-believe world of medieval chivalry, when the cargo on the high seas was still not insured against piracy and shipwreck. What Shakespeare did was to let the marginalised voices of parallel ideologies speak through his plays. Returning to Steeven's letter we find that the unwanted dualities that Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, according to him, reflects focalise the ironies of the achieved social compromise. We may say that the passage achieves the opposite of what it strives to say. It seeks to say that the reflection of the second term in each of the binary opposites is undesirable -- the puppet-show along with the funeral, the pickpocket along with the venerable beggar soliciting charity. The very juxtaposition is destructive of coherence in the passage. The censored ideology, the counterpoint to the achieved social compromise, gets stated through the differential play of language. The puppet-show, the mockery of the solemnity of the royal funeral --- the death of the King symbolising divine-ordained authority -- refers to the Dumb-show in the play-within-the play which is Shakespeare's device to

undercut and expose the hollowness of ruling Tudor ideology. The reality of the divinity that hedges a king is nothing else than predation. The Dumb-show is the naked show of the play of power. Power game was personalised in the Tudor age, but the Glorious Revolution of the end of the seventeenth century brought about constitutional monarchy and the achieved social compromise. Moreover, the dissenting voices in the Tudor age belonged to the realm of improbability. Lear's Fool is a minor nuisance for the Gonerils of the age. The pickpocket in *The Winter's Tale* is a joker one can afford to laugh with. The aristocrat has a large-hearted tolerance for the Fool, the pickpocket and the Gravediggers -- but the bourgeois is embarrassed; they are too close for comfort.

Sidney's *Apology* was written in the sixteenth century, and the *Apology* contains one of the most celebrated defences of the neo-classical theory of the purity of genre. Sidney's exercise, however, was purely academic since Shakespearian and major Elizabethan drama was still a decade away, and the genesis of Sidney's attack must be traced elsewhere. The post-Restoration dogma, on the other hand, was not academic but involved the play of fierce socio-psychic energies: Betterton's and Garrick's audiences were not the "understanders" at the Globe; they were commercialised landed gentry coming to town and the city burghers like the great Pepys hobnobbing with the aristocracy. For them much in Shakespeare was unpleasant stuff, and so Shakespeare had to be harmonised with the consensus of the age. The doctrine of the purity of genre came in handy to suppress and to elide into silence the voices that threatened the fragile social equilibrium of the times. History foregrounds itself and makes theory an instrument of urgent social needs.

Dr. Johnson's criticism of *King Lear*, too, should be viewed in the light of the attempt to "naturalise" Shakespeare within the dominant ideology of the age of the great social compromise. He is if anything a greater representative of that compromise. As we all know he thought of Shakespeare as the poet of Nature, of universal human nature.[5] This essentialist Nature, however, should be viewed with caution and in its proper context. It is possible to say that the fiercest intellectual energies of the age of the great social compro-

mise were devoted to warding off, containing and eliding into silence Nature as envisioned in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Hobbes's Nature, as Danby pointed out long ago,[6] is Edmund's Nature, the Nature that could erupt from below -- both in the psychological and social senses -- and destroy the order imposed by the ruling hierarchies on the body politic -- as had happened during the time of the Peasants' Revolt in Chaucer's century. Shakespeare had been, more than Chaucer before him, a powerful medium for the variety of social discourses to inscribe themselves in his texts. Implying an older poetics we could say that his ears could not only catch the accents of the Bedlam beggar, not only did he position him next to the King but could also see the bare, forked animal that humanity could be reduced to when shorn of all the pretences to culture. The voice of the dispossessed and the marginalised makes itself clearly heard amidst the pieties and platitudes made to order by the Tudor establishment.

Johnson objected to the death of Cordelia.[7] He was, of course, referring to Shakespeare's play as found in the original quartos and the folio of 1623 and not to Tate's version as it continued to appear on the stage from the Restoration to the early nineteenth century. Johnson approves of Tate's version with its rational symmetries and its poetic justice. Johnson's objection to Shakespeare's *Lear* as also his proposition expressed in the *Preface* that while Shakespeare's comedies are instinct, the tragedies represent only his skill, are both embedded in his peculiar religious view of the world, and this view derives its shape and colour from the peculiar ideological needs of the age. It is wrong to suppose that for Johnson the death of Cordelia puts divine dispensation into doubt. As a matter of fact, he conceded the living truth of such undeserved deaths in the world outside the theatre.[8] What he objects to is its representation on the stage with the theatre's full sanction of its subversive ideology. In his dealing with Shakespeare's tragedies in general Johnson resists with all the force at his command the Shakespearian metaphysic of subversion and its social implications. In his comments on the plays, he does his best -- unconsciously, of course -- to naturalise and appropriate the ideological content of Shakespearian drama and to

slur over its dissonances.

What we are sensitive to in *King Lear* and other Shakespearian tragedies may indeed be no more than another form of appropriation. However, interpretation is self-definition with its dialectic of reciprocity. *King Lear* is, even within the framework of a traditional poetics, a work of compulsive improvisation that achieves the opposite of the intended effect. Shakespeare may have begun with the thought of writing another tract for the times with its flattering envisagement of order and hierarchy, with its tacit assumption of the value of the traditional conception of the tragic pattern, with its overt celebration of Nature's benign fecundity -- he may have begun with all this but soon the conscious design gets swamped in the exhilaration generated by his unconscious realisation of the differential play of language, and consequently the play distances itself into an almost polar opposite of the cultural ideals of its age.

The great Shakespeare myth, as Christopher Norris has recently pointed out,[9] brought into being the twin ideological poles of Shakespeare's Nationalism and his Universalism. The myth came into being early in the eighteenth century and has persisted in its various manifestations till the days of Leavis and Knights. What, however, neither Norris nor Terry Eagleton[10] in his remarkable little book on Shakespeare, does is to suggest that the prototype of the mythical being of Shakespeare, the Master William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the texts that go by his name in the non-Baconian sense, is a medium through which runs the counterpoint to the dominant ideological rhythms of Elizabethan society and culture. The focal point of the disruptive force may be discovered in the total reversal of audience expectation with regard to the tragic pattern. It is not at all being suggested that Elizabethan and early Jacobian drama bears out a uniformist singularity of the pattern of tragedy in that age. On the contrary, there is a remarkable variety of tragic modes from *Gorboduc* to *The Atheist's Tragedy*. What, however, turns the diversity into unity is the common underlying assumption as to the purgatorial nature of suffering implying an assent to cosmic and hence to social order. What *King Lear*, however, does, along with its many other disintegrative counterpoints

which may not here be considered, is to throw order into unfixity through the deaths of Cordelia and Lear. The death of Cordelia, briefly speaking, is the destruction of the fiction of millenniality, a disjunction in the eschatological narrative, a violent and climactic interrogation of the ideology of assent. It is not for nothing that Cordelia and the Fool were doubled in the original production. They have also been doubled in many later productions. "And my poor fool is hanged." The fusion of Cordelia into the Fool and vice versa and their hanging in, perhaps an act of improvisation, is destructive of the myth of socio-cosmic harmony symbolised by Cordelia and underwritten everywhere by the power of Elizabethan establishment. In the death of Cordelia the dissenting voice of the Fool is silenced for ever.

REFERENCES

[1]See George C.D. Odell, *Shakespeare: From Betterton to Irving* (London, 1920), pp.385-90.

[2] Odell, *op. cit.*, p.385.

[3]"Garrick omitted ... the rude jocularity of the grave-diggers." Odell, *op. cit.*, p.387.

[4]Quoted in Odell, *op. cit.*, pp.388-89.

[5]"Preface to Shakespeare" in *Shakespeare Criticism: A Selection*, edited by D. Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1953), p.79.

[6]*Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of 'King Lear'* (London, 1948), pp.31-42.

[7]Smith, *op. cit.*, p.119.

[8]Ibid., pp.119-20.

[9]Christopher Norris, "Post-structuralist Shakespeare: Text and Ideology" in *Alternative Shakespeare*, edited by John Drakakis (London, 1985), p.49.

[10]Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986).

FERMENTATION OF IDEAS: THOMAS HARDY AND THE *BHAGAVADGITA*

S.D. Sharma

The Victorian Age was an age of ideological fermentation and innovative experimentation. Thomas Hardy, the man, is known for his ideological fermentation and Thomas Hardy, the novelist, earned laurels for making innovative experiments in fiction writing. Whereas from Darwinism he drew the idea of Unconscious Will, he borrowed the concept of Immanent Will from Schopenhauer. But for his concept of Cosmic Consciousness, in all probability, he rummaged through the oriental literature, particularly the *Bhagavadgita.*

For a proper understanding of Hardy's concept of Cosmic Consciousness, let us have a little bit of deeper probing into what *The Bhagvadgita* propounds about Human Will. In the *Dynasts,* Hardy lets us know his mind about the Unconscious Will, Immanent Will and the Cosmic Consciousness and the basic difference between the three types of inner urges or creative energies.

Thomas Hardy made a tall claim to have discovered the idea of Unconscious Will of the universe in his correspondence dated March 22, 1904 to Edward Clood and dated June 2, 1907 to Edward Wright respectively.[1] But the fact remains that Hardy derived the idea of the Immanent Will from Schopenhauer, who himself was greatly influenced by the teachings of the *Upanishads*[2] and the *Bhagavadgita.* Schopenhauer treats nature as the objectification of the Will; life as an essentially painful and futile striving; and detached attitude as the only panacea to be released from the imperious demands of the Will. Schopenhauer attributes different *gunas* to his concept of powerful will, which Hardy calls the Immanent Will, and which the *Bhagavadgita* too attributes:

> ... that the will, of which human life, like every phenomenon, is the objectification, is a striving without aim or end. We find the stamp of this endlessness imprinted upon all the parts of its whole manifestation, from the most universal form, endless time and space, upto the most perfect of all phenomena, the life and efforts of man. We may theoretically assume three extremes of human life, and treat them as elements of actual human life. First, the powerful will, the strong passions (*Radscha-Guna*). It appears

> in great historical characters; it is described in the epic and the drama. But it can also show itself in the little world, for the size of the objects is measured here by the degree in which they influence the will, not according to their external relations. Secondly, pure knowing, the comprehension of the *Ideas*, conditioned by the freeing of knowledge from the service of will; the life of genius (*Satwa-Guna*). Thirdly and lastly, the greatest lethargy of the will, and also of the knowledge attaching to it, empty longing, life-benumbing languor (*Tama-Guna*).[3]

In the *Bhagavadgita* (Chapter 18), the theory of *gunas* with their proper divisions, viz., *Satvic, Rajas* and *Tamas,* has been propounded. The *Satvic guna* has been explained as:

नियतं संङ्गरहितम रागद्वेषतः कृतम्।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तासात्त्विकमुच्यते।।[4]

The *Rajasic* action has been explained as:

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्मं साहंकारेण वा पुनः।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदामहृतम।।[5]

And the *Tamasic* action has been explained as:

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनवेक्ष्य च पौरूषम।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते।।[6]

In Chapter II, the *Bhagavadgita* propounds the idea that action without desire and fruit is the duty of everyone, which Schopenhauer finds the best course for the release from the imperious demands of will:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफल हेतु र्भूर्मा ते संङ्गोऽस्त्पकर्मणि।।[7]

John Holloway's interpretation of Hardy's philosophy as natural living is the Schopenhauerian release of the imperious demands of will, and is also tantamount to the way as enunciated by the *Bhagavadgita. The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a study of this idea. The more the paralysis of the Immanent Will, the more the tragic struggle is there. Henchard succumbs to the powerful paralysis of the Immanent Will. Donald Farfrae keeps up a seemingly detached attitude and so does Elizabeth Jane. Susan fails to lead a will-less and resigned life, and so she meets a tragic doom. Under the fit of his *Tamsic* guna, Henchard sells his wife Susan to Newson which is certainly a paralytic attack on the Immanent Will. Henchard's character is a study of the different dimensions and manifestations of the Immanent Will: his failures and successes are interlinked

with the effectiveness and non-effectiveness of the Immanent Will.

The following is the most oft-quoted passage from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* where Henchard perhaps appears to be most detached in the sense of the detached deeds of the *Bhagavadgita:*

> And thus Henchard found himself again on the precise standing which he had occupied a quarter of a century before. Externally there was nothing to hinder his making another start on the upward slope, and by his new lights achieving higher things than his soul in its half-formed state had been able to accomplish. But the ingenious machinery contrived by the Gods for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum—which arranges that wisdom to do shall come *pari passu* with the departure of zest for doing—stood in the way of all that. He had no wish to make an arena a second time of the world that had become a mere painted scene to him.
>
> Very often, as his hay-knife crunched down among the sweet-smelling grassy stems, he would survey mankind and say to himself: "Here and everywhere be folk dying before their time like frosted leaves, though wanted by their families, the country, and the world; while I, an outcast, an encumberer of the ground, wanted by nobody, and despised by all, live on against my will."[8]

Deeds, *gunas,* Immanent Will, character and fate are closely interlinked in Hardy's novels. Henchard becomes the Mayor of Casterbridge by dint of his hard work and perseverance; from an itinerant drunkard and hay trusser, he becomes the wealthiest corn-merchant of the town. He makes a firm resolve not to touch wine for twenty years and rises to newer heights. But the moment he takes to drinking again he declines and touches the nadir. His capacity to work dwindles; his fate deceives him; his deeds fade into rituals; his *gunas* grow *tamsik* and ultimately he dies a tragic death. So is the case with Wildev and Giles Winterbourne. Alec and Jude, Sergeant Troy and Bathsheba Everdeene also get happiness and unhappiness, success and failure, mirth and gloom in accordance with their virtues and vices, deeds and *gunas.* In juxtaposition of this category of characters of extreme good and bad is the category of those characters who are neither too passionate nor too indifferent, but those who try to do good deeds. Precisely, they are more given to temperance, which the *Bhagavadgita* also stipulates for a happier living. Fancy Day, Elfride Swancourt, Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, Donald Farfrae, Fitzpiers and Angel Clare are such characters who

practise temperance and lead comparatively a happy life.

In the *Bhagvadgita* (Chapter XI), Lord Krishna shows to Arjun that the whole universe is concealed in Him and everything in the world is already fixed and determined:

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं
त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम्।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता
सनातनस्त्वं पुरूषो मतो मे।।[9]

Hardy's determinism is similar to the above concept as enunciated in the *Bhagavadgita*. Again, as in the *Bhagavadgita*, the concept of *Samskara* evolves a human life, a fixed and determined concept of spiritual evolution, so in Hardy's novels, the Christian humanism does wholly help grow a man higher and higher both physically and spiritually. It is true that Hardy accepts the whole concept of the Darwinian evolution of man, but his total belief in the cardinal virtues of the Christian religion does good to a man for spiritual evolution and perfection too.

According to Hardy, human action is not free but determined by motives, which are regarded as external forces acting on the will. The characters, therefore, would appear to be helpless; and yet the tragic characters do not appear to be mere puppets jerked by a malicious fate. Were it so, they would miss an essential condition of tragedy. The tragic characters who endure all the vicissitudes and odds of life with patience turn out to be more perfect, as in the *Bhagavadgita*, a man with good deeds forms good *samskaras* and ultimately grows more perfect. External pressure or coincidence is always there in Hardy's novels, yet the internal conflict, the conflict of good and bad outweighs in the end. Angel Clare, for instance, does appear to be a puppet in the hands of fate yet external compulsions are far less predominant on him than internal ones. His getting more and more detached to crystallise his vision of the world, the society and ultimately of Tess is remarkably underlined as and when he grows internally.

Hardy's Immanent Will, this inner force has some characteristic features. First, the Will is one and Immanent like the *Bhagavadgita's* Brahma, for it is represented as the one and the

only source from which all life and activity are flowing. Secondly, the Will is autonomous, determining everything; it is itself determined by nothing and human events are but the manifestations of its mysterious designs. No earthly power can swerve the bias of its power which governs all things by its clock-wise laws. Thirdly, the Will is unconscious, viewless and vioceless. Lastly, it is indestructible, endless like the *Bhagavadgita's* Lord Krishna or Parama Brahma. Conditioned by this Immanent Will, man in Hardy's novels is often a willing, surrendering being, completely ruled by the fixed mysterious inclinations of his nature. The Will within him urges him on, often against his better judgment. It is, for instance, some inexplicable power that draws together Eustacia and Wildev; Alec and Tess; Farfrae and Lucetta; and Jude and Sue.

Whereas the evolution of man in the *Bhagavadgita* is thus wholly spiritual, Hardy's is a combination of science, say Darwinism, plus his complete faith in the Biblical Monotheism. Hardy's man struggles for existence in the Darwinian sense of the term and his physical existence is meaningless without his faith in the sterling virtues of life, the basis of the Christian humanism and which exactly corresponds to the spiritual evolution of man as enunciated in the *Bhagavadgita.*

In the *Bhagavadgita,* Lord Krishna says to Arjun "whenever there is decline of righteousness, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body myself forth for the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma (righteousness) on a firm footing. I am born from age to age."[10] This is Hardy's view of Cosmic Consciousness which approximates to Bucke's and also Spinoza's view of *Necessity.* By inference it means that whenever there is a collapse of good, the Immanent Will, though often irresponsible and blind, grows into self-consciousness and ultimately assumes the form of Cosmic Consciousness. In the *Dynasts,* the same concept of Cosmic Consciousness or the theory of Necessity or Expediency has been explained by Hardy. When Hardy's critics fell hard upon him, finding too many philosophic abstractions in the *Dynasts,* Hardy wrote to his friend Pretor, Fellow of St. Catherine College, Cambridge, explaining his view of Freewill

versus Necessity. Pretor understood Hardy's point of view well and wrote back to him:

> My thanks for your tremendous new statement in *The Dynasts* of the world-old problem of Freewill versus Necessity. You have carried me on to the mountain with Jesus of Nalzareth and viewing with Him the great conflict below, one chooses with him to side with the spirit of the Pities, in the belief that they will ultimately triumph; and even if they do not we atleast will do our little to add to the joy rather than to the woe of the world.... The spirit of the Pities is indeed young in comparison with the Years, and so we must be patient.... Your conception of the Immanent Will--irresponsible, blind, but possibly growing into self-consciousness--was of great significance to me, from my knowledge of Dr. Bucke's theory of the Cosmic Consciousness.[11]

Hardy is often misconstrued to banish God from Heaven or to tarnish the image of God with a bitter coat of malignancy. Were it so, his Henchard, Tess, Jude, Gabriel Oak and others would prove to be the most despised human beings. But it is not so. His providence is wholly conscious and not malignant. In his correspondence to Mr. Edward Wright, Hardy writes:

> That the unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely at which I arrived by reflecting that what has already taken place in a fraction of the whole (i.e., so much of the world as has become conscious) is likely to take place in the mass; and there being no Will outside the mass--that is, the Universe--the whole Will becomes conscious thereby; and ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic.[12]

Hardy's Cosmic Consciousness is, therefore, the Nature in her primordial form which is bound to grow into perfection. Here his views approximate to the concept of *Prakrti* as enuncidated in the *Bhagavadgita:* "My Prakrti or Nature in her primordial, undeveloped state is the womb of all creatures; in that I place the seed of consciousness."[13] The birth of all beings follows from this combination of Matter and Spirit. "Rather must I apprehend," Hardy writes, "that man, in some inconceivable way, may at his best moments represent a principle darkly at strife with that which prevails throughout the world as known to us."[14] In this fierce strife, Immanent Will plays an important role in so far as it goads a man on to keep up his spirits high and enlivened. The weaker the Immanent Will, the lesser will be the chances of survival. In the Darwinian sense of the term, this spirit of fierce struggle is the basic instinct which governs and operates the principle of survival of the fittest. This spirit of

fierce struggle may be termed as the Cosmic Consciousness in the sense the *Bhagavadgita* enunciates.

The spirit to survive in the Darwinian sense is purely biological, but the same in the Christian religion becomes tantamount to the Cosmic Consciousness. Hardy may see this spirit or urge to be or not to be a part of God or a Blind Power, he does not doubt at all the overall impact of good and the degenerating effect of evil. Purity of action is its own reward, whether the presumed God or the feigned hypocritical air of religiosity vouchsafes purity to be worthy of any reward or not. "Of all the theological systems," Hardy asserts, "most convincing is the Manichaeism, which, of course, under another name, was held by the Puritans themselves."[15] In fact, the Manichaeism system of the universe seems to have confirmed Hardy's view that man should constantly endeavour to glorify good without the least expectation of its being rewarded. In the purity of action, the purity of love works wonders. The last lines of *Far From the Madding Crowd* explicitly carry this strong message. "Where, however," writes Hardy, "happy circumstance permits its development, the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death--that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the flood drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as stream."[16]

No wonder the famous paralytic fit of the Immanent Will in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* seems to glorify good. "But the ingenious machinery," exclaims Henchard so magnificently, "contrived by the Gods for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum—which arranges that wisdom to do shall come *pari passu* with the departure of zest for doing--stood in the way of all that. He had no wish to make an arena of a second time of the world that had become a mere painted scene to him.[17]

Tess, the heroine of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, has a resolute will to oppose and dislike Alec knowing the fact that he was her seducer. Notwithstanding the grave awaiting her, she feels extremely determined to enjoy Clare's company for ever. She prefers death to separation from Clare. The type of happiness she gets with Clare is the type of happiness she has never derived in her life from any

source. She does not fear God, not even the society which criminally hurled labels of a lewd woman, an impure maiden, on her. Hardy himself presents her rather philosophically in such a tone as to attract everybody's attention.

In summation, this discussion may be concluded by what Thomas Hardy himself wrote to Edward Wright on June 2, 1907, "....The will of a man is ... neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will... he is not individually free; but whatever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is an equillibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them."[18]

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[2]"In Schopenhauer's writings, it is possible to detect influences from the systems of Plato, Kant and the *Upanishads*, all of which he studied at the Universities of Gottingen and Berlin" (James B. Hartman, *Philosophy of Recent Times* [New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967], Vol.I, p.82).

[3]Ibid., p.119.

[4]*The Bhagavadgita*, Chapter XVIII, Shloka 23.

[5]Ibid., Chapter XVIII, Shloka 24.

[6]Ibid., Chapter XVIII, Shloka 25.

[7]Ibid., Chapter II, Shloka 47.

[8]*The Mayor of Casterbridge* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.313.

[9]*The Bhagavadgita*, Chapter II, Shloka 18.

[10]*The Bhagavadgita*, Chapter IV, Shlokas 7 and 8.

[11]Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1965), p.337.

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THE STORY OF AGONY AND ECSTASY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF TED HUGHES'S CROW POEMS

Keya Majumdar

I

As T.S. Eliot flashed bright and unique in the horizon of English Poetry in the 1920s, so did Ted Hughes during the 1960s, matching Eliot's aversion to contemporary poetic method as well as the burning zeal and urge to utter the "felt truths" with astonishing technical brilliance. Like Eliot also, Hughes's energy of feelings and sheer vigour of versification, played havoc with the prevalent 'nice' formalities of The Movement. And with breath of fresh air came the realization to reading public that "Something else is alive."

In his earlier poems, Hughes engages instinctively almost in finding parallels for violent liveliness of animals in action.As he goes on exploring the animal kingdom, the hawk, the jaguar, the horses, the cat, the fox and the bullfrog, described by him, assume vital, luminous and graceful symbolic presence. This stark physicality of the animals in movement was something novel in English Poetry, and one can say that even keeping D.H. Lawrence in mind. Though he can make his lines throb with the raw vitality of the gnawing, gushing, belching and galloping animals as predators or victims, his main occupation has always been to search for the Spirit of the particular animal in order to make a Metaphor out of that. The metaphors then relate the creatures to human experiences and concepts as awesome, terrible and vital as the case may be. As the hawk becomes a spokesman of Nature as "It took the whole of creation / To produce my foot, my each feather: / Now I hold creation in my foot" (*Hawk Roosting*).

With the publication of "Lupercal" (1960), however, he had exhausted his original subject, the violence of the Universe, limiting as it was. Something that happened on personal front could be responsible for the change also. He had been separated from his wife, Sylvia Plath, a brilliant poet herself. And, then, the suicide of Plath in February 1963 stunned him into three years'poetic silence. In 1966 when he could start writing again,his poetic style and the

treatment of subject matter had undergone a crucial transformation. The present study would try to throw some light on this second stage of his poetic career in the context of the Crow poems particularly.

Although animals still persist as his objective corelatives, now they are smaller in stature, but are more deeply engrossed in the drama of existence -- more questioning, bitter, cruel and somewhat bewildered in manner.

Now, mapping this strange land of the destructive - creative energies of Nature, Crow the Noble Savage appears with his indestructible urge for life. Through the whole series of the Crow - Poems, the 'Search' of this scavenger bird continues through dust and dirt of Life, taking recourse to different poetic, shamanistic devices of tricking, being tricked, parodying, black humour, faking, and committing faux pas -- just to fight it out with Macbethean courage. All through this very personal-spiritual journey, the Crow-Poems pared to the barest minimum of rhetoric and rhythmic manifestations chart the way through crisis --> courage --> survival --> agony (of the survivor) --> ecstasy (of resurrection). In final effect, the poet seems to point at not the end of the journey but the 'journey' itself in which the Crow's "daring ability to ask, 'Why'? may still be more important than hearing answers."[1] So, the poets stance now changes to take on the most difficult task of removing all the obstacles and shackles of his blocked Self to come to terms with the ongoing world:

> ... god or not god, who
> Come to my sleeping body through
> The world under the world; pray
> That I may see more than your eyes
> In an animal's dreamed head... (*Crag Jack's Apostasy*)

II

In an elaborate, ritualised sequence, covering the whole panorama of life from birth to death, Hughes presents and examines what goes on in the "dreamed head" of the Crow. Is he simply a destroyer, or a creator too -- creator of the cleansed self ? Is he just a scavenger, or a being engaged in purifying the anarchic debris of the soul also ? Is he just an evil prankster whose solipsistic complacency bites into pieces all human pretensions, or may be

this mocking bird scoffs at the world at his own expense, as he realises:

there were two gods
One of them much bigger than the other
Loving his enemies
And having all the weapons. (*Crow's Theology*)

With each and every discovery of the Crow, Hughes's poetry inexorably reaches the point of crisis -- moral, psychological,or spiritual -- which he very successfully transfers on to the universal mythic vision. The Crow-Poems seem to come out of the very disturbing, relentlessly questioning deep psyche of the poet, as with this apt metaphor he tries to destroy once for all the puzzling, hurting and guilt-ridden attributes to come out cleaner, wiser and saner.

The terrible potential of outward world that Hughes had artistically imposed in poems after poems of surging violence since the start of his poetic career, now turns inside to torment him with self-questioning doubts of guilt, error, terror and death absence: "In the great emptiness you sit complacent," thinking perhaps about the "coffin that will not be silent." In the heart-rending effort of dragging the Meaning up from the debris of the depths, the Crow becomes Hughes's apt metaphor now, as it lives out its life in naked extremity taking part in the primary struggle of Existence, grasping with its beak and claw the atrocities and vitalities of Life and Death. It "roars" in laughter as "He bit the Worm, God's only son", or "smirks" in self-pity as God "cursed, wept--", or "charged into space" in search of the black beast, as he had to find out "something to eat":

Among abandoned utilities
Exposed to infinity forever. (*The Moment*)

Gradually, as the Crow takes its sojourn poem after poem, it becomes strong enough to control everything -- expert at self-mockery, a mind and consciousness stripped bare in the agonies and ecstasies of self-realisation.

III

As the Crow comes to grips with the tricks and strategies of Survival, it offers extended awareness of Living -- pointing at the personal inferno that each of us faces offering ways of resilience and endurance. Geoffrey Thurley incisively points out, "To emerge is the aim of the Crow poems. The whole book wants to say with

Lawrence, look, we have come through. The poet tries to reach a peace in annihilation."[2]

Coming out of the womb of the "Scream", the Crow is subjected to a first encounter with Death in *Examination at the Womb-Door*. As soon as he gets into being, he successfully encounters the existential dread of the victim in "A K ill", or/ and that of the killer in " Crow and Mama." Rather sure of himself in his barest urge of self-gratification, he struts forth into the actual world of physical existence, peeping through the "eye's pupil. This now is his first confrontation with the "I" the Self as well as with God. So unflinchingly he progresses to brave all that is ghastly or lively, terrifying or terror-yielding creating pure poetry that has "...audible meanings without disturbing the silence, an art of homing in tentatively on vital scarcely perceptible signals, making no mistakes but with no hope for finality, continuing to explore." And this suggests Hughes himself. Ready to explore as he is, the insidious intent of "deathliness" in all stages of life with his unleashed energies, all human pretensions, social hypocrisy ,psychic disorders come under the cold and nihilistic scrutiny of the Crow. In *Crow's First Lesson*, God tries to teach him to say love. But Crow's gape only answers back successively as "shark", "bluefly, "tsetse" and "mosquito" as objective co-relatives of love. Before God gives up in utter disgust, as the Crow would not learn the love-lorn hypocrisies, the fleshy possessiveness of man-woman love is brought into focus as "woman's vulva dropped over man's neck and tightened. / The two struggled together on the grass." One is aptly reminded of the same fate of the couple of *Lovesong*, so obsessively possessive of each other that "In their entwined sleep they exchanged arms and legs / In their dreams their brains took each other hostage," hammering home the crucial question—if so-called love cannot set each other free, is it worth it at all? Like love, human beings have distorted the meanings of smile also which gets ominous almost:

> And so the smile not even Leonardo
> could have fathomed
> Flew off into the air, the rubbish heap of laughter
> Screams, discretions, indiscretions etcetera. (*Crow Improvises*)

But it is the Crow, the ultimate survivor of this crafty, delusive and

disgustingly malevolent world, who is having the last laugh as "he chokes he / Holds his aching sides" (*Crow's Battle Fury*). He, however, does not abandon his search for Truth through "double smiles and blank silence"

> Till it had no weeping left
> It lay at the bottom of all things
> utterly worn out utterly clear. (*How Water Began to Play*)

So to be utterly "clear" the survivor has to get at the bottom of things, as Geoffrey Thurley suggests -- "to horror, perhaps, but a horror clean and without distraction from itself."[4] There is no surrealistic diffuseness colouring the Crow 's motive as is found in Wodwo because he "goes on". So Hughes explains the psychic journey of the Crow : "... (he) lives on, the dimension of psychic life through which he fares forward, destruction prone but indestructible ...blundering through every possible mistake and every possible sticky end, experimenting with every pulse, like a grambling machine of mutations, but inaccessible to despair."[5] So the Crow as a Protean figure would not hold back from the cruelties of life, because he knows the terrors or the meaninglessness of death also as his being got devastated and recreated time and again, "His tattered guts stitched back into position" and "his shattered brain covered with a steel cowl"

> He steps forward a step,
> and a step,
> and a step -- (*Crow's Battle Fury*)

to make the break through, where the wind's "incomprehensible cry/ from the boughs" cry out "Joy! Help!"

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DIALOGIC SYMBOLISM IN HAROLD PINTER'S PLAYS

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The drama is probably the most composite literary form. The great Indian dramaturgist Bharata has called it the fifth Veda. "There is no knowledge," he maintains, "no craft, no science, no art, no combination thereof that cannot become a part of the drama" (*Natya-sastra* 1.116). He further says that no one can find an end to the art of the drama chiefly because "so many sciences, techniques and arts become part of it" (1.108-12). Though Bharata defines the drama (*natya*) as "imitation of the affairs of the world" (*lokavrttanukaranam*), in his detailed exposition of the systems of dramatic representation he draws a distinction between two modes called *lokadharmi* and *natyadharmi*, generally translated as realistic and stylized, mimetic and conventional, or worldly and theatrical. The *natyadharmi* or theatrical representation

> ... comprises exaggerated statements, extraordinary actions, imaginative mental pursuits, unbounded emotions and gracefulness of movements and ornaments and dialogues made beautiful by the embellishments of voice and metaphors (14.65).

The great dramatists like Kalidasa and Shakespeare beautifully blend elements from both the kinds of representations. But in the case of less gifted dramatists either of these modes may be preferred at the cost of the other. The theatrical communication generally, however, works less through a world reproducing mimesis than through a complex process of differential semiosis. Bharata's postulates regarding the *natyadharmi* subsume principles and practices which, in the terminology of modern theatre semiotics, may be called the constitutives of all the possibilities of performance, the arbitrary relationship between the theatrical signifiers and signifieds and the transferability of the sign through linguistic and non-linguistic means. In other words, Bharata posits the theatre as employing a distinctive language which, despite being conventional in nature, has little reference to an extra-theatrical reality.

The twentieth-century drama makes recurrent demands for some drastic reconsideration of the structure of the drama and also of the

theatrical enactment on the stage. Pirandello, for example, would see the theatre creating "its own little world"; to Ionesco theatre is a place where "two antagonistic worlds" of the real and imaginary collide; and according to Adamov, a "stage play must be the point of intersection between the visible and the invisible worlds." The theatre is now being regarded as an independent world where the dramatist has freedom to fashion his own cosmos through verbal and non-verbal means. Artaud, who has most vociferously advocated for a separate language of the theatre, is of the view that the visual possibilities of the theatre have proved to be mere illustrative factor to the words of a play and the theatre environment, including non-verbal action, an extension to the dialogue of a play. Theatre, according to him, has its own non-verbal language, which may incorporate the verbal language as and as much it needs without being fully dependent on it for its efficacy:

> The idea of supremacy of speech in the theatre is so deeply rooted in us, and the theatre seems to such a degree merely the material reflection of the text, that is not kept within its limits and strictly conditioned by it, seems to us purely a matter of *mis en scene,* and quite inferior in comparison with the text. Presented with this subordination of theatre to speech, one might indeed wonder whether the theatre by any chance possesses its own language, whether it is entirely fanciful to consider it as an independent and autonomous art, of the same rank as music, painting, dance, etc.
>
> One finds in any case that this language, if it exists, is necessarily identified with the *mis en scene* considered:
>
> 1. as the visual and plastic materialization of speech
> 2. as the language of everthing that can be said and signified upon a stage independently of speech, everything that finds its *expression in space,* or that can be affected or disintegrated by it.
>
> Once we regard this language of the *mis en scene* as the pure theatrical language, we must discover whether it can attain the same internal ends as speech, whether theatrically and from [the] point of view of the mind it can claim the same intellectual efficacy as the spoken language. One can wonder, in other words, whether it may not entice the mind to take profound and efficacious attitudes toward it from its own point of view.[1]

With the concept of "difference" having acquired enormous significance today, it would be proper to evaluate the modern drama as having its own sign-system or language. Changes in respect of a genre, as Bakhtin points out, should be considered in terms of social

changes. A genre, he says, is "a crystallisation of the concepts peculiar to a given time and to a given social situation in a specific society."[2] Interpreted liberally, the given situation would also include the mental states of the interactants. Notwithstanding the social nature of our conventional language, what we find in some of the modern plays is a heteroglossiac situation in which characters generally speak not in a shared language but in a multiplicity of overlapping and at times conflicting languages. Language in such cases serves as an analogue or symbol or metaphor. Talking about metaphor, Johnson remarks that it "is not merely a linguistic expression ... it is a process of human understanding by which we achieve meaningful experience that we can make sense of."[3] The modern dramatist's special commitment being to his language, he makes strenuous efforts to make it a better instrument for the delineation of human psyche and mental sets. The present paper aims at analysing the language of Harold Pinter's plays from this very point of view.

II

When Pinter's *The Birthday Party* was first presented at the Arts Theatre in Cambridge on 28 April 1958 and at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on 19 May the same year, it was regarded as an abject failure. The *Manchester Guardian* of 21 May 1958 dismissed Pinter as a playwright because his characters spoke in "non-sequiturs, half-gibberish and lunatic ravings" and the play was found to be "unable to explain their actions, thoughts and feelings."[4] *The Evening Standard* linkened the play to a "crossword puzzle where every vertical clue is designed to put you off the horizontal."[5] The most amusing review of the play came from W.A. Darlington of *The Daily Telegraph* of 25 May 1958, who declared that the play "turned out to be one of those plays in which an author wallows in symbols and revels in obscurity. ... The author never got down to earth long enough to explain what his play was about."[6] Later, however, Pinter's achievements as a dramatist of great potential were duly recognised. Harold Hobson declared that Pinter "possesses the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London."[7] The cause of his greatness lies in, among other things, creating a drama of human

relations at the level of language itself. "A Pinter's play," it has rightly been pointed out, "exists at the level of language as opposed to plot."[8] An analysis of Pinter's language is likely to reveal the secret of his success as a dramatist.

Dialogue in the plays of Pinter is, in fact, an integral part of the action itself. The verbal texture of these plays is remarkably suggestive of the confused, shifting and agonizing states of the modern mind. Like Ionesco, Pinter was fully aware of the futility of the common language, and attempted to rediscover the mechanism of theatre in its pure state. The power of his dialogue helps Pinter evoke the feeling of meaninglessness and *angst.* Like other exponents of the Theatre of the Absurd, he owes a lot to the existentialist philosophy of Heideggar, Sartre and Camus. Camus, who coined the concept of the Absurd in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), observes:

> In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile.... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.

One of the major problems that Pinter and other Absurdists had to face was the creation of an idiom which would serve as an objective correlative--an effective verbal symbol capable of corresponding to and communicating experiences and feelings, problems and predicament of the "irremediable exile" spelt out by Camus. Ionesco expressed the position of all of them when he said: "A work of art is the expression of an incommunicable reality that one tries to communicate--and which sometimes can be communicated. That is its paradox and its truth." In his efforts to resolve this paradox and face the truth squarely, Pinter has tried to alter the consciousness of the spectator by bringing him face to face with a new perception of this "incommunicable reality." This he has done with the help of a powerful dramatic idiom of far-reaching significance through which he reveals the inner man in his existential predicament:

> Goldberg: Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral.
> McCann: That's true.
> Goldberg: True? Of course it's true. It's more than true. It's more than true. It's a fact. (*The Birthday Party*, I, 38)

Pinter's dialogue, transcending the literal and farcical levels, stirs the obscure corners of human consciousness, which remained

inhibited by the age-old traditional way of thinking. Pinter's plays confront the audience with a distorted picture of well-guarded images of society and uncover a sterile world of diminishing human communication and growing absurdity in life. Through a careful deployment of words or their apparent absence that appropriate meanings emanate. "Meaning," as Pinter himself wrote in a letter to Director Peter Wood on 30 March 1958, "begins in the words, in action, continues in your head and ends nowhere. There is no end to meaning. Meaning which is resolved, parcelled, labelled and ready for export is dead, impertinent--and meaningless."[9] The unenviable task of the modern dramatist is to create and convey meaning in a relatively meaningless set-up.

Accepting the challenge, Pinter liberated the drama from past shackles and introduced a new style of playwriting. The truth of linguistic discourse runs parallel here to the truth of human experience, truth of perception and feeling. 'Pinterish' dialogue contains much that would be popularly considered to be falsehood, half-truths, contradictions, innuendoes, gibberishes and whispers. All gestures, movements and meaningful looks, along with a careful stage-decor, contribute significantly to the dialogue in his plays. Pinter patterns his dialogue systematically and with metioulous care along the route of disintegrated, defiled, incongruous day-to-day conversation. As Almansi observes,

> He has never stooped to use the degraded language of honesty, sincerity, or innocence which has contaminated the theatre for so long... his language was never chaste, but corrupt from birth. ...Pinter's idiom is essentially human because it is an idiom of lies.[10]

This idiom comes to grips with the perplexed sensibility, crosscurrents of multifarious stupefying human awareness and facets of ever-green violence and brutality embedded in the under-surface reality of the contemporary human society and human self. In the process, the well known distinctions between real and unreal, true and false get blurred. Pinter himself writes in his seminal essay on "Writing for the Theatre":

> There can be no hard distinction between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.[11]

It is this attitude that is at the base of Pinter's symbolic mode. The language used by his characters is spattered with dialogic disfiguration, disjunction and dysfunction, which are parts of his deliberate technique.

Symbols may be regarded as bridges linking the literal with the suggestive. And "a literary symbol," as J.A. Cuddon would put it, "combines an image with a concept."[12] Pinter has used symbols variously. *The Birthday Party,* for example, assigns symbolic value to broken glasses, drumbeat, blindness and so on. The monosyllabic names of the hospital staff in *The Hothouse* such as Cutts, Lush, Beck, Peck, Tate, Lamb and Tuck are deliberately used to create necessary mental set by distorting human reality into grotesque fantasy. These absurd and curt names conform, in a way, to the Roman belief of 'Noman Omen' and indicate that what a person or thing is called bears, in some subtle and mysterious way, an affinity with his or its inner being and is a pointer to his or its destiny. What is even more important is the fact that a typical Pinterian play, with its verbal and non-verbal repertoire, symbolically represents the complexity of modern life and the predicament of the modern man. Using Virginia Woolf's expression for great Greek dramatists, we can say that the entire play is "the reverberation and reflection"[13] of the reality that it strives to enshrine. At the hands of a master craftsman symbolic representation, like the one we find in Pinter's plays, epitomises man's dreams and plights in totality. As Northrop Frye would put it,

> ... the symbol is a monad, all symbols being united in a single infinite and eternal verbal symbol which is as *dianosia, logos* and as *mythos,* total creative act. It is this conception which Joyce expresses, in terms of subject matter as epiphany and Hopkins, in terms of form, as 'inscape.'[14]

A consistent use of the symbolic mode enables a playwright to persuade the audience to properly apprehend the action on the stage at the levels chosen by him.

The success of the Pinterian dialogue is mostly due to the various devices used by him. "The dialogue in Pinter's plays," writes George Wellworth, "fascinates by its very monotony and repetitiveness because the audience *recognizes* it--they have heard this sort of talk before."[15] The following extract from his earliest play, *The*

Room (1957), illustrates this point:

Mr. Kidd: Hello, Mr. Hudd, how are you, all right? I've been looking at the pipes.

Rose: Are they all right?

Mr. Kidd: Eh?

Rose: Sit down, Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Kidd:. No, that's all right. I just popped in, like, to see how things were going. Well, it's cosy in here, isn't it?

Rose: Oh, thank you, Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Kidd: You going out today, Mr. Hudd? I went out. I came straight in again. Only to the corner, of course.

Rose: Not many people about today, Mr. Kidd.

Mr. Kidd: So I thought to myself, I'd better have a look at those pipes. In the circumstances, I only went to the corner, for a few necessary items. It's likely to snow. Very likely, in my opinion.

Rose: Why don't you sit down, Mr. Kidd?

Mr. Kidd: No, no that's all right. (*The Room,* I, 105-106)

A careful analysis of the passage quoted above shows that Mr. Kidd and Rose do not provide each other with likely or expected answers. They are being deliberately repetitive and recurrently misunderstand each other. Mr. Hudd, spoken to by Mr. Kidd, is somehow mysteriously silent. Pinter's realistically modelled dialogic design, as we will see, heavily banks upon the hiatus between words and their implications at the connotational level.

The characters in Pinter's plays often speak minimally with obvious restraints, wading through pauses and silences. Their language is spattered with unanswered questions and equally unanswered counterquestions. It has been suggested by Martin Esslin that "drama can hardly ever be reduced to a clear-cut personal statement by an individual creator, fully in control of the exact meaning of every element and sign contained in the message emitted."[16] This would explain the incoherence and seeming inconsistency of the Pinterian dialogue. Gaps and hurdles enliven a Pinter play and the audience response concentrates around the aura of a perceived meaning. But as T.S. Eliot maintains, "suggestiveness is the aura around a bright clear centre,"[17] and in order to have the aura (i.e. the suggested meaning) we must have a bright clear centre (i.e. the stated meaning). Incidentally, the *dhvani* theorists have also considered the distinction between the denotative and suggested

meaning on the basis of the lamp-jar metaphor. Ananda-vardhana clearly states in *Dhvanyaloka*: "Just as the purport of a sentence is grasped only through the sense of individual words, the knowledge of poetic sense is attained only through the literal meaning" (1.10). However, this does not generally happen in Pinter's plays. The convoluted language patterns littered in them demonstrate beyond any pale of doubt that people are mostly incapable of revealing accurately their thoughts and feelings. In one of his early poems pertinently called "Stranger" (1953) Pinter writes:

That you so did render
The echo unheard
That you might divide
When the echo was gone.

The dialogue in Pinter's plays shows that the speech we do not hear is a "necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smokescreen ....When true silence falls we are still left with echo."[18] At times this echo becomes more eloquent than eloquence itself.

Evasion is, in fact, an integral part of the Pinterian dialogue. Pinter once said that in conversation what takes place is "continual evasion" born of our desperate attempts to "keep ourselves to ourselves."[19] The following dialogue between a barman and an old newspaper seller in a coffee stall, from *Last to Go* (1959), testifies to this quality of his language:

Man: I want to see if I could get hold of George.
Barman: Who ?
Man: George.
Pause.
Barman: George who ?
Man: George ... Whatsisname.
Pause.
Barman: Did you get hold of him ?
Man: No. No, I couldn't get hold of him. I couldn't locate him.
Barman: He's not about much now, is he?
Pause.
Man: When did you last see him then?
Barman: Oh, I haven't seen him for years.
Man: No, nor me.
Pause.
Barman: Used to suffer very bad from arthritis.

Man: Arthritis ?
Barman: Yes.
Man: He never suffered from arthritis.
Barman: Suffered very bad.
Pause.
Man: Not when I knew him.
Pause.
Barman: I think he must have left the area.
Pause.
Man: Yes, it was the 'Evening News' was the last to go tonight.
Barman: Not always the last though, is it, though?
Man: Oh no. (...)
Barman: Yes.
Pause.
Man: I think he must have left the area.

(*Last to Go,* II, 252)

The two characters--the Barman and the newspaper seller--seem to talk at cross purposes, are not interested to listen to each other, and fail to mentally connect and communicate. Besides, they are also not interested in what they are confabulating about. The emptiness and irrationality of the dialogue stand out clearly and reflect the self-centredness, callousness and impatience of modern life with its sick hurry and divided aims.

T.S. Eliot says in *The Rock* (Chorus IX) that it is "Out of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail of verbal imprecisions" that we try to build the world of verbal discourse. Almost in the same vein, Pinter writes in his poem "All of That" (1970):

All of that I made
And, making lied.
And all of that I hid
Pretended dead.
But all of that I hid
Was always said.

Words wear out faster than numbers or tunes and cease to be vital, and hence the Pinterian hide-and-seek game with words:

Deeley: How's the yatcht?
Anna: Oh, very well.
Deeley: Captain steer a straight course?
Anna: As straight as we wish, when we wish it.
Deeley: Don't you find England damp, returning?

Anna: Rather beguilingly so. (*Old Times*, IV)

Pinter demonstrates in his plays what Ionesco calls "collapse of reality" in language, which happens when words are "turned into sounding shells devoid of meaning." Pinter makes it a point to reduce his language to its lowest common denominator wherein words are emptied of content, as in the following passage:

Len: Who's driving the tank?
Pete: What?
Len: Who's driving the tank?
Pete: Don't ask me. We've been walking up the road back to back.
Lan: You've what? (*Pause.*) You've been walking up the road, back to back? (*Pause.*) (*The Dwarfs*, II, 115)

In *Mountain Language* we find a breakdown of language system:

Sergeant: Name?
Woman: We've given our names.
Sergeant: Name?
Woman: We've given our names.
Sergeant: Names? (*Mountain Language*, 11)

The verbal interaction in the real sense is just not possible under such circumstances. The interactants keep on talking without getting, or even expecting to get, proper response. This breakdown in human communication is probably the greatest tragedy of the modern/ postmodern age.

Pinter's career as a playwright provides sufficient proof of a continual development in technique. As he goes ahead, he acquires a greater mastery over craftsmanship. But the language used by him evinces a steady minimalization. Once words, because of inherent limitations, fail him, non-verbal communication becomes more important, and so do irony and anxiety-tinged vacuous laughter. Pinter, consequently, creates an idiom for his plays which seldom flows smoothly and often slips into meaninglessness. This idiom abounds in repetitions, pleonasms, questions-without-answers, non-sequiturs, gaps and potholes of uneasy pauses and heavily loaded silences. No other language would be suitable for people populating his dramatic world. The language use, or the absence of it, is indicative of the psychic state of his characters. Ordinarily, the use of such language will be regarded as a violation of propriety and resulting in a defect (*dosa*). But in the Pinterian world the dislocation in respect

of language is highly expressive and appropriate. The Indian poetician Dandin would regard violation of sequence and self-contradiction as defects in normal conditions, but in a certain frame of mind, he says in *Kavyadarsa*, such expressions are permissible (3.131; 133). Pinter, to express the mental condition of his characters, uses symbols and telegraphic language, without which probably he would not have succeeded in projecting properly the plight of the modern man doomed to undertake an agonising quest for awareness in a hostile world.

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HART CRANE'S *THE BRIDGE:* AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

P. Dhanavel

Hart Crane, one of the rare poetic talents of modern American literature, wrote his major poem *The Bridge* in direct response to the bleak and negative vision of the early 20th Century life in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.* Since then the readers of Crane have now and then pointed out the intertextual relation between the two poems. Here is yet another attempt to show a particular connection between them from a Bloomian angle, though Harold Bloom himself does not favour such a study of direct influences. After all, most varieties of intertextual theories, including Bloom's, have been found to be "conservative" (Morgan 1989: 272).

When Crane was half way through his important poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," he read Eliot's *The Waste Land.* Inspite of his high regard for the senior poet, the young poet could not but condemn Eliot for his pessimistic and perturbing vision. Spurred on by a combative spirit, Crane decided to "answer" Eliot by providing a positive alternative. Perhaps he was so much overwhelmed by Eliot that he wanted to use the same materials and methods of Eliot and yet reach "a different goal" (Savage 1982: 43-44). It took him seven odd years to bring out *The Bridge,* a significant poem of epic dimension.

Unfortunately, critics of the day, for instance Winters (1982: 24-30), did not find Crane's poem to their liking for several reasons: obscurity, incoherence, sentimentality, inconsistency, and so forth. In short, it was not a pure modernist poem for them. Consequently, Crane became more depressed than ever before and at last drowned himself in the Carribean Sea at a young age.

The personal and poetic life of Crane gives ample scope for asking a Bloomian question: Was the poet forced to drown himself by "the anxiety of influence"? Personally, Crane had no stability in his life, for his parents were always at loggerheads with each other. He failed to get stable selfhood from his friends and acquaintances too. He had no choice but to turn to poetry for achieving an imaginative

unity that he constantly longed to have within himself. Poetry seemed to offer him a chance but Eliot and other modernist writers posed him a challenge which he took up seriously. In this battle for balance, frequent bouts of doubts about his creative ability came to him. Finally, however, he achieved his goal of poetic immortality in *The Bridge*. It is sad that few critics have taken the efforts to understand Crane's creative anxiety and achievement. Perhaps, the only critic to have paid serious critical attention to this phenomenon in Crane is Bloom (1982: 252-269).

Harold Bloom's essay on "Hart Crane's Gnosis" is a good starting point for the present study. Bloom reminisces elegiacally and ecstatically about his first love for poetry through Crane. Employing two of his arbitrary critical terms, kenosis and askesis, he considers Crane's " 'religion' *as a poet*" (*ibidem*: 254) and establishes the American gnosis in Crane's poetry.

What is chiefly relevant of Bloom's essay is his astute remark on Crane and Eliot. First, the critic observes that "the older contemporary antagonist and shaper for Crane was certainly Eliot" (*ibidem*). Second, he points out that the contestants of 'Atlantis' are found in *The Waste Land* and Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." Third, disregarding overt textual traces, he recovers the deep inwardness of the battle through two modes of "phantasmagoria." Now convincing himself that "Crane's lines answer Eliot in every meaning of answer" (*ibidem*), Bloom reveals the fundamental differences between the two poets:

> Crane's bridge is to Atlantis, in fulfillment of the Platonic quest of Crane's Columbus. Eliot's bridge is to the Inferno, in fulfillment of the neo-Christian condemnation of Romantic, Transcendentalist, Gnostic quest. Crane's sibylline voices stream upward: light illuminated bridge becomes a transparent musical score, until Orpheus is born out of the flight of strings. Eliot's sibyl wishes to die: her counterpart plays a vampire score upon her own hair, until instead of an Orphic birth upwards we have an omnipotent triumph of time (*ibidem*: 264-265).

Finally, Bloom concludes that Crane comes to terms with several of his predecessors and becomes a true American Gnostic/Orphic poet.

Now to build upon Bloom: The idea of bridge is an obvious

connection between Crane and Eliot. The latter's waste land has the river Thames and the London bridge across it. In its first occurrence, a crowd overflows the bridge. But in its second occurrence, "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down." As Lee Edelman (1987:188) suggests the falling London bridge might have given a clue to Crane for using the Brooklyn Bridge as a major symbol in *The Bridge*. It is worthwhile to remember, however, that Crane has not written a line like "the Brooklyn Bridge is rising up rising up rising up" in order to complete Eliot's poem antithetically.

A careful reader can see as many points of intertextual relation as Crane's and Eliot's poems allow, both Bloomian and non-Bloomian varieties. In this study an intertextual relation concerned with a memory of the past is examined to show how each poem has a dialogue with the personal and literary past.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* begins defining affirmatively the poet's negative impression of spring:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain (Eliot 1974: 63).

These opening lines of Eliot may be juxtaposed with a passage from Crane's *The Bridge:*

> So memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box
> Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass
> Is it the whip stripped from the lilac tree
> One day in spring my father to me,
> Or is the Sabbatical, unconscious smile
> My mother almost brought me once from church
> And once only, as I recall--(Crane 1986: 56)?

A Bloomian reader may note that Eliot's "April" is a strong distractor as it directly echoes Chaucer. Further, he may observe the vagueness in "memory and desire". Now a knowledge of Eliot's homosexual relation with his friend Jean Verendal (Miller 1978: 66) may be helpful in understanding this hidden episode. But a Bloomian perspective reveals that Eliot's "memory" of his poetic forefathers threatens him and his desire for poetic immortality brings him a sense of guilt. Since the guilt complex is dominant, he goes on borrowing directly from his precursors without concealing or much distortion. In this

way Eliot achieves his poetic im-mortality.

Crane has a different sort of memory of the past, which is directly concerned with one of his childhood events. The lilac bred out of Eliot's dead land by the cruellest April is used by Crane's father to make the whip for beating the boy, because he is more attached to his mother, the muse. Her memory and unconscious smile gives all the strength necessary for Crane's survival as a poet. Interestingly, Edelman (1987: 212) finds an equivalent of this smile in Eliot's "key" which opens a broken Coriolanus's mind at least temporarily.

In conclusion, it may be observed that the intertextual relation between Hart Crane's *The Bridge* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is highly complex enough to warrant further explorations. The Bloomian analysis of a single instance of memory of the past in this study clearly shows how the personal family romance of both poets determine their poetic family romance. Eliot's personal past is concealed as he is revealing his poetic past parodically. Crane's personal past is revealed as he is concealing his poetic past. Each one achieves his "imaginative space" through this dialectic of concealment and revelation.

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THE METAPHOR OF FLYING: ADVENTURE AND MYSTERY IN TONI MORRISON'S *SONG OF SOLOMON*

Narain Prasad Shukla

Toni Morrison is one of the world's finest contemporary novelists. She is part of a continuous tradition -- the writing of Black women --, a tradition that exposes,through an art form, the lives of Black men and women. In 1974, in her article "Behind the Making of the *Black Book*"[1], Morrison makes three points which are also reflected in her writing. She talks about her concepts of myth, beauty, and Blacks' true mythic quality. The Black response to self and white America did not seem admirable to her at that time. She found Blacks to be overly occupied with Whites in a never ending game of self explanation. At the same time Blacks were also creating an identity for themselves which seemed to have little anchoring in the realities of Black history and folklore:

> Let me explain what I mean by mysticism and reactionaryism. A few years ago we were called upon to make new myths to forge a new cosmology to live by; the assumption being either that we had no Afro-American myths, or that if we did they were inferior. So we skipped over some 300 to 2,000 years of lived life to find a myth to our liking, or we made some up. To deliberately create a myth is a contradiction in terms. A myth is a whatever concept of truth or reality a whole people has arrived at over years of observation. It cannot be manufactured by a handful of people. It must be collective creation of -- and acceptance by hordes -- of anonymous people. All the artists and intellectuals can do is record it -- they can't make it. To make a myth and hand it to the people is simply propaganda.[2]

Morrison tries to descend into the unknown recesses of the group's unconsciousness through the vehicle of adventure and mystery that is both historical and mythical. *Song of Solomon* depicts a tale of adventure concerning five past generations, from Solomon, the African, and his wife, Ryna, to their descendents, Hagar and others. Solomon and Ryna were Black slaves who had twenty-one children. Solomon "flies" away to freedom and home, trying to take Jake, the youngest, with him. The saga begins with Jake, who dropped out of Solomon's arms. Ryna went insane over her husband's abrupt departure. Therefore, Jake was raised by an Indian woman who

already had a daughter named Singing Bird. The two young ones left to start a new life together at the end of the Civil War.

The element of adventure and mystery is reflected in the novel after Macon I settles on the farm. His prosperity attracts the attention of greedy whites. They trick him into giving up the title to the farm, but he refuses to leave. For days, he sits on a fence with his gun, protecting his property and family. Then he is shot from behind. His children witness his death and take to woods until they meet their father's ghost. The ghost leads them to a cave, where an old white man hides with a sack of gold. In fear, Macon II kills the white man. After this, he and his sister, Pilate, argue whether they would take the gold and they never reconcile. When his son, Macon III, first asserts himself, he chooses the same path as his father, lured on by the quest for gold. When he finds out that Pilate does not have the gold, Macon III, nicknamed as Milkman, continues the search on his own. On this journey, Milkman does not find gold, but instead finds himself. He discovers links to his family's past, and that behind each name there is a history to be told. He learns the value of people and relationships, and that although history cannot be rewritten, the future has yet to be written.

Macon III is a symbol of adventure and mystery. He struggles to live even in the womb. He must survive his father's attempt to abort him. Macon III is his mother's testimony to her sexuality and life. As a boy, Macon III is largely dissociated from other children until Guitar befriends him. Guitar's interests are politics and the state of Black America, while Macon III's are wine, women and song. Milkman tries to be less responsible as he grows older. The insensitive way he rejects his second cousin, Hagar, is an evidence of this. Pilate is killed in the end as Guitar seeks to avenge Hagar (the only woman he has ever loved) and the wrongs committed against Blacks by Blacks. The outcome of the last scene is unknown. Milkman stands on a cliff, Guitar somewhere below, asking for Milkman's life. Then Milkman leaps to struggle with Guitar, or to die on the rocks below, or escape in charmed flight to safety.

The groundwork for adventure and mystery is laid by Macon I, Milkman's grandfather. The original Macon was larger than life to

both his son and the Black community. With his freedom, love and faith in God, no barrier was too great except the treachery of Whites. In the face of their treachery and greed, many Blacks had frozen and become immobile; but Macon had shown them a way out. He called upon others to live actively and shape their lives. But his murder left them hopeless and without drive. After his death, the community returned to a state of paralysis from which his son suffers most of his life. But the son of Macon I was not paralysed. He had his father's zeal and energy, and remembered the cry to own and acquire. He was ruthless with his tenants and believed that there was "magic"[3] in the keys to his property. But the magic of those keys did not change what he had become. Macon II's callousness is partly due to his inability to see any point of view other than his own. He also refuses to forgive others for alleged crime committed against him. He has a grudge against Pilate, his own sister. To him the gold means a promising future where "life, safety, and luxury fanned out before him like the tail spread of a peacock."[4] But Pilate prevents him from taking the gold, depriving him of this treasure for ever.

After her separation from her brother, Macon II, Pilate is unable to fit into a community and is forced to lead a life of adventure. She travels and finally settles down with a group of isolated island Blacks. Among them she takes a lover and gives birth to a daughter named Reba. Her exclusion from the three main institutions of the community -- marriage, friendship and church -- deprives her of contact with people. This isolation forces her to rely on herself and to fall back on the love she received as a child. She retreats to her childhood home on Lincoln's Heaven where there had been comfort, acceptance and love. She chooses to make liquor because of the freedom and independence it provides her and her daughter. At Lincoln's Heaven, it is her "father who appeared before her sometimes and told her things,"[5] adding another dimension to her education. Pilate is open to this world and the world beyond, loving all who are a part of either. Though Macon attempts at uniting the family, Pilate stays in Flint because Ruth's suffering appeals to her concern for others. Pilate discovers that Ruth, at thirty, is dying of

lovelessness. The latter is a tragic figure because, though materially comfortable, she does not have Pilate's strength to make herself and define who she is. To feel alive, she spends her whole adult life fighting her husband, if not death. When she challenges death to give birth to her son, it is her only victory.

Ruth and Pilate create the world of mystery and adventure in which Macon III is born. It was Pilate's perception of Ruth's need that led her to assist Ruth in one final tryst with Macon II.They worked "a root" in Macon II and he came to Ruth in a "sexual hypnosis."[6] Macon was so infuriated at Ruth's pregnancy that he tried everything to make her miscarry. Again, it was Pilate who saved both Ruth and the child. Milkman struggles to be born; his will to live is as strong as his aunt Pilate's, but this will becomes diffused as he grows older.

Milkman is born under the influence of "flying." His mother went into labour after witnessing Mr. Smith's suicide. Morrison here, as in her other novels, uses the imagery of flight to express release for the imprisoned. In fact, the home where Milkman grows up is described as a "prison"[7] and the family car is called "Macon Dead's hearse"[8] by the Black community. When as a child he discovers he cannot fly, Milkman is crushed. He wants to be free of his family at an early age because his home is a tomb where he feels more dead than alive.

Milkman's friendship with Guitar is an integral part of their commitment to adventure. The former is bored with life and his only concern is with personal gratification, while Guitar is completely committed to the race to the extent that he foregoes personal happiness to be a member of a sacred society, the Seven Days. This group of seven men are Black America's avengers who right wrongs. Guitar's justification for the actions of this group is that Whites are unnatural; they kill Blacks for fun, and although there are a few good whites, but these do not make up for this defect in their genes. Milkman, however, cannot accept Guitar's justification for the group because he cannot see how their actions lengthen his or any other Black person's life. In due course, Milkman's association with Guitar becomes overshadowed by the latter's excessive

commitment to mystery and adventure. Guitar's madness becomes apparent when he starts to stalk Milkman to recover the missing gold, to seek revenge for Hagar's death, and to compensate for all the Blacks who did not care about other Blacks. Members of the Seven Days sacrifice the love and companionship of a woman and children for the more nebulous and more altruistic love of their race.

Again and again, Morrison connects love, adventure and madness in men and women. Milkman has to learn loving unselfishly the hard way, and many suffer before he does. Those to whom he has the closest ties are those who suffer the most. He treats the women in his life with disregard and arrogance. Hagar is the most tragic of all. When he spurns her love, she becomes so deranged that she seeks to hunt him down each month. As Morrison describes Hagar's world of madness, it is similar to Solomon's flight. Hagar and Sing are nervous because they feel insecure about their relationships. Sing fears that Macon I will twirl around and fly off like his father. In a life devoted to one man and children, fear of abandonment can cause madness. This was particularly true of women in slavery. Pilate and Ruth are different from these women because they are never alone. They communicate with their father in death to keep themselves sane and alive.

Milkman becomes a mythic hero when the events of his life force him to act: Magdlene declares war, Hagar and death have been confronted, Ruth has revealed her truth, and Macon II has sent him and Guitar on a wild goose chase after gold that turns out to be bones. He must leave his birthplace to venture out on his own and unravel the tangled web of the past. He sets out for Pennsylvania,unchanged, selfish and greedy, and is reborn again in Virginia where he finds his core. Because his orientation is monetary, for material wealth, in his travels he assumes that others have the same orientation.Circe is insulted when he offers her money, as is the man who gives him a ride from her house. As long as he can offer money to people, Milkman does not have to strain himself. Money takes the place of true dialogue and eliminates the need for other commitments. The men of Shalimar recognise that something in him has died — the same thing that Guitar's grandmother found

missing in Macon II — leaving him more like a white man than like themselves.

Milkman arrives in Shalimar, his grandparents' home, with a false sense of confidence and clouded vision. Things are not always what they seem to be, as characters in the novel have noted many times before. Reality and dreams often merge. Milkman often wonders if what he sees before him is real, as when he travels down the street in the opposite direction from every one else.

This surrealistic state is sometimes suggested by the smell of ginger. When Milkman enters the Butler House, it smells of ginger.There is a ginger smell in the Byrd House where he hears the tales of Jake and Sing. When he and Guitar take the bag of bones from Pilate's room, they smell ginger in the air. On the same night Corinthians declares her womanhood, and she and Porter smell ginger. The fragrance of ginger is "Pleasant, clean, seductive,"[9] suggesting exotic and distant lands. Significantly, the smell of ginger is in the air the night Milkman and Guitar, looking for gold, break into Pilate's house. Milkman had not believed his father's tale of lost gold, but Guitar's belief in the story makes it seem credible. Guitar's prodding motivates Milkman to go after the gold, and this makes him feel defined and purposeful. For once he is willing to hunt to live more fully, the smell of ginger makes the impossible possible.

Song of Solomon is a book about the senses. When Milkman is reborn, his senses — hearing, sight, touch — come alive as they never have before. On the hunt with the men of Shalimar, he finds himself alone in the woods at night. He realises it sounds childish that one just cannot share the good with people unless one shares the bad too. There in the dark, he comes alive: "Under the moon, on the ground, alone, with not even the sound of baying dogs to remind him that he was with other people, his self — the cocoon that was 'personality' — gave way."[10]

Listening to the night and the baying dogs, he realises that communication is far older than English and more than a language of words. If a man really listens, opens himself up, the world is ready to communicate with him. The revelation is that Man and Nature are truly one. When he listens, he saves his own life. He

finds his life restored and vitalised. He feels true fellowship with Man and Nature because he now finds himself a part of the world. He can never admit his fear without threat to his manhood. Milkman's deformity is gone; he has been reborn as a hero with mythic proportions. His rebirth does not repudiate the past, nor does it promise major changes in the present. He still feels shame for many of the things he has done, and he wears this shame "thick and as tight as a caul."[11] But this shame, his caul, provides him with a new ability to see both the physical and the spiritual sides of his life. He realises that the relationship with people and the responsibility they entail are primary in life. He becomes truly unselfish when he gives his most precious possession to his old friend who desperately needs it. He takes the next step towards freedom when Pilate dies, and it occurs to him that "without ever leaving the ground, she could fly."[12] His childhood dream of flying can be realised, if he would just drop all the unnecessary weight: "If you surrendered to the air, you could ride it."[13] At this moment, he takes to the air to face the cat.

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THE AESTHETICS OF NISSIM EZEKIEL

Ranjan Ghosh

For a poet, whose work is rooted in reality, reflection and experience, there is no denying the appositeness of a logical discursive form as the method of expression. The pressing rigours of a well-defined reality, most often, encourage a thrifty and concentrated mode of communication that celebrates the fusion of thought and feeling. Poetry, thus, speaks of order and coordination. Ezekielian aesthetics, without circumventing these essential cognates, can yet include areas beyond formalization and rhetorical ornamentation which hail the unschematized and 'unconditioned' segments of the creative process. With a secular moral conscience,' his aesthetics heralds an 'integralism,' for "others wrote poem, he wrote poetry. The difference is reflected in his craftsmanship and purposefulness; this is as much a matter of will as of talent."[1]

The 'craft' (*techne*) and 'purpose' (*telos*) remind us of a near apotheghmatic statement: "The best poets wait for words."[2] This waiting in Ezekiel is the hunting with patience, a patience that crystallizes the meaning out from the sustained watching of the first flush of movement of a 'timid wing' of thought and word (*Artha* and *Sabda*). This vigilant waiting is for the right word, the precision of expression, the definite 'moment' of 'delivery' fostered by the spirit, the inspiration (*enthusiasmos*). It is what language imposes on the creative self--waiting, watching, and witnessing, something of the test that Pound suggests a reader should undertake to judge the competence of the poet.[3] Words need to enhance the circulation of the poetic circuit and not become the 'dysfunctional distraction.' Indeed when Vamana disqualifies a poet who keeps himself engrossed with the 'insertion and deletion' game, the concrete implication is toward the uncertainty of expression and the resultant imperfection in verbalization. He advises the waiting for a 'fixity of words' (*Sabda Paka*).[4] Ezekiel subscribes to Raleigh when he underscores the endless and painful vigilance needed for the 'avoidance of the unfit and the untuneful phrase.' He emphasizes "how meaning must be tossed from expression to expression, mutilated and deceived, ere

it can find rest in words."[5] Here Mallarme's words are quite relevant: "I swear to you that there is not a single word which has not cost me several hours of research and that, the first word, which clothes the first idea, besides making its own contribution to the general effect of the poem, serves further to prepare the last."[6] This is meticulousness with regard to the *Artha Paka*. So the Ezekelian waiting opens up the opportunity for the sight of the 'rarer birds,' the epiphanous revelation, the manifestation beyond the epidermality of phenomenal existence. The 'rarefaction' is the experience in a meaningful configuration. Riding on inspiration, the poet can churn the "springs of many unborn poems" in him; it reveals "in a flash the steady flame,/Fire in the heart of wind" ("A Word for the Wind"). The true artist, for Ezekiel, never,

> ... martyr the meaning
> in the flux
> to lonely
> and heated visions whoring
> after truth ("For Satish Gujral")

This experience is the journey to the source, the 'silence' near the source, where realism and naturalism are foreshadowed by the supranormality of an overmind, the "myths of light" that never feature in the empirical penumbra. This is the savouring of the "secret locked within the seed" that releases a "teasing light" rivening gloriously through "a ferment in the darkness" ("Tribute to the Upanishads"). The poet's mind is never the "untrained mind" that "slouch and slither in half-sleep" ("Mind"). It is not the "sad artificer" that clings "too long to the same static vision." Never "misled by norms," its "passionate waiting" never "crumbles" ("Mind"). The Ezekielian vision is never static; rather it is infused with the meditative dedication that makes the spirit "sing and dance" ("Jamini Roy"). The poet's world is a compound world that knows Frost's crooked straightness of a path, where the darkness at the pith is no impediment to a discovery of 'sense.' His "restless flight" is from sense to supra-sense, from umbra to the lumen where the deaf comes to have ear, the voiceless his voice and the blind his sight.

For Kuntaka in *Alankarasastra*, *sahitya* is the combination with *sabda* and *artha* with *vakrokti* as the conspicuous embellishment.

The poet's waiting could be for *alankara*, the poetic expression that is aided by imagination--"to hear what can't be heard/when everybody speaks" ("For Satish Gujral"). This *alankara*, in a sense, is rooted in the *Kavyavastu* without which the *sahrdaya* would never find his coveted warmth. Ezekiel's belief in the 'patience' in poetic vocation is merely an indirect admission of the superiority of poetic expression and ideologically what constitutes the best canons of art. To Ezekiel, as for Kuntaka, poetry must please the *rasikas* with the infusion of delight. So *riti* is always *Uttama*, for *Adhama riti* is always deemed as the poetic flaw. This points to the *Kavisvabhava* with its individual *marga*. Ezekiel's poet can hold *alaukika pratibha* and can subscribe to *vicitra* or *madhyama marga* as well. The waiting for words is also the respect to *Lavanya* or what Raja Shekara means by *Ukti Visesha*. This leads to the image of the artist as introspective and meticulous, pairing his finger nails with due cognizance to *auchitya* as an effort to beautify the whole *kavi-vakya*. Here Dionysius's emphasis on *electio* (choice of words) in the proper rendition of *compositio* is quite relevant. In a *collocatio* (composition) along with *indicium* (selection) and *dispositio* (arrangement) comes *electio*.[7] There is implicit a stress on a studious 'waiting.' And the poet's patient waiting for words contributes to the sentence order, movement or the heightening of language (*De Sublimitate*). This is not to relegate the poet's keen sense, receptivity, and insight to the back burner of relative indifference.

> Move in living images, he said. Rhythm, shapes, colours,
> forms, they are yours. In them is embodied the language with
> which the laws of the universe brighten existence.
> And dance in musical phrases for him who waits. ("Encounter," p.35)

It would not be an overdone reading in comparative aesthetics if one finds an association with Aquinas' *Phantasia*, as one of the four internal powers of the sensitive part of man as also to Avicenna's fifth power, as something that resides between instinct and imagination. This is the extraordinary activity of the poet's mind, that associates and dissociates, forming a panorama of images of things, some of which are not received from the senses.[8] However, the aesthetics of Ezekiel does not merely admit art as imitating nature, *in sua operiatione;* it never fails to emphasize the 'teasing

light' which need not be read in the Augustinian teleology of constructive art. The coherence of form in Ezekiel has a relatively simple analogy with Aquinas's concept of proportion and *claritas*. A poet, who waits for words, laments over the death of meaning in a barmy flux and legislates against a whoring for truth, manifests a sense of form as an aesthetic experience. Aquinas, in his commentary on the Divine Names points out the relation between beauty and proportion or consonance (IV, 5) and form, as we know, is a key concept in Aquinas's aesthetics. So when the best poets wait for words, they wait for a perfection which is the realisation of 'form'. According due heed to Baudelaire's warning of the danger of meaning assuming precedence over form to the detriment of poetry itself, Ezekiel believes language as a "conspicuous gift" ("Talking"). It is with the power of language, the 'needed flame,' that the poet's mind works--"Give the lead/ to yourself" ("The Poet Contemplates His Inaction"). The poet, artist with "plastic senses" ("Sparrows"), has to reach up to a world view; the *weltanschauung,* under the transitive action of the poet, is a dynamic matrix rippling with the inexperienced waves and flashes of an elusive flame. In Ezekiel we have the thrust on the Sanskrit doctrine of *Sauhitya*.[9] *Sabdarthau sahitau kavyam*--the coexistence of word and meaning, is precisely what Ezekiel looks into and the waiting evinces an Arnoldian belief in poetry as the most delightful and perfect form of utterance that human words can reach. Ezekiel's poetic tissue (*Kavya Sarira*) could also point to Abhinava's *Utkrishta Samghatana* (ideal structure) which believes in the perfect integration of idea and expression without the 'compromise.'[10]

There is also an admittance of poetic maturity and *pratibha* as a rare phenomenon. He never "attempts to dance/without learning to walk" ("The Room"). He has the vision within the shifting shadows and light of the room, within the arrangement and rearrangement with his aesthetic distance, the patience, and creative dialecticism, and readies the creative chamber beyond "fever and exaggeration" to a coherence that unify the "flux in patterns" ("The Room"). Here in Ezekiel we have what Chinese aesthetics would call *wen-chang;* it is a pronounced accent on a critical zone of Lu Chi's aesthetics:

In joining ideas together, one should esteem skill,
In choosing words, one should value beauty
As for the alternation of sounds and tones,
They should be like the five colors enhancing each other.[11]

Ezekiel's dexterous ability reminds me of the Rbhus in *Atharva Veda* who attained divinity by their adroit forging of the joints of a chariot and in fashioning four camasas out of one. Their deft joining of the parts is the joining of the parts of the poem that contributes to the harmonious whole of the chariot and in this instance the poet's integrated art.[12] This cognate of 'coherence' is justified in the "The Stuffed Owl" where Ezekiel laments frozen "lyric impulse," "sterile phrase," "wobbling line," "trivial theme" and "calculated couplet." This is the 'tired' poet's aesthetics--the second of the adolescents in "Two Adolescents"--that stuffs the owl to shape without triggering the circulation within. Ezekiel strongly disapproves the infructuous "erection of mind" ("Agony in the Morning"), a bloodless child of fancy, disfigured by its own miscreation. Poetic organism is vitiated by such *avakara* (dross) and poetry that is stuffed out is born from *Apratibhodbhava* (no inspiration). This is an occasion of hypertrophy of elements that press beyond the sanctity of a dynamic gestalt, forbidding the organismic entitisation of art. Stuffed owl can lead to Nietzsche's anarchy of atoms[13] without the inward justness (*auchitya*). So for Ezekiel, creation combines *sakti* (power) and *nipunata* (proficiency).[14]

Ezekiel leaves aside the 'unorganic' and the 'unintegrated' and whatever comes in the way of a realisation of poetic intention. He scarcely allows the *Rasa Vighna* and the stabilisation of the poetic centre generates a principle of order that has all the poetic elements contributing *adequately* to the harmony of the system. It is what Day Lewis calls "dialectic of purification."[15] Ezekiel subscribes to the Valerian aesthetics that by avoiding preciosity acknowledge a synergic control over syntax, harmony and ideas, Tagore's prescription of a bridled imagination and Supervielle's 'decantation' that orders out the *filtrate* which creates. His poetic intelligence allows his 'unconscious' to articulate but the articulation is brought under the strength of his conscious sensibility, functioning as it does under the unified impress of his poetic sensibility. The "uneasy croaking"

or "whirr of wings" cannot have the much needed efficiency or sanctity of speech; the poet's vocation is a purification through speech, the acts of speech beyond the "fragments of discerning speech" ("Speech and Silence") to the acknowledgement of occasional 'silence,' the contingent voices of the "neglected stars." So Ezekiel's prayer is a prayer for the "ordered Mind" ("Prayer") that homes in on the articulate 'silences' and does not require the paradigmatic axis of expression at every instance of speech. The speech of silence is an obedience to a simplicity which is a potential reality beyond the positivist domain of meaning and understanding. "In bitter secrecy/ A central image grows or shrinks away" ("Sonnet"). This 'secrecy' is the "prodigious music" of silence. Feeling for him does not run amok; rather it is structured with influence of reason and judgment. This bears an obvious reference to what Leon-Paul Fargue says of placing mathematics at the command of the daemons of imagination, Baudelaire's insistence on rendering precise structure to the emanations from the depths of the 'unconscious' and Matisse's emphasis on the art of 'arranging.' Eliot sees conscious and deliberate attitudinizing in the composition of poetry ("The bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to conscious").[16] Ezekiel's mind moving between the dual function of 'making' and 'exploring,' render a structure by an almost Ananda Vardhanian principle of poetic need—*kala cha grahana tyagau.*

There is indeed a raging urge in Ezekielian aesthetic of a probe into the new (*Nava Navollekha*)-- "...to become a form and find relevance" ("In the Theatre"):

> Grain of sand stays
> soft in its proper place
> beneath or beyond
> the repetitious sea-wave.
> but in my eye it's
> gritty as a new idea,
> burning the white
> of my view to bloody red. ("Drawing Room")

The poet with "distinctive music of an individual mind" ("The Prophet") which could bear a cursory reference to Addison's 'Action of the

Mind', stands to interpret the world before us with his mind, belief and art--a mosaic of conviction and construction where consciousness is coextensive with a deeper consciousness on the metaphysical layer of existential realisation without the lassitude or cramping rigour of a work that is born from an 'entranced reason.' It is a promise of unveiling, exposing and expanding the "metaphors of meaning" ("Morning Prayer"). It pragmatises and transcends without the loss of a naturalness that enlivens the poet's creative circuit fecundly. As part of the poet's action (*Kavi Vyapara* or *Kavi Karma*) he admits the metaphysicality of originality that transcends the premises of consciousness. However, the candour in the metamorphosis cannot be set aside. Hinging on this penchant for the 'new', Ezekiel's aesthetic perimeter vibrates with the spirit that fails to accept the "accepted styles." Creation, in his aesthetic realm, denies the stale conventionality of forms and ways, the dry weight of standard images and phrases. It grows into a sensibility that blends thought and emotion, observation and insight, imagination and intuition, temporality and tradition, statis and evolution. This newness is the concentration of a 'generative energy' where 'originality' traverses beyond the conscious borders of empirical exegesis for a voice that avers:

> If nothing else, I'ill keep my nerve,
> refuse the company of priests,
> professors, commentators, moralists,
> be my own guest in my own
> one man lunatic asylum
> questioning the Furies, my patron saints,
> about their old and new obscurities. ("A Small Summit")

He is no poet for whom "no fury sparked the fuse" ("Insight"). The poet, "child of flesh and fancy," in a divine analogue to he Creator, constructs a song from the flux of "uncreative doing" ("The Problem"). He with the "odour of some strange vocation" ("The Prophet") asserts himself in the "common dance" ("Transmutation"), participating in the existential rhythm without flaunting the tenuous thread of difference. As for Rilke, Ezekiel's verses are experiences. His art grows out of a smorgasbord of experiences and when Rilke points to the 'rare hour' that gives birth to a poem, we have Ezekiel's

"spacious hour."[17] There is no *Loka Virodha*, the violation of truth of human experience. He has the feel of the bounty of the open sky; he listens to the "secret marrow"; there is the intense participation in the "wider, warmer meaning" of existence, engineering a 'transmutation' of the self, retrying himself up that involves to dissolve.

> Pavements or pools, traffic lights or lilies,
> Rivers or roast chicken, cafes or corn,
> All are focussed in a purer light, poems,
> *Waiting for transcription* on the page
> In the dancing minute or the *spacious hour.* ("Creation"; italics mine)

Ezekiel's poetic organism also enriches itself on the coexistence of sound and sense. There is ample vindication of Kuntaka's *paraspara spardha*[18] or Tate's doctrine of tension.[19] Ezekiel vitalises the parts by permeating them with sense of the whole which renders a sense of completeness and a feeling of equipoise. In the organismic integration of his art there is no sense of statis; this is an integralism that can qualify as a 'balance' where the binaries of existence and philosophy are conjugated into a "single architect" ("Division"): an attitude of 'licking' into a living shape, as the poetic spirit welds matter and form.[20] There is the inwardness of the struggle. This is how poetry differs from the poem.

> In which the savage and the singular,
> The gentle, familiar,
> *Are all dissolved;* (Italics mine)

His creative aesthetics substantiates with the triune unity of the constellating forces of feeling (*Rasa*), resonance (*Dhvani*) and propriety (*Auchitya*). He evokes his feelings within a precision of a well premised adequacy implying subordination and superordination within the poetic matrix. This is the poetic tension between the inwardisation and desubjectification with the eventual concretisation. With allegiance to the 'differential and the conceptual' in life, Ezekiel *did* write *poetry*--the 'dissolving and involving' medium of his aesthetic vocation.

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[6]This is what Mallarme wrote to Cazalis about his poem "L' Azur," quoted from Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarme* (Gallimard, 1941), p.104.

[7]See William Rhys Roberts, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Literary Composition* (London, 1910).

[8]*Summa Theologiae*, Blackfriars edition & translation (London & New York, 1964-76), I, 84, 6 and 2.

[9]To consolidate such a view see John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, 1934), p.132; Henry James, *The Art of Fiction* (New York, 1884); I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (London, 1929); Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, xix, 1589; T.S. Eliot, *The Music of Poetry* (Jackson, 1942), p.13. See also for a different angle to the concept in Kalidasa's *Raghu Vamsa*, edited with English translation by G.R. Nandargikar (Bombay, 1897).

[10]See I.C. Ransom, *The New Criticism* (London, 1941), pp.294-95.

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[12]*Rig Veda* 1.161.2; 4.35.3; *Nirukta* 11.16.

[13]See *The Case of Wagner*, trans. A.M. Ludovici (Allen & Unwin, 1911).

[14]See Mammata, *Kavya Prakasa*, Ullasa I, Karika 3, ed. Gajendragadkar (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1959).

[15]*The Poetic Image* (Cape, 1947), p.86.

[16]*The Sacred Wood* (Methuen, 1920), p.52.

[17]See Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. John Linton (Hogarth Press, 1930). See also Dandin, *Kavyadarsha*, ed. Rangacharya (Madras, 1910), I, pp.15-19.

[18]Kuntaka, *Vakrokti Jivita* (Calcutta, 1923), p.23.

[19]*Allen Tate, Lectures in Criticism*, ed. H. Cairns (New York, 1949).

[20]"Without integration, the merit becomes a flaw; integrated, the flaw is transformed into an organic merit," Raja Sekhara, *Kavya Mimamsa* (Gaekwad Edition), p.112.

CITY AS PROTAGONIST : A VIEW OF ANITA DESAI'S *VOICES IN THE CITY* AND *IN CUSTODY*

O.P. Budholia

Symbolic expression is the hallmark of all modern literatures. The symbols and the pictorial images of the unconscious mind make modern writers reveal the organic role of time and place in their writings. Anita Desai, like George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Arun Joshi, works on the interior regions of human psyche. Being aware of the external impact of the scenes and situations on human personality, she, like a subtle psychologist, lurks deeper in the unconscious layer of human psyche and reveals the existential pursuits of man. Her protagonists, with fractured and fragmented consciousness, enter in direct fray with the city and its sensibility. Sometimes her protagonists appear mere pigmies before the gigantic powers of the city which acts like the real protagonist in almost all her novels.

Desai presents the realistic vision of the city and its strong effect on human mind. The city as a social force works for an organic entity and presents an ambivalent vision of human relationships. A close study of her novels brings out an incessant intervention of the city in the progress of the protagonists. The clinging of Arjuna to a city life in New York after the independence of India, the marital gap between Maya and Gautama in *Cry, the Peacock*, the poisonous coil of "pus-filled boil" of the city of Calcutta on Nirode and her elder sister Monisha in *Voices in the City*, Adit and Dev's fatuation for England in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, Sita's aversion to and nervous breakdown of her health in a flat at Bombay in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, Nanda Kaul's willing resignation to a luxurious life of the city of Delhi and her movement from Delhi to lonely house at Carignano in *Fire on the Mountain*, the role of Old Delhi in the partition of Bimla's family in *Clear Light of Day*, the negative role of Delhi for Deven's wishfulfilment in *In Custody*, Baumgartner's outlandishness both in Germany and in India in *Baumgartner's Bombay* and Laila's revulsion against the life of metropolis and her final regeneration as a spiritual being in the Himalayan region in *Journey to Ithaca* exhibit an ambivalent vision that emerges from

the organic entity of the city in Desai's novels. However, this paper is restricted to revealing the organic yet the negative role of the city and its sensibility in *Voices in the City* and *In Custody.*

Voices in the City has structurally been divided in to four parts: *Nirode, Monisha, Amla and Mother.* In fact, this fascinating novel exhibits the corrosive effects of Calcutta on Nirode and Monisha. Having luxurious upbringing and over-indulgent mother as a child, Nirode comes to Calcutta with a hope to be progressive in his academic achievements. He becomes absorbed in its bohemian life, begins to publish a journal and finally fails in its continuation due to his financial difficulties. His elder sister Monisha also arrives at Calcutta and experiences a life of servile existence with in the rigid confines of a traditional Hindu family and ultimately dies a tragic death. Nirode's younger sister Amala also comes to Calcutta and gets involved in affairs with an artist, but the tragic death of her elder sister Monisha, the ghost-like figure of her brother, Nirode, and the coldness of her mother make her understand the pragmatism of life. There are two monstrous characters in this novel: the mother of Nirode, and the invisible mighty city of Calcutta. Calcutta with its organic powers pervades the entire structure of this novel.

As the nature in Hardy's fictional world, the city of Calcutta restrains Nirode from his progression and finally it ruins his life completely. The entire narration of the novel expands an endless drama of human miseries in the "beastly blood thirsty"[1] city of Calcutta. It acts as a devil for Norode. Even the train standing on the platform of Calcutta in the beginning of this novel reacts against the living from of the city:

> The train began to pant, as though in preparation for a battle, sending jets of white steam violently in.to the night sky, and on the platform people loitered in various attitudes of nervousness, impatience and regret, turning now and then to the lights at the head of the platform, waiting for them to change. (5)

The train with the phrases like "white steam" and "night sky" is symbolic of fury and destruction. This city of goddess Kali symbolizes both time and timelessness. A series of events in this novel enlarges on the rise and fall of individual's progress, happiness and sorrow, attraction and repulsion, love and aversion and the relation-

ships between the organic and inorganic, but the city of Calcutta stands only for the destructiveness and annihilation of man's existence.

With Nordic strength, Norode strives to seek his existence in this city of Goddess Kali, but he fails before this giant city of Calcutta. Calcutta as a living entity challenges and thwarts the struggles of man and gives the sight of "destruction and rebirth" (53). Nirode ceases to exist in the society as an editor of a literary journal, *Voice*. Nirode warns even her sister to be cautious against the devilish powers of this city. The life at Calcutta exhibits the dullness, helplessness and the continuous poisoning of smoke from the industries. This environmental pollution is injurious not only to intellectuals, but also to the rickshaw-pullers, coolies, the street sweepers, the tanners and the beggars. Nirode comes to perceive the two faces of this devilish city--"one rapacious, one weary." (117)

The city of Calcutta is "a pus-filled boil." Nirode wrestles with the devilish powers of this city but meets failure. As a mendicant, he now leads to a life of utter helplessness. His continuous failures make him neurotic. He groans and shrieks under the merciless clutches of the unseen powers. He experiences a miserable life in a rented house of rupees fifteen per month. He sees many streets with the gap-toothed houses in which the dwellers apparently seem alive, but they are actually half-alive and half-dead. They dwell in the slums which are in the grip of packed and airless atmosphere of the city. Nirode along with his friend David undergoes the impact of dust, squalor and filth all around him. The lane known as *Ta Fa Shun* exhibits the filth of a burst rain pipe. The novelist thus unfolds an endless drama of human miseries and sufferings, hunger and poverty. No body thinks of seeking any solution to the burning problems of the poor, and the underdogs of the society. These people appear mere dwarfs and pigmies before the organic yet the negative powers of the city. Nirode as an objective narrator comes upon the drama of human miseries and sufferings in this city:

> 'We'll see' Nirode said, 'We'll see' and over the faint, feminine odour of Jasmine they talked more amiably and only of friends and adventures in this city that seemed to offer, they agreed, endless opportunity to the eccentric. 'And none' Nirode complained as they stepped out in to the

> flooded, putrid lane, 'for pleasure and talking of happiness and pleasure and the disparity between the two, they wandered past the empty food stalls, the prostitutes who still stood at the corner, now and then crying out in the harsh, arresting tones of nightmares, into the wide streets where vendors and beggars lay sleeping, wrapped in white sheets, against empty barrows and on door steps. (95)

Nobody is happy here. Even death mocks at those who apparently seem happy. Nirode searches here constantly for human and moral values. As a defeated soldier in life, he visits the temple to get rid of his sufferings and disappointments but the presence of "libidinous priest" (63) in the temple convulses him with anger. The nervousness and hopelessness so surround him as he seeks "a justification of his birth" (129). Life appears to him miserable and meaningless. Like other protagonists of Anita Desai, he aspires to exist, but he is always beaten down. In such trepidation of mind and physical debility, he succumbs finally to visionary perceptions of *Srimad Bhagavadgita.* The entire family of Nirode, except his mother, has no definitive plan to follow. Monisha is happy when she is out of Calcutta. Her arrival in this city makes her agonize over her unfulfilled motherhood. Her house at Calcutta shrinks down "like a boil about to burst " (140).

Symbolically, the house embodies the hollowness and callousness in human relationships. Her sufferings constrain her to be "traceless, meaningless and uninvolved" (241) in the affairs of life. She appears a passive on looker towards life and burns inside of her body and mind as a defeated woman. Guilt-ridden and sorrow-stricken, she devises to be lost into oblivion. Unaware of the difficulties of the poor and miserable of the society, she becomes introvert and loses a proper balance between her feeling and thought: "I have not given birth, I have not attended death...., I should remain alone, apart and enclosed with in my self, beyond their touch " (240). Her unfulfilled womanhood lengthens out the agonies of her mind. Out of these self-created illusions, she becomes hysterical and loses the equilibrium of her mind. In her alienation and isolation, she like Sita recollects her past memories and links them with the stream of time present. The nostalgia makes her see her own room "as the lifeless appurtenance with a barred enclosure" (241) around her. As

Monisha develops warmth and heat "a great fog enveloped her, not the white one of dreams but black, acrid thick." (242) She is surrounded by the negative rush of emotions which derive her to commit suicide. She longs for an existence that comes through an "undisturbed solitude."

The mother-thread of the story is equally important, for the cruelty of mother is as corrosive as that of Calcutta. She comes to Calcutta after hearing the tragic death of Monisha. Her presence was needed for nerve easing effects on the family, but her engrained coldness and indifference towards her family seemed otherwise. As an agoist, she is self-loving woman. Thus, the visible entiry of the mother as an egoist meets the invisible egoist in the form of the city. These two egoists together ruin the lives of brother and sister--Nirode and Monisha:

> Mother, mother-Kali is the mother of Bengal, she is the mother of us, she must also deal us our death ? .... She is our consciousness and our unconsciousness, she is all that is manifest and all that is unmanifest .... She is our knowledge and our ignorance. She is everything, we are attached, she is reality and illusion. She is world and she is maya. Don't you see, in her face, in her beauty. Amla, don't you see the amalgamation of death and life.(256)

Thus, both Calcutta and the mother represent the total flux of time and set in the complete structural plan of this novel.

Like *Voices in the City, In Custody* too unveils the symbolic role of Delhi as a protagonist in disguise. For the analysis of time and place in this novel, the remark of Desai herself seems appropriate:

> The time and place: these elementary matters left to Deven arrange as being with in his capabilities. Time and place, these two concerns of all who are born and all who die: these were considered the two fit subjects for the weak and the incompetent. Deven was to restrict himself these two matters, time and place.(2)

Deven Sharma, a son of a widow, is baffled by the city and its sensibility. In Delhi, he marries Sarala unwillingly. As a man of poetic skills, Deven marries a prosaic girl only on the forced choice of his mother and aunts. Unaware of the necessities of a new bride because of "the grim boundaries of their own precarious lives" (67), they confine Deven into an unbreakable net of domestic life.

The city as a negative force does not yield any fructiferous results to a weak man like Deven who is a victim of his own phantasy and illusion. As a man of "humble origin" (52), he moves from Delhi to a small town of Mirpore and joins as a temporary lecturer in Hindi in Lala Ram Lal College. More a poet than a professor, he is eager to promote the cause for Urdu poetry. In the mean time, Murad, his old friend, comes from Delhi to Mirpore. Murad advises Deven to interview a Delhi-based famous Urdu poet, Nur, for fulfilling his dream. Murad thus becomes a symbolic projection for the deeper yet the slumbering motifs of Deven.

As a matter of fact, the entire structure of this novel rotates around the two places: Delhi and Morpore. Baffled and disenchanted at Delhi, Deven comes to Mirpore for leading a happy life of domestic responsibilities; but he finds the sensibility of this town inimical to him. Mirpore with its negative role plagues him incessantly. It is a town of "total dehydration" (22). He becomes obsessive to this town and thinks again of Delhi which is "more suited to a literary man " (20). Frustrated and nervous by the decaying and the rotten conditions of the town of Mirpore, he chooses again the life of Delhi:

> The bus soon left Mirpore behind. It came as a slight shock to Deven that one could so easily and quickly free oneself from what had come to seem to him not only the entire world since he had no existence outside it but often a cruel trap, of prison, as well, an indestructible prison from which there was no escape.(19)

The phrases like "total aridity," "perpetual motion" and "total dehydration" become symbolic of sterility, decadence and degeneration of human values in this town. It has nothing good to offer except the dung, dust, grimy bazaar, sickly air and withered and desolate fields. This town as an "indestructible prison" thwarts all the progressive efforts of Deven. Deven's illusion comes to its full swing when he leaves this town for Delhi in order to comply with his dream to be a critic of Urdu poetry. Delhi as a living entity disappoints him once again as he fails to interview Nur. It appears to him like a nightmare, creating a friction between his two-halves. Here are some negative perceptions of Devan for the city of Delhi:

> If it had not been for the colour and the noise, Chandini Chowk might have been a bazaar encountered in a nighmare; it was so like a maze from which

> he could find no exit.... The heat and the crowd pressed down from above and all sides, solid and suffocating as sleep.(36)

He is surprised to see "mynah birds in cages" here in this "pullulating honey comb of commerce" (36). In fact, Deven finds Delhi "as gloomy as prison" (37). If Deven feels in custody and in an "indestructible prison" at Mirpore, Delhi also appears to him a "gloomy prison," snaring him in an unbreakable net from which there is no escape; if Mirpore disenchants him for its "filth... the excreta of pigeons and ubiquitous dust" (20), Delhi too haunts him like a "nightmare" and chains him through the "strained wall" and stupefies him with its "suffocating crowd." (36) Stopping at a shop while on his way to Nur's house, he sees "poison-green and red sherbets in bottles" (36). It is Delhi which invites him from Mirpore and leaves him friendless, penniless and shelterless. Defeated and disappointed he quits his project in a fiasco and saves his life from the cruel clutches of Delhi. The drama of Deven's ambitions is internal and the novelist further explores the unconscious possibilities of his unfulfilled motifs. Delhi as an organic entity has not entirely done away with him. Murad once again tempts him to be the secretary of Nur. For his wishfulfilment, he readily agrees to Murad's proposal. He comes again to the house of Nur as an interviewer. The house of Nut at Delhi symbolizes the deterioration of human values and the ignorance of Deven to realize the wheel of time.

Everything changes with time. So is the case with Nur. All the time, Deven observes Nur as a perverted man who is incessantly indulged in the sensual pleasures like wine and women. The followers of Nur in his house make him "eat and drink like some animal, like a pig" (60). Deven again becomes obsessive when his enthusiasm is met with the coldness of the poet. The drama of Nur's begums in his house at Delhi plagues his tender nervous system. As a defeated soldier, he loses every hope to tape Nur's sound in "this nest of the spies" (116). Somehow, he succeeds to tape a few lines of Nur but the noisy atmosphere and the wailing of his wives create a fiasco in his recording.

As a defeated man, Deven comes back to Mirpore with a few taped lines of Nur. He determines to keep them in his custody. Again,

Deven's arrival at Mirpore haunts him of other problems. He has spent a lot of money which he borrows from the accounts of the college. He experiences the risks of his dismissal from his job as he has to face the board meeting of the college. His own house at Mirpore also haunts him like the house of Nur at Delhi: "That night before the board meeting, Deven found himself unable to sleep. The house was more oppressive, the heat more endurable, than on any other night that summer. He thought he heard thunder in the distance--perhaps the monsoon was coming, perhaps it was drawing close."(201)

An in-depth study of *Voices in the City* and *In Custody,* thus, unfolds the organic entity of the city for the structural unity and visionary perceptions in these novels. As Anita Desai explores the hidden motifs and the untrodden regions of the unconscious mind, she becomes symbolic and suggestive in dealing with the predicament of man vis-a-vis the invisible powers of the city. The impact of the negative powers of the city is with so piercing-effects on the protagonist as he experiences an utter helplessness for withstanding the negative social forces. The city as a social force often appears winning and thus thwarting all the progressive efforts of the protagonist. The futile resistance of the protagonist to the demoniac powers of the city seems a complete failure, but his recurring failures do not disspirit him. Defeated and disenchanted, the protagonists of Desai's novels leave an indelible impression on the readers.

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[1]Anita Desai, *Voices in the City* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1965), p.20.
All subsequent references are to this edition and page number follows each citation.

[2]Anita Desai, *In Custody* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1984), p.110.
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THE LIGHT OF MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

M.K. Naik

The first significant fact about the 'new' fiction is that the number of Indian English novels published during the last two decades easily surpasses the total output for any corresponding period earlier. But quantity of course does not automatically guarantee quality; hence attention must also be drawn to the increasing recognition and respect the new novelists are winning in the literary world today.

One obvious aspect of this recognition is the fact that far more Indian English writers are now being published abroad than ever before, and their publishers include pretigious firms on both sides of the Atlantic: Faber and Faber; Andre Deutsch; Heinemann; Alfred Knopf; Random House; Penguin etc. In fact, a full list of these will read like a Directory of British and American publishers. Equally remarkable is the fact that today even a young Indian writer publishing his first book is readily accepted by a leading publisher abroad. Thus, Amit Chaudhuri's first novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address* was published by Heinemann in 1991. One recalls how Mulk Raj Anand's first novel, *Untouchable* (now included in the Penguin Classics) was turned down by 19 British publishers in 1935, before a word from E.M. Forster persuaded Lawrence and Wishart to accept it; also, how R.K. Narayan had to wait for the Green(e) light before his long and illustrious career could begin. This does not, of course, mean that Amit Chaudhuri is a better writer than Anand or Narayan, but it certainly does indicate the ready acceptance of Indian English literature abroad now.

If recognition and respect come, can rupees (or pounds or dollars, to be exact) be far behind ? One is told that Vikram Seth's novel, *A Suitable Boy*, was sold to Faber and Faber for a sum of one million pounds, for the U.K. rights alone. (One understands that this has caused considerable heart burning in 'Nativist' circles in Bombay and Calcutta, but let that pass.)

But sales alone do not spell literary excellence; for one may well ask, *a la* Keats, 'Where are the best-sellers of yesterday, aye, where are they?' The new novelists have proved their mettle by

winning, in competition with writers whose mother tongue was English, several major literary awards, prizes and distinctions, a complete list of which will occupy many pages. To note only the most outstanding of these, two new novelists have won the Booker Prize, supposedly the British equivalent of the Nobel Prize. (Salman Rushdie for *Midnight's Children* in 1981: this was also adjudged to be the 'Booker's Booker', the best of the novels so awarded over a period of twentyfive years; and Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* (1997), (R.P. Jhabvala too had won the Booker Prize earlier, but she belonged to an earlier generation). Since then, almost every novel by Rushdie has won an award in one country or another: *Shame* bagged the *Pix du Meilleur Livre Etranger* in Paris; *The Satanic Verses* was given the 'Author of the Year' Award in Germany; *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* qualified for a Writers Guild Award in England; *The Moor's Last Sigh* was adjudged 'The Novel of the Year' in 1996, and also won the Whitbread Prize. Similarly, Rohington Mistry's *Such a Long Journey,* which was short-listed for the Booker Prize, received the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best book and the Governor General's Award in Canada, and the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada first novel Award in 1991. And more recently, Jhumpa Lahiri created history in becoming the first Indian author to win the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in the USA. The novels of Rushdie, Roy, Anita Desai and others have also been translated into numerous European languages, thus setting the seal on their standing in the world of letters today. And this adulation need not any longer be taken as the traditional 'White-pat-on-the-Brown-back' syndrome, which had plagued Indian writing in English for a long time. Surely, there could not have been a collective will to condescension in so many, on such a large scale, in so many countries, at the same time.

Another highly significant feature of the new fiction is the way these writers handle the English language. The days of F.E. Anstey's comic 'Babu Jaberjee, B.A., 'dropping heavy linguistic bricks on white feet all over Calcutta are now part of the long-forgotten colonial story; now the Babu in question seems to in a position to teach a thing or two to his ex-Prospero. Born in the days when the sun was never opposed to set on the British empire (as Chesterton said, this

was because God wouldn't trust the Englishman in the dark), when Queen Victoria was in her Buckingham palace and all was right with the world (in British perception), the older Indian novelists could not perhaps be somewhat self-conscious in using the tongue of the august master. Each of the 'Big Three' solved the problem in his own way. Anand boldly carried the battle into the enemy camp, by cocking a snook at Fowler and Company; he translated literally from his native Punjabi into English, and gave the language of Shakespeare and Dickens the pungent flavour of *'Sarasonka Sag';* Raja Rao bravely declared, 'We cannot write like the English. We should not,' and tried to capture the rustic Kannada grandmother's breathless garrulity in *Kanthapura* and the stately rhythms of Sanskrit in *The Serpent and the Rope.* Narayan's method was subtler: he deliberately adopted a seemingly drab, colourless and almost journalistic style, so that the thrusts of his ubiquitous irony could prove all the more deadly.

Born and brought up in the post-colonial world, the new novelists, many of whom are part of the great Indian Diaspora, had no reason to feel self-conscious in handling the English language, which, for them, carries no colonial baggage; it is for them simply a tool--and a most resourceful and pliant one--which their education and upbringing have placed into their hands, and which, with the typical Indian flair for languages they have thoroughly mastered. One tell-tale mark of this is the fact that the new novelists mostly do not feel the necessity of appending to their novels a list of Indian words in the text and their meaning. One remembers how the American edition of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* carried a 60 page long glossary of Indian words (at the instance of the publisher, one is told). Now neither the publisher nor the author regards this as necessary. The inference is clear: earlier, the Indian writer was supposed to go at least half way to meet his reader (in some cases, he even went three quarters). His successor today expects his reader to go all the way to meet him.

Where do the new novelists stand in relation to their chief predecessors? Curiously enough, the most outstanding of them do not seem to follow any of the 'Big Three.' Neither Anand's burning reformistic zeal, nor Narayan's ironic apprehension of life, nor yet

Raja Rao's metaphysical musing seems to provide a viable model to them. Their affinities are rather with that maverick of Indian English fiction: G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr,* an exciting amalgam of fantasy, absurdism, comedy, satire and linguistic pyrotecnics. These were the fictional values which also dominated post-colonial and post-modern fiction, especially after the rise of 'Magic Realism,' hence most of the leading new novelists are in a sense only Hatterr's children.

Another significant way in which the new novel differs from the old is, that it is in a way more globalised. Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao have all lived in the west for a time, but barring a few exceptions, their primary engagement has been with India. Of course, Anand goes to France and Flanders in *Across the Black Waters,* and to England and Ireland in *The Bubble* and Raja Rao lives in France for long periods in *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Chessmaster and His Moves.* Bhabani Bhattacharya sets the scene of his *A Dream in Hawaii* in that Island. But the new novelists go much further. In Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate,* not only is the setting entirely American; so are also the characters; and in *An Equal Music,* the scene shifts from England to Austria to Italy, and his chief characters are English. In Joydeep Roy's *The Gabriel Club,* the setting is Hungery and all the characters are mid-European. And the grand finale of Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* takes in a lonely tower room of a fortress in an Andalusian village in Spain. The younger novelists are thus citizens of the Cyber-space, though the ties that bind them to their motherland continue to be strong.

The first of the new novelists to arrive was Salman Rushdie (b.1947) whose *Midnight's Children* (1981) heralded a new era in the history of Indian English fiction. Rushdie's main assets are a vaulting imagination, which often makes the bizarre its business, a carnivalesque sense of the comic, and an irrepressible love of word-play. When these powers are under perfect artistic control, and are geared to a meaningful central concerns, he produces his better work. On the other hand, when his imagination runs amuck, when his sense of the comic overcomes his sense of propriety (an occupational hazard for every comic writer--'The clown in me trips

me awfully,' Bernard Shaw once said), and when his word-play descends to the level of compulsive jesting, he seems to fall back on puerile puns, juvenile jokes and worn-out witticisms.

Rushdie's fictional art has been shaped by some highly significant factors. Born and brought up in Bombay, he spent the first fourteen years of his life here, after which he was sent to England for higher education and he has lived there ever since. Childhood and adolescense play a major role in shaping a writer's mind. This explains why Rushdie has come to have a firm foothold in both India and the West. This must have evidently been reinforced by his study of history at Cambridge. Further, though a Muslim by faith he has himself said that his 'Writings and thought have ... been as deeply influenced by Hindu myths and attitudes as Muslim ones.

It is his hyper-active imagination that must have drawn Rushdie to Surrealism, and its modern cousin, Magic realism, a strategy which has patent affinities with the strong oral traditions and narrative patterns of Third world societies; and *All About H. Hatterr* must have shown him the immense possibilities of word-play in English. Rushdie's forbears are, thus, Laurence Sterne, Gunter Grass, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and G.V. Desani.

His first novel, *Grimus* (1975), shows Rushdie trying his hand at these various strategies, without mastering any. The protagonist is Flapping Eagle, an American Indian in search of his lost sister. He finally locates her on a Mediterranean island controlled by Grimus, a magician. The narrative is a hodge-podge of several myths and motifs, which do not seem to mix well. Thus, the name 'Grimus' is an anagram of 'Simurg', a great, wise eagle in the Persian *Shahanama;* while the Rose, which is secret of Grimus's power, and the Protagonist's guide, Virgil (Jones) are obviously from Dante. And Sufi mysticism and Menippean satire make strange bed-fellows. In *Grimus*, Rushdie was evidently serving his apprenticeship.

How well he did this is suddenly apparent in *Midnight's Children* (1981), Rushdie's first major work and in a sense his best novel. It is a multifaceted narrative, which is at once an autobiographical *bildungsroman*, a picaresque fiction, a political allegory, a topical satire, a comic extravaganza, surrealist fantasy, and a daring

experiment in form and style.

Midnight's Children is the story of Saleem Sinai, born on the midnight of 15 August, 1974: the time and year of the birth of the modern Indian nation. He therefore feels that he is 'mysteriously hand-cuffed to history.' The narrative opens with an account of the life of Saleem's grand father, and the hero is actually born as late as on page 116 (which reminds us of the birth of Sterne's hero in *Tristram Shandy,* in a similar fashion. Saleem's peregrinations over the next twentyfive years include his experiences during the Bangla Desh War in 1971 and the clamping of Emergency in 1975.

The narrative abounds in several instances of meaningful use of fantasy and symbolism. Thus, Saleem, who represents the new-born Indian nation, is actually a changeling, a son of an Englishman, and an Indian woman; Saleem is born with blinking eyes and has to be taught to shut them, 'for nobody can face the world with his eyes open all the time.' And out of the lool (a figure which clearly alludes to the *Arabian Nights*) children born on the midnight of 1947, exactly 420 die (this is the notorious number of the section of the Indian Penal Code dealing with cheating.)

The story is narrated in the first person by Saleem himself, and his garrulity makes for several digressions like the 'Paean to Dung (p.32) and the 'Fairy Tale of the Prince of Kif' (pp. 320-326). Stylistic experiments, which remind us of *All About H. Hatterr,* mainly take the form of the 'chutnifucation of the English language, using several devices such as the use of Hindi and urdu words, expressions, explatives etc. (*'O baba,' 'funtoosh'*), bilingual echoic formations (*'writing-shiting'*), use of Hindi idiom *a la* Mulk Raj Anand (*'who cares two pice'*), bilingual puns ('ladies and *ladas'*), and dove-tsiling of words (*'ononon'*).

But what makes *Midnight's Children* an outstanding work is the fact that it has a distinctly existential dimension. One central theme seems to unify all the elements of political fantasy, comedy and surrealism in the novel; this is the over-arching theme of identity and its plight in a hostile world. The numerous ways in which identity is made to suffer are vividly illustrated in the experiences of the protagonist. Identity is, in turn, shown as a sham, as mistaken and

confused, subjected to oblivion, fractured, dwarfed and reduced to animal level; as barren, sterile and totally lost. And since heredity is an essential element in identity, some of these ordeals are repeated from generation to generation, in the narrative which opens with the protagonist's grandfather and ends with his son.

If the political allegory in *Midnight's Children* concerns India, its sister nation, born at the same time--viz. Pakistan--is the subject of *Shame* (1983). Here again, the political equations are quite clear. The protagonist is Omar Khayyam Shakil (a name which is significant of the Pakistani belief that has greater affinities with Persia and the Middle East rather than with neighbouring India, in spite of the fact that a majority of the people of Pakistan are Hindus converted to Islam. He is the illegitimate son of three mothers and a British officer. This obviously refers to the creation by the British Government of Pakistan out of three Muslim-majority provinces of pre-Independence India. Many major players in the history of Pakistan during the first three decades of its turbulent life, including Zulfiquaer Ali Bhutto (= 'Iskander Harappa'), and Zia Ul Haq (='Raza Hyder') appear here. The macabre end, in which Omar is Killed by his own wife, who has turned into a man-eating beast, and his home is destroyed in an explosion is perhaps a dire warning that a nation born in hatred, and which has for the most part lived in an ambience of tyranny, violence and unrest is bound to end the same way.

Apart from the political allegory, the narrative has other dimensions as well. The miraculous birth of Omar and the sudden transformation of his wife into a white panther clearly belong to the fiction of Magic Realism. The idea of a human being transformed into an animal is not new. In David Garnett's *Lady into Fox* (1922) a country gentleman's wife is suddenly transformed into a fox; her husband accepts her as she is now and continues to live with her until she is killed by hounds. This is fantasy as a sheer flight of the imagination, but with no symbolic dimension. It is this symbolic dimension that gives Rushdie's novel its powerful appeal.

Furthermore, as Rushdie himself says, 'I am only telling a sort of a modern fairy tale' (p.70). But here is a fairy tale with a big difference--an inverted fairy tale. In a traditional fairy tale, a frog is

transformed into a prince, in the midst of the ringing of wedding bells; in *Shame*, the process is reversed, with tragic consequences.

The title, 'Shame', suggests another possible dimension of the narrative. The Hindi/Urdu word, '*Aurat*,' meaning woman, comes from an Arabic word, which means 'Shame.' In all oriental cultures, Woman and Shame are associated in two diametrically opposite ways. First, it indicates a woman's honour, her decency and modesty. Ancient Hindus, who has a passion for classification, have listed eleven basic traits of woman, including modesty, along with beauty, tolerance, self-effacement etc. In fact, in a positive sense, Shame is associated with the Divine. Idols of *Lajja Gauri* (*Lajja*=Shame , and Gauri=Parvati, the consort of Shiva) are still found in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. They symbolized female fertility and were worshipped by barren women.

On the other hand, 'Shame', in a pejorative sense is equated with dishonour, loss of self-respect, humiliation etc. It is this pejorative sense that seems to be emphasised in this narrative of three decades of a country united in a 'macabre fellowship of shame.'

Rushdie's fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), brought him a considerable amount of notoriety, and devout Muslims found it so blasphemous that a dire *Fatwa* was issued against him by a cleric, passing a death sentence on him. The 'verses' in question are actually from the holy *Quran;* they were first sanctioned by the Prophet, but were later repudiated by him as originating from the Devil, since they are about certain pagan deities of the Meccans.

The novel opens with an incident typical of Magic Realism: two Indians fall from an aerolane on to the English coast and land unhurt. They are Gibreel Farishta, a super-star of Indian Cinema, and Saladin Chamcha, an Indian emigre. The names are highly symbolic. 'Gibreel,' which is Gabriel, represents the angelic, and 'Ferishta' means angel; and 'Saladin' recalls Sultan Saladin, whom the Christians regarded as the Devil himself. His surname, 'Chamcha,' alludes to the proverb, 'One needs a long spoon to sup with the Devil.' But as usual with Rushdie the symbolism is actually multilayered. For instance, '*Chamcha*' means a 'hanger-on', a flatterer in Hindi and his wife's name is 'Pamela Lovelace' *a la* Samuel Richardson. (In fact a detailed

consideration of the symbolism of proper names in the novel will take an entire essay).

The ensuing adventures of the two Indians in England provide occasion for the treatment of many subjects, including the problems of Indian immigrants in England, British politics (Mrs Thatcher becomes' Mrs Torture'), Islamic history and theology, and Feminism. Both finally return to India to meet different fates. Gibreel, who had earlier won his laurels by playing Hindu gods on the screen (a smack at N.T. Rama Rao, the noted Andhra actor) makes a movie on Prophet Mohamed, and when it is a big flop, he shoots himself. Saladin, suddenly realising that his roots are in India, decides not to return to England.

In spite of its seemingly inexhaustible inventiveness (or perhaps because of it), *The Satanic Verses* is ultimately a confused book. In his irrepressible way, Rushdie tries to do too many things at the same time, allowing the narrative to run into too many directions, ultimately arriving nowhere. The nature of Good and Evil is an exceedingly complex subject. To unravel its intricate interconections is an arduous task; and it is certainly not made easy by periodic engagement with peripheral issues, however interesting they may be, by themselves.

With the Democles Sword of the religious fatwa hanging over his heretical head, Rushdie was forced to go into seclusion and live under constant police protection in London. It speaks volumes for his courage, strength of mind and *sang froid* that under these forbidding circumstances his creative powers remained entirely unaffected. In fact, in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) he has written perhaps his most delightful novel. Rushdie is supposed to have written the book at the request of his small son for a story, but here, as in the case of *Gulliver's Travels*, is a children's tale with an urgent message to adults, a message on the issues of the liberty of creative imagination and the sanctity of the artist's freedom of expression. There questions were of pressing personal relevance to him then, and it is a mark of his powerful creative imagination that he transformed a seemingly insuperable difficulty into a fine artistic opportunity.

Haroon and the Sea of Stories opens in a manner typical of a children's tale: 'There was once in the country of Alifbay a sad city.' In this city lives Haroon, a small boy, whose father, Rashid Khalifa is a master story-teller. But his wife runs away with another man and he suddenly finds that his story-telling powers are also gone. He regains them in the end after several adventures and a great war between champions of the freedom of expression and their tyrannical oppressors. The story abounds in allegorical characters like Prince Bolo (=speak), Princess Batcheet (=dialogue) and Khatam-shud (=completely finished).

As an allegory *Haroon and the Sea of Stories* invites comparison with the earlier *Grimus;* and the comparison immediately shows how much ground Rushdie has covered during the fifteen years that separate the two novels. In *Grimus,* the allegory was vague, confused and unanchored in a specific cultural reality. In *Haroon and the Sea of Stories* these pitfalls have been successfully avoided. Devoid of digression, compact and unified in effect, this is perhaps the most focussed of Rushdie's novels, and as an allegory, it is perhaps fit to rank with the best in the English language.

It is precisely this power of focussing that is missing in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). All the usual ingredients of Rushdie's fiction are here: a large canvas; a narrative covering several generations; characters sporting different kinds of eccecentricities; employment of thinly disguised real-life personages; magic realism; a conscious attempt to allegorise and constant word-play. But these several elements do not seem to coalesce well enough to constitute a unified whole. This is probably because some of these ingredients appear to be merely routine gestures, rather than organic parts of the narrative.

Consider, for example, the curious fact that the protagonist, The 'Moor' grows twice as fast as his biological age, owing to casual wish made by his mother, so that he is actually born only four and a half months after conception and he is really sixty at the age of thirty. This idea is evidently borrowed from Gunter Grass, whose protagonist, Oskar in *The Tin Drum* refuses to grow after the age of three. Both are typical examples of 'Magic Realism,' but in *The*

Tin Drum, the protagonist's refusal to grow has a profound thematic significance; it symbolises, in a powerful way, the stunting of the intellectual growth of the nation during the totalitarian Nazi rule. Rushdie has not been able to invest the Moor's double-fast biological growth with a similar symbolic meaning. It remains little more than a clever gimmick.

The same objection must be taken to the putative parallel suggested at various places in the novel between the protagonist, The Moor and Boabdil the last Moorish sultan of Granada. The protagonist's real name is 'Moraes' which is shortened as 'Moor', and his surname, 'Zogoigby' means 'unlucky'--an adjective which fits Boabdil also, because with his defeat in 1492 ended the eight hundred year old Moorish kingdom in Spain. The picture, 'The Moor's Last Sigh' depicting Boabdil riding out of the palace of Alhambra also figures at more than one place. But the comparison is limited to superficial details like these, and is not rigorously worked out in symbolic terms, in respect of character and action. It would be uncharitable, but perhaps correct to suggest that Boabdil was perhaps an after thought, which provided an attractive title, since the 'Moor' like Boabdil was destined to be the last of his line.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet (1999), Rushdie's latest novel, stands apart from all his other narratives in that it is his first attempt to deal with the theme of love, as the title suggests. The ground beneath whose feet her lover, Ormus Cama worships is Vina, a singer. As usual, Rushdie implies a symbolic parallel between a modern love story and an ancient legend: the story of Orpheus and Euridice. The names of Rushdie's lovers are symbolic. 'Ormus' is a variation on 'Orpheus' and 'Cama', a common Parsi name also recalls 'Kama,' the Hindu god of love; Vina is a musical instrument, and music plays a critical role in the narrative. There is an interesting twist given to the old story. Ormus, injured seriously in a car-crash, lies in a coma. Vina who has been separated from him for long, gets to hear his latest song, 'Beneath Her Feet,' and hastens to be at his bedside and he revives. So, in Rushdie's narrative, it is Euridice who brings Orpheus back from the dead, and not the other way round. Finally, the lovers are separated for good, when Vina

disappears, literally swallowed by the 'ground beneath her feet', in an earthquake in Mexico.

The chief weakness of the novel is that the lovers fail to come to life. It is extremely difficult to portray romantic love credibly in this hard-headed age of ours, where even the word has become devalued (The London bar-maid calls you 'luv') especially in serious literature, and perhaps only lyricism of the highest kind can make the feat possible. Rushdie's attempts in this direction lack conviction:

> 'How shall we sing of the coming together of long-parted lovers separated by foolish mistrust for a sad decade, reunited at last by music? Shall we say they ran singing through fields of asphodel and drank the nectar of the gods?' (p.321).

This tissue of conventionalities becomes all the more unconvincing when one remembers that Vina continues to flirt with her friend Rai all time, and on the night previous to her death, she has had a man warming her bed.

Emotion is hardly Rushdie's strong suit; fantasy, irony, and satire are. It is hardly surprising therefore that the minor characters, which afford him ample scope to exercise his powers, are much better realized: Cyrus, the pathological killer, called 'the Pillowman' because he smothers his numerous victims with a pillow; Piloo Doodhwala, involved in a goat-scam, and Ormus's father, a sham-barrister, who is finally exposed.

The weakness at the heart of the narrative is compounded by the excessive, and at times puerile word-play. (e.g. 'Cut the throats of your goats and turn them into coats'--p.117).

Just past the age of fifty, Salman Rushdie should have many more years of creative writing before him; and the recent easing of the deadly *fatwa* should make for far more congenial conditions of work. Meanwhile, Indian English literature owes him much. Known earlier only for a few prominent writers, and studied in a few universities abroad, Indian writing in English has now won far wider acceptance, not only in English-speaking countries but in the wide world also, by way of translation. And it was Rushdie who showed the way by his bold 'chutnification' of English.

ANEES JUNG: PROTEST AGAINST GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Tapati Lahiri

Social justice means availability of equal opportunities that Indian citizens could enjoy for the development of their personalities in all respects. The preamble to the Constitution clearly says that India is a Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic. In this connection we may quote Justice J.S. Verma, retired Chief Justice of India: It is clear from the constitutional scheme that national unity and integrity are of paramount importance for the development of the country. There has been much talk of social justice in the name of caste, class and gender since Independence. But ultimately genuine social justice has proved elusive in many ways. Instead of integration, there is disruption and instead of unity there is deplorable disharmony that steadily blocks the progress, social and economic, of the country. It is because of the intense social and economic differences and disbalances that are created by some selfish opportunists who always seek to exploit to fulfil their vested interest.

There are lots of social injustices in our country, one of which is a gender discrimination of unjust social systems. The women, regardless of the class and caste in which they survive, are subjected to discrimination, exploitation and violence wherever they are either within families or at the place of work. Women are no longer considered human beings with a personality. With this indifferent attitude towards women, a number of problems have crept in. A majority of Indian women, particularly in the rural areas, are hopelessly neglected even now a days. There are so many things, mainly technological, being developed in India, but sad it is to note that no change as such is remarkable in outlooks and views on the existence of women in a family. Theoretically women are given equal constitutional rights with men, but in practice the gender discrimination is alarmingly increasing in our society and this has deep impact on the emerging feminist consciousness.

In the realm of literature a large number of women writers have flourished, protesting against this gender discrimination. One of these

writers is Anees Jung who is noted for her forceful feminist voice against the unjust social order and we shall consider her here as such. For this paper, her book *Unveiling India : A Woman's Journey*[1] has been chosen in which the discriminations of gender as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother have been exposed to public gaze. Anees Jung's book shows how class, caste and gender consciousness subjects a human being to untold misery. *Unveiling India* is a chronicle of events and incidents dealing invariably with such fundamental social problems of rural women in India is their various sectors of social life. All this Jung, while travelling the rural 'neglected' areas of India, experienced from village to village, from woman to woman, young and old alike. In the core of the Indian rural society lie the causes of women that remain unsolved, unheard even upto now, which Jung seems to have had in mind.

First of all Anees Jung through her childhood takes us back to that patriarchal world where women are treated as a 'kind of non-man.' She writes about her mother:

> My mother remains absent in the only family portrait that rests on the last page of the album. Her seven children are grouped solemnly around a father, proud in the colour black. The inscription below the picture reads, 'Hosh Ki Duniya,' Hosh being my father's pen name. My mother, it appears, has no claim on this happy world which she has helped create.

In these few lines the author has encapsulated male tyranny that totally kills the active role of a woman as a wife or a mother in the family.

Another gender discrimination is deplorably marked out when a female child is born in a family, mainly in a rural family--there are no celebrations, no sweets distributed, no astrologers to predict her fate and fortune, for her fate is known and sealed. The birth of a daughter was, and is still, looked upon with disfavour. Girls are not properly fed. They are thus badly treated and seen as a burden whose birth means expenses in terms of marriage and dowry (p.71). It is nothing but a murkish picture of gender-based compartmentalisation in our society. It comes as an undesirable shock that things are not better even in the educated mass of our society. Girls are not counted in the number of children, as mentioned here by a paediatrician in Bombay,a woman may have five daughters and one

son but if she is asked about her issues, she would promptly say, one.

In our society women are despised as women, while theoratically feminity is highly praised. It is because of this fact that for a long time women have been shutting their eyes to their natural rights and their own prospects. These women should raise their voice against their confinement in domestic space as a mere housewife, a mother or a daughter. But what we see is somehow more deplorable, and that is the oppression of women by women. Vaisali Madho Rane miserably wails:

> I was married seventeen years ago and have failed to bear a child. I went to temples, to god men, to doctors and faith healers. Nothing worked. My mother-in-law taunts me. She pushed my husband to take another wife. (p.114)

Then, there is a grim picture of bride burning. Satyarani Chadha wails for her daughter:

> One could not tell whether the body was that of man or woman; it was just a twisted black bundle lying in a corner. The mother-in-law refused to give me even a *Kafan* (white shroud) to cover the body. She told me to pick up my rubbish and clear her courtyard. (p.117)

Women are not only oppressed by men in a society, but oppressed by women also in a family. It is really sad.

But everything is not like this. In the modern age the image of woman has changed. Women have already come out boldly and have fearlessly raised their voice against tyranny, especially based on gender discrimination, as in the case of Arti (109). Another woman, Saadu Bai, shows her bold step when her husband drives her out of the house after giving birth to a still-born child:

> I returned to my mother's village. Since I become a village nurse, I have found a new life. I have made friends and won the respect of my village. I no longer feel abandoned. (p.111)

Here is the point to be realized. Saadu Bai did not blame her fate at all. Moreover, she could realize her own worth and capacity to improve her luck. Santosh Ben, a self-employed woman, says:

> I was a poor woman. I had no name.... When I became a member of SEWA, I saw many women like myself, doing the same work, living the same kind of life. I felt strong being among them. Together we raised a voice, demanded respect, a right to work, a space to sit. Today when we go into an office

> we are made to sit on chairs and given tea to drink. (pp. 121-22)

What Anees Jung wants to say is worth thinking. For the social justice, women themselves should come out, with undaunted spirit and indomitable will power. If the awareness of woman for woman's sake is strong, if fellow feelings grow in them and education is imparted to them, there will be few oppressed women on the grounds of class, caste and gender in our society. Anees Jung cites Sita Bai who is a strong-minded widow. She says:

> When my husband died my father wailed like a child. In his death he saw the end of my world. I did not. I was a girl of fifteen. I wanted to read novels, not sit in a *puja* room reciting the Gita.... I wanted to study. So I read, travelled beyond the books, went to America, returned with a degree in business management.. (p.75)

This is the keypoint that Anees Jung wants to stress; that is to say, all women have rights to become a successful and independent career-woman in our society.

Evidently, woman does not live 'invisibly, negating herself' (p.119). Individually she has gained 'a name, collectively an identity' (p.122). The fact is that the fate of woman does not depend on man, and that rights are not given in charity but have to be fought for and won. Anees Jung, however, has never lost her faith in woman, who is also the Sakti, the female energy of Siva.

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[1]Anees Jung, *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1987).

All subsequent references are to this edition and page number follows each citation.

AN EQUAL MUSIC — A CRITIQUE

K.K. Gaur

Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music* deals with a two-fold theme. On the one level it depicts the love of a woman-the love that is lost, found and lost again. Simultaneously, the other thematic strand dilates upon the love of music that can sustain as a throbbing, passionate pre-occupation throughout one's life. In the scheme of the novel, both the dimensions of the theme are coalesced together in a way that each reinforces the vigour and emotional impact of the other. Thus they are collaborative and complementary and enable the reader to savour the emotional profundity of Seth's unique achievement. The novel opens with the protagonist Michael living in London as a fugitive from Vienna where he has met the girl of his ever-abiding love named Julia McNicholl nee Julia Hansen after her marriage. Both of them are music students there in an institution under the instruction of Carl Kall. A sudden disruption is caused by Michael's distaste for Carl Kall whom he finds intolerable because of the latter's despotic manner in teaching music. Julia McNicholl-by temperament an amiable, sensitive, perceptive and humane woman-disagrees with Michael's impressions and advises him not to push the matter to a point of no return. Michael leaves Vienna suddenly and settles down in an eighth storey flat near the Hyde Park in London. Julia is emotionally shattered by his unsteady temperamental behaviour and unceremonious departure. For two months there is no communication between the duo. Thereafter Michael's letters or telephonic calls to Julia go unreciprocated by her as she feels the manner of his departure too shocking and irreconciable. Ten years pass during which she gets married to an American banker from Boston named James Hansen and gives birth to a son, Luke.

Still a decade of separation does not dull Michael's nostalgic memories of his lost love for Julia. A sudden glimpse of Julia-lookalike woman in a moving bus on the Oxford street whets his desire and passion for her. Like a maniac, he runs after the bus on foot but frustratingly fails to meet her. After the Quartet played by the Maggiore-a musical group comprising Michael, Piers, Helen and Billy-is over in the Wigmore Hall, Julia meets the protagonist backstage

as she too has settled down in London alongwith her family after the death of her father. This meeting is followed by Julia's visits to Michael's flat during the day after she has left her son in the nearby school. She invites the protagonist for meetings at Walla-ce Collection and at Orangery in Kensington Garden under heavy downpour. During these frequent visits, the love passion between the two is revived leading to repeated indulgence in love-making. The recollection of old Vienna days of romance and music exercises upon both an electrifying, transforming influence that rekindles the embers of the dimmed passion. These amorous scenes are described thus:

> She kisses me. I hold her in that soundless room, far from day light and the traffic of Bayswater and all the webs of the world. She holds me as if she could never bear to let me desert her.[1]

The impetuosity and serenity of spontaneous love-making is further lucidly illustrated in these words:

> Afterwards, when I return to bed she rests her head on my shoulder and drowses off..... I lightly place the palm of my free hand first on one eyelid, then the other. She is deep in some other world far from my domain..... In her face, clear first with passion, then with peace.[2]

The reunion further gets an over-whelming, all-absorbing fillip by fortuitous quirk of circumstances. The Maggiore has to proceed to Vienna and thence to Venice for staging musical concerts at these places. Erica persuades the agent Lothar to requisition the services of a pianist for joining the performance of Schubert's quintet at Musikverein in Vienna. It is a matter of coincidence that Julia is engaged as a pianist by him, a fact which Michael comes to know to his amazement much later on. This opportunity enables Michael and Julia to live in each other's company for about ten days. The whole sequence is a reliving of the fond memories of their good, old days spent together in Vienna and in Venice.

Michael feels shocked at the revelation by Julia that this quintet performance will be her last concert in ensemble as it is a strain for her because of her deafness. In desperation, he strikes his forehead against the statue of a bear in the street and gets a bump on it. The intensity of attachment between Julia and Michael is convincingly manifested in the embarrassing scene that occurs during the intermission of their concert at Brahms-sall in Vienna. Michael is suddenly taken ill due to a sudden attack of nervousness that he

suffers from at the thought of this ensemble performance being the last on the part of Julia. The mere imaginative prospect of his losing Julia makes him unsteady with tremulous fingers. The sudden flash of realisation, expressed in the words "it is a death, a passing, for will she ever ? - she will not ever-play with anyone again,"[3] exerts a destabiling pressure on his mental equilibrium. He regains normalcy only after she reassures him and inspires him with the rendition of a musical piece.

The resurgence of love emotion reaches its zenith in Venice. Both the lovers travel by train by themselves away from the company of other members of the Maggiore who leave for Venice by an aeroplane. Michael and Julia live together in an apartment which is spared by Julia's friend, Jenny for them. Four days are passed in closed company. Their sojourn in Venice is like honey-mooning in a gondola on an island. They visit places of their old acquaintance like the Vivaldi's dilapidated church where both play a Sonata composed by the master musician on their violin and piano respectively. Their visit to Scoula to see Carpaccio's paintings arouses a spontaneous over-powering impulse of abandon and love-making. The loneliness of the place and natural surroundings of a pigeon that coos, the breeze that ruffles the red curtain, and the sound of work that comes from across the canal conspire together to entangle the duo into love-pranks such as:

> We kiss for a long time. I sit on the bench, she sits astride me, I move my hands over her, and under her dress.[4]

They go to San Marco to enjoy the dawn scene. In their apartment in Venice at night, the togetherness and isolation unlock all the shackles off Julia's mind and thinking induced by marriage and such other related developments in the last ten years. It is described thus:

> She seemed shy at first, but now she is far bolder than she has ever been before-it is as if this voyage by water and this unknown room have freed her from constraint.[5]

They enjoy eateries and drink at different places as the whim takes them to and exchange gifts of a book and a blue porcelain frog. On the night before Julia's departure for London by herself, Michael is captured by a demonic frenzy of passion. Obsessed and excessively aroused, he bites her over different parts of her body leaving blue scars all over.

The cup of love-making is perhaps filled to its brim. The memories of her husband and especially her darling son, Luke overpower Julia. Stung by an unexpressed sense of remorse and lurking suspicion of infidelity towards her steadfast husband, she decides to return the next day and writes a letter to James about her arrival at Heathrow airport in the evening. The chance discovery of this letter by Michael and his having read her personal private letter prove an act of undoing their regained love for ever. Julia feels hurt by Michael's craftiness and jealous feeling. His careless mocking utterance of the words 'Dearest Jimbo' she has used in her letter for addressing her husband rattles her calm and injures her feeling of self-dignity. Next evening she departs from him without speaking a single formal word of farewell. This puts the relived love to an abrupt end. Later persuasions and regrets by Michael to Julia fail to resurrect the relationship as she has a strong suspicion that her husband has smelt a rat. She, in the company of James and her son, goes back to Boston for a month.

Seth's intention of writing this novel is candidly stated in the *Author's Note* appended after the end of the narration. He states, "Music to me is dearer even than speech. When I realised that I would be writing about it I was gripped with anxiety. Only slowly did I reconcile myself to the thought of it."[6] Hence, he has dedicated this piece of fictional writing to music. The whole firmament of the novel is reverberating with intricacies of the Western musical instruments like violin, viola, piano, cello and bass etc. Details after details are piled up in discussions among the members of the Maggiore about performance complications involved in musical compositions of classical music composers such as Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Bach and others. The writer is abundant in the knowledge of various forms of musical compositions like a trio, a quartet, a quintet, the "Art of Fugue", Trout and a Sonata, etc. The reader is astoundingly impressed with the opulence and exactitude of finer subletities of music expounded by the author. The dominant theme of love-affair is basically interwoven with the pursuit of music as both the lovers take to liking each other by dint of their common deep, life-long interest in music. Music and love are inseparable and make a natural corollary in the events unfolded in the novel.

The world of music is all-embracing. The ambience saturated

with over-flowing love for music admits of no barriers of nationalities, languages and cultures. The English, the Viennese, the Venetian, the French and the American characters engaged in the common pursuit of love of music meet, perform and feel together. The life so envisioned in the novel is global, Music, therefore, is a potently unifying and binding force. The realisation that the power of music is elevating and capable of lightening the gloom and burden of a failed love affair dawns upon the protagonist in the concluding part of the novel. Michael, despite his feeling of frustration and disenchantment, rushes back to London from his native place Rochdale so that he may attend the solo musical concert held by Julia which he ab initio thinks of skipping over by refusing a ticket for the show. But on the day of performance, he gets entry into the Wigmore Hall on Billy's ticket. After listening to Julia's rendition of the "Art of Fugue" on piano, he feels relaxed and goes through a calming down experience that gives him inner strength to get reconciled to the inevitable by saying:

> Music, such music, is a sufficient gift. Why ask for happiness; why hope not to grieve. It is enough, it is to be blessed enough to live from day to day and to hear such music-not too much, or the soul could not sustain it-from time to time.[7]

The ardour and consuming fire of failure in human love-affair are doused and made bearable by the divine, sublimating nature of celestial music. Happiness or grief ceases to matter in such a soul-stirring ambience. The protagonist gets salvation from the obsession of physical love form of Julia by listening to her enthralling, soul-searing and liberating music. This unearthly, transcendental horizon of experience is summed up by him thus:

> There is no forced gravitas in her playing. It is a beauty beyond imagining-clear, lovely, inexorable, phrase across phrase, phrase echoing phrase, the incomplete, the unending "Art of Fugue." It is an unequal music.[8]

This novel, therefore, is a sort of paean sung in adoration of music and love that lie beyond the realm of physical temporal existence.

The narrative skill of the novelist is superbly impressive, captivating and compulsively absorbing. The reader is simply swept off his or her feet by the torrential flow of spinning of the story fabric. The immediacy, force and eloquence of language is irresistible. Seth is a master wizard who creates a world populated with personages living and breathing for the ethereal impulse of music and engage

themselves in hot pursuit of it for its sake and for the purpose of achieving excellence despite the heavy financial odds they are confronted with since as a profession it does not prove much remunerative. Facile use of musical vocabulary speaks volumes of the writer's dedication, perserverance and erudite effort to accomplish the task of churning out faultlessly this work of fiction.

The observations in the *Indian Review of Books* about Seth's *Mappings* as reproduced on the back of the Jacket Cover of *An Equal Music* are truly applicable in the present case also. They read:

> 'Fluent, witty and accomplished writing by a man in full command of the resources of the language... The final impression is one of over-whelming mastery."[9]

The author has successfully exploited the technical devices like flash back technique, hind-sight and restoration of memories of the past. Much of Michael's past life as a music student and a lover is focused through the deft application of such literary medium. The depiction of natural scenic beauty of flowers, lakes, river, birds, animals and varied vegetation in plenty in the novel fits very well with the main thematic tenor of love and of music presented in this flawless, immaculately perfect creative piece of art. The narration flows as naturally as water gushes out of a water-fall. Spontaneity is laced with literary finer sensibilities of wit, humour and elegiac connotations.

At perceptional level, to borrow the words of the novelist himself, this fictitive composition induces the reader "to expect to continue to live in the zones that lie at the inersection of the world of soundlessness with those of heard, of misheard, of half-heard and of imagined sound."[10]

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MEANINGFUL WHISPERS: THE SHORT STORIES OF JHUMPA LAHIRI

O.P. Mathur

E.M. Forster's "Only connect" has been superseded by all-round globalization and consequent cross-fertilization of different cultures. Its cultural, intellectual and emotional dimensions are being explored in the literature of the diaspora which, on account of its increasing richness, variety and comprehensive coverage, seems to be growing into an independent branch of literature, truly 'inter-national' in its parameters. Its writers, portraying the social, marital, professional and other types of inter-mixture, become the vehicles, sometimes themselves the arenas, of their interaction which has far reaching impacts upon the personalities of the individuals involved. One of the latest born of this disasporic hierarchy, catapulted to the elite of Pulitzer awardees with only one frail collection of nine short stories, is Jhumpa Lahiri, almost a literary phenomenon by herself. She has treated in her own simple, sincere and yet ironic mode the problem of centre, double vision, ambiguity of the ground beneath the writer's feet. She goes on to define her position by viewing herself as an interpreter of "emotional pain and affliction."[1] As an interpreter she is also, like her characters, occupying "a middle position,"[2] poised between the two cultures of the East and the West, though there seems to be a marked tilt towards her native land. She goes to the extent of confessing, "I went to Calcutta neither as a tourist nor as a former resident--a valuable position. I think as a writer. I learned to observe things as an outsider and yet I also knew that as different as Calcutta is from Rhode Island, *I belonged there in some fundamental ways I didn't seem to belong in the United States*"[3] (Emphasis added).

Out of the nine stories included in her prize-winning book *Interpreter of Maladies* with the sub-title "Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond," seven deal with Indian-American interaction, while two exclusively treat the Indian characters in the backdrops of traditional beliefs, superstitions and ways of life. Even in these stories the two narrative attitudes of the author are clearly noticeable--the deeply sympathetic for the fate of low-caste woman Boori Ma (i.e.

old mother) in 'A Real Durwan,' and the ironical one in a female victim of superstition carving out a place for herself in 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar.' These two stories focus on some of the important maladies of Indian society. But it is the title story that deserves special consideration, for Jhumpa Lahiri herself has revealed, "When I was putting the collection together, I knew from the beginning that this had to be the title story, for I think it best expresses, thematically, the predicament at the heart of the book—the dilemma, the difficulty, and often the impossibility of communicating emotional pain and affliction to others, as well as expressing it to ourselves."[4] The word 'maladies' is well chosen, for it is a neutral word, comprehensive in its connotation, which can cover anything 'abnormal,' from the mild to the more serious, deviating from the norms of one's native culture, arousing in the observer or interpreter reactions from irony to sympathy. Whatever persona the author adopts--a character involved in the action, an amused, but careful observer, a mediator, or a physician--her stories are vehicles of self-exploration and fulfilment. In the title story the East and the West brush past each other for a while, with the difference that when a local Indian Mr. Kapasi, a tourist-guide and taxi-driver, takes an Americanized Indian family of Mr. Das to see the sun-temple at Konark, this brief business-like encounter reveals how far the Indian characters settled in the West have travelled from their cultural roots. Mr. Das does what is unthinkable in India--he refers to his wife by her first name 'Mina' while talking about her to their small children, and Mrs. Das, only after some bickering, agrees to such a small thing as taking their little daughter Tina to the toilet and that too only after Mr. Das points out that he had given the child her bath the day before. Matters even more serious lie beneath this surface relationship. Their son Bobby is not Mr. Das's son. The lady takes her adulterous relationship with another man so lightly that she casually reveals this fact for the first time to a total stranger like Mr. Kapasi in a far-off land. Her behaviour with Mr. Kapasi borders on flirtation, not unusual in Western society, so that the poor man, slightly self-opinionated, fancies that she is somewhat serious, for she even says that they "have a lot in common" (p.46). Such behaviour, coupled with the sight of Mrs. Das's body-

contours prominent in her tight-fitting dress, goes to the head of Mr. Kapasi, who is probably unused to being treated by a beautiful foreign lady with so much interest, which for him is "mildly intoxicating" (p.53). When Mr. Kapasi thinks that once again how she had said "romantic," the feeling of intoxication grows (p.53). This seems to have reached its climax when Mrs. Das asks him for his address, which also makes him dream of becoming even "an interpreter between nations" (p.59). But his dream is based on a miscalulation of the nature of Mrs. Das. Would the lady who could disregard the marital tie by adultery continue to be friendly to him, a complete stranger in a distant land ? Her words so readily lapped by him was for her no more than a casual and light manner of passing time. On her opening her bag, the slip of paper containing Mr. Kapasi's address flies off unnoticed except by him. This is the end of Mr. Kapasi's 'romance' and also of his dream of becoming an interpreter between nations, but it seems to highlight the author's identical objective in the book.

These three stories are located in Bengal. The backdrop of the others is "Boston and Beyond," "Beyond" probably standing for their emotional and spiritual reaching out. A striking story that stands by itself is 'Mrs. Sen's' in which Mrs. Sen does baby-sitting for Eliot, who is apparently between infancy and boyhood. For Mrs. Sen 'home' means India (p. 116) and her only identity is that of being the wife of Mr. Sen, a teacher of Mathematics. Her style of life is almost completely Indian--her outfit consisting of a Sari, vermillion in the parting of her hair, a dot on the forehead, her taste for fish, her cooking in the traditional Indian way down to the knife for peeling and slicing vegetables having a curved blade "like the prow of a Viking ship" (p.114). As in most Indian families, she has strong ties of affection, and is much upset at the news of her grandfather's death, while, contrastingly, even the small American boy Eliot can entertain the thought of putting his mother, when old, in a nursing home (p.131). She toys with the silly idea of driving right upto Calcutta and unsuccessfully tries to learn driving, getting involved in a minor accident after which Eliot, though uninjured, is withdrawn by his father from Mrs. Sen's baby-sitting, ironically referred to in the title

as 'Mrs. Sen's' as if it were a regular institute. Thus end Mrs. Sen's few and half-hearted efforts at getting properly adjusted in the West. Like Mrs. Sen, Mr. Pirzada of the story 'Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine' is a Bengali, an East Pakistani who in the course of the story itself becomes a Bangladeshi. He too, like most Indians, is deeply attached to his native place Dacca (the time of which he keeps in his pocket-watch) and his large family of seven daughters back home. While in U.S.A. he dines every day with an Indian family, of which the small daughter Lilia is the narrator of the story. She is the special object of Mr. Pirzada's affection and so is the best observer of his nature and behaviour. The child-narrator cannot understand the difference between an Indian, a Pakistani and a Bangladeshi, for Mr. Pirzada successively embodies all the three identities which are essentially one for which political divisions are merely notional. Even the long foreign stay of Mr. Pirzada can make no difference to it. The Indian family, while participating in Christian festivals like Halloween, wishes for the safety of Mr. Pirzada's family. The resilient essential Indianness of both parties remains unaffected.

Two stories deal with the problem of inter-relationship of Indo-American couples in a land with different cultural and social norms. In 'The Blessed House', the wife Twinkle goes on finding Christian icons in a house into which they have recently moved. Broadminded and tolerant, she likes them and uses them as decoration pieces, but her husband Sanjeev is utterly irritated and begins to hate the icons. The visitors admire them, and ultimately the husband also falls in line with his wife. The all-embracing nature of essential Indianness even in an alien ambience underlies the story. The theme of another story 'A Temporary Matter' is also basically similar. The working wife of an Indian couple, Shoba, apparently influenced by the Western stance on the independence of women and the prevalence of separation and divorce, decides to live separately from her husband and even hires an apartment for herself. The catalytic factor was the apparent absence of her husband from the clinic where she delivered her still-born child and, being unconscious, could not even know its sex. After this they already started avoiding each other. Shoba has not the heart to convey her feelings directly

to her husband. Luckily for her, the electricity department announces a power-cut for five days, giving her an opportunity to exchange pieces of information, till now kept secret, in semi-darkness. Shoba's revelation of her plan for separate living makes her husband Shukumar shock her by the fact that their child was male and that he had held him in his arms. These searing revelations made by them to wound each other really unite them in a flood of tears--their reunion being symbolised by the Bradford couple walking arm in arm on the road outside. Shukumar and Shoba return to the Indian mores after the resolution of 'a temporary matter' the roots of which lay in the conventionally Indian desire for a male child.

Another story in which the Indian outlook on life sets things right is 'Sexy', the title of which refers to one of the chief pursuits of the Western man. Western social life has almost become sex-centred, in which genuine love and friendship have been largely usurped by sex. The chief character Miranda, a professional 'mistress' selling her body, has recently got a catch in Dev whose wife is away for some time. Near the beginning of the story Miranda gets a glimpse into the Indian psyche when unknowingly his Indian acquaintance Laxmi comments on the adulterous behaviour of her cousin's husband, "If I were her I'd fly straight to London and shoot them both" (p.97). Ultimately Laxmi gets a divorce and sends her intelligent seven-year old son Rohin to Laxmi. When at Miranda's place, Rohin calls her 'sexy', defining it "loving someone you don't know" (p.107). Rohin also sleeps by her side as if she were his mother. All this makes her realize the depths to which she has fallen when even Dev, an Indian of recent acquaintance, can come and enter her like an animal without speaking a word (p.93). She therefore starts avoiding Dev's weekly visits under some pretext or the other and returns to her traditional values symbolized by the church and its giant pillars and a clear blue sky spread over the city (p.110) against which all evil is dwarfed.

The last story 'The Third and Final Continent' also deals with an Indian couple. It is narrated in the first person by the male protagonist, for in it the author wants to portray from within his gradual adjustment with the West. At first he is an 'outsider' but his admiration

for his 103-year-old landlady Mrs. Crofts, her exaggerated pride in the American achievement of sending a man on the moon and her clinging to customs at least a century old endears her to him so much that after his marriage he brings his wife Mala, herself brought up in Indian traditions, to meet the old lady, who on noticing that she has been following her own cultural norms, calls her 'a perfect lady.' Mala also gradually gets adjusted to American life. The happy spiritual journey of both the protagonist and Mala is portrayed intimately from within--their mutual adjustment making him amazed "that there was ever a time that we were strangers" (p.197). With a growing son, they attain contentment and happiness in this "third continent," which is also the final one for them. But still the protagonist's Indian moorings occasionally haunt him, as perhaps they still haunt the writer who says, "I am so much more American than they [i.e. her parents] are. In fact, it is still very hard to think of myself as an American."[5] It appears that the Indian 'past' of the protagonist too is embedded deeply in the "Beyond" of his imagination, as it is in that of the author herself who, according to press reports, is going to marry an American, but in Calcutta and according to traditional customs.[6] When the protagonist of the story pours out his nostalgia in the following words, he might well be his creator's mouthpiece:

> I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept, as ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination." (p.198)

Jhumpa Lahiri also says, "America is home to me but I feel I am an outsider too."[7] This feeling seems to be common at least among all first-generation expatriates. Ashis Gupta, another such writer, also voices the same feeling in his interview, "So you will always have people who will come back with the sense of longing for something that is irretrievably lost."[8]

Jhumpa Lahiri's stories are rightly celebrated, for they have a variety of fragrances, subtle nunances of their own. They are deceptively simple on the surface like the calm waters of a deep river. She describes in detail the ripples, only giving to a careful

reader hints of the deep currents which reveal their forceful significance only when we are made to dive, usually at the end. 'A Temporary Matter', for instance, is another masterpiece of suggestiveness in which the reality underneath Shoba's behaviour is revealed at the very end. This device is reinforced by narrative strategy. Many of the stories have a narrator, sharply observant and with his heart and soul in the right place, who can unveil the layers of reality with an effective seasoning of irony and pathos, simple description and narration, flashbacks and fantasies, and streams of thought with dialogues reduced to the minimum. A few of the stories have one of the characters as narrators. This type of narration, whenever used, is a necessary requirement for discerning the point of the story. The basic simplicities of human affection and the irrationality of the Partition can best be rendered through the mind of a child-narrator, as in "Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine." In two of the stories the narrators rightly remain unnamed, for they have a representative character. A neighbour is the unnamed narrator in 'The Treatment of Bibi Haldar' in which a hysteric girl, supposed to be under the influence of witchcraft, is badly treated, or rather tormented by a superstitious and orthodox society and ultimately 'treated' or cured of her disease when fate makes her independent and she begins to stand on her own feet. Similarly, an unnamed young protagonist, coming to America and then finally getting adjusted, though not without nostalgic moods, and settled there with his Indian wife and son is representative of a large majority of first-generation Indian Americans.

The sophistication of Jhumpa Lahiri's narrative art is perhaps best revealed in her subtle exposure of the 'deep structure' of her meaning through uncomplicated plots, characters and style, "the extraordinariness of experience... evoked by the ordinariness of expression."[9] Some of her stories deal either with the revelation of the essential features of the personalities of their characters or their evolution. But the most significant of them present a sudden transformation springing from their roots, the silent control of their genetic cultural construct. The primary message that seems to permeate the stories is like that of cultivating the best of modernity by a mutually advantageous intermingling of the best in the East

and the West, both purified of the accretions of evils and distortions which have disfigured their essence. Her stories thus have global relevance, though they convey their meaning so unobtrusively. Hers is the art of silences suggestive of a 'stream of conscience' both Indian and universal at the same time, "that peculiarly novelistic continuum, inner-and-outer dialectics of the novel, event by event, under the aspect of an ethical form."[10]

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LITERATURE AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Meenakshi Raman

As branches of knowledge, Literature and Science & Technology seem to be poles apart. But there are certain incontrovertible facts which make us realise that this is not entirely true. The spirit of eager inquiry and adventure, the desire for innovation and change, the impulse for creativity, the insatiable thirst for knowledge and the quest for truth--all are universal in nature. These driving forces have worked together to enable man to accumulate knowledge which for convenience has been classified into various branches. But each one of them, directly or indirectly, deals with man's life and his environment. Consequently, advancements in Science & Technology have affected society, brought about a change in the environment and added a fresh dimension to man's attitude, thought and behaviour. A change in the temper of arts is always associated with a change in the temper of the society or a significant part of the society. This in turn directly impinges on the artist, creating new intellectual stimuli and new ideas with which to look at the world. Though the development of Science & Technology is universal, yet to some extent it is socio-cultural specific as is literature. The unique needs and habits of thought of a society create circumstances which force scientific & technological development in a particular direction. So there seems to exist a relationship between the two branches of knowledge--Science & Technology and Literature.

Literature is basically an expression of life through the medium of language. It is a vital record of what men see in life, what they experience, and what they think and feel about those aspects of life which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. In short, literature has a deep and lasting human significance. There are various forces which act behind the creation of literature; a desire for self-expression, an interest in the world of reality and a love of form. The subjects with which literature deals are as varied as life itself for there is nothing in life which cannot be made a theme for literature. Ranging from the simple natural objects like a flea, a flower, or a fountain to the complex technical objects such as an engine, an aircraft, or an aeroplane, the writer of literature has a wide choice

of subject matter.

The ancient world regarded science (Latin "scientia") as knowledge, a unity embracing things physical, human and divine and called its study 'philosophy'. In the Middle Ages, science in this sense was studied in three formal branches; natural philosophy, moral philosophy and metaphysical philosophy. In the 17th Century, a vastly increased interest developed in natural philosophy because such a study was now based on observed facts and experimental verification. The word "science" replaced "natural philosophy" in 1831 and its classification into separate branches like biology, physics, chemistry, etc., was accomplished in the 19th Century. Now science is both a means of promoting human happiness and an end in itself as a search for truth by understanding and interpreting the world. Broadly speaking, technology is the systematic study of techniques for making and doing things. It can also be defined as the application of science to the practcal aims of human life, or as it is sometimes phrased, to the change and manipulation of the human environment. By late 20th Century the concept of technology became more comprehensive and it began to mean the pursuit of results, especially the useful results of scientific research. It has, in fact, now become a global term connoting not only the tangible products of science but also the attitudes, processes, artifacts and consequences associated with it.

Though science and technology developed as different and separate activities, there were points of intersection such as the use of mathematical concepts in building and irrigation works and so on. But largely the functions of scientist and technologist remained distinct in ancient times. Slowly the situation began to change and now we realize that the link between science and technology is far more subtle than the straightforward application of science to create technology. Science is the message that keeps technology straight on the advancing route running smoothly and completely. The notions of science and technology have merged because of the complexities involved in separating the two bodies of knowledge that fall within the ambit of these concepts. It has become almost impossible to demarcate the boundaries showing where science ends and

technology begins or where technology ends and science begins. Further, the role of science in society has already become inseparable from the role of technology. With the phenomenal advancement both in the realms of science and technology, it has become customary to bracket the two together, especially for academic purposes.

After this brief discussion on the two key words of the topic—Literature and Science & Technology, let us now turn our attention to the understanding of relationship that exists between these two branches of knowledge. Both grow out of life and lead to the accumulation of knowledge, though the processes and procedures differ. While the procedures and methods of science and technology are based on the powers of intellect, that of literature are based on the intuitive and spontaneous reactions to physical events, social relationships and individual behaviour. In spite of the fact that the perception of scientists and creative writers differ, both react to the environment with intensity and record their reactions and observations.

Both Literature and Science & Technology are mostly concerned with the experiences of human beings. But whereas the man of Science & Technology does his best to ignore the worlds revealed by his own and other people's more private experiences, the man of letters never confines himself for long to what is merely public. His inner feelings are always activated by the world encompassing him with its culture and customs. He takes delight in considering the experiences of individuals around him as his own and using them in his artistic creations. With him the outer reality is constantly related to the inner world of private experiences.

The truth a scientist seeks is not the intimate, felt-truth of our subjective life. It is truth from outside, organized into a system of merely rational explanation, by a process of abstraction and hypothesis. In other words, the scientific and technological reality is the observed, investigated and experimented truth, whereas literary reality is the qualitative truth dealing with the inner impulses of the individuals. While science abstracts the common and measurable qualities of real things, art seeks to present the element of individuality by virtue of which they are unique.

The scientific or technological exposition being merely instrumental can be re-organized or re-phrased in several ways each of which will be perfectly satisfactory. When new facts make it obsolete, it will go away just like the earlier scientific and technological writings and be forgotten. On the contrary, the fate of a literary exposition or work is very different. As Huxley observes: "Good art survives. Chaucer was not made obsolete by Shakespeare. Intrinsic beauty and significance are long-lived: instrumental information and instrumental explanations within some scientific frame of reference are ephemeral. But the sum and succession of these ephemeral productions is a monument more enduring than bronze—a dynamic monument, a Great Pyramid perpetually on the move and growing larger all the time. This formidable structure is the totality of advancing science and technology."[1]

Both the artist and the scientist seek something which they think is real. Their methods are different. The scientist sets his brain to work and by a slow process of trial and error, after a long experiment and enquiry he finds his answer. This is usually an exciting moment. The artist wants to make something which would produce just that sort of excitement in the minds of other people—the excitement of discovering something new about reality. The excitement so derived is mostly because of seeing connections that did not exist before, because of seeing quite different aspects of life unified through a pattern.

Moreover, the manner in which the literary artist treats his subject matter is very different from the way in which the same subject is treated by the scientist or the technologist. Let us consider a flower as the subject matter. Whatever flower it may be, the literary artist would express its grace and beauty in his own diction and also might use it for analogy. The scientist or a technologist might dissect the flower and with is petals laid out before him might explain to us its sepals and petals, its stamens and pistils. His exposition on this flower would be completely different from that of a literary artist. Whereas the interpretations of a literary artist give us an intimate sense of objects, those of a scientist or a technologist may not do so, though we may be able to understand even the minutest details

of the objects. But the portrayal of objects by the literary artist seems to convey a truth just as significant as that other truth which the man of analysis and demonstration imparts to the intellect.

Apart from the difference in the treatment of the subject matter or theme, the use of language by a literary artist also differs from that of a scientist or a technologist. The latter uses the vocabulary and syntax of speech in such a way as each phrase has only one interpretation; and when he finds them too imprecise for his purposes, he invents new technical language, or jargon, specifically designed to express the limited meaning which he is professionally concerned with. In its purest form, scientific language ceases to be a matter of words and turns into mathematics. The literary artist, on the other hand, filters and purifies the language of the common man in a radically different way to suit his artistry since he wants to convey the multiple significance of human experience both on its private as well as on its more public levels, as against the man of science and technology whose aim is to say one and only thing at a time. But for both of them, the same attributes are required to compose a satisfying sentence and one which is in harmony with the general effect that they are trying to produce.

Of course men of letters have not been greatly interested in science and technology as a set of logically coherent hypotheses validated operationally by experiment and dispassionate observation. Particularly in the field of technology their main concern has been primarily with the social and psychological consequences of applied science and very little with its working or its underlying themes. While writing about technology most of them feel concerned about how it impinges upon them and the social environment in which they live rather than regard themselves as accurate observers of the forces that create and regulate technology. For some of them, the contemplation of scientific theories may be an experience as enjoyable as any one of their personal experiences. But as far as literature is concerned some writers acquire a general knowledge of science, a bird's eye view of what has been achieved in various fields of science and an appreciation of the ways in which the scientific modes of thought are relevant to individual experience

and to the problems of day-to-day life.

To sum up, though the methods of inquiry in the two fields, viz., Literature and Science & Technology differ widely, the processes of creation and accumulation of new knowledge are characterized by the same intellectual passion and the same concern for individual well-being, social advancement and enrichment of human experience. The creativity in one field therefore influences the creativity in the other. This underlying unity between the two major branches of knowledge needs to be highlighted in view of the current massive investment of both human and material resources for increasingly narrow specialisation. Moreover, as this is significant for the proper and integrated growth of society, a clear perspective of the contributions made by the distinguished intellectuals of both the fields is essential.

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NO WELSH BARD,BUT SWANSEA POET: AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN KNIGHT

C.T. Indra

At a time when the Welsh people were reluctantly going to cast their vote to decide whether they should have an elected assembly of their own, thanks to the Tony Blair dispensation, at a time when a train from Cardiff got involved in an accident with another train in London, Chennai (Madras) was listening to the poet from Swansea. He was no flamboyant Dylan Thomas, nor self-conscious Celtic poet like Seamus Heaney, but very much an unostentatious urban man using poetry to comment on the goings-on in the world around him.

Stephen Knight, brought over to Chennai by the British Council in September 1997, came out in this informal interview as a sensitive, caring and open-minded young poet who has thought deeply about modern life in his poems. Although his published volumes include "Flowering Limbs", "Dream City Cinema" and "The Sandfields Baudelaire", I had access only to the volume "The Dream City Cinema". His poem "The Mermaid Tank" (included in this volume) was chosen for the National Poetry Award in 1992.

Stephen Knight, born in 1960, has already won recognition for his authentic and arresting depiction of contemporary scenario capturing the metropolitan urban air which marks life not only in the United Kingdom but all over the globe. It is not surprising that "Dream City Cinema" should have been considered for the T.S. Eliot Poetry Prize because like that illustrious progenitor of contemporary verse and idiom, Knight writes a poetry that is close to the living speech but nevertheless conceals thoughtful poetical modes and techniques -- to use his own phrase, it is "an art disguising art."

The volume reflects upon the sombre situations in modern life as Eliot did in his early verse, but does not pretend to make a grand narrative out of the infinite chaos and sordidness that mark post-industrial, we should say, post-technological society. Hence, it is almost incidental that he happens to be born in Swansea to a Welsh

father. But his poetic voice refrains from getting confined to being Welsh except perhaps in some poems, which we understand use Welsh words and require some special effort on the part of the reader. Nor does he make a big issue of his Austrian identity(which is derived through his mother) for the sake of platform rhetoric. He is much too deep and fine a poet for such popular gestures.

In this interview compiled from his utterances and reactions to my questions, we can discern how he is eminently approachable, cultivated, but flaunting no air of elitism, above all open to receiving the reader's point of view if it was not too absurd. He said he was the first generation person to go to Oxford, although his father was a Communist forever talking about political change. Knight mentioned the fact of his coming from a working class background and how there is no attempt at parading scholarship because it is something far remote from his cultural and poetic sensibility.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

CTI: Your poem "Benthills Notebook" strikes me for the self-perception of yourself as a poet in a self-deprecating manner when you write: "My notebook full of rubbish -- metaphors / emptier than all my 8 rooms' empty drawers /a haiku I couldn't begin." How do you see your vocation as a poet? And a Welsh poet?

SK: I was a "writer in residence" staying at Aldeburgh festival, east coast of England. I was self-conscious of writing, struggling to get my sentences. Hence, the word "notebook". It is despairing that you are not able to write. The thing about poetry is that you'll feel that you will never respond again. You need security at the bottom of it. That's why the poem's lines are notes -- just listings.

CTI: This poem is, shall we say, somewhat self-reflexive,the poet sitting in a sea-side place trying to write out the poem and be done with it?

SK: I was staying in a big house on the coast. I was in a state of loneliness and experienced a sense of impermanence. It

is all about how to make a poem. I was born in North Wales, but never speak Welsh. My mother is an Austrian. When you go to Wales, You can't be treated as though you were English. When you go to England, you can't be treated as Welsh. A lot of images of my poetry might stem from that. I did not want to make that the main subject of my poetry, because a lot of poets in Wales make that.

CTI: The volume "Dream City Cinema" is interesting not only for its concrete particularity, its specificity, but also for the space it creates. Not just the sense of place. It reminds a modern reader of Eliot's early poetry on the one hand, with its atomistic depiction of the modern world; and on the other of the documentary realism of Philip Larkin's poetry, with its contemporary description in contemporary language. Do you accept these as influences or do you see yourself in this tradition?

SK: I grew up in an urban landscape, therefore the influence of Eliot is inevitable but not direct. Every poet after Eliot updates the images of Britain; Eliot is updated by Larkin. Larkin by Michael Hoffman (who is three years older than me). One has to keep updating. About Eliot I must say it is not pastiche in the case of my poetry. I have been influenced by Pope, Lowell, Craig Raine. I admire Pope's form, verbal dexterity and the facility of writing. When I was in the University, Craig Raine was teaching there. The visual element in my poem is influenced by Raine. I like most poets but with some reservations. I am a bit like a magpie taking a bit from there and there. I do believe that a poetic voice is a synthesis.

CTI: I was particularly thinking of the atomistic descriptrion in your poems of the world we live in. I suppose there is no possibility of taking a kind of total view of life, as we see in Eliot and Auden in their use of the technique of montage.

SK: Our existence is now in a plural world. Fragmentation is unavoidable. I think we have come to terms with that. It is very difficult to go into writing and aim for the single voice because we are bombarded by voices all over.

CTI: Could you say something about the verse forms of your

poems, for example, "Surf Motel", "Desert Inn" and "Mermaid Tank"?

SK: I get the feeling of being engulfed. I use multiplicity of techniques and use the verse forms of other poems. "The Mermaid Tank" is modelled after Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" in its stanzaic form. When I was writing "Surf Model" I had Tennyson's "Crossing the bar" in mind.

CTI: What is the purpose of using the Keatsian stanza?

SK: You see, I started the poem "The Mermaid Tank". I liked the idea of the mermaid because sailors mistook the dugong which is a sea-cow for a mermaid. I worked on the rhyme-scheme that suggested music -- that may or may not be heard. You get into the area of the real and the unreal. Hence like Keats, you ask, "Do I wake or sleep?"

CTI: The poem suggests to me an exotic show. There is the mermaid, not in the open sea but in a tank. There is sordidness around which is typical of urban life. There is also the curiosity of the human mind which evokes the world of fantasy. No trained reader would miss the reference to Eliot's "Prufrock", who plaintively complains that the mermaid sings but not to him. Have I stretched your mermaid too far?

SK: You see, there is the line "I kneel beside / the songstress of the Deep / and Wait." On the whole there is a juxtaposition of dream, a better world and the ordinary reality. Britain is going through an atheistic experience. What happens when we subtract religion from a society and yet try to find a meaning? May be that's what is also suggested.

CTI: I didn't think of those lines as alluding to religion or the absence of it.

SK: (Smiles) your reading is as valid as mine. Mine is a guess as well....

CTI: There is no attempt at creating a grand narrative, is there? I come to your perception in your poetry of the Post-Modern, Post- Welfare State. consumerist, pop-culture where there is the minimal presence of the self. I see mainly your poems in this volume reflecting the tenuousness of that relationship. Does that account for the preponderance of motifs such as

"drift of sand", "of life", "dreary place", "death" and "human action" with its nebulous value? There is no 'irritable reaching' after an objective goal. How much does life in Britain today determine this vein in your poetry?

SK: It is very difficult for anybody to analyse the ways in which their environment influences their attitude. I presume that the whole of contemporary British poetry will be noticing the kind of moribund landscape. But we must come to terms with the post-industrial state. We are living in a multi-cultural society where there is so much instability. Thatcher was making us believe that Britain is great. The Conservatives were offering images of the past. Thatcher was trying to revive the image of Britain as a nation, but we must come to terms with multicultural existence. Football violence has travelled to Europe. Multiple TV channels bring the world to a hotel room.

The poems that you mentioned, I confess, I don't fully understand them. I wrote them instinctively. You could perhaps tell me more about it than myself.

CTI: Take this poem "Yogi Meet & Deep". As an Indian, the range of suggestions in the word "Yogi" evoked various contexts for me. This poem has the subject of people who are unable to sleep. "Yogi Meet & Deep" is an all-night stationer's shop; the place becomes a haven for such people who are longing for sleep.

SK: I wasn't thinking of that. I don't know why a lot of poems in this book are about sleep and bed. Could be that the poem is looking at that longing for the closure of sleep -- a resolution -- ... I'm guessing (smiles)....

Most of the writng I do in the night, I get ideas running through my head. I can't sleep. I like the real world and also the unreal or surreal. The spark that happens when the two collide is what happens in the poem.

CTI: The Yogi is one who can transcend sleep or sleep at will. Since sleep is the motif....

SK: (Laughs): That's wonderful ! I think the search for peace in the poem will come with the finished poem. There is a back-

ground to the poem. It is dedicated to my friend Paul Henry. We were giving each subjects for poems. He gave me the phrase "all-night stationer's shop" which gave me something to start with.

CTI: So the poem grew out of it?

SK: Indeed ! He planted the seed, I couldn't sleep !

CTI: We have, of course, bleak pictures of human situation and human activity in your poems. Even so, I felt that there are moments of affirmation and positive images. I am having in mind poems like "Elvis", "Daedalus", "Land of Nod", "Wake & Paine" and "Last".

SK: Elvis Presley died in 1977. People said he hadn't. They saw him in the supermarket. I grew up in the working class milieu -- Elvis was a truck driver, he was gone and was a kind of a living god. This is the genesis of the poem.

CTI: He becomes a kind of an icon -- a new image to be celebrated in the poem, for "he walks across the forecourt like a god."

SK: Elvis was a god for many people. When he was off the street, it was like being off the centre stage. Context makes gods.

CTI: What struck me was the mystification of the ordinary, perhaps a veiled Welsh element -- the juxtaposition of the metropolitan stereotype and the myth.

SK: That's right !

CTI: The poem about your father "Daedalus" has a fine touch of affectionate dig. The father, despite his ineptitude in handling the tools, is still whistling at his job.

SK: I take any active creation as a positive one. However badly he is doing it, he is doing something. My father was a bad craftsman. In the poem he is making a mess of it but he is creating something.

CTI: The older generation always thinks that the younger ones are bad at doing their job. This poem seems to represent one such old man.

SK: That's right.

CTI: What about the poem "Wake & Paine" ?

SK: "Wake & Paine" are names of undertakers. The poem grew out of these extraordinary names. People think that it is an anti-poem -- a piece of chopped up prose. The poem has mono-rhymes. The form is constricting, not allowing one to operate freely. The rhymes in the poem may be seen in print. You disguise the formal qualities instead of loudly advertising what you are doing. Art concealing art is a kind of celebration.

CTI: As in a supermarket we have the showroom, where varieties of coffins are neatly displayed. But there is a deep emotion when one of the mourners, in the process of selecting a coffin, also intensely misses the person who died and is to be buried. It's a superb piece ...!

SK: There is emotion in most of my poems. I think, for me "Dream City Cinema" is a very emotional book. The question is how below the surface and how far you can get to it.

CTI: The showroom situation in "Wake & Paine" is presented in such a way as the human element is not lost.

SK: No, absolutely not ! The consolation is achieved in the end.

CTI: Perhaps I should ask you about the poems of personal relationship in the volume. Of course, it is minimal, laconic, even apparently neutral in tone. There is no narrative flow. The two poems about the grandmother seem to reveal a sense of lost kinship. It is a result of deracination or a simple snap of ties?

SK: When my grandmother died my mother couldn't reach her, she was delayed because of snow. She arrived five minutes after my grandmother died. There is a residual guilt in her. I remember her howling and crying like an animal in pain, inconsolable. The grief was coming out in a raw fashion. Sometimes you have to look away. It makes me wince even now.

CTI: That's why the title "Cotton Wool" ?

SK: I was 13 when my grandmother died, my mother was the only daughter. She left Austria at the age of 18.

CTI: The poem "Cotton Wool" seems to be a kind of modern elegy,

though it holds back so much of grief. The cotton wool itself is a new item in a new elegy. It appears to be a symbol of the attempt to distance oneself from the grief. But it also betrays the failure, hence the poignancy in bringing the three generations.

SK: Quite right.

CTI: Let me come to the poem "The Land of Nod". Once again it invokes the Elvis myth but resents the lack of vitality in present-day life.

SK: The people of "The Land of Nod" can't reproduce Elvis. The title of the volume "Dream City Cinema" is actually taken from a pornographic cinema which was burnt down in Swansea. The place in the poem is loosely modelled on Swansea. In South Wales of industrial Britain, which was exporting copper, mining was suddenly stopped. The workers were moved to another place. But there is the problem of regenerating the environment. The miners were stranded like fish on the earth.

CTI: I thought there was a slight touch of satirical note in the poem.

SK: What we have now is a cultural mish-mash. There can't be an Elvis but only an imitation. I don't resent that, I don't despise but I sympathise with those who ape.

CTI: The word "Nod" in the title implies a mindless approval, doesn't it?

SK: There is a loss of identity. Britain is more and more Americanised. There is pale imitation.

CTI: I like the poem "Last". Is it a similar kind of experience of the inability to cope with the present?

SK: The poem is about change. It's a companion piece to "After Lessons". In "The Land of Nod" it is an industrial change. Most of the characters in my poems come to terms with change. The straggler in the poem "Last" also does not come back. You never swim in the same river twice.

The straggler is also, however, a survivor. He is still there. What I admire is the human resilience -- the spirit that helps one to live through the walks of life.

CTI: At the end we have the blazer of the straggler still hanging

on to the peg in "the draughty changing room." It strikes me as a symbol of anchor and stability in a world that changes ceaselessly.

SK: Yes, there is pathos and poignancy to that.

CTI: Coming to your mode of writing, I find stark realism going hand in hand with the bizarre and the macabre, especially in poems where you are the object of your meditation. For eg., "The Day I Go" imagines yourself after death. Then there is the other longer poem, what is its title? "Mc Auliffe"? You watch bed bugs drinking your blood and flea larvae skipping in the carpet. What sort of dark comedy is this? Who is the speaker? The same detachment I find in a poem like "Hotel Terminus", where "mosquitoes arrive to dine on my legs."

SK: "McAuliffe" is in bits and pieces. The poem is a collage -- an assemblage of quotes from newspaper pieces. There is not one speaker. The identity changes. The speaker is acted upon. You are right. In general as a person I do feel that the world acts on me rather than I act on the world. I do feel more acted upon than acting. My poems are expressions of being acted upon.

CTI: At the end there is the garbage machine, cleaning up the place. Isn't it significant?

SK: Yes. Similarly the speaker-poet removes and rounds off everything. Hence it is a cyclical pattern.

CTI "In my beginning is my end"!

SK: (Smiles) The reader can make a whole of it.

CTI: Do you think poetry should be read out to an audience? I am reminded of the popularity of poets like Dylan Thomas, the American Beat poet Ginsberg, a Liverpool poet like Brian Patten. What's your opinion?

SK: Some poems are more densely written. In reading them out, you can lose something. If you purely write for the stage, then it becomes performance poetry. A poem like "Young Siward" can be effective when read out because it is cast in the ballad form. But I think the middle section of the "Dream City Cinema" cannot be as effective when read out.

What impressed me while listening to Stephen Knight was the seriouness with which he regarded his role as a poet. And his care for craft. But there was a sense of rectitude about the man and his verse. Poetry was for him a way of seeing life where the perennial themes of time, decay, death, change and survival echo endlessly. Knight came as one who was engaged in the job of updating the images of Britain though he was modest about it. That was the most appealing aspect of the hour I spent with him.

Note: This interview was first published in *The Hindu Magazine Literary Review*, Sunday October 19, 1997, pp.XVII-XVIII.

AN INTERVIEW WITH I.K. SHARMA

B.K. Dubey

B.K. Dubey: What do you take poetry for? If asked how would you like to define it personally?

I.K. Sharma: Well, poetry is like garment with many folds. While examining it, a critic holds on to one, two, or three folds and comes to believe that he has resolved its mystery. But he has not. In fact, poetry stays unrevealed although a good portion of its body lies open before his eyes. Its elusive quality is intact as ever. To put it differnetly, it articulates in many ways including silence.

To me Poetry is the art of knitting words together in such a way that the felt experience is appropriately and imaginatively conveyed.

B.K. Dubey: What do you think about the Indian English ironical school of poetry writing? Who are its exponents? What's about its history and present development?

I.K.Sharma: I think there has never been anything like an ironic school of poetry in Indian English poetry. Fortunately, we have been free from 'schools' of all kinds. However, a group of poets have shown preference for a particular mode of writing.

Well, before Independence our poets wrote lyrical poetry highlighting the glory of ancient India. Not unnatural. An unfree psyche needs its own defence mechanism. Also, it was a hidden encounter with the imperial voice. A quick run through Prof. Gokak's anthology (1970) will offer several instances of the kind I have hinted above.

With the advent of freedom, the social scene in India underwent a big change. In a few years the soaring idealism of old titans faded and a wave of the so-

called pragmatism took over the stage. It had its corrosive effect on all sections of our society.

In such a hopeless situation, the Indian English poet (who had come in contact with new literatures of the West) adopted the ironic way of stating unpleasant aspects of our life. What else could this animal of no-man's land do except pointing out his finger at wrong-doers !

As far its history in our times, we may safely begin with Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lal, A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das and so on. The new voices that carry on the same technique in their writing are: O.P. Bhatnagar, Vikram Seth, Niranjan Mohanti, Ashok Mahajan, A.K. Mehrotra, R.K. Singh, P.Raja, Eunice de Souza, Tara Patel, Imtiaz Dharkar and a host of other poets.

B.K. Dubey: Is there any difference between irony and satire? What do you believe personally?

I.K.Sharma: Yes, there is. Satire is more open and direct while irony is indirect, implied, and very delicate. However, in the twentieth century they have come close to each other and are occasionally used for each other. A satirist strips a person (whichever tier of society he may belong to) of his false wrappings in full public view while an ironist feels contented if he has drawn the attention of the reader to the 'fault line' he has observed.

Satire falls from grace when it turns personal. Attack then is revenge. Damnable !

Otherwise, both are cleansing agents in literature. They act as deterrent as well as detergent.

B.K. Dubey: What are you writing now a days? Do you plan to publish just to add to your poetic output?

I.K.Sharma: I write poems and translate a few poets of my region. Right now I have no plan to bring out any new volume

of poems. Otherwise too, you will notice that I am a slow-moving poet: 1976, then 1986. After my retirement (1991) I have published two volumes of poems (1993, 1998) and one book of translation.

B.K. Dubey: Since when have you been writing poems in English?

I.K.Sharma: Practically from 1973 when my poem appeared in the Journal of Indian Writing in English. Recently I have retrieved a poem which I did in 1965.

B.K. Dubey: Should I call you an ironist or a satirist?

I.K.Sharma: My interest lies in the making of poems, label-fixing is not my job.

B.K. Dubey: What are the ingredients of the ironic mode?

I.K.Sharma: Subtlety, sophistication, contrast, anti-thesis, paradox, pretense, surprise. To put it succicntly, it is a curved statement, a Vakrokti, where fair is foul and foul is fair. Often it works in 'reverse' gear.

B.K. Dubey: Do you write keeping fun, pun, humour, satire and irony in view?

I.K.Sharma: If a poet has all these elements in view while writing a poem, he may only be playing in the end with fairies. The poem will fade out.

What is relevant is the attitude of the poet towards his subject. Other things follow on their own.

B.K. Dubey: What do you think about the future of modern Indian English poetry?

I.K.Sharma: For this, look at the figures of All India Poetry Competition held last year. 1500 poets made 4300 submissions. What does it show? The field is fertile and practitioners are many. Anything to feel bad about it. Not at all. Out of this medley, a Derozio or an Ezekiel,a Sarojini or a Ramanujan may come out.

Also, the future of this poetry will depend on the quality of critics, well-equipped with relevant vocabulary, we have around. It can, then, slowly move towards centre stage.

B.K. Dubey: What new poets you admire most?

I.K.Sharma: Well, I am a free and uncommitted reader of poetry. A religious poet is as good to me as a poet with political stance provided his poem is clear and well-organized.

But where to find new poets? To meet them I go to little magazines like *Poetcrit, Canopy, Skylark, The Quest, Poetry Today, The Brainwave, Metverse Muse, The P.E.N.*, and many more appearing from different parts of the counry.

Won't it be a nice idea if best poems of a year are put in a volume (and sold) as is done in the United States. Best I mean daring in every sense of the term.

BOOK REVIEWS

VINOD KUMAR SINGH, *DRYDEN IN CONTEXT: RESTORATION POLITICS, POETICS, POESIS*

(Varanasi: Vishwajnana Adhyayan Sansthan,1999), pp.239, Rs.300.00

H.C. Gupta

The book under review is an "updated version" of the author's "doctoral thesis" (Preface:iii), its leit-motif being, to use his own words: "By the historicist analysis, it is hoped that this study will throw fresh light on the study of Dryden"(pp.217-18). Obviously, it is a tall claim. The book is neither justifiably 'fresh' nor presumably 'updated' excepting, of course, a few additional titles in the Bibliography. Playing the role of a judicious critical judge, Prof. Vinod Kumar Singh has made full use of bioghraphical, historical, autobiographical, critical and textual evidences before giving his verdicts within his reach, far-distanced as he stands in space and time. As a matter of fact, trying to be convincing at all costs, he has made use of even secondary sources not only for critics' views but also for Dryden's own words (q.v.,Dryden quoted by Trickett) (p.83) by Kinsley (pp91-92). In its present form, the riches of the work have been lamentably impoverished by proof-reading errors.

Painstakingly, the author subscribes to the view that Dryden, to be fair to him, was not an opportunist who changed allegiances now and again, but ardent good -intentioned, well- informed public poet who took timely steps for working out order in all chaotic conditions. He comprehensivley accounts Dryden's one experiment after another in verse -- its forms and themes--, and highlights his distinctive achievements therein and commendable contributions to the English literature in general and to the eighteenth century, in particular. Dryden worte for 'art for the sake of life' and in the classicist vein treated art not as artless delivery but as laboured craftsmanship.

In my opinion, chapter-headings would look better without the unnecessary additons--rhetorical flourishes within inverted commas. What must strike to the reader at first sight are the deep shoddy

scars of linguistic errors all over the body of the beautiful book, including the countenance. Plentiful errors of omissions and commissions complain of the nodding proofreaders. The regrettable irritants are the incorrect use of capital and small letters, and the divergence between the chapter-headings as they appear in the 'Contents' and atop the pages inside the book (vis-a-vis size of letters) and between the titles of books as they are in 'References' and 'Bibliography'. There is too miserly use of commas and compound word-making hyphens.

I give just a few of the glaring correction-slips as specimens.'Itself' has been written as two words: 'it' and 'self'; and 'Latter' has been spelt as 'later' even in the proximity of former (pp198, 202). 'Mac Flecknoe' has been written in three different ways: 'MacFlecknoe', 'Mac Flecknoe' and 'Mac- Flecknoe'. The verb 'practise', spelt correctly (p159), has been spelt mostly as 'practice'(pp.70, 148,154 and 219). The favour shown to the American spelling 'mold' (pp.77 and 89) is not pleasant. A few other examples of various other errors are given exactly as they are in the book by giving the page number within brackets: (a)Spellings: 'wandrinng' (Foreword, page number not given), 'inaugurater' (Preface, ii), 'greatful'(iii) 'ancestory' (50, 58) 'propogator'(217), propogates (218), and so on; (b)Agreement: 'vehemence...illustrate' (3), 'an intimate relations' (70), 'Dryden' s poetry, especially his lyrical ones' (87), 'he contrast' (194); (c) Sentences: 'The Tories, the Anglican Church was synonymous with the English nation' (15).

The book, however, is full of much useful and invaluable information for students.The author has undoubtedly taken all pains in recounting literary generic traditions, Dryden' s shaping influences, his age and his individual talent. He has unambiguously told what belongs to the Age, what to the tradition and what to the writer himself. On the whole, in the words of Prof. R.S. Sharma, the writer of the 'Foreword', 'In itself, it is *also* a good contribution to Dryden's [sic] studies (Italics *mine*) .The lucid analytical explanatory discussions and illuminating critical observations unimistakably widen the readers' Dryden horizons. The book is, to be sure, worthwhile their pains.

RAJENDRA SINGH, *THE SHIRT OF FLAME*

(Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1999), pp.314, Rs. 300.00

Basavaraj Naikar

It is a matter of common knowledge that epical narratives are very few in modern Indian English literature. Even the abridged versions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* by R.C. Dutt, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and K.R.Srinivas Iyengar's *Sitayana* are all poems retelling or revisions of the age-old Hindu myths. There is hardly any epic narrative in the modern Indian English literature dealing with a contemporary theme. The traditional Hindu writers are notorious for their obsession with mythical themes and hardly interested in the burning problems of contemporary or historical life. Viewed against this background, Rajendra Singh's *The Shirt of Flame* is a very refreshing composition filling in the long felt desideratum. A very interesting literary experiment in Indian English literature, it is a sequence of 575 sonnets with common theme running in it, obviously inspired by Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate.* The sustained effort to deal with any theme in such a long sequence is indeed a remarkable achievement.

The most interesting aspect of the epical sequence is its contemporary setting and the creation of the ethos of north-Indian, especially Uttar Pradesh rural area, with all its cultural details. The poem is epical in its canvas, alternately comic and tragic in its tone, and witty and satirical in its realism. The eighteen chapters of this sonnet sequence easily owe their allegiance to the numerological importance of No.18 in the Indian epics and *puranas*. It deals with the struggles and successes of Harial Singh, the protagonist. But far from being a representative of the highest ideals of his culture—which an epic hero is--Harial happens to be an embodiment of the most practical, opportunistic and immoral pursuits of modern life. Money, sex, power and success being his top priority goals, morality happens to be his arch enemy. In this sense, the poem can be described as a satire on the modern Indian life wherein values are topsy-turveyed. The first half of the poem deals with his personal life, whereas the latter half deals with his socio-political life. But in both aspects of his life, he exhibits unscrupulous opportunism,

selfishness, callousness, corruption and shamelessness. Having failed in the fourth standard, Harial takes charge of the financial matters of home from his father Sardar Singh. While he dislikes his younger brother Bhopal Singh, he likes his younger brother Dalpat Singh for his sycophancy. He misappropriates the common fund of his family for buying a he-buffalo for the pleasures of drinking and visiting the prostitutes. Once he takes away Bhopal's buffalo forcibly in the latter's absence. As a consequence of Bhopal's complaint to the Police, Harial is arrested and imprisoned. After returning from the prison, he decides to take revenge upon Bhopal Singh. He tries to spoil the marriage feast arranged by Bhopal by driving the drain water in their direction. He removes the beams of the ceiling of Bhopal's house in order to trouble the inmates in the rainy season. Having lost his job as a consequence of Bhopal Singh's case against him, he cleverly gets Bhopal poisoned through a sweet dish of *halwa* and wriggles out of the legal complication. The murder of his own brother shows the climax of his evil nature, malice and vindictiveness.

In the latter half of the poem, Harial's evil nature expands itself to his socio-political relationship with people. Inspired by the rural political circumstances, he contests for election and succeeds in getting elected as Pradhan of village panchayat by abducting the Harijan voters systematically. Capitalising on the antagonism between high caste Hindus and low caste Hindus, he humiliates the low caste people of the village by sealing their only well thereby creating an acute problem of drinking water. Finally, he opens the well of the low caste people only after eliciting an apology from his enemy Jogi Ram. Thus, Harial achieves success in everything that he undertakes to do by foul, nefarious means. Rajendra Singh has given a great clarity of motivation to the characterisation of Harial who emerges as a triumphant Satanic figure.

The imagery sparsely employed in the poem is pointed, sarcastic and uninhibited. The language has a freshness that is rare in Indian English poetry. One may easily attempt a comparative and contrastive study of Rajendra Singh's *The Shirt of Flame* with Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate*. One wishes Rajendra Singh will do well to write a historical epic about some north Indian hero in the days to come. Kudos to Rajendra Singh.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *THE THIEF OF NAGARAHALLI AND OTHER STORIES*

(Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1999), pp.193, Rs. 250.00

A.A. Mutalik-Desai

This slim collection of short stories introduces a montage of places, people, experiences, incidents, the most common fears and prejudices of the *dramatic personae* who cover the landscape being painted. More rural than urban, it takes us to the humble folk who toil and reap their modest rewards. Rural primarily and, therefore, there is more ignorance than enlightenment, more folk than worldly wisdom. With the author as our silent guide the readers crisscross this northern-most corner of the State of Karnataka the pulse of which is unmistakenly felt.

It might be profitable to look first at "Fulfillment" written as far back as in 1972. It narrates the plight of Bharati through about fifteen years of her life. The daughter of a socially conservative widowed, retired judge, the precincts of a high school have concluded her education and she spends her days running the household. These circumstances do not prevent her from dreaming natural, youthful dreams of love and romance, hope and excitement beyond the dullness of her life under her father's roof. She falls in love with a stage actor from a lowly caste no less, they elope and get married to start a life which should realize all her dreams. Soon enough they are blessed with a charming son. But, earthly matters seize her husband and he must go hiding for twelve long years. The story ends when he returns to be reunited with Bharati in bliss. Sociological and symbolic aspects are not wanting. Topical references also tie it to its date of composition.

Next, in 1980, came the title story "Nagarahalli." Again, true to the spirit of the time and the place in which it is situated, it is an account of Malla, who has turned to thievery which he seems to accomplish with much stealth and success. His patron, a big shot in a village, is pleased. Malla's exploits become a legend, although he meets his match and has to end his career.

Then, in 1983, Basavaraj wrote "All for Gold," a tale of a two-

some, Sngappa and Balappa. The former is a rich man, while the latter has just "his rustic simplicity and sincerity." It is a tale of lust, greed, adultery, deception and predictable blood and brutal revenge. In this stark portrait of rural savagery where passions are elemental, the tale ends on an unpredictable note: what seemed like a naturalistic account suddenly but unnecessarily turns political in the last two lines.

The 1984 product, "Mother's Husband," leads us to mythology, heavenly interference in worldly matters, fantasy, passion, heart-break and pathos. To those who are even fleetingly acquainted with Western classics, there are enough echoes of Oedipus and his fate in this story. The narrative ends with this mother-cum-mistress jumping into a well along with the new-born. What the divinity had ordained is carried out ultimately; and the human aspirations, however compelling they may be, are crushed, and retribution prevails.

Finally, "Coffin in the House" (1987) is a melodramatic piece with an improbable chain of events culminating in a teenager's rape and murder. Apart from these five short stories, selected here for a closer look, there are others: a newly married young man goes abroad for higher education and abandons his wife for an American girl; a businessman attempts suicide and the doctor who is trying to save him is lured to bring about his death instead; a young woman unable to produce a male heir goes to great lengths, all in vain; there is news of a truck driver's death, except he is not dead at all; then there is short sojourn to academia and the usual goings on in a department of English, complete with back-stabbing, setting students against one or the other teacher, anonymous complaints, hasty compromises and back to the old grind, and the rest.

To conclude, Naikar's *Nagarahalli* is a remarkable piece of creative writing in that it becomes a mirror to life in North Karnataka. Undoubtedly, it is an interesting collection of short stories, and I welcome this offering by Basavaraj Naikar. I expect and await even more felicitous contributions from him.

M. PRABHA, *THE WAFFLE OF THE TOFFS*

(New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 2000), pp.272, Rs.250/-

I.K. Sharma

A book that opens with a save-my-skin note from the publisher that "the views expressed are solely of the author, who accepts full responsibility for all statements in this book" must have some critical RDX between its covers. And it has. The book is very unconventional even in matter of choosing the title. It is not polite like books of criticism (literary and sociological) published so far in our country. It defies common norms and clips many reputations. It is a one-person demolition squad.

The author of the book, M. Prabha, surveys the whole culture scene (that includes Indian English literature) and notes that the governing elite of this country has unfortunately become the cultural elite of the land. She gives instances of manipulation how the powerful lobby in the corridors of power manages prizes and awards for their kith and kin. As an enlightened tax-payer she wants to know how persons close to the high and mighty become first-rate poets, novelists, dancers, painters, etc. overnight. How does, she asks, the very first book of a writer earn him/her the award of the Sahitya Akademi, or the Booker Prize, or the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, or the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Literature ? Beneath the surface she observes the glory of 'connections' and not the sunshine of 'merit'. At this bureaucrat-pedagogue-media nexus she trains her gun in the book.

Tracing the history of Indian English literature from Derozio down to modern times she finds that its start had been on a correct note but in the hands of the Bengali bhadralok who mostly suffered from xenolegia, it took a wrong turn. Sadly, they, in their poetry, talked of England, Christianity and took a wrong turn. Sadly, they, in their poetry, talked of England, Christianity and the Bible, and ignored what was around them. On the other hand, the genuine Indian writers (K. S. Venkatramani, K. Nagrajan, R. K. Narayan, G. V. Desani, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao) came

from very ordinary backgrounds and they wrote about the social and political landscape of their times. *They are the real makers of Indian English literature.*

As regards contemporary Indian English poetry scene, she finds it a veritable pool of intriguing characters. How has Nissim Ezekiel become the starting point of modern Indian Poetry in English while his *Time to Change* (1952) has 'not a single reference to India'? He is a 'master manipulator' (p.184). Another teacher-poet Shiv K. Kumar offers nothing but 'libidinous, titillating stuff'--the left-overs of the west. Further, he got one of his books published by Vanguard Press Inc., New York--*'one of the many book-publishing racketeers in New York'.... 'Authors from the Third World--and quite a few from India—have thus got the N.Y. imprint and launched their literary careers....'* (p.193). Jayant Mahapatra 'invents a mask for himself' and 'has poured out his prolix tartuffery' (p.190), R. Parthasarathy is 'unethical' and now 'a self-extinguished poet' (195), Keki N. Daruwalla has a pathological aversion to its milieu (213) and he wears 'colonial cockade' that engenders all angularities (217), Dom Moraes has 'distaste for all things Indian' (221), and Kamala Das (now Suraiya) gave us 'sex-loaded poems' and that sort of stuff was 'a real change for the hungering Indian male' (p.224).

Equally severe is her criticism of the women novelists—the 'pom pom darlings' of India, many of whom stay abroad and live in comfort with their foreign husbands. They write for 'British publishers, with an eye for British literary awards' (p.140). Unconcerned about India, their writing is a 'glamour game with its accompanying bonanza of lucre and fame.' Such writing is nothing but 'phatic moos of sated Jeresy (or New Jeresy?) cows' (p.140), she opines.

The growing tribe of male novelists? They are the 'cultural vagabonds'--sons and daughters of our Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, senior bureaucrats, judges, businessmen, boxwallahs and Bollywood stars...' (p.168). They have identified themselves with the external and have thus become 'internal exile.' They take pride in India-baiting and get their works published abroad. Romen Basu, Shashi Tharoor, Vijay Singh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Mukul Kesvan, Richard Crasta and so on have, thus,

profaned 'the sanctuary of the compulsive, the recluse and the obscure—the natural habitat of a genuine writer.' Such writers, it is important to note, have been openly snubbed by Peter Meir, President Penguin International, in Delhi. He said: 'I can't understand why Indians find it more prestigious to be published abroad than in their own country.... *I think that Indian writers should practise nationalism instead of just talking about it* ' (p.155).A good English kick ! About such writers Chalapati Rau has this to say. They "crawl about like crabs and jellyfish and earthworms of our intellectualism; they are the singers of self-praise. They are oysters who may have travelled physically in space, but live in their shells, in metropolitan cities or posh suburban houses, waiting for reviews of their books, which are blurbs, blurbs borrowed from book jackets." (p.222)

This book, in short, inaugurates a new era of socio-literary criticism in India. It asks a reader to find out more about the lifestyle of a writer before he/she takes up any work of his/her for study. This new touchstone method will then unravel many mysteries of their writings. In this context two chapters, nos. 3 and 4, which present the life-sketches of other Indian and Western writers are quite meaningful. (I think it is for the first time that such an effort has been made in any book of criticism. Regional and occidental writers have been brought in for a comparative assessment of the whole literary scene.) Secondly, she asks critics not to be led away by the opinions of foreign critics which are in many cases 'arranged.' (See p.222 for the 'intellectual honestly !' of Bruce King.) They should rather re-evaluate their own literature after a decade or two from newer and newer angles. Thirdly, she disputes the claims of bureaucrats, media barons, and university dons (generally metro-based) to be genuine creative writers. Without subjecting themselves to the rigours of self-discipline and suffering they cannot hope to grow into a writer, she seems to suggest. Lastly, the book is a cry for the liberation of 'culture,' which unfortunately has gone into the hands of the 'counterfeit gentry' in our country.

To conclude, it is a millennium book which will be read, I guess, along with the books of Prof. Iyengar and Prof. Naik, though for different reasons.

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