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K.K. Sharma

POINTS OF VIEW

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BOTTOM'S FATE: SOME REFLECTIONS ON TRANSLATION

M.K. Naik

'Uneasy lies' the forehead that wears the translator's frown, for if Politics is the art of the possible, translation is the art of the less than possible. The translator's task is beset with several insurmountable difficulties. I. A. Richards even goes to the length of claiming that translation is 'probably the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos.'[1]

Like all complex phenomena, Translation too has been subjected to much theoretical discussion, and in speaking about the phenomenon it is easy to get lost in the thicket of theories, the quicksands of abstract questions and the desert of doctrines. In fact, one is surprised to see the amount of sheer theorising that now seems to be going on in some critical quarters, which appear to forget that literature consists of books, and not abstract concepts, that theories are good walking sticks, but bad crutches.

One would therefore do well to use an ounce of theory with a pound of illustrations from appropriate texts. It will be universally agreed that the ideal of all literary translation is, as R.A. Knox puts it, 'The resurrection of an alien thing in a native body; not the dressing up of it in native clothes, but the giving to it of native flesh and blood.'[2] Perfect translation is reincarnation; *Anuvada* is *Avatara*.

The first major aspect of this process is evidently the successful embodiment of the message of the text in the Source language in the Receptor language. This would appear to be too obvious to need discussion, but one is often surprised to find how often has the message of a text been totally misinterpreted by an otherwise competent reader. I once asked a batch of very bright postgraduate students to evaluate Thomas Hardy's beautiful poem, 'In Time of The Breaking of Nations,' omitting the title and the name of the poet; *a la* I.A. Richards' well-known experiment at Cambridge. One smart young man obviously mislead by references in the poem to 'smoke', 'flame,' 'dynasties,' and 'war's annals,' concluded that this was a War poem describing the operations of armed conflict. But he totally

missed the message of the lyric, which is that War is only a temporary aberration in human life, the basic values of which are represented by agriculture, hearth and home and human love.

Similarly, the story is told of a German director of an English play translated into German. In the text, one character says to another in a heated exchange, 'You lie.' The clever Director saw here a clear opportunity for dramatic action, and directed the first character to strike down the second, so that the poor man was only hit, and actually made to lie down on the ground.

Some of Ezra Pound's translations are a map of misreading of an equally serious kind. In his translation of the Old English poem, 'The Seafarer,' for instance, the word, 'byrig' which means towns (modern 'berg,' as in 'Heidelberg etc.) is translated as 'berries'--a bloomer which would have brought an instant blush to the cheeks of the dullest Oxford graduate who had found *Beowulf* a wolf in wolf's clothing. Again, the phrase 'Lifes blaed' is translated as 'Life's blast,' though 'blaed' actually means glory.[3]

But there is the other side of the coin as well: translation may on occasion, make the text yield a meaning which the native reader somehow was not able to locate. At least three writers who wrote in English, and were translated into French, illustrate this. Edgar Allan Poe was just a 'Jingle Man' for most of his contemporaries; translated into French he become the father of two influential schools of poetry: the Symbolist school and the Parnassian school. Oscar Wilde, hounded to prison and untimely death by his compatriots for committing the 'sin without a name' was soon reduced to the status of a minor wit; but in France and in the whole of Europe, one is told, he enjoys a high reputation even today. As for Somerset Maugham, his crime was that he was utterly readable in an age which worshipped the new, shining god of obscurity, considered technical innovation to be the be-all and end-all of art and regarded narrative skill as a great sin. In England therefore, he remained a minor novelist, short story writer and dramatist. He was hailed in France as a worthy successor to Maupassant. It seems possible that these writers had a 'message' which their own compatriots could not fully grasp, for one reason or another, while users of other

languages had a ready access to their 'message,' for reasons well worth probing fully.

After the 'message' comes the consideration of the text at the lexical level. Here again, there are formidable difficulties in the path of the translator, mainly because words are such chameleonlike things: they change meaning according to the context; they have weight and sound; they belong to different registers, though they may be just synonyms for the grammarian. The translator must therefore find out a word which not only corresponds to the original one, but which also shares some of the typical features of it, in terms of sound, weight, associations, etc. For example, in his Marathi translation of T.S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton,' Sadanand Rege translates the word 'Footfalls' by coining the word 'Paulcahul', which deftly catches the alliteration in the original word.[4] Similarly, while translating part of Vishram Bedekar's autobiography, *Ek Zad ani don Pakshi* into English, I came across the word, '*Chandal-chaukadi*' (which literally means a group of four evil-men), and spent days in trying to find a phrase which would capture the alliteration in the original, without sacrificing the sense, until one day the solution came in a flash: 'Felon-foursome.'

The associations of words are equally important. While translating the title of T.S.Eliot's poem, 'The Portrait of a Lady,' I wanted to bring out the irony in it, which lay in the sly allusion to the title of Henry James's novel with the same title. Unlike James's heroine, Eliot's protagonist is a fake, a culture-vulture, a society lady who likes to pose as an art-lover. The Marathi word 'Mahila' could hardly bring out all this meaning. Then I remembered the phrase, '*Vishal Mahila,*' a meaningful term coined by the leading Marathi humorist, P.L.Deshpande, to denote this very type of a woman. The translation may be faulted for not being accurate, but it is perhaps fair to the spirit of the original. Ignoring the associations of words may, in fact, make the translator commit the ultimate crime, which is to do violence to the spirit of the original. An example of this kind may be found in the Hindi translation of 'Prufrock' by Narasinha Srivastava. While translating the lines 'Into the room women come and go/Talking of Michael Angelo,' he uses the term

'*Mugdhaen*' for 'women.'[5] Now *'Mugdha,'* which is a Sanskrit word, means an innocent girl, which Eliot's women in the lines are certainly not; they are sophisticated society ladies, and whatever their virtues, innocence is certainly not one of them. Of course I don't know whether *'Mugdha'* has now come to mean 'a sophisticated lady' in Hindi because the way Hindi-users keep on maltreating Sanskrit must be making Kalidasa turn in his grave: thus, the word, *'Kirtiman'* is an adjective in Sanskrit, and means 'one who has won fame.' In Hindi, however, it is now used as a noun, meaning a record set up by someone. And instead of '*Avahan'* (appeal), the Hindi-user says *'Avhan* (challenge) so that when the Prime Minister makes an appeal to the nation in other Indian Languages, he challenges the nation in Hindi to what one doesn't know.

But it is not always possible to capture the associations of words in translation. Vilas Sarang gives a very good illustration of this. In the (English) translation of his own poem 'Radha', P.S. Rege has the lines: 'The wide earth is Govinda/And the rice field is Radha.' In the original Marathi, Rege has used the rustic dialect word, *'bhui'* for 'earth', and for 'field' the original Sanskrit *'Kshretra,'* instead of its corrupted form in Marathi, *'set.'* Much of the appeal of the lines derives from the tension between the rusticity of the dialect word and the learned sophistication of the Sanskritic word. On a microscopic scale, Rege is in fact playing off two whole traditions of poetry against one another: the tradition of unlettered folk poetry, and the refined tradition of Sanskrit poetry. In English there are no alternatives of a similar kind for 'earth' and 'field.'[6]

The difficulties of the translator do not end here. A text is mostly loaded with overt or covert allusions to certain social realities, practices, norms, conventions, etc. They may sometimes appear incongruous or even militate against corresponding realities, etc. in the Receptor language. J.C. Catford gives an apt example of this. During negotiations between the United States and Japan, President Nixon raised the question of Trade between the two countries. The Emperor's response was translated as 'I'll think about it.' Nixon took this to mean 'Yes', whereas the Emperor actually meant to say no and responded as he did since in Japan

it is improper to say 'no' in public.[7]

A drastic solution to the problem is to omit all such allusions, though this remedy is available only to the translator who is translating his own text and can defend himself by pleading that he is recreating his own poetic experience in *L2.* In his Marathi poem, *'Irani,'* Arun Kolatkar, while describing how the Shah of Iran in the photograph hung on the wall of an Irani restaurant takes no notice of the unemployed young man sitting on a chair there, mentions 'the fly which ties a *Rakhi* to the wrist of the young man.[8] In his own English translation, however, he omits the image of the Rakhi altogether and translates the lines colourlessly: 'A fly.../ ...finds in a loafer's wrist an operational base.'[9]

Another possible way out is to translate literally and add a footnote explaining the allusion. But encountering a footnote in a poem is like finding one's teeth landing on a piece of flint, while eating one's daily rice.

It would perhaps appear best to substitute in place of these norms, etc. parallel ones in the culture in which the Receptor language is embedded so that the spirit of the original is preserved, which is vital in translation. To be strictly literal in translation in such cases is to keep 'faith unfaithful,' to be 'falsely true.' For instance, while translating into Marathi Emily Dickinson's poem, 'A Bee his burnished Carriage/Drove boldly to a Rose,' I felt that the Bee-Rose symbols in the poem may not work as effectively in Marathi as they did in English. Fortunately, an almost parallel pair was readily available in the Sanskritic tradition: viz. the Black Bee (Bhunga) and the *Kamalini* (the Lotus).

Take another example: In Housman's poem, 'Is my team ploughing,' there is a specific reference to 'the horses trample/The harness jingles now.' Now to translate this literally would be awkward, since the Indian farmer does not use the horse for ploughing, But since the 'horse' here is just a plain horse, without any symbolic overtones, it would not really matter much if the horses are duly transformed into bullocks.

The horse in another poem is however of another colour altogether. In Hardy's *"In Time of the 'Breaking of Nations,' "* cited

earlier, in the first stanza, we encounter 'an old horse that stumbles and nods' half-asleep as it ploughs the field. Now, it would be unwise to replace the horse here with a bullock, because of the symbolic overtones it seems to carry in a subtle manner. As noted earlier, the theme of the poem is the contrast between War, which is a negative phenomenon, and positive values such as agriculture, the home and the hearth and human love. In view of this, the horse has an urgent thematic relevance here. The 'Old horse that stumbles and nods/Half asleep,' immediately recalls its younger cousin, the war-horse, which rushes headlong and snorting into the battlefield. This contrast, which has a bearing on the central theme of the poem, would be totally lost if the horse is not allowed to go on stumbling and nodding in the poem.[10]

Form is another vital aspect of translation. Here the overwhelming question is, should the translator try to approximate, at least in some measure, to the form and structure of the original, if this is possible? Modern practice is to ignore the form of the original, disregard the rhymes and reduce the translation to free verse. The argument is that the exact equivalent of the form of the original may not be available to the translator, and as for the use of rhyme, it may compel the translator to distort syntax and sense, or add words of his own in order to meet the demands of rhyme. Another reason cited is that free verse translation in a modern idiom makes the reader feel at home.

I have strong reservations about this practice and the reasons given in defence of it. First, form is not merely the outward covering of a poem; it is an integral part of its totality. Half the effect of a poem is bound to be lost if it is summarily reduced to a nebulous mass of free verse.

Take the following Marathi poem, for instance: it is by Chokha Mela (14th C.A.D), an untouchable who became a devotional poet in the great tradition of the Bhakti school, which for a time abolished all social distinctions in the common pursuit of the worship of god Vitthala:

'Õosa dongã pari rasa nohé donga
Kã ré bhulalasi waraliye songa ranga

Kaman dongi pari teera nohé donga
Ka ré bhulalasi waraliye songe ranga
Nadi dongi pari jala nohé dongé
Ka ré bhulalasi waraliye songé rangé
Chokha donga pari bhava nohé donga
Ka ré bhulalasi waraliye songa ranga

The central idea in the poem is clear. The poet argues that one should not be lured away by mere appearance, which is a fake: but try to understand the reality behind the appearance. He illustrates his argument by employing four images: the sugarcane and its juice, the bow and the arrow, the river and its water and Chokha the untouchable and Chokha the devotee of Lord Vitthala. There are two examples of effective repetition in the poem. In each unit of two lines the word 'Donga' comes at the second and the last places of the first line; and the second line of each unit is the same: 'Ka ré bnulalasi waraliya songa.' This acts as a refrain, bringing home to the reader the central idea in the poem.

Now here is a translation (in perfect modern idiom and form) by an American scholar:

The sugarcane may be crooked, but its juice is not crooked
Why did you take a fancy for other things?

The bow may be bent but the arrow is straight
Why did you take a fancy for other things?

The river may be winding, but the water is straight
Why did you take a fancy for other things?

Chokha may be crooked, yet his devotion is straight
Why did you take a fancy for other things?[11]

Unfortunately, the translator's zeal may be straight but her translation is crooked. To begin with, the key line in the poem, the refrain is translated totally wrongly, thus nullifying the very point of the argument in the poem. Another major flaw is the failure to translate the key word '*donga,*' which literally means 'crooked,' but can, according to the context, be translated in such as a way as to indicate a negative quality. Thus, to say that juice is 'crooked' makes no sense; juice can be either bitter or sweet. And in the last line to translate 'Chokha *donga*' as 'Chokha does not wish to say that he may be a criminal,' he simply wishes to make a pointed

reference to his status as an untouchable, which, he wishes to emphasize, should not prevent him from being counted among the devotees of Lord Vitthala.

And now here is a verse translation guilty of the twofold crime of trying to preserve the form of the original and using rhyme:

Hard is sugarcane, but that its juice bitter doesn't make
Why are you lured away by appearance fake?

Winding is the river, but that its water twisted doesn't make
Why are you lured away by appearance fake?

Worthless is Chokha, but that his devotion worthless doesn't make
Why are you lured away by appearance fake?

I would like to believe that this translation reads and sounds much better than the free verse version, though it is by no means perfect. That key-word, *'Donga,'* which rings like a gong through the entire poem, is capable of various analogous meanings in Marathi, according to the context. This is not possible in English, so that the wonderful sound-effect of *'donga'* is totally lost in the English version.

It is thus not utterly impossible to translate a poem in a closed form and using rhyme by preserving these aspects of it in translation. It is difficult to accept the argument that a translation using rhyme and closed form would not be acceptable to modern literary taste. Actually, when a modern (qualified) reader is reading in translation a poem rooted in another culture and possibly belonging to another age, he is (or at least should be) mentally prepared to encounter a literary phenomenon different from a contemporary one. In fact, savouring the particular literary flavour of an alien text in terms of its own distinctive form and style should be one of the specific delights of the translation. Besides this, free verse translation is a far easier option; it is in using appropriate rhythm and rhyme, without sacrificing sense and going beyond the text, that the skills of the translator are tested fully. Imagine, for instance a modern translator trying to translate into the free English verse the well-known poem, *Garja Jayajakar* by the noted Marathi poet, Kusumagraj. A stirring paean to Revolution, this poem is strictly in the Romantic tradition, totally romantic in spirit and imagery. Written about sixty years ago, it has lost none of its appeal even

today. Try translating it into modern free verse and you get some thing like: 'Roar Victory to revolution, roar Victory to Revolution/ And catch on your breasts the blows of the thunderbolt!,' and you destroy all the magic of these immortal lines. Try translating a musical poet like B.B. Borkar, try capturing in free verse the haunting word music of:

> *Gadad nilé gadad nilé jalad bharun aalé/Shitalatanu chapalacharana anilagana nighalé.*

It is of course true that the form of the text in translation should approximate as far as possible to that of the original; and that it should not militate against either acceptable literary norms in the Receptor languages or the spirit of the original. An example each should clarify the point.

The structure of a typical Marathi *abhang* is four lines rhyming *ab bc.* But this rhyme scheme would sound rather odd in English, where *aa aa* or *abab* would be the acceptable norm. Consider the following set of *abhangs* by Tukaram and their translation in rhymed verse:

> *Ratridivasa aamha yuddhacha prasanga/Antarbahya jaga/Aani mana. Jivahi Agoja/Padati Aaghata/Yeooniya nitya/Nitya varu. Tuka mhané tuzya/ namachiya balé/Avaghiyanche kalé/Kelé tonda.*[12]

And here is a translation in rhymed verse, employing a four line stanza with alternate rhymes, *ab ab:*

> It's war, for us, war/Day in and day out/War with the self within/And war with the world without.
>
> Blows keep raining on us/Heavy are they/We ward them off as they come/ From day to day.
>
> Says Tuka/We recite your holy name/And on the strength of that/Put all hard knocks to shame.

A wrong choice of metre may land the translator into several difficulties, leading to the evaporation of the tone, temper and spirit of the original. R.C. Dutt's English translations of *The Mahabharata* (1895) and *The Ramayana* (1899) provide telltale examples of this. Dutt's choice of the Tennysonian 'Locksley Hall' metre was hardly a wise one, though he tries to defend it in his "Epilogue" to his translation of *The Mahabharata.* The originals are written in the *Sloka* metre which has the qualities of simplicity, vigour and energy

native to folk poetry. The pause that divides each line into two parts makes trechant and frequently epigrammatic expression possible. With its easy flexibility, this metre is capable of endless varieties of mood, tone and effect. These are precisely the qualities which the 'Locksley Hall' metre with its jingling rhythm (which palls in large doses), its uniform imagery flow and its sophistication and polish singularly lacks. Again, in order to fill in the long lines of his chosen metre, Dutt is often compelled to commit the translator's ultimate sin viz. using a lot of padding. For instance, Sita'a memorable words to Rama in the *Ayodhykanda:*

Na pita natmajo na mata na sakhijanah
Iha pretya cha narinam patireko gatih sada

are translated extremely loosely as: 'sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state/With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her fate.[13]

Here, the concentrated epigrammatic force of the last four words (*narinam patireko gatih sada*) is irretrievably lost in the diffuse second line of Dutt's rendering (With her lord...) which contains more than three times the words in the original without a third of its clinching quality.

The translator has thus to face formidable difficulties in carrying out his task, and the end-product may, almost invariably leave him dissatisfied. Indian thought posits four kinds of *Mukti* (liberation) perfection of being*: Salokata:* dwelling in the same region as the Divine; *Samipata* : nearness to the Divine; *Sarupata:* achieving likeness to the Divine, and *Sayujyata:* accomplishing intimate union, identification with the Divine. It would be interesting to judge translations by the application of this fourfold test to them, the *mukti* in this case being artistic perfection. Most translations may achieve *Salokata* and possibly *Samipata;* but how many translations can really be said to have reached the stage of *Sarupata* and finally *Sayujyata* ? This must perhaps remain a distant dream never to be realized. In this imperfect world of ours the translator's work is therefore always in the danger of suffering the same fate as that of Shakespeare's Bottom: 'O Bottom... thou art translated.'

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AGAINST GENRE: FEMINIST FICTION AND INTERTEXTUALITY

N. Geetha

"We must rethink Womankind beginning with every form and every period of her body" (Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa")

"Revision--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for woman more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an art of survival." (Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence)*

The notion of Intertextuality implies that a text is not an autonomous entity, possessing an independent existence of its own. Every text, on analysis, emerges as an intertext of another text. The term was introduced into French Criticism in the late 1960s by Julia Kristeva in her discussions on the ideas of Bakhtin. Basically, it can be defined as utterances/texts in relation to other utterances/texts. A text is thus a complex composite of multiple, pluralistic utterances. A continuous dialogue thus ensues between the given text and other texts.

A text is thus a transformation of another. Kristeva argues that no text is 'free' of other texts (Katie, 1989:259). Roland Barthes claims that a text is not an "internal, closed, accountable structure, but the outlet of the text onto other texts, other codes, other signs: What makes the text is the intertextual" (Young, 1981:137). Listing a series of "operating tactics" that would avoid giving a text positivism or closure, he sees the notion of 'text-space' as a text being "plugged in" to other texts, other codes (135). In his meditations *Eperons* (Spurs) Jacques Derrida has shown how a text can have any number of contexts. When a text is ascribed a specific context, it does not mean the meaning of that text is closed or fixed once for all, for "there is always the possibility of reinscribing it within other contexts" (Moi, 1985:155). Jeremy Hawthorn views the text as a 'play of signifiers.' He says that it is like a piece of language "structured, but decentered, without closure" (1984:59). Leon Roudiez writes that "Any signifying practic is a field.... in which various signifying systems undergo... a transposition" (Moi, 1985:155).

Any new text thus "operates partly by direct comparison with a whole series of earlier texts, without the intervention of any system of formal rules" (Leonard, 1991:149). For Christopher Nash, this process of 'embedding' texts, one in another, is reciprocal. He speaks of two levels of intertextual understanding: Intertextual Indeterminacy and Extratextual Indeterminacy. The former establishes that all utterances, all signs are "nodes in the total text and continually modify each other. The latter that words signify what they do not signify, a presence implies an absence, texts perpetually 'defer' fixed integration and its final meaning" (1987:151). To Olga Kenyon, intertextuality is a reader's experience of other texts. According to her, a text "consists of its ideological, political and psycho analytical relationships with society and other texts" (1988:167). It also accounts for the complex web created by interweaving from other texts, other discourses and other cultural associations (61).

Genre also functions as an intertextual concept. Each age has withnessed the genesis and establishment of certain kinds or types of literary productions. Genre usually refers to formal distinctions in literature; a term for a kind or type of literature, it refers to a standard cafegory or subject area of artistic composition. The three major genres of literature are identified as poetry, drama and the novel, these kinds are subdivided into many other genres, major and minor, such as Lyric (incorporating Elegy, Ode, Song, Sonnet), Narrative Verse, Tragedy, Comedy, History, Short story, Autobiography, Biography and so on.

The classical genre theory, regulative and prescriptive, regarded genres as relatively fixed entities, written in keeping with strigent rules governing particular genres. The Neo-classic critics insisted on each genre retaining its "purity," and fiercely opposed any free mixing of the generic conventions. A hierarchial taxonomic arrangement of literary productions prevailed with works being assigned a specific place along the aesthetic ladder, and ranked according to their order of difficulty and seriousness of purpose. Modern genre theory, descriptive, tends to avoid any overt

assumptions about generic hierarchies. Genre had become fluid, flexible and more inclusive, and through several mutual relations, such as inclusion, mixture, anti-genre inversion, and contrast, is now in a continual state of transmutation. Writers transgressing the rigid classical sanctity of generic conventions and structural boundaries are known to have fused and intermixed, intervened and interpolated, transposed and transformed literary material belonging to one genre with another.

Feminist writers and critics assert that such assignment of literary works to a generic hierarchy and rated as high/low has essentially led to a constitution of a 'canon' that is both elitist and phallocentric. Alastair Flowler rightly points out that of the many factors "determining canon, genre is surely among the most decisive" (1982:216). In an essay on reclaiming 'neglected literature,' Stephen E. Tabachnick affirms that the "canon is simply too seductive," where we are also 'seduced' into "ignoring volume after volume of important non-canonical writing while practising scorched-earth criticism on a handful of masterpieces" (Russell, 1986:25).

The generic classification and ranking had safely shielded a huge amount of female literary talent from public forms of writing. Women had long begun to write, straining against great odds, but much of what they wrote fell outside the so-called 'canon.' Writings by women that did not fit the categories of fiction, poetry and drama have, as Ruth Sherry points out, been frequently "excluded from academic consideration on the grounds that it is not 'really literature' " (Sherry, 1988:25).

For centruies, women had been the most prolific and accomplised of letter-writers and diarists. These writings by women, in general as Rosalind Miles says, "has a knack of failing to satisfy the critical criteria of the male canon and is faulted on these grounds of genee.... (1987:4) The tendency to assign literary works to a genre hierarchy has inevitably led to aesthetic divisions of high/low, serious/trivial and masculine/feminine. Joanna Russ claims that the assignment of genre to literary products

functions as a false categorizing especially when works fell between "established genres and can thereby be assigned to either (and then called an imperfect example of it) or chided for belonging to neither" (1984:53).

Feminists question the propriety of certain forms and kinds of writing being regarded more highly than others. There have been various constraints against women writing and publishing poetry, drama and fiction, hence much of women's creative and literary energy has gone into other forms of writing than these traditionally enumerated genres (Sherry; 1988:24). These include letters, journals, diaries, autobiographies, travel books, histories, biographies, cookery and childcare and other philosophical and non-technical essays. Others include what women so often wrote: children's books, 'Gothics,' science fiction, fantasy, utopian fiction, detective stories, romance, etc. In these we hear the voices of overworked housewives, and mothers, of working class and even illiterate women. These writings were sadly enough doomed to remain outside the "canon." Women's writings were badly paid and lowly rated than anything comparable written by a man. Thus most women, as Miles says, have "directed their energies, or had them directed, into the sub-Genres or foothills of the literary mountain range" (1907:4). Most of what women wrote escaped print not because of a dearth or absence of women writers but because they were ignored or neglected as not being worthy of inclusion into the 'canon.'

Feminist writers have seized upon the concept of Intertextuality to explode the dominant patriarchal forms and structures. They employ different textual strategies like parody, imitation, mimicry and other duplicitous methods to attempt writing in daringly innovative forms and subjects.

In "Le Riro de la Medusa," Cixous asks women to "take up writing in order that they can break apart the dominant mode and replace it with a feminine one" (Humm, 1986:51). Feminists avow that in reading literary texts produced by male writers one hears only the masculine voice, using male formulations. Even the most

intense and intimate feminine experiences are perceived in masculine terms and described according to male norms. This has resulted in a total exclusion of vital female experiences.

Feminist writers find the concept of Intertextuality a radical and pragmatic tool that can aid them to rewrite prominent male texts, giving them a women's perception and correct the distorted female experiences and also to transform texts written by women into feminist texts. It provides the very space feminists require for what has been described as "crossover, hybridisation, and interzoning" between... different subcultures, different genres... "a space for raiding, scavenging, subverting and reviving the forms and narrative of writing..." (Carr, 1989:213). Leslie Dick, pointing out that all literature relies on reference to other texts to take shape and make sense, says that "Genre writing explicitly works by referring to previous examples of itself, and either sustaining or subverting the narrative and formal elements that make up the genre" (1989:207).

At the same time feminists are not interested in creating a parallel or alternative 'canon' equal to the existing canon of patriarchal works but to write new experimental texts never attempted before, to write in forms and structures which are unrestricted and uncircumscribed and to write a kind of discourse uninvented by male writers, precisely as a way, as Alison Light asserts

> Of prising free and remapping a multiplicity of cultural forms and images. It can give us a way of moving beyond the fixity and authority, of any one form of representation, of breaking open great traditions, allowing us to realign questions of value, of what constitutes high culture or low, the serious and the trivial, the masculine and the feminine: genre can invert and dissolve some of those oppositions in favour of a much broader set of pluralities, driving a wedge into a closed world of clerical distinctions (1989:33).

Fiction has its genesis with women; it is in fiction that the contribution of women has been most conspicuous and most widely acknowledged. Feminists use fiction as an all-inclusive canvas, a frontier for subverting and transgressing the boundaries of genres and genders. Breaking away from the tight structures of traditional genres, feminist writers find in this genre an experimental

front, where radically different and oppositional materials are symmetrically placed to create texts that are an admixture of various generic elements. Sara Maitland speaks of the important role assumed by feminist fiction in subverting the male-dominated forms. She points out how feminist fiction "has been immensely successful in terms of pushing the boundaries of traditional genres out enough to include our interests and our concerns" (Carr, 1989:197).

Feminist writers have been employing the device of intertextuality to reach across generic divisions that had so long confined them to produce radically innovative texts. A variety of novels have appeared with feminists employing the device of intertextuality to lift a story, motif, plot or character from one genre and fitting it into another--one genre feeding another like Angela Carter's infusion of gothic vampire motifs into the fairy takes in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979).

Kathy Acker's texts like *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984) and *Don Quixote* (1986) very effectively efface the distinction between high and low art. They explode literary hierarchies, so that in her books one cannot tell if one is primarily reading a work of pornography, or soap opera, pulp fiction or high modernism, for, as Leslie Dick says, "plagiarism is fundamental to her writing practice: other books are raided, ripped off and recycled, imitated, parodied, rewritten and manipulated in as many ways as she can come up with" (Carr, 1989:208). A.S. Byatt's *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978) draws on texts she loves, lifting phrases to create this "intertextuality." The result is often a brilliant new discourse. Unlike T.S. Eliot who used other texts to depict the deterioration of the modern era, Byatt uses other texts to reveal a revivifying, not dying culture. Using fragments from seventeenth century texts to depict the twentieth century girls, her text explores, along with the deterioration, the endless possibilities for her female characters.

Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) is a text which is of particular interest to the feminist reader. It reveals Carter's conscious and dexterous use of the device of intertextuality to analyse femininity and female subordination as cultural constructs.

In it she reworks episodes and motifs not from one text but from two others as well. There are the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman* and Freud's account of the psychic structures relating to the family unit (the primal scene, the oedipal configuration and the castration myth). Her novel becomes, in Barthes's words, "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings none of them original blend and clash" (Roe, 1978:183). Deconstructing the old texts, Carter in her essay "Notes from the Frontline" concludes:

> reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the New wine makes the old bottles explode (Roe, 1987:183).

Her other novel, *Nights at the Circus* (1984), also represents "a skilfully contrived exercise in intertextuality" (Roe, 1987:197). There are allusions to writers like Shakespeare, Milton, Poe, Ibsen and Joyce. The novel interweaves as a 'medley' of "paradoxically reconstructed quotations." This medley unites the serious and the comic, the high and the low. "It subverts any single, unified utterance, in a typical carnivalistic manner" (Roe, 1987:197). The novel further transforms and embeds other texts, clearly indicating the way "Carnivalistic perspectives may be adapted as a vehicle for the treatment of important feminist themes, including an analysis of patriarchal culture and the representation of female community" (197).

Christine Brooke-Roe's novel *Thru* (1975) is in every sense an "anti-novel," making a conscious textual departure from the norms of the conventional bourgeois novel. The novel constantly alludes and refers to other texts, carrying traces and gleanings of earlier texts. The novel quotes bits of pre-existing language and also imitates established styles of writing. As Roger Fowler points out, the novel is "polysystemic, drawing its structure from a variety of systems of codes which also enter the generation of other texts" (1977:126).

Leslie Dick's *Without Falling* (1987) deconstructs various genres and traverses through a number of genres. Its intertextual

nature is revealed in its reference to the eighteenth-century gothic and the nineteenth-century melodrama. The novel is an "anti-romance" and uses fragmented narrative, internal monologue, shifts in points of view and is a composite of varieties of texts (letters, journals, dramatic dialogue).

Feminist writers and critics have variously and differently exploited the device of intertextuality to deconstruct generic boundaries and to re-invent and rewrite canonical male texts, giving them a feminist perspective. The feminist genre fiction has by right assumed a front where rigid traditional genres are made to collapse and dissolve through the use of the concept of intertextuality, leading to a fusion and creation of a feminist literary product that is against and beyond genre.

COLERIDGE'S INFLUENCE ON TED HUGHES'S THEORY OF POETRY

A.H. Tak

In recent times when critics and creative writers have often found themselves on opposite sides of an imaginary fence, each being hostile to the other, the contribution of the creative writers who have also strayed into the territory of literary criticism has gained tremendous significance for a proper analysis and evaluation of literature. Ted Hughes is one of the latest in the long line of poet-critics extending from Sir Philip Sidney to our day, and including such names as Ben Jonson, Dryden, Dr. Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold and Eliot. Unfortunately, Hughes's writings have drawn little attention to themselves as literary criticism, partly because his criticism is hard to get hold of or to view as a whole, and mainly because it is without the pretentions or postures often required in academic criticism. Since there are no exhaustive critical studies or definitive essays written by Hughes, nor does he concern himself with one subject or author for long, his criticism takes second place to his poetry. Even his reviews are supposed to function as a critical background to Hughes as poet, reflecting his interests and preoccupations as a poet. It is very often neglected that these reviews also suggest a critical talent that is more overshadowed than it deserves to have been. The present paper attempts to analyse the critical formulations of Ted Hughes in order to establish the presence of an underlying theory of poetry which is almost an extension of Coleridge's theory of imagination and his organicist conception of art.

The beginning of Ted Hughes's career as a critic can be traced to 1960's when he worked as a reviewer for the *Nation* and began contributing reviews to the *New Statesman* and *The Sunda Times*.[1] Though these reviews can hardly qualify as literary criticism and are interesting in suggesting contextual patterns of thought and ideas behind Hughes's own poems, there are signs among them of an unusual critical voice and insights which reveal Hughes's importance, as well as his qualifications, as a literary critic. For

example, in his review of Constantine Fitzgibbon's edition of Dylan Thomas's *Selected Letters* he not only analyses strands of his imagery and political themes but also uses the occasion to explore layer by layer levels of Dylan Thomas as a man and as poet.[2] Similarly, his reviews written for the *Listener*, done alongside his increasingly numerous broadcasting engagements, clearly reveal the signs of a critical commitment parallel with main things in his work as a poet. "These reviews of the *Listener,"* writes Philip Small Wood, "reveal the extra-ordinary width of his literary interests and the interests he has taken in other cultural forms."[3] Although these short pieces exhibit the passion of the poet, they simultaneously convey the deficiencies of criticism that rests exclusively on academic examples of the form. This they do by Hughes's explicit and implicit understanding of what poetry is; the conception of the object under consideration that is reflected back by Hughes's critical remarks. His reviews of 1964, such as that of Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism* and Idries Shah's *The Sufis*[4] reach out in yet more associative way to non-eurocentric modes of thinking and knowing. In all these ways, Hughes, as far as he is expanding the geographical and cultural basis necessary for the consideration of human society and the artefacts it creates, is moving with equal energy inward towards something that comes to be affiliated with the essentially poetic and romantic.

Though in his reviews the distinction that Hughes reveals as a critic remains substantially concealed, his *Listener* reviews exhibit a critical sense of poetry connected to Hughes's in its assertion of inward intensity. It was, however, a series of broadcast talks on poetry, published by the B.B.C and finally amended and brought together as the volume entitled *Poetry in the Making,* that finally revealed his most impressive contributions to the critical discussion of poetry. The book clearly affirms Robson's remark that "poets can tell us things about poetry that only poets can know."[5] Though intended for helping children in finding more honest and adequate verbal expression for observations and ideas, the book contains, and even collects, more wisdom about poetry than the works of a number of 'professional' critics put together.

In the opening section of *Poetr in the Making,* Ted Hughes compares making poem to capuring animals, a favourite occupation of his childhood and early youth. Making a poem, he suggests, is like making an animal your own. He defines the poem as a living creature, with parts and limbs:

> It is better to call it an assembly of living parts moved by a single spirit. The living parts are the words, the images, the rhythms. The spirit is the life which inhabits them when they all work together. It is impossible to say which comes first, parts or spirit. But if any of the parts are dead... if any of the words, or images or rhythms do not jump to life as you read them.... then the creature is going to be maimed and the spirit sickly.[6]

This drawing of an analogy between the work of art and the living things, though as old as Aristotle himself, was mainly exploited by the German romantic critics, particularly Schelegel and Schelling, for describing the artistic process. These critics, and later Coleridge, while formulating a "non-mechanistic aesthetics and psychology of the creative process," maintained that a poem begins as a 'seed' or 'germ' in the creative imagination of the artist and "assimilates to itself foreign and diverse materials." They regarded the growth of the seed primarily as 'unconscious process' and its development and final form 'self-determined': the result being an artistic work which in essence is like a living thing in that multiplicity and unity, the particular and the universal, content and form have coalesced and fused.[7] "Poetry," says Coleridge, "takes up the surrounding materials and adapts itself to existing circumstances. What it cloaks itself in, it glorifies, like a plant, depending on soil for many things, yet still retaining its original form."[8] This is the organic form which "shapes as it develops, itself from within, and is opposite of the mechanistic form in which on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material."[9]

Coleridge, as is well-known, spent a great deal of energy in refuting the eighteenth-century mechanistic philosophy[10] which he concluded was a misplaced application of Newtonian science: "Newton was a materialist. Mind in his system is always passive—a lazy looker-on on an external world. If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's image... there is ground for suspicion

that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false as a system."[11] One finds an echo of these words in Ted Hughes's essay on "Myth and Education"[12] where he states that Bacon, Locke and Newton, the harbingers of three hundred years of rational enlightenment which hardened into objectivity of looking with and not through eye, began by "questioning superstitions and ended by prohibiting imagination itself as a reliable mental faculty, branding it more or less criminal in a scientific society." The last three hundred years in Europe have forgotten, Hughes asserts, that "without full operation of the various worlds and heavens and hells of imagination, men become sick, Mechanical monsters." Hence we clearly see that Ted Hughes follows Coleridge in defining poetry as "the expression of the imagination" as well as in attributing to human mind the active power not only to create but also to respond creatively to the impressions showered upon him by the external world. Paschall rightly argues that Coleridge followed Schelling and Fichte who shaped the Kantian theory of the "self into a premise that it was insignificant whether one spoke of the mind (consciousness) or of Nature (external reality) because, according to them, during the act of self-perception the perceiver and the perceived become one."[13] Coleridge himself speaks of this possible identification when he writes:

> I think of the wall -- it is before me, a distinct Image -- here. I necessarily think of the *Idea* and the Thinking I as two distinct and opposed things. Now [let me] think of myself--of the thinking Being--the Idea becomes dim whatever it may be -- so dim that I do not know what it was. But the Feeling is deep and steady--and this I call "I" -- identifying the percipient and the perceived.[14]

Following Coleridge, Ted Hughes asserts that the inner world separated from the outer world is a place of demons, and the outer world separated from the inner world is a place of meaningless objects and machines. The faculty that makes the human being out of the two worlds is called divine: that is only a way of saying that it is a faculty without which humanity cannot really exist. It can be called religious or visionary; more essentially, it is imagination which embraces both inner and outer worlds in a creative spirit.[15] Hughes is a true Coleridgean in rejecting the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' imagination because both exist as opposite

dimensions of an essentially single vision:

> Objective imagination, then, important as it is, is not enough. What about a 'subjective' imagination? It is only logical to suppose that a faculty developed specially for peering into the inner world might end up as specialized and destructive as the faculty of peering into the outer one. Besides, the real problem comes from the fact that outer world and inner world are interdependent at every moment. We are simply the locus of their collision. Two worlds, with mutually contradictory laws, or laws that seem to us to be so, colliding afresh every second, struggling for peaceful coexistence. And whether we like it or not, our life is what we are able to make of the collision and struggle.[16]

The distinctive quality of Hughes as a critic lies is his discussion of the question of how poetry is created. Ted Hughes, no doubt, talks about his own act of creation but his utterances have at the same time the potential to infuse how we think about creation in poetry as a whole. In 'Ted Hughes writes' (1957), printed in the *Poetr Book Societ Bulletin,* Hughes represents the activity of making poetry as that of reconciling opposites; bringing violently opposed energies of heart, body and brain to temporary 'peace' in a poem. To capture this act, Hughes employs a musical analogy:

> The way I do this, as I believe, is by using something like the method of a musical composer. I might say that I turn every combatant into a bit of music, then resolve the whole uproar into as formal and balanced a figure of melody and rhythm as I can. When all the words are hearing each other clearly, and every stress is feeling every other stress, and all are contended—the poem is finished.[17]

Here Hughes is talking about his own poems but eight years later, in a review of poems by Sylvia Plath, he states: "The words in these odd-looking verses [Ariel] are not only charged with terrific heat, pressure and clairvoyant precision, they are all deeply related within any poem, acknowledging each other and calling to each other in deep harmonic design."[18] In Hughes's description of poets, the whole achievement is perceived as a clash or confrontation of opposite or discordant qualities resolved in the creative heat of poetry. In seeing poets as wholes, Hughes sees them as gathering together disparate and diverse parts of themselves and their view of reality into oneness, individually distinct and unlike anything else.[19]

Hughes is also Coleridgean in arguing that the ability to unite

separate things, and separate worlds, marks the true poet. The Poet, described in ideal perfection, says Coleridge, "brings the whole soul of man into activity... He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination."[20] "It is all there," Hughes says of Vasko Popa, the Yugoslavian poet, in a tone which is almost resigned to qualities about poetry it takes for granted: "the surprising fusion of unlikely element."[21] This belief in fusion is not just a technical matter for Hughes as it is for J.C. Ransom and Allen Tate; it is a whole way of feeling and seeing the force of what is in human being. Ted Hughes does not agree with these critics that language creates meaning; he says that it has meaning, and meaning of its own, but that we are constantly struggling, mostly without success, to make it convey the meaning we want it to have. However, words try to subvert meaning, it is experience, searching for expression through them, which is the important thing. While talking of the relationship of the words and things, Coleridge argued:

> It is the fundamental mistake of Grammarians and writers on the philosophy of Grammar and Language [to assume] that words and their syntaxis are the immediate representations of *things,* or that they correspond to Things. Words correspond to Thoughts, and the legitimate order and connection of words to the Laws of Thinking and to the acts early and affectations of the Thinker's mind.[22]

In the final chapter of *Poetry in the Making,* Ted Hughes, his modern successor, offers his own modern-day meditations on the relation of words to things:

> It is the same with all our experience of life: the actual substance of it, the material facts of it, embed themselves in us quite a long way from the world of words. It is when we set out to find words for some seemingly quite simple experience that we begin to realize what a huge gap there is between our understanding of what happens around us and inside us, and the words we have at our command to say something about it.[23]

He further argues that a word has its own definite meanings, that a word is its own little solar system of meanings, yet we are wanting it to carry some part of our meaning, of the meaning of our experience, and the meaning of our experience is finally unfathomable.[24]

Both Coleridge and Hughes agree that the task of the poet

is to embody his consciousness -- an identity of the perceiver and the perceived; subject and object -- in symbols and words, and the task of the critic should be to judge how successful the attempt has been. For an artist the important things is, according to Ted Hughes, concentration on art rather than the social and political change:

> Damon, quoted by Plato, says that the modes of music are nowhere altered without changes in the most important laws of the state. Is a musician to listen to his gift then, or study legislation? The poet who feels he needs to mix his poetry with significant matters, or to throw his verse into the popular excitement of the time, ought to remember this strange fact...[25]

Hughes's theory of poetry and criticism, therefore, aspires to include, in the Coleridgean way, the whole of the author's humanity in any consideration of literary work. This is made explicit in Hughes's review of the *Letters of D lan Thomas* where he states that "everything we associate with a poem is its shadowy tenant and part of its meaning, no matter how new critical pursuits we try. Yeats' life is not the less interesting half of his general effort, and one wonders what his poetry would amount to if it could be lifted clear of the biographical matrix.'[26] What is true of Dylan Thomas is true of the artist in general:

> What we need, evidently, is a faculty that embraces both worlds, simultaneously... This really is imagination. This is the faculty we mean when we talk about the imagination of the great artists. The character of great works is exactly this: that in them the full presence of the inner world combines with and is reconciled to the full presence of the outer world. And in them we see that the laws of the two worlds are not contradictory at all; they are one all- inclusive system.[27]

One immediately recollects Coleridge's definition of the organic form created by the faculty of Imagination which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate, or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify."[28] While talking of Shakespeare's following two lines:

> Look ! how a bright star shooteth from the sky
> so glides he in the night from Venus' eye

Coleridge remarks: "Many images and feelings are brought together without effort and without discord--the beauty of Adonis—the rapidity of his flight -- the yearning yet helplessness of the enamoured gazer—and a shadowy ideal character thrown over the whole."[29]

Hence, like Coleridge, Ted Hughes develops his account of imagination in terms of characteristics of the poet 'described in ideal perfection' and like Coleridge, he sees poetry as bringing the whole soul of man into activity and stresses the necessity of the reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities. Hughes's greatness lies in his "affirming the forgotten standards, rather than setting up new idols" and in reaffirming the vitality of the critical formulation of S.T. Coleridge, "the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last"[30] whose critical speculations could be ignored by future critics "at their own risk."[31]

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SUPPRESSED VOICES: A STUDY OF THREE VICTORIAN POEMS

Asha Viswas

The relationship between the past and the present is not a hyphenated one that presupposes a break. The past is invariably a part of the present. At times one can look back in order to know how far one has reached, how much one has progressed--if progress means a linear evolution. In this sense, the past is a yardstick to measure the present. It is for this very purpose that this paper reinterprets three Victorian poems concerned with women's lot in patriarchy.

Martha Vicinus' *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* and Francoise Basch's *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel* give us a vivid picture of the conditions of women in the 19th century England. It was a general belief in the Victorian age that the female body in itself was an inferior instrument, small and weak:

> Victorian physicians and anthropologists supported these ancient prejudices by arguing that women's inferiority could be demonstrated in almost every analysis of the brain and its functions. They maintained that, like the "lower races," women had smaller and less efficient brains, less complex nerve development... any expenditure of mental energy by women could divert the supply of blood and phosphates from the reproductive system to the brain, leading to dysmenorrhea, overian neuralgia, physical degeneracy, and sterlity.[1]

Although Mill refuted this small brain argument in *The Subjection of Women* and mentioned that the heaviest brain on record belonged to a woman,[2] yet the argument retained enough force till the early years of the 20th century. In 1929 Virginia Woolf suggested that women's physical weakness meant that they should write shorter books than men.[3]

As a compensation to this mental inferiority the Victorians made their women feel that women were angels without baser feelings like jealousy, passion, anger or ambition. Self-effacement and modesty were expected to be their natural virtues. Horticultural imagery of the period described them as lilies and violets always needing shade of a father, husband, or a son. Obedience to father

and husband was never to be questioned. A wife's duties were so detailed that these left no time for any other activity. The events of female body like puberty, menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth were taken as excuses to keep women in concealment. Their training in repression, obedience and self-censorship was severe. This female subculture denied women the right to get formal education. It was found that the percentage of University educated men between 1800-1835 was 52.5% and between 1870-1900 this percentage rose to 70.9%. But amongst women only 20% had some formal education upto school level only and this figure remained constant during the entire Century. The percentage of men who were University educated equalled the percentage of women who were educated only at home.[5] Deprived of education, women, were supposed to do only womanly woman's work, such as darning stockings, sewing shirts, making puddings and singing songs. Sexist laws prevented married women from owning property and divorced women were not allowed to see their own children. Thus some fixed opinions, prejudices and values were prescribed and described for the sub-culture of second class citizens to maintain their subordination.

It is in the light of this background of the Victorian age that the paper makes an attempt to reinterpret three Victorian poems. The first poem taken into consideration is Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott." Shalott rhymes with Camelot and Lancelot but the similarities end with the rhyme. In fact, Camelot presents the contrast between the city and the isolated island. Society and active life are contrasted with loneliness and frustrating withdrawal imposed on woman. The lady lives a secluded life within "Four gray walls and four gray towers," a kind of eternal prison house, a tomb. Keeping girls in seclusion to subdue their desires of the flesh and rebellious spirit was a common practice in the Victorian age. Girls were often locked up, starved and deprived of gratification of senses. Victorians regarded female passion as a dangerous force that must be confined and punished. In a number of novels of this age female passion is expressed through images of rooms, attics, basements, houses and towers. The number 'four repeated in "four gray walls and four

gray towers" is a religious symbol associated with rituals. Thus there is a suggestion that the taboo and the curse pronounced on women have religious sanction. The severe dictates of society forbid the lady, under the threat of a curse, to look down from her secluded tower onto Camelot which represents the world of men. Completely cut off from social, human cares, the lady goes on weaving beautiful patterns. This weaving work is synonymous of the needle and embroidery work prescribed for women. The Father of the Prince in *The Princess* avows:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> ... Man to command and woman to obey.
> All else is confusion... (*The Princess*, L1. 437-441)

In terms of psycho-analysis, the "Magic Web" that the lady "Weaves by night and day" is a sort of transference of energy from sex to art through sublimation. Sublimation of passion reaches its zenith in the works of art:

> Art at its best makes for the sublimated expression of the basic urges... and permits of exalted vicarious gratification of the primitive desires...[6]

Freud (1936, *An Autobiographical Study*) calls it substitutive gratification.

The lady knows the world of reality only by reflections in the mirror. Thus what she knows is the shadow. The people of the outside world lead passionate, active, colourful life. The shadows that the lady sees are symbolic of the subconscious world of dreams. The mirror "that hangs before her all the year" is also the "mirror stage," a stage in the development of identity. Lacan associates this "mirror stage" with the birth of ego or sense of self and the laying of the foundations of social identity.[7] In this sense, the poem presents a woman's search for identity as a human being in the patriarchal society. The Victorians called female passion moral insanity which increased under the overcast moon. The lady of Shalott sees the reflection of lovers "when the moon was overhead." Then appears Lancelot who represents life in all its attractive aspects. The images associated with him are of fertility and passion and the verbs used in relation to him are of actions and the colours that describe him are bright and dazzling. He sings "Tirra Lirra."

This song has overt sexual signals as it is taken from Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* where Autolycus thinks of "tumbling in the hay" with his whores. It is now, when her dormant desires are roused, that the lady feels depressed. The hopeless monotony and restrictions force her to make a choice between passion and repression. The act of loosening "the chain" is symbolic of her decision in favour of passion--"down she lay; the broad stream bore her far away," "The broad stream" and "river's dim expanse" are needed for a dried-up heart. There is also a suggestion of going deep into the depths of desire. One cannot live with shadows, deceived by illusions. Devoid of all hopes, the woman abandons herself on the relentless current which takes her along as it does objects like leaves and twigs.

Her journey down to Camelot signifies her revolt. In life she had no identity. It is to fulfil this desire that she writes "round about the prow of the boat" she takes--"The lady of Shalott." Her desire to enter the world of men, of activity is thwarted by death--perhaps it is a threatening warning to women that their place is within the "four gray walls and four gray towers." Her death is a kind of suicide committed out of frustration. The poem thus presents the predicament of a woman trying to free herself from Shalott--lot of a she, female situation.

The second poem is Browning's "Porphyria's Lover." In this poem the lover is neither given a name, nor a social class and nationality. He is known only from his relationship with Porphyria—an appendage, an auxiliary verb, not a Noun, just Porphyria's lover—an intolerable situation to a man's ego. Porphyria's murder is an escape, from this intolerable reality. In classrooms the poem has always been taught as a study in abnormal psychology. In fact, the madness argument has been caused by the first title of the poem--"madhouse cells" which has nothing to do with madness. It is only a symbol of a state of mind that refuses to accept outside reality. Engrossed in male ego, the mind refuses to tolerate the dominance of the 'Other,' the woman.

The pathetic fallacy of the first four lines portends the coming violence and the lover's hatred for Porphyria--"The sullen wind...

tore the elm-tops down for spite and did its worst to vex the lake." The storm outside and the storm within are in their worst destructive moods. Then 'glides' in Porphyria. No true lover would use the verb "glided" for the woman he loves as the word is used in relation to raptiles, specially snakes and for the blood-sucking vampires. In the next fifteen lines the lover sits passive and watches Porphyria's actions. Any woman free of "struggling passion" (as the narrator describes her) would have rushed to the lover, wet or not wet. But this is the 'last' (the narrator is counting her actions) thing that Porphyria does. Each of her activity is minutely watched by the lover--"Straight She Shut the Cold Out and the Storm." The masculine endings of the monosyllabic words of this line give the impression of a woman with power who can control things the way she wants. Next she knelt down "and made the cheerless grate blaze up." This repeated use of masculine endings reinforces a dominating woman who has power over elements--fire. Next she removed her wet cloak and shawl. This narration is proof enough to cancel the suggestion of a passionate woman coming in rain and storm to meet her lover. It rather gives the picture of a woman who is calm and sensible. In line 12 the narrator mentions her "soiled gloves" which she "laid by." The word "soiled" does not simply mean wet by rain. It has another connotation of dirt and moral stains.

After taking full control of the surroundings, Porphyria comes to the lover -- "And, last, she sat down by my side and called me." It means that she has not paid any attention to him till now. The word 'last' is purposefully placed between two commas. It emphasizes not only the lover's resentment of being the last object of the lady's attention but it also shows his fear that after controlling the surroundings, she is now coming to control him.

When Porphyria bares her white shoulder and makes the sulking lover's cheek lie there, she reverses the traditional passive role of the woman prescribed in patriarchy. So far she has been active and dominant in small matters of the cottage like shutting the windows and kindling the fire; no harm in that. But when it comes to role- changing in man-woman relation, she must be stopped. In such matters man cannot be a passive object. Now, we get the

crucial lines from the lover's self-created fiction to justify the murder

> ... At last I knew
> Porphyria worshipped me...
> That moment she was mine, mine, fair
> Perfectly pure and good; I found
> a thing to do..

The line "Porphyria worshipped me" shows not only this particular lover's self-deification, but everyman's wish-fulfilling illusion about himself.-- that he is a god to be worshipped. Lowering his head over the shoulder of the worshipper woman is to come down from the high pedestal of godhood. By offering him her love at this point, Porphyria as a devotee can be purified of all her weaknesses and passions. The lover god, by killing her, has granted the boon of moral purity. There is a sudden metamorphosis of the passive lover into a god who starts acting now. There are pronouncements of self -- "I looked," "I knew," "me," "mine," "I found," "I wound," "I am quite sure," "I ... oped her lids," "I untightened," "my burning kiss," "I propped her head," "my shoulder bore," "I its love." From the moment of killing her the lover acts and she becomes an object. Her drooping head is called 'it'. The different parts of her body, with which she seduced him, are now different objects fully under his control. The assertive woman has been completely subdued. He assures the reader that her death has not changed anything at all:

> I propped her head up as before,
> Only, this time my shoulder bore
> her head, which droops upon it still.

From this subordinate, drooping, subaltern position, dead Porphyria would never ever raise her head, never look up, never assert and dominate him. The reversal of positions has gained him her possession forever as an object. The male ego has assumed the active role. The lover has:

> reduced the real woman to an object onto which he could project the qualities he required in her. By killing her, he merely completed the process, for the dead Porphyria could not contradict his fictional Porphyria. As Duke Ferrara's Duchess could satisfy her husband's demands in a wife only by becoming a portrait for him, so Porphyria could be the woman required by her lover only by becoming a corpse. When the living women become artifacts (as painting or puppet), their men could finally become masters without fear of opposition.[8]

In "My Last Duchess," duke Ferrara's duchess, like Porphyria, is killed out of hatred and a desire to possess her as an object. Since the duke cannot control the real woman who blushed too much, she must die. The duke has the power to destroy her portrait too, but he does not do that because he needs the portrait as a representation of his power. The male ego needs a constant reassurance of his power over woman. The Statue of Neptune, the sea god, is symbolic of the supremacy of god over nature. Woman, like nature, is to be controlled by man, the god. Like nature, the duchess is to be tamed. The duke shows the portrait of the duchess to the emissary and points out her moral weakness:

> ... Sir, it was not
> Her husband's presence only, called that spot
> of joy into the Duchess' cheek
> ... her looks went everywhere.
> Sir, it was all one! My favour at her breast
> the dropping of the daylight in the West
> ... She thanked men - good; but thanked
> Some how ... I know not how ... as if she ranked
> my gift of nine hundred-years-old name
> With anybody's gift ...

Since as a man he could not stoop to talk to her about her smiles given so generously, he gave commands, "then all smiles stopped together." The words "stoop" and "command" represent the two sexes--women stoop and men command.

The duke is now going to marry the daughter of a count, his inferior in social status. This marriage will elevate the status of the count's daughter. An early warning is needed so that the new duchess would know how to behave. The duke represents the patriarchal order which gives absolute power to men over women. The main point of discussion between the duke and the emissary is the settlement of dowry:

> ... I repeat,
> The count your master's known munificence
> Is ample warrant that no just pretence
> Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
> though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
> At starting, is my object ...

The words "I repeat" are significant as they hammer in the demand

for dowry. In the Victorian age, marriages were made or marred on account of dowry. Men were always on the lookout for females with fortunes. As this demand for dowry is repeated, the reader, if not the emissary, is left wondering whether the last duchess was murdered to get a second helping of dowry.

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TREATMENT OF FALLEN WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF JOHN STEINBECK

Sushma Arya

Spread fairly wide over the Steinbeck fictional world is the category of fallen women--women living in the brothels. These women have been given as serious a thought, as respectable a place, as sympathetic a treatment by the novelist as women of any other class in his novels. Steinbeck's attitude towards prostitution "as shown in his works is consistently serious and an integral part of his world view as a novelist."[1] The town woman or fallen woman in Steinbeck is a respectable citizen of society; the whorehouse, a place of honour. Here, prostitution is as honourable a profession as any other. The town women are not looked down upon by the novelist; rather they are portrayed respectfully and sympathetically, so much so that "whores, pimps, gamblers, and sons of bitches" appear as "saints and angels and martyrs and holy men."[2] The novelist, thus, does not take a harsh view of these town women; they are not considered inferior to the women living in homes. Right from his first novel, *Cup of Gold,* as Benson has observed, the novelist stresses the fact that "prostitutes may be fine people who honourably provide a valuable service, and this unconventional idea recurs in later works, most notably with the story of the Lopez sisters in *The Pastures of Heaven* and the treatment of Dora and her girls in the *Cannery Row.*"[3] In Steinbeck at some places, the brothel becomes a substitute for the family, and the madams living in them, a substitute for the guardians or sheltering mothers. Of course, these women are no substitute for the ideal mothers and wives, nor is the brothel-house a replacement of the happy home. But the brothel-house and its inhabitants do seem to receive a more favourable treatment in Steinbeck than do the disturbed homes and broken families.

Steinbeck's uncoventional attitude towards prostitution touches its highest point when he describes the function of a whorehouse as similar to that of a church. He contends that both--the church and the whorehouse--perform the function of serving man in his

disconsolate state of mind and, thus, helping him out of that frustrated state at least for a while. The whorehouses here are found performing a very positive role in the social set-up. These are whorehouses not in the conventional sense of the word, but a type of houses where service to humanity is given top priority. For example, Dora Flood in the *Cannery Row* sends her girls in shifts to attend to the sick persons when epidemic spreads out in the town. Her girls would not only sit with patients but also serve them with nutritious soups. The madams of these houses are known for their decency and the girls working under the guidance of these women continue to be as decent as their madams, sometimes even better than the girls living in homes.

The whorehouses in Steinbeck may better be called the homes for destitutes; the madams the protective mothers. Here girls are trained for their life after marriage. For instance, Funna, the match-maker in the *Sweet Thursday,* would make her girls take lesson in table manners and postures to acquire a lady-like looks and get married if a suitable match is found. In Steinbeck, a whorehouse is like a finishing school for the girls working there. It is a house for the infirm and the old, too. The girls who are incapable of business and cannot earn money for the house are not turned out, but are given the same comfort, the same protection, and the same affection which they used to get earlier. Steinbeck portrays these whorehouses as homes away from home and the madams as motherly sorts who look into the needs of those who visit as well as of those living with them.

Steinbeck is primarily a writer committed to the larger issues of society and not to individual problems. A realist and a naturalist as he is, he mainly draws on the social aspect of the characters of these town women. A close study of his novels makes it clear that he has little interest in the erotic or sex aspect of the lives of these women. He seems to be more concerned about their social role. He treats them as social units; in their social role they are shown valuable human beings: "They are idealized, mythical, exotic figures, that have a position in the public mind."[4] Steinbeck is unlike the modernist writers in whose works man is viewed as an alienated

individual facing his destiny in the existential void. A realist to the core, he never separates the individual from the society; on the contrary, he always places and views man in the context of society. He considers man basically a social being and lays stress on the social aspects of his characters.

Some critics feel that Steinbeck's repeated portrayal of whorehouses and prostitutes in his novels as honourable indicates his concept against false respectability and hypocrisy. As Warren French says, "...he is simply using the prostitutes to emphasize his scorn of thoughtless respectability and to condemn the making of judgement on the basis of superficial categories."[5] Robert E. Morsberger echoes the same thought when he stresses that Steinbeck perhaps uses prostitution "as a focus for satire, both against puritan prudery and the work ethic and against the hypocrisy of sanctimonious politicians and businessmen who are just as eager customers as the proletariat they put down for immoral habits."[6] Whatever may have seen Steinbeck's purpose in portraying these town women as respectable citizens of society, one thing that emerges very clearly is that they are an integral part of the web and texture of Steinbeck's novels and are no less important than other women. These fallen women are the counterparts of mothers and daughters out of home. Denied the opportunities of playing mothers and daughters in regular homes and societies, they find a substitute role for themselves--their natural role of mothers and daughters in whorehouses. They may not be fortunate enough to enjoy the respectability of daughters, wives or mothers in the main fabric of the society, their roles in the peripheral places like the whorehouses is neither very different from those nor less significant.

As explained earlier, in Steinbeck's world whoredom is not a sin. Like Mrs. Warren of G.B. Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, his town women do not entertain any sense of shame about their work; rather they even take pride in their position, in their profession. For instnace, Coeur de Gris's mother in *Cup of Gold* is proud of her profession, proud that her callers are the best people in the port. Equally proud of her profession is the son, Coeur de Gris, who sees no harm in his mother's continuing with the profession because

her profession does not stop her from mothering her son. An improved version of Coeur de Gris' mother is Susy in *Of Mice and Men*. Old Susy's place is a refuge for lonely farm labourers; it is a place where lonesome could for a while get respite from their loneliness. Susy's motherly compassion proves that a madam is to a whorehouse what a mother is to a family.

Dora Flood in the *Cannery Row* is another mother-whore of Steinbeck who runs a stern and stately whorehouse named the Bear Flag Restaurant. Dora can easily be considered the counterpart of Ma Joad in the social set-up of Monterey. Like Ma Joad, she is selfless, sacrificing and resourceful. As Ma Joad's real worth, real courage is to be seen in the moments of crisis and she emerges as the natural leader of the family. Dora Flood too becomes the accepted leader of the people of Monterery. Steinbeck has placed Dora on as high a pedestal as he would place his any other woman.

East of Edan is considered Steinbeck's most serious and detailed study in the business of prostitution. Here, we are introduced to gentle sweet madams like Jennie, Nigger and Faye, along with a wholly evil character, Cathy Ames. Like the houses of all other mother-whores, Faye's house becomes a shelter, a refuge for the deserted. Like Dora Flood of *Cannery Row,* Faye is running a decent, clean house where no vulgarity, no indecency is permitted. Steinbeck treats the oldest profession with humility and gives a humanitarian touch to his mother-whores who are shown to be generous-hearted and charming in their personalities. These women remain happy and contented by bringing happiness and contentment to all those who come into their contact. Fauna of *Sweet Thursday* replaces Dora Flood of *Cannery Row*. She converts Dora's house for the deserted into a school for brides. She is preparing them not for the business of prostitution, but matrimony because she finds marriage "a desirable social condition."[7] A fairy Godmother Fauna has stamped her girls with the valuable virtues of love, kindness, affection and sacrifice. Fauna, in fact, is the wise Steinbeckian mother-whore whose mere presence brings strength and comfort to all around.

The young whores in Steinbeck share with all the Steinbeckian

girls the desire for a home of their own. Like all other young girls, they yearn for safety, stability, and smooth sailing in life. They have been shown each aspiring for a settled and happy life with a husband and children of her own. Paulette is one such young whore in *Cup of Gold* who initially enters Henery Morgan's house as maidservant only. Once given the protection and comfort of a home, she longs for the safety of a man and a home. A desire for the secure married life is aroused strongly in her. Allthough Paulette's desire for marriage is quite natural for a girl of her age, she knows that marriage was not possible for the class of women to which she belongs. She is not a dreamer and knows that Morgan would leave her one day, and that she would be subjected to the fate of a slave again. Steinbeck's characters, particularly the women, may deceive themselves for some time, but in the long run they show adaptability, and at last come to terms with reality.

In his fiction, Steinbeck has inverted the traditional morality in such a way that prostitution is made to look legitimate and respectable; the people who make an effort to crush it are shown to be insensitive and inhuman. That is what happens in the case of Lopez sisters in *The Pastures of Heaven.* Rose and Maria, the two sisters, who after the death of their father run a restaurant to earn their bread, do not find it immoral to give their favours to the customers who buy three or four enchilidas from their restaurant. They consider themselves perfectly honest as they never accept "the money of shame"[8] but charge only for their cooking. These self-deceiving sisters stand disillusioned with the society they live in. The Munroes, the cause of their disillusionment, are portrayed by the novelist as inhuman and insensitive as they bring hurt to the sisters. Instead of feeling sad and desperate when put out of business, the Lopez sisters face the truth boldly and leave the valley to become professional whores in San Francisco. As Mini Reisel Gladstein puts it: "What Steinbeck seems to be saying is that the two women have the strength to deceive themselves when they can thus making their prostitution more palatable, but they also face up to harsh reality when they must. Men, in Steinbeck's stories, often collapse when they have to discard their illusions. Adaptability

is one of the characteristics that most of his indestructible women, like Lopez Sisters, share."[9] Steinbeck's objection is against not the life the sisters are leading but the way they have been treated by the society forcing them into becoming bad women. Another young whore, Suzy in *Sweet Thursday*, joins the profession simply because she thinks that perhaps it might be better than waiting on tables or clerking at "Five and Ten." She is one of those indomitable women of Steinbeck who display great endurance. To start with, she is a whore, but by the end of the novel she is Doc's girl showing a possibility of future motherhood.

With the portrayal of Cathy Ames in *East of Edan,* whoredom no longer remains a genial recreation only. She is the black version of large-hearted whores prominent in Steinbeck's fiction. A wholly evil character Cathy is a complete opposite of Steinbeck's "Happy-Hookers." Whereas all others are shown shifting from whores to housewives, Cathy Ames turns from a housewife to a whore. She is the only woman character in Steinbeck's fiction who is an enemy of procreation. John H. Timmerman rightly sums up Cathy's character: "Cathy's essential evil is indeed the evil of lovelessness: instead of affirming life, she perverts and bends life to her darkness. Steinbeck introduces Cathy as a monster.... Yet she is and remains a monster for two reasons. First, she bends and twists life. Second, she debases sexuality and in Steinbeck's fiction human sexuality is always a sign of robust vigour and energetic life.... The sexual weapon that Cathy wields wounds everyone in the novel."[10]

These fallen women of Steinbeck are definitely better, more compassionate, more caring for others than his self-centred egotists. That way they can easily be placed with the ideal figures-mothers or wives or daughters--of Steinbeck. Both Hawthorne and Steinbeck establish that those who err, those who fall, become more understanding of other human beings; they behave at level with the people. They become closer to the common suffering humanity. Undoubtedly, home brings social respectability to a woman, but it brings some restictions too; whorehouse compensates respectability by bringing more freedom.

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THE THEME OF LOVE IN THE POETRY OF JUDITH WRIGHT

Attia Abid

It was only in the fourth decade of the twentieth century that Australian poetry graduated from mere 'sentimentality' to something more serious and worthy of note when poets like A.D. Hope, James McAuley, Kenneth Mackenzie, Ronald McCuaig and Judith Wright introduced 'love, sex and sexuality' into their verse. This dearth of genuine love poetry and silence on sexuality has been attributed to various factors: Geoffrey Dutton talks of "a certain reticence in the Australian character ...a shadow of the wowser ... a nervous sense of the anti-poetic mate looking over your shoulder."[1] Another reason put forward is the 'alienation psychosis' of the Australian intellectuals and artists who also had to contend with an inclement geographical situation and bleak economic prospects among a host of other problems. Besides, love poetry had to be grafted onto some multi-faceted mythology or rich cultural heritage because the European mythology was incompatible with their search for an independent identity and the native mythology was foreign to their character and temperament, and could not inspire enough respect in them for itself, being against the racial and colonial mentality. Christopher Brennan was the first poet to break the shackles of narrow nationalism, draw on the myths and symbols of other races, and be inspired by Herbert Spenser to write successfully, giving vent to his amorous and romantic sensibility.

Judith Wright saw the rise and fall of the Jindyworobak Movement (propagating nationalism and indiginisation) and its counter movement--the Angry Penguins--without getting emotionally involved in either. From the beginning of her career, love was a dominant theme in her poetry and she resorted to various mythologies. She is one of the pioneers of love poetry in Australia, and her treatment of the theme is free, uninhibited, complex, rich, encompassing a vast range of metaphysical nuances and implications. Like Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath, Judith Wright is every inch a woman and this is reflected in all her writings, which on many occasions become assertive smacking of the Women's Lib and Eternal Feminine. In

the poem 'Eve Scolds,' written in the mid '70s, she assumes the role of Eve and gives Adam, i.e., Man a dressing down; she accuses him of being:

> vulgarly moreish
> plunging on and exploring
> where there's nothing
> left to explore, exhausting the last
> of our flesh.[2]

Even God and religion are not spared: God in 'his maleness' is imaged as a person with a huge masculine beard, 'his dictator hand' giving strength to Adam. Adam's claim that he came first is rejected straightaway; the 'unshaped clay' out of which he was made was nothing but 'she' -- "I was the clay."[3] Her anger is the climax of a long simmering sense of injustice, bullying and persecution. It stems from mixed, paradoxical responses, indistinguishable from the feelings of love. The male excesses that she rants against are also 'liked' and 'asked for' by her. This feminine dilemma is summed up thus:

> But my trouble was love --
> wanting to share my apples
> .....
> But you and I, at heart, never got on.
> Each of us wants to own --
> You to own me, but even more, the world;
> I to own you.
> Lover, we've made, between us,
> one hell of a world. And yet --
> still at your touch I melt .... [4]

The poem thus epitomises the poet's entire attitude to man and love.

In "Eve Scolds," Judith Wright refers to mother with a capital M. The Mother is greater and more ancient than Eve, rather God's female counterpart and coeval with Him. Identical concepts can be found in other mythologies of the world. According to Indian mythology Shakti is a 'devi,' primal Mother and Creator. According to the Maori legend, the primal Mother and Father were distinct from the beginning; the Earth (Gaia) somewhat like Androgyne, begot everything itself without the cooperation of the male counterpart. Thus in her characteristic way, by referring to Mother, Judith Wright leads us

backwards, to the non-Androgynous myth of some female energy which probably coupling with the male God of the poem brought forth the Universe.

An earlier volume, *Woman to Man* (1949), is devoted wholly to the theme of woman's relationship to man and its sub-themes of fertility, procreation and the child's role in the scheme of the universe. The title poem, "Woman to Man," describes woman's experience of love and gestation. In just sixteen lines she works out a miracle of feminine expression of mother-lover-child theme, a feat impossible for man, and also not touched upon by many women in English. Images, metaphors, symbols, mythic references, allusions and the confident majestic cavalcade of lines warm up to what Susan Walker calls "orgastic climax."[5] The child in the womb, though only a throbbing foetus--no shape, no name--is an object of tremendous pride and concern to the mother; it gives her a sense of fulfilment regarding the primeval responsibility of furthering the human race. However, keeping the religious symbolism in mind, to a 'selfless' Christ the world will be a razor's edge from birth to death if he desires to project his image as the ideal man and god; the vision of his future suffering makes the mother cry out hysterically: "Oh hold me for I am afraid."[6] Perhaps she also suffers from a guilt complex--she is resurrecting Christ only for another crucifixtion; thus it is she who is responsible for all his pains and suffering. In the poem "Flesh" the "Hand" says something similar on behalf of the mother. The eighth line of the poem "Woman to Man" -- "the third who lay in our embrace" -- opens before the mind the whole panorama of Creation from the mythology of the Maori aborigines: "Father Sky and Mother Earth had lain in close-locked embrace for countless years, until in the course of time Mother Earth became pregnant and bore him children--the brood of men and animals. At first the offspring lived in darkness and semi-suffocation between the embracing parents, until at length they revolted, thrust Father Sky far up overhead and thereby let in light and air and room for themselves to grow. But the loving parents weep in endless sorrow over their separation--the tears of Father Sky falling down again and again as rain and those of Mother Earth mounting upards as

mists."[7]

"Woman's Song," the next poem in the anthology *Woman to Man,* is again about the personal experience of pregnancy, and wonderfully captures "the dreaming, introspective sensual quality" of it. Here the trinity of love is short by a member, the lover or father. The whole poem is a monologue addressed to the unborn in the form of a lullaby. The mother is apprehensive and wishes to prolong the period of pregnancy when she says, "whom yet my blood would keep." This is not only because of the obvious pleasure of possessing the darling but also for fear of the inhospitable outside world. The fourth stanza of the poem calls for special attention. It expresses a well-known aspect of maternal love--jealous protectiveness of the child, a theme which finds monumental treatment by D.H. Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers.*

The next poem, "Woman to Child," is a monologue to a newly-born child, and evokes the kangaroo imagery in the mother-child relationship--the kangaroo's pouch being a post-natal substitute for the womb. She says: "though the child is out dancing in the light," it is still there inside her; total separation is not feasible. She refuses to be taken as a mere female human individual.

"The Unborn," a poem in two parts, treats a unique theme—foeticide. The child is again the sole concern of the mother, but with a difference that its growth and birth inside the womb have been thwarted by her alone. The first part has the mother as its persona, ruminating most excruciatingly over the live denied and destroyed. In the second part 'the unborn' becomes the persona. In short lines, made up mostly of monosyllables, it complains against the denial and growth and life. The rhythm remarkably approximates a child's sobbing sound and sends a wave of pity down the dark depths of the human heart. The poem actually goes to complete the world of mother-child relationship, bringing in the hitherto neglected aspects of her love for the unborn, aborted one. A similar guilt-complex and sadness is also voiced in another poem of the same volume:

> Now all of us who live
> are in our lives an elegy;
> are in our lives a continual speech

with the dead; the mourner speaks to the mourned,
the murderer speaks to the murdered.
To you whom I have killed,
you whom I have seen die
(and my tears were useless),
you with whom I have died --
to you at least I should speak the truth.
With you at least I should share my heart.[8]

Maternal love permeates nearly the whole spectrum of Judith Wright's concern for humanity.

Judith Wright's frankness in describing erotic feelings and ideas, sometimes directly, sometimes implicitly through metaphors and symbols, has surprised many of her critics. She allows her poetic imagination free play, and does not fear any wowser puckering his eyebrows at what she does. If she feels a truth, she goes ahead with it, regardless of denunciation or disapproval. Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath adhere to the same philosophy, and abound in what has come to be called "hot stuff." The act of sexual union finds frequent expression in their poetry. In "Eden," a short lyric, Judith Wright remarks that it is in the total merger of the two sexes: "love in love dissolved"[9] that the real Eden is regained, which to her was the place where perfect pleasure of sex existed, the "flesh" had not split into "two halves" there, and there was just one truth. During its sojourn on earth, the heart suffers a curse:

that it can never be
closed in one flesh with its love,
like the fruit hung on Eve's tree.[10]

The sex-act, as such, is the culmination of the noblest aspiration of the flesh, its attainment of "truth." The *Two Fires* (1955) contains a number of poems on physical love, generation and regeneration. With her characteristic candour in the title poem itself Judith Wright talks of the "holy unwearying seed," "the holy seed that knew no time," and the "bright falling fountain." The fire symbolism, that imparts an obvious unity to the poems in the volume, stands both for sexual passion and the usual human bellicosity. The "bridegroom" and the "bride" -- the man and the woman pledged to the physical enjoyment and furtherance of their race--are the two fires. They, like Donne's lovers, burn in each other's flame and enact the

atavistic ritual that ensures the continuance of the human race.

In *The Other Half* it is love as a verb that Judith Wright is interested in. Her concept of Action which frequently branches off into the Hindu philosophy of 'Karma' too might have persuaded her to concentrate more feelingly on 'love' the verb, than its noun-variant. In "Wishes" she extols it as:

> that verb at whose source all verbs
> take fires and learn to move.[11]

There is again the same preoccupation in "Pro and Con." In "Typists in Phoenix Building," it is again love in its verb form that is explored and projected, that is the sex-act realistically described under thinly veiled symbolism.

The lover in most of her poems seems to be the husband himself. Even as early as the first poem "The Moving Image I" there is a finality about the "lover's face" that gives her strength to hold her own against the fast-spinning world and time. The next poem in the volume *The Moving Image,* suggesting a perfect trust between the beloved and lover, attainable between a fiancee and fiance or wife and husband only, is "The Company of Lovers." The physical manifestations of the trust in embraces, kisses and sexual communion, relieve her of the fear of death and destruction. With World War II as the backdrop, she says:

> Lock your warm hand upon the chilling heart
> and for a time I live without fear
> Grope in the dark to find me and embrace,
> for the dark preludes of the drums begin,
> and round us, round the company of lovers,
> Death draws his cordons in.[12]

Then in poem after poem of love there is an unmistakable streak of conjugality and celebration of the sacred love between husband and wife. "Turning Fifty" expresses full satisfaction in love on the fiftieth birthday.

The love poems in Judith Wright's anthology *Shadow* take on an elegiac mournfulness. The husband is dead and with him is gone the vivacity of passion. Some of the poems contain a sort of Tennysonian ennui and anguished reminiscing. Poem after poem recapitulates married fulfilment and recounts that the lover's death has left the world desolate for the beloved, with "all certainty,

passion and peace withdrawn."[13] Since she had lived through him, she too is dying now. This reminiscing, elegiac strain continues, and is most elaborately expressed in her latest volume, *Fourth Quartet*. "Twenty Five Years" describes "a clear blond evening on the pastoral hill/grass gilt by the moon" when she had "your hand on mine."[14] However, the theme here is the inability, perhaps failure, of memory to envision a long dead experience "live" and with fidelity.

Love, according to Judith Wright, liberates man from the fear of time and death. This is love's supreme function. Time, the platonic, "moving image of eternity" halts when a lover and his beloved lose themselves in one another. It is the source of creation, continuity of life, and the never-ending succession of generations of the living creatures on this planet. In many poems the child is propped up as the symbol of triumph of love on time and death. In Judith Wright love is thus an escape into an experience of eternity. It is the flame in which even time burns, allowing the humans involved, to step, though only temporarily, into the region of timelessness. Love and time interact so vigorously that they cannot even be known from each other, become one-- "the faces break and blur and pass/as love and time are blurred together."[15]

Judith Wright does not confine herself to the physical sensual love alone that procreates and sustains life on earth. Her theme of love spans a far broader spectrum. Her concern at the primeval bellicosity in man as demonstrated so hysterically in the form of wars--World War II and the Vietnam War specially--the diabolically studied assault on the culture of the weaker tribes, aborigines in particular, and the ruthless destruction of the vegetation and wildlife in Australia, is explicable only in terms of her all-encompassing love. Her heart goes out most passionately to all those who have been denied their legitimate rights to live in honour and peace even if they are social drop-outs like the metho-drinker, lunatic, prisoner, or an ailing dying man, all of whom get more than their share of love and concern.

Thus probing Judith Wright's love, one finds its roots extending beyond the mere biological into the vegetable and inanimate world too. Many a time she plausibly erases the demarcating line between

the botanical and human life. She proudly identifies herself with the botanical objects, and in so doing, she extends her personality and female function on an eternal and a universal level. She identifies herself with the earth too. Identification with anything or anyone is the extreme end of mystical love. River, sea, mountain, sun, moon and stars frequently recur in her poetry as manifestations of herself. She feels the whole universe contracted into her whole personality diffused over all space and time. Such an attitude far surpasses the usual concept of love, and signifies a robust sense of supreme oneness with the universe and eternity.

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THE ANGLOPHONE AFRICAN NOVEL: A COMMITTED APPROACH

Usha Bhatnagar

The anglophone African novel needs to be divided into two categories for a purposeful study of its temperament: (a) novels written about Africa by the foreigners; and (b) novels written by the Africans. Africa, until 1950, existed only as an exotic background on the literary landscape of the world. Much of what was written about the continent was by foreign visitors who went there either on official assignments or as explorers. The tales, they carried home, suffered from the bias of preconceived notions that accompany inadequate knowledge. Thus the messages about Africa travelling to Europe, were, in most cases, half-truths.

To the outside world of Europe, the African man was a voo-doo ridden ignorant primitive, afraid of the natural events like eclipse and frightened of the white man's magic machine, the gun. The rough, tough, virile and savage image of the African was exploited by some western writers like Edgar Wallace (1875-1932), Evelyn Arthur Waugh (1903-1966) and Sir Henry Rider Haqgard (1856-1925) to create sensation. For these writers the yet unexplored continent abounded in fanciful material that could titilate the imagination of the European reader. The will to view Africa as a place of normal human habitation was missing.

With colonisation, the fantasy image of Africa was pulled down towards surer grounds of reality and a shift in the attitude is witnessed. The arrival of the emissaries of the Emperor to govern the natives provided an actual interaction between the two races which led to an actualistic presentation of Africa to the world. Most of the novels produced during this period by the foreigners are an account of the difficulties faced by the British administrators in a geographically unapproachable, climatically unsuitable and culturally backward land. The native African is projected as an uncouth person that the philanthropic British officers are trying to civilize.

The political domination of Africa created cultural complexes in the tribal society. The African, now, began to look at himself through his white masters, lenses as a primitive and uncivilized slave of

no consequence. In Joyce Cary's best known novel, *Mr. Johnson,* the African clerk's obsessive imitation of the ways of his employer Lieut Rudbeck is a confirmation of the demolition of the native's faith in his own culture. Mr. Johnson's ridiculous imitation of his white master's manners and language marks his desire to alienate himself from his sorts, a fallout of the lost pride of the native. The preference for the whiteman's ways is symptomatic of the eventual cultural complex. Lieut Rudbeck's zealous concern for the improvement of the general condition of the place and his benevolence towards the natives occupy the centre stage in the novel. Most of the foreigners' writings about Africa project a one-sided and distorted picture and these works cannot be accepted as representation of the thought and sentiments of the continent.

Edward Blyden, an Afro-American, was the first blackman to highlight the cultural decay of the continent and attempted to arrest it. In his essays, he produced historical evidence to assert Africa's positive contribution to the world. He was proud of his black identity and inspired others to recognise it as a valuable personal asset. Dr. William DuBois and Marcus Garvey's various conferences on pan-Africanism between 1900 and 1950 gave further boost to the national spirit and political independence became the national objective. Another movement, known as Negritude, was launched by the French speaking African students, studying in France, as a reaction against the colonial assimilation of the intellectuals and their subsequent alienation from their environment. The movement called for reaffirmation of cultural pride and intellectual independence. Though Pan-Africanism and Negritude soon lost their appeal because of being more reactionary than real in nature, yet both aimed at the reinstatement of the lost pride of Africa and their historical significance in the national awakening cannot be denied.

The growth of the native African novel is closely related to the rise in national consciousness. The first generation of African novelists like Ngugi, Achebe, Camera laye and others use the 'genre' to create awareness about the ignominious political domination of Africa. These anglophone writers disregard the negritude writers' romantic view of Africa's past as a contrast to

the present-day ruination as unrealistic and unauthentic. They appreciate the objective of cultural rehabilitation, but see their present as an outcome of their social and political past. The present ills stand related to the past failings. Therefore, these African novelists commit themselves to the task of stirring up African consciousness to build a new Africa:

> The native intellectual, who wishes to create an authentic work of art, must realise that truths of nation are in the first place in realities.[1]

The commitment is corroborated when Achebe says:

> I believe that writing is very much a political activity ....And I don't buy the idea that there is a separation between politics, public life, public themes, public concerns and an individual artistic concern.[2]

The African society, at this time, was struggling to obtain independence politically and culturally. The task was not an easy one. The European influence, which had already become an integral part of the African system and sensibility, could not be negated not only on account of its mercilessly tight hold on the social framework but also because it opened new doors and linked Africa to the rest of the world. The native is caught in a conflict:

> When the native is confronted with the colonial order of things, he finds that he is in a state of permanent tension. The settler's world is a hostile world which spurns the native but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious.[3]

Therefore, at this stage the clash between the traditional and the colonial forms the paramount theme of the novel.

It is the polarised contemporary life which dominates the novels of Cyprian Ekwensi. Ekwensi exposes the westernised rootless city life where none is comfortable for long. One slack step, one unwitting lapse can crumble the hard-built dreams of the city dweller. The neck to neck race of the town does nor forgive the slow runner. He may either opt out of it, or be destroyed.

The eternal conflict between virtue and vice is topicalised as a tussle between the traditional and the modern. In Cyrian Ekwensi's *The People of the City,* Amusa Sango, a newspaper man from the village, gets involved with the depraved women of the city. The city devoid of traditionally accepted values symbolizes decadence. Sango is finally saved by a virtuous girl.

Ekwensi's *The Beautiful Feathers* reiterates the same theme.

The traditional is the ideal. A break away from the traditional invites retribution. Wilson Iyari is deserted by his wife Yaniya. As a result of the shameful act, she is cursed by the gods. Her son dies. Finally, she has to sacrifice her own life to make penance. In *Jagua Nana,* the conflict between the western materialism and traditionalism is at the most intense. The heroine Jagua comes to town. She has to accept the immoral life of the city to obtain power which she mis-equates with happiness. But happiness in the westernised set-up of the town proves elusive and she turns to the countryside. Jagua's retirement to her village is a metaphor of deliverance from the destructive forces of the west and of settlement into the tranquillity of the traditional.

Ekwensi decries the new western influence on the African society as immoral and depraved. The characters, caught up in the quagmire of the decadent western life in the city, stage a happy come-back-home at the end to reinforce the traditional view of life. In Ekwensi's novels the nostagia for the old narrows the writer's vision and obscures the truth to a considerable degree but, in the bargain, the focus on the undesirable impact of the west is sharpened. Ekwensi's novels are records of individuals trapped in the conflict but the balance finally tilts in favour of the traditional which is, unmistakably, suggested as the ideal.

Ekwensi's commitment to the exposition of the social vices is emphasized by Obiechina:

> Ekwensi's writing is preoccupied with exploring through individuals like Jagua, contemporary urban manifestations like obsessive materialism, crime, violence and prostitutions which are essentially products of a particular changing social scene[4]

The combat between the western impact and the native pattern of living forms the central statement in Ngugi's novels also. The former is replacing the latter and the latter is resisting the former. But Ngugi displays a greater insight into the contemporary situation than Ekwensi. Ngugi does not slice up life into Western and African pieces. His novels present a richer array of life with subtle nuances and are far from being the simple town and tradition juxtapositions of Ekwensi.

In Ngugi's *A River Between,* Waiyaki goes to Siriana Mission

School. He comes across a lot more of another way of life than he expected. The earlier objective of getting to know the enemy, to beat him gets hazier as he learns new things.

> Being away from tribe makes him look at the rituals in an entirely different way. Waiyaki knew that not all the ways of the whiteman were bad[5]

The conflict, between the precepts of the newly acquired knowledge and the pulls of the dear-to-heart old traditions, is at its peak on the occasion of Muthoni's circumcision. Joshua, who has accepted the religion of the missionaries, cannot allow his daughter Muthoni to submit to the ritual of circumcision. But for Muthoni, the ritual alone can bestow upon her the womanhood that all Ibo girls longingly await. The ritual and the womanhood are identified as a unified experience. It is a sort of umbilical cord that joins her to her life-source. She must go through the ritual to gain the beautiful feeling of being a woman. Muthoni's secret participation in the ritual at the cost of her life is a statement in favour of the traditional but the assets of the missionary religion are not outrightly condemned, though there is a no denying of the fact that there is a river between.

During the 50's, the cry for political sovereignity was ringing loud and clear throughout the continent. The literature, particularly novels, written during this period, narrate the pain, the frustrations, the aspirations and the fights of changing Africa. Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* and Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* are stories of political uprising. The Mau Mau movement for land forms an important part of the novel. For the natives, losing the possession of the land means losing their identity. The political theme enters into social and economic dimensions as the story is unfolded through the prisonmates of Munira. The novel stands out as a unified experience of the sorrows of the slave Africa. The same political theme is reinforced in *A Grain of Wheat.* Mugo, the lonely and introvert orphan, dreaming of a prosperous life betrays Kihika, the political revolutionary, to the British. He is crushed under the burden of the guilt of his treachery when the town ululates his supposed national heroism. The public announcement of his patriotic bravery dwarfs him in his own eyes. But the heroic is restored with his confession of his guilt.

The pre-independence novels of the great master Chinua Achebe, bring to the public focus the essential character of the society. Achebe delineates the African ambience with a remarkable fidelity to truth. He neither fantasizes nor deprecates unwarrantedly the social patterns of Ibo people. The British impact is strongly felt by the natives, much of which is beyond their control but if the things fall apart the disintegration begins from within. The outsider only hastens the process. Achebe does not view the African past as a separate unit of time. The present originates from the past. If the present is deformed, the beginnings were made much earlier.

In *The Things Fall Apart,* the tribal society kills Ikemefuma who called Okonkwo his father. Okonkwo, too, loves the child but he surrenders to the traditional ritual. The execution of the act proves Okonkwo's unflinching faith in the collective judgement but a doubt about its adequacy is raised when Nwaye, who grew up with Ikemefuma, cannot forgive his father for the inhuman slaughter and leaves him to find an answer in Christianity. Okonkwo stands out for his indomitable will in the context of his people and against the British. His final act of defiance of the British order and his subsequent hanging is the Africans' reply to an indifferent and stubborn outsider. Chinua Achebe's novel is an act of diligent balance of the traditional and the western.

Achebe's *Arrow of God,* though published after the independence of Nigeria, goes back to the pre-independence period. Ezulu, the chief, manipulates his power against his own people and also against the colonial outsiders for self serving motives. As a result, he destroys both his tribe and himself. He cannot escape the arrow of God, his destruction is God's judgement:

> To them the issue was simple. Their god had taken sides with them against this headstrong and ambitious priest and thus upheld the wisdom of their ancestors that no man however great was greater than his people; that no man ever won judgement against his clan.[6]

By 1960, most of the African countries had attained independence. It was a period marked by rejoicings over Africa's liberation from foreign control. The new-gained freedom was a promise of the beautiful. The Africans were their own masters now. But the new masters wasted no time and quickly got into the places

of power vacated by the imperialists. The elite African 'been tos' settled themselves comfortably in the whiteman's seat and began to manipulate the changed scene for their personal gains. Corruption and exploitation came to be accepted as normal and unavoidable for an ambitious individual. Ambition was no more collective, it assumed individualistic dimensions. In the free Africa, the enemy was not an outsider. The battle had to be fought against one's own self.

Describing the corresponding thematic shift in Achebe's novels, Ayi Kwei Armah says:

> *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* present the early stages of the process, the contemporary implications of which are developed in *No Longer At Ease* and *A Man of the People.* Running through the sequence established by these novels is the novelist's consciousness of a progressive drop in the quality of African life, of a distinct moral decline culminating in the chaos described in the last novel.[7]

African novel, now, turns to expose the stifling neo-colonial scenario where their new born dreams cannot survive. *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People* narrate the errors, confusions and the eventual fall of the protagonists in the neo-colonial materialistic societies. In *No Longer at Ease,* Obi is sent away to foreign lands to imbibe the education which would catapult him into the elite class. Umufoia Progressive Union regards Obi's departure as an investment and eagerly awaits to collect the dividends. Obi's stay in England is far from being happy:

> It seemed more like a decade than four years, what with the miseries of winter then his longing to return home, taking on the sharpness of physical pains.[8]

He was nostalgic about Nigeria. But on his return he finds, to his dismay, that in his home land the civil services have gone corrupt, leaders have become selfish manipulators and the common people have been forced by their ambitions for social success to discard ethical values that preserve a society. He feels as if:

> I have tasted putrid flesh in the spoon.[9]

Obi's resistance against malpractices, exploitation and corruption gives way in the face of mounting pressures of the family, community and personal obligations. He is left with no choice and is caught taking a bribe.

Chinua Achebe's response to Anna Rutherford, in an interview, evinces the author's resolve to come to grips with the chaotic conditions:

> What I am really interested in is how you could begin to solve this problem. If you are going to do that, you have to pinpoint the responsibility specifically before you can even begin to break out of the vicious circle. And it is at the level of the leadership that the break must occur.[10]

The argument is carried on in *The Anthills of the Savannah.* The novel is a tale of the debris of Africa's dreams. Each new coup d'etat upsets the system but gains nothing for the masses. The novel is about the deteriorating quality of African leadership and it seems to send out negative signals. Explaining the existence of hope in the grimness of the tale, Achebe says:

> It's grim, it is very bad, it's almost hopeless, almost, but there is the possibility of a new beginning. A new dispensation could begin, slowly, patiently, painfully--it's not going to be a mango trick, it's not going to happen overnight, it's going to be brought about by a group, by that small company around Beatrice, that group who have learnt something from their experience.[11]

The African novelist is looking up to the people 'who have learnt something from their experience' to awaken the Zambie crowd to the need of discovering a new way homogeneous to the African society, to revitalize the paralysed society:

> What both Achebe and Soyinka attack is the personal corruption of the first generation of African political leaders after independence and the resultant moral paralysis.[12]

Ama Ata Aidoo's collection of short stories, *No Sweetness Here,* centres on the humble lives of the poor. Basic to the stories is the subtle condemnation of the modernisation which does not change the lives of these individuals. They were born in sorrow and will die the same way. The neo-colonial modernisation has ignored the masses. The characters in these stories are inescapably trapped in the struggle for survival. They die every day in their desire to get a better deal from life. The husband leaves his wife. The sister becomes a prostitute. The grandmother is alone to cry for her only grandchild. The stories are woven around the unfulfilled small dreams of the poor.

Kanadu's *Shadow of Wealth* deals with the dying out of old traditions and their replacement with the most despicable kind of modernisation. Alice gives up the traditional role of a woman to be

independent. Independence lands her into the arms of Frimpong, the Managing Director, who wants to take advantage of her. Disillusioned, she looks back towards the housewife role but that was left far behind. Eventually, she sinks into a boring life with a boring job.

In *Waiting for the Rain* of Charles Mungoshi, Lucifer, the chosen one of the family, stamps on the sacred medicine prepared by his people for his safe stay in the alien land. The traditional and the modern are polarised. The disintegration begins when the traditions which form the strength of a society are crushed under the feet advancing towards the western way.

Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, my Brother* is an allegorical exposure of the corruption. Ghana is used as a symbol. Amamu, the protagonist, finds himself alone against a multitude of confused people who have adopted pervert ways to reap materialistic benefits. Amamu, who has been considerate and compassionate since his childhood, feels like an alien in the ambience of deceit and violence. The odds are heavy against him. He opposes the system, yet forms a part of it. What ensues is guilt and alienation. Disillusioned, Kofi Awoonor says:

> Bricks, cement, mortars pounding. A nation is building. Fart filled respectable people toiling in moth eaten files to continue where the colonial imperialists left off.[13]

The hero in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* is alone in his protest against the depraved and decadent sorroundings. His lonely cries are lost in the materialistic din. *The Voice* is the story of an individual's struggle to convey his vision for the community to an unreceiving environment and his subsequent isolation.

The protagonists of Ayi Kwei Armah seem to represent the 'group of people' of Achebe 'who have learnt from experience.' The aware protagonists find themselves amongst a crowd of men and women running a blind race for things. The climb up the ladder of personal materialistic success is a tale of increasing apathy to the community. The repulsive neo-colonial decadence which impedes the birth of the beautiful informs *The Beautyful (sic) Ones Are Not Yet Born.* Koomson-like leaders have put the country to ransom for their personal gratification. Man, who stands for all those men

who refuse to submit to the deteriorating parametres of success, suffers the stigma of being a failure both at home and outside. The stink and faith physically confronting the reader everywhere is symbolic of the rotting human values.

Ayi Kwei Armah's *Why Are We So Blest* is a poignant narration of the woes of the 'blessed ones.' The 'blessed ones' cross over to an alien land on government scholarship to be assimilated in an alien culture. The few sensitive and intelligent ones, who can see through the game, find themselves stranded in an unblessed predicament in the land of the imperialists and also in their home land. Modin gives up his studies abroad to join the revolutionaries in his own country. But he is shocked to find that there is no revolution anywhere. It's only a camouflage for the dark and destructive designs of the successful corrupts.

Gauging the changing mood of the novel, Eustace Palmer says:

> Ghanian novelists evince a particular interest for the contemporary scene. It is also at the centre of the pre-occupation of such internationally known writers as Cameron Duodu, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ayi Kwei Armah. Some of their works are indicative of a new mood and concommitantly new models: disenchantment with independence and self serving leaders it brought.[14]

What Eustace Palmer says about Ghanaian writers, in particular, is true of the African novelists in general. For the African artist.

> The communal good is all important and any personal denial of group commitment appears to weaken the whole and is deplored.[15]

In *Fragments,* Baako, the sensitive artist, refuses to make compromises with the fallen norms of the society. He wants to reach out to the people through his creative writing for films and Ghanavision. But Ghanavision has sold its loyalities to the people in power. It has no place for the artist committed to the society. Defeated and weary of the hostile millieu, Baako seeks escape in isolation. He turns inward to live only in his dreams and snaps all ties with the world which refuses to understand his genuine concern. Baako goes mad. *The Beautyful Ones are not Yet Born* and *Why Are We Blest ?* also expose the loneliness of the individual.

The loner protagonists of earlier novels of Ayi Kwei Armah regain their strength of convinctions in *The Healer* and *Two Thousand Seasons* and set out with renewed vigour to heal their sick society.

The African novelists, like their protagonists, are 'that group of people who have learnt something from their experience' (Achebe) and have vowed an unflinching commitment to heal their sick society and carry on the battle against the materialistic wave which is not integral to the African way.

It is Achebe's 'group of people' which emerges anew in Ngugi's recent novel, *Matigari* (1986). The author in his preface to the English edition talks of 'a man looking for a cure for an illness' and there upon starts the 'journey of search.' Matigari, the searcher for truth, becomes a symbolic figure towards the end of the novel. He stands for the instinct for truth:

> Everywhere in the country the big question still remained: who was Matigari ma Njiruungi ? Was he dead or was he alive?[16]

Matigari may be dead physically but the spirit of search lives as Muriuki picks up AK 47 and slings it over his shoulder. The fight rages on.

Matigari, originally written in Gikuyu, is also an assertion of the national culture through an indentfication with the native language:

> They must discover their various tongues to sing the song.[17]

Most of the African writers view the social failings as 'ills' and look for people who can cure these ills. Ngugi's *Matigari* is also based on an African folk story of a man looking for a cure for an illness. The metaphor of sickness predominates the works of Armah also. The desperate protagonists of the first three novels decide to turn healers in *The Healers.* The soul of the people is sick. It needs a therapy. The illness is chronic and haste will worsen the disease. The healers need to be patient and persevering:

> The disease has run unchecked through centuries. Yet sometimes we dream of ending it in our little lifetime and despair seizes us if we do not see the end in sight.[18]

The African novelists, thus, seem to emphasize the need for the formation of a viable collective regenerative force (a group of committed people) vowing to fight out the neocolonial and materialistic forces which have gripped their society. The African writers' vision for their continent is identifiable with the vision of their protagonists, Ayi Kwei Armah's Baako, Chinua Achebe's Beatrice, Kofi Awoonor's Amamu, Ngugi Wa Thiango's Matigari are a few among many others

who stand as literary embodiment of the creative writers' social commitment.

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DENNIS HASKELL'S NEW BOOK OF POEMS, *THE GHOST NAMES SING:* AN INTRODUCTORY APPRAISAL

Subhas Chandra Saha

When today's critical trend is theoretical and cerebral, depending more on logic and detachment, I strike a divergent note by relying more on my personal responses to Dennis Haskell's new book of poems, *The Ghost Names Sing.* It is very difficult to be only theoretical, cerebral, logical and dispassionate when I feel, perceive and enjoy the texture of Dennis's craftsmanship, his world of dreams, nullity, passion and irony. In his poetry, Dennis is a painter and sculptor, portraying the littlenesses and largenesses of life that he appropriates with his alert psyche and awake senses. For his readers, his poetry offers a world of perception and simulation where they re-discover themselves. His poetry is often therapeutic and cathartic, re-presenting to us our own world of dreams and sensations which we more often than not tend to forget under the compulsions of the quotidian life-pressures of modern times.

Dennis Haskell is an Australian poet, having spanned fifty years of life, currently engaged in the affairs of academic administration of the University of Western Australia, after having served the University of Sydney and the University of Western Australia as a faculty member of the Department of English for about fifteen years. He has published twelve books which include three volumes of poetry. His first book of poems is entitled *Listening at Night,* published in 1984 by Angus and Robertson and his second volume of poems is *Abracadabra,* published in 1993 by Fremantle Arts Centre. His latest book of poems is *The Ghost Names Sing,* published in 1997 by Fremantle Arts Centre Press. It was released in December 1997 at the University of Western Australia at a function where I happened to be present along with his numerous admirers. Leonard Cohen of Canada established himself in the hearts of millions of readers with his enchanting song-like poems. Dennis is a fifty-years-old young

Australian who has won the heart of this Indian scholar, that is myself, along with numerous other admirers present at the occasion where he read out his very interesting and exciting poems from his own collection.

In this essay I will make an effort to analyse some of the poems of this new volume, and present my responses to the craftsmanship of this vibrant Australian poet of today. The very first poem in the volume has an evocative title, "The Empty Room." The poem evolves by itself: so natural and organic are the setting, the pattern and the design of the verbal structure that we forget the poet; the poem creates its own space inside our psyche and imagination. The poem begins in the following manner:

> The hours go past, the hands
> flick forward on the clock's face
> but time inside our heads
> ticks at its own pace,
>
> falters, lies, sticks contempt
> for where every thought
> stutters and stops
> beside the emptied room.[1]

Both temporal time and personal time have to face the empty room: both public life and private life have to encounter the ultimate empty room of death. The apparent paradigm of ordinary items evokes a parallel paradigm of metaphorical and allegorical significances. Death teaches, as Shelley's 'Ozymandias' showed us. Dennis learns and tells us this:

> There I learn how little
> I can do, when his shoes
> defy me... (9)

However eternal and universal the theme may be, Dennis's presentation of the same is unique, personal and contemporary; his style idiomatic, down-to-earth and profoundly shaking:

> Empty, I lean in the doorway
>
> of brutality and a word
> I cannot say, suck in breath
> and dream of coming to that room
> where none shall ever sleep. (10)

In the context of my analysis of the poem, I wish to quote Geoff Page who pinpointed Dennis's individuality in perception and style:

> Haskell's temperament is essentially sceptical but
> it is also a spiritual one: he is someone who finds
> the numinous in the small things of everyday life
> rather than on the road to Tarsus.[2]

Dennis is wonderfully a combination of a private man and a public man. In the next poem, 'In the Lao Revolutionary Museum, Vientiane,' he is so forthright and at the same time graphic in his comments on public figures:

> Deep-set eyes and determined frown,
> Lenin looks a brute. (11)

His irony and veiled mockery are subtle and pungent:

> Familiar sketches of Marx and Lenin--each
> looking like God, only more serious. (12)

Yet his humanity is deeply perceptible in his ironic presentation of history:

> In the 1960s
> the Viet Cong hacked a trail through Laos
> so the Americans bombed the shit out of them:
> hundreds of thousands of Lao bones
> are strewn through the forest,
> bones of the most bombed people
> in the history of the earth. Next day I visited
> Laos's most sacred monument, Pha That Luang,
> known in English as 'the Great Stupa.' (13)

The value of being human is communicated by Dennis in an extraordinarily ironic manner in the poem, 'After Fifty Years':

> At times
> I almost thought
> I could turn myself
> on and off at will.
>
> If I were human
> I would have been capable
> of anything. (14)

Over the years Dennis has developed a style that is wry and oblique, at the same time it is factual, matter-of-fact and apparently simple. This style has made his poetry touching, moving and extraordinarily stirring.

Each of Dennis's poems in the volume is vibrant with recollection of the unforgettable past. The poet's style makes his past our past. 'For Fanny Elizabeth Moore' ends with reverberations in our

memory:

My grandmother's house of shaking hands, the lino stained cupboards
cluttered with impracticality,
and air as thick as history.
Now I step outside my door
under ivy climbing into sunlight
and turn five again and again
my grandmother's walls darken and shine inside me. (16)

Dennis's poems on his relatives like grandmother, uncle, cousin, brother, sister and friends are steeped in local colour, but the themes, and the moving effect that his style creates, make them universal in appeal. They remind me of the Indian English poet A.K. Ramanujan's poems on his relatives. The poem 'In the 1950s' gives us memorable lines that evoke pictures of human relations in a touching fascinating manner:

my short uncle
smoked Craven A
Filter Tip, with
a black cat on the packet.
Each breath rained inside him
like a shower of confetti
and he seemed sure
they had stunted his growth.
My short uncle
had a cool, steel, curving
ash tray, whose stem
was a naked silver woman.
I was young and I was 3 and I was 5.
.....
When I was little
he strapped me to the back
of his motorbike
and roared around the block
to rock me to sleep. (17)
.....
I was 7 and I was 8 and I was 9
and sometimes he was bigger
than the whole world. (18)

Not only human beings but also the human products set against the natural backdrop arrest the attention of the poet. Dennis's sensiblity and imagination work in unison with the visible products of human beings uniting harmoniously with the natural setting, as

exemplified in the following opening lines from 'Romanticism in the 1990s':

Yachts
like gulls with upturned wings
alone in their element
silently flit across
a fine horizon
of thin, listless cloud.
On the shore we stare out to sea
amongst the translucent
blobs of jellyfish foam,
sand sinking into our toes.
And the yachts look like elegance,
delicacy of action. (31)

Nature and human beings impinge on Dennis (sensibility and imagination) in an esemplastic manner.

The power of Dennis's poetry to evoke scenes and stir feelings is beyond any shade of doubt. It shows itself in every line that he writes. Dennis visited Keats' grave in Italy, and concludes his long poem on the same, entitled 'As You Are, As We Are,' so evocatively:

One wall
displays a verse, Enrica Giarnieri's, which ends:
'I stand before the cross of God and flee toward the light
toward the sun in the streets
where day after day
grow great silences.'

When I go to cemeteries now
I think of Keats,
and others he's among,
and the dates creep up on me one by one. (40)

Dennis's art of presenting sensitive, soul-stirring, even claustrophobic or apocalyptic moments is poignant. He tells us in his poem 'Flowers' how a girl growing adolescent goes astray but then the miserable end to such a life is unbearable. The pathos of the situation is evoked in a dramatic touching manner in the following lines of the poem:

Her life was numbingly predictable
except when in the car her shoes
stayed stuck to the pedals,

an instant of inattention
which numbed her forever. (43)

Dennis is not only aware of the pathos but also of the indifference and irony of the earthy situation when he concludes the poem:

All through the service
on an adjacent grave
her 3-year-old son played cars. (44)

Ultimately it is Dennis's humanity that touches the reader, that illumines the words of his poetry, as in the poem '152:Shanghai-Beijing' which he concludes with the following image in a picturesque evocative set of words:

Then, before the last of the landscape
disappeared into dusk
I could see tongues of light begin to speak
in the small, stone peasant houses. (46)

That Dennis is a human and humane poet underscores each line of his poetry. However, he does not sound prophetic and universal in his style: he presents small cameos of what he observes and feels but through them his humanity percolates. In his touching and moving cameos of his ninety-six-years-old grandmother, Dennis offers us memorable images:

We saw her off at Central;
behind the silencing glass
in her cabin she bustled about
while the engine wheezed, the wheels slid slowly out
and twelve new jumpered arms
waved a fascinated, frantic goodbye. (52)

Dennis's humanity is perceptible in his attention to small things of life. In fact, Dennis widens the horizon of poetry by writing poems on many ordinary things. In one poem 'Chilliholicism,' he writes about his experience of eating Fried Hokkien Prawn Mee at 3. The poem ends the narration with a superb choreography of chillies, frying pan and rain:

You'd have to be
born to it, a chilliholic; something so unnatural I knew could never be learnt. Tissues wiped sweat away from a numb-lipped smile that knew hours of red lava retasting lay ahead, even as I listened to the still air, the wok beside me sizzling as naturally as rain. (55)

A very pertinent observation on Dennis's poetry in this regard has

been made in *Australian Poets and Their Works:*

> Deeply inherent in his poetry, which is often self-searching, is an urge to 'value the ordinary,' because in the seemingly commonplace lies perhaps the individual's best hope of personal satisfaction and fulfilment.[3]

Mundane and ethereal, ordinary and extraordinary merge into images that stir us to a new consciousness of life lived today. Hence, in theme and style, Dennis's poetry is both old and new, registering a continuity and a modernity, evoking in us a paradoxical simultaneous sensation and perception of the evanescence and the solidity. 'Evening Flight' begins with a series of images that exemplify what I just observed:

> We left the hazy city
> in fretting light
> and lost each house,
> each line of fence,
> each shine of office,
> the fluctuating fingerprints
> of wind on water
> beneath their harvest of rain (60)

In the same vein, in the poem 'Outlines', we come across the following lines:

> Before my own hands lie
> fists of broccoli, potatoes peeled white,
> ridges of stainless steel
> and knuckles of vast eternity. (62)

Hence in Dennis's poems, the mundane never remains mundane; an aura emerges and engulfs the mundane, creating a sensation of elevation. A few more lines from 'Outlines' clinch the details of Dennis's art of presentation of his responses to the mundane encapsulating the ethereal:

> Though rocks may slide
> and houses might fall,
> governments come and go,
> love for you will be in my bones. (62-63)

Dennis's art becomes spell-binding. Alan Urquahart in a review in *Southerly* points out the delicate wizardry of Dennis's poetic craftsmanship:

> Similar images, objects, characters, concepts recur in different contexts, in unpremeditated and unimposed ways, and weave webs of enriching significance. There is maturity and continuity of vision... realising a note of

almost Romantic resolution between the polarities of the volume: meaning and absence, life and art, the prosaic and the poetic.[4]

But deeper paradoxes of life, its agonies and anxieties, its listlessness and obfuscating craze for economic values punctuate some of his poems about ordinary life. 'Our Century' offers us striking lines and images portraying today's life which is colourless and economic in contrast to nature's variety:

Mainly Japanese, Singaporeans, Malays,
Australians, all the would-be passengers
sat apart, folded into themselves
like escalators, in that international land, 'Departure,'
whose every language is listlessness.

.....

a lake-like,
cloud-islanding sky. (64)

.....

this is our century with its international face
calling us at prearranged times
where time is of the essence, where all subjects
have become one: economics
that measures values by valuing
only the measurable. (65)

it is observed in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* that Dennis's poetry celebrates 'the search for the extraordinary in a mundane urban environment.'[5]

Dennis's humanity and his adoration of the ordinary are fraught with irony, but lyricism is not absent from his art. That he is small, that he is empty, that he is a part of Australia are linked together in a mosaic of lyrical poetry, as in the following lines from 'Unsuccessful Interview':

after all, this is Australia.
Going back it should be no surprise

to find, above the runnelled, red-baked land
as hard as fate, the lumpy cracks

surrounded by dust, the sun-shattered rock,
that you are as empty as air,

and winds blowing through the thin-fleeced cloud
need no further strength to miff
the puff of self, to sing on and on
in the endless and possibly meaningless blue. (72)

However, the profound and prophetic sometimes appear to give Dennis's poetry a roundedness, a sense of wholeness, an immaculacy of perfect design. 'Cape Fear' ends with such lines that linger in our memory: they offer a Yeatsian apocalyptic vision:

> How the world sees us is how
> we see the world,
> its violence so brilliant
> that all we can do is enter and belong.
> These are the rigours of the age,
> the consequence of life lived in the head,
> its love of fear, its violet distance from sense,
> its fascinating reward, its post-modern brilliance. (77)

Geoff Page's final observation in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Australian Poetry* embodies our own responses to Dennis's poetry: '... how deeply Haskell's own unobtrusive poetry can find its way into the most intense of our human feelings.'[6]

Dennis's poetic art shows a line of progress that culminates in his fourth book of poems, *The Ghost Names Sing.* His lines sing our story, our history; though his English may be Australian, his language is so moving that we Indians can respond to it with ready spontaneity. A fuller study of Dennis's poetry in comparison with the poetry of some post-Independence Indian English poets will prove to be a very interesting and fruitful one. Indian English poetry should be studied in comparison with Australian poetry. Dennis's poetry will be a right choice, to begin with.

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[1]Dennis Haskell, *The Ghost Names Sing* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997), p.9. (Subsequent references to this volume are mentioned in the text of the essay).

[2]Geoff Page, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Australian Poetry* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1995), p.117.

[3]William Wilde, *Australian Poets and Their Works* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.111.

[4]Alan Urquahart, Review in *Southerly*, quoted on the backpage of *Abracadabra* (South Fremantle: Fre mantle Arts Centre Press, 1993).

[5]Ian Hamilton, *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[6]Geoff Page, p.119.

SELF AND SEMITIC HERITAGE: A STUDY OF CYNTHIA OZICK'S "LEVITATION"

M. Poornananda Rao

Ruth R. Wisse, a literary essayist for *Commentary,* has identified Cynthia Ozick as the leader of a movement of post-World War II American-Jewish writers, who are self-consciously defining themselves as Jews and who are attempting to express their artistic vision in Jewish terms. Ozick also has a wish for the Jews; she wants Jews to be particular, but not seperate. This paper examines one of Ozick's most powerful and at the same time most representative fictions, "Levitation." It has a narrative focus on semitic heritage. The question of Jewish identity is posed in "Levitation" from the perspective of a sympathetic insider-outsider. As Joseph Lowin points out:

> It is through her eyes, the eyes of the novelist (but not of the author of the story) that the reader sees the levitation of title, and much, much more (77).

The story revolves round the novelists, Lucy and Feingold. Ozick teases the reader with hints and speculations about the characters through comments on their "living." Lucy, inspired by the Psalms her father, a Christian minister recited in the Church, decides to marry "out of (her) tradition." Feingold looks for a non-Jewish wife and finds her in Lucy. Daring to be different, she marries a Jew and is happy that "She became an Ancient Jew." Ozick casually mentions that they have published one novel each, she about domestic life a la Jane Austen and he, about the Jews. It is through minor details that Ozick points to differences hidden underneath the veneer of domesticity and shared concerns.

As novelists Lucy and Feingold are not theory-oriented, not even interested in post-modernism, and "the end of character and story" (4). They are committed to avoiding modern-day snares especially, first person narratives and "the one principle they agreed was the importance of never uniting about writers" (4). They use the code word "the Forbiden thing" for solipsism. Lucy herself has been guilty of violating this taboo in their discussion in their bed. In her published novel, Lucy has already described in the first person the upper West side of New York.

This foreground leads to the story proper, the Feingolds call themselves the people of the "Secondary level" -- a level between celebrities and mediocrities. The truth is that none cared for them or their artistic careers. The horrid truth of their lives is brought out in Ozick's comment: "Anonymous mediocrities. They could not call themselves forgotten because they had never been noticed" (8). It is Lucy's bid to rise out of their mediocrity that furnishes the occasion for the action proper, the cocktail party. The party they host over a weekend takes place in their living room and dining room which are connected by a central hall. The renowned Jewish artists and critics, such as Norman Mailer, Susan Sontag, Alfred Kazin, Philip Roth and so on have not turned up on the Saturday as they are out of town, preoccupied or cannot be reached. Feingold regards the party "a waste." Disappointed by the company of pseudo-intellectuals and mouthing platitudes, Feingold steps into the central hall and runs into Lucy coming from dining room full of theatre and film people with their boisterous jokes and manners. The central hall is a no-man's-land.

In the living room, Lucy notices the party is coming alive. Meanwhile, Feingold feels ignored and awaits an opportunity to talk about his work-in-progress. He is greeted by the young man from a "Theological Seminary" who performed his marriage. At the sight of this "theological friend," he feels a strong urge to talk about "God or if not God, then certain historical atrocities" (11), such as the arrest of Jews of Vienna in 1247 and the castration of men and the tearing of breasts of women. He begins to wonder whether it will be decorous to discuss at a cocktail party issues, such as God's stepping out of history and whether the world is merely a chimera. Lucy notices that all the people in the living room without exception are Jews. In contrast, the dining room is full of gentiles, except the Jews of the other kind, humorists, painters and film-reviewers. Lawrence S. Friedman finds the living room and the dining room a clue to Jewish identity:

> The authentic Jews who gather about a Holocaust-survivor rise towards the ceiling while the inauthentic Jews in another room remain firmly anchored to the floor (16).

Back in the living room, Lucy faults Feingold mentally for one

of his notorious fits of fanaticism. The Theological friend has brought along a friend of his own, looking like a refugee with "a nose like saints. The face of Jesus" (13). As Feingold is expatiating on the sufferings of Jews in London and Munich, the refugee-like man urges him to speak about recent times. Lucy intuitively knows that the stranger is a holocaust-survivor and she is proved correct. Starting as a whisper, the refugee's story casts a spell on the Jews gathered there. The refugee's recital of a recent massacre makes her picture every Jew as a Jesus on the Cross. Tales of bulldozers showing the skeletons, an uplifted hand, twisted mouth and other details have been the staple documentaries so long that such sights no longer move the viewer. Transferring the horror of the tale to her familiar ground, she muses:

> If there had been a camera at the crucifixion Christianity would collapse, no one would even feel anything about it. Cruelty came out of imagination (14).

In spite of this routine repetition of macabre details, the tale appears to have frozen them. The narration of the story proceeds so smoothly and irresistibly that it transports them into a different world. Lucy, a convert to Judaism, observes the chamber of Jews rising into the air, carrying the "real" Jews away from her. Commenting on the distancing between Lucy, a converted Jew, and real Jews, Elaine M. Kauvar says: "The break with her father's faith augurs Lucy's eventual disavowal of an adopted tradition as well"...(147). The guests are floating along the wall of the room. Ozick describes:

> The room began to lift. It ascended. It rose like an ark on waters... the room floated upwards carrying Jews (15).

She feels herself at the bottom below the floor boards. Lucy can still hear faintly a rhythmic iteration of the word "death." Someone utters the word "Holocaust," and she knows it must be Feingold's voice.

As Jews soar up and away, Lucy experiences what Ozick calls "an illumination" (16). She has a vivid expression of a Sunday in the city park with the children. There seems to be some sort of simultaneous action, for even as Lucy warns the children not to touch the city birds, she is also aware of the roomful of Jews levitating farther and farther. Meanwhile, an anthropologist from the

Smithsonian Institution steps on to the platform to announce an entertainment by peasants from Messina and Calabria. One of the older peasants wears bells on his fingers. The Anthropologist elaborates on the "male" instrument, the elaborate music and the seductive dance. The old man, making a circle, goes into a trance, squats and begins to ascend. The audience, Italians and Sicilian immigrants, cheer the performance. Lucy feels "glorified... exalted by the celebration of Madonna, giver of fertility and fecundity" (18). She becomes aware of the pagan fragments in Christianity--Lucy reflects on "how she abandoned nature, how she has lost true religion on account of the God of Jews" (18). Essentially, she is not Jewish, nor Ancient Hebrew nor Christian. The story ends with the Jews' redemptive levitation and Lucy's earthbound Paganism. Contrasting Lucy's vision of the Jews with her "illumination," Elaine M. Kauvar observes:

> The power to ascend "to the sublime" belongs to the Hebraism, to Hellenism the dark slide into the earth, the wild and voluptuous realm of Pan.(146)

Ozick treats Judaism as a religious as well as ethnic and social characteristic and her work displays an overt reference for Jewish heritage. In an attempt to characterize Jewish identity, Joseph Epstein highlights in "Levitation" the note of Jewish exclusivity:

> I recognize that Miss Ozick is reading something deep and special here. Can she be referring metaphorically, to the inherent loftiness of Jews, to the spirituality that can set them apart, especially when they speak of themselves among themselves? (67)

Ozick scrutinizes the main springs of belief. Commenting on Ozick's characters, Victor Strandberg points out:

> Behind the fresh slate of her characters, facing the new dramatic situations in widely different settings, the essential issues remain the familiar concerns with Jewish identity (306).

The story highlights the hollowness of Lucy's conversion to Hebraism. The husband is bitterly obsessed by the atrocities committed against the Jews throughout history. He joins with some fellow Jews in living room and participates in a trance-like discussion of the Holocaust. From the sidelines, the wife, a convert to Judaism, observes the living room rising into the air, carrying the 'real' Jews away from her. She remains a passive observer because she does not share "the glory of their martyrdom." She tries unsuccessfully

to rise with the levitating Jews by means of Christian visions and pagan myths.

The nature of Jewish identity in its specific parameter of involvement with Jewish history and commitment to the covenant, which according to them God had "broken," constitutes the core of action. Jewish heritage is thus presented of something that cannot be acquired nor disowned by sentimental nostalgia. Judaism has taken roots in Lucy, because in the dance and old Hellenic song, she is aware of her personnal connection exalting her selfhood as a woman. She is also at the same time aware of how inseparable the Jew is from his past and from other Jews.

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND KABIR: A STUDY IN INFLUENCE AND COMPARISON

Kuhu Chanana

Rabindranath Tagore and Kabir are undoubtedly two celebrated Indian poets who wrote great poetry, saturated with remarkable universality, in different languages--Kabir in Hindi and Tagore in Bengali and English. Though the two poets belonged to two very different ages--Kabir to the medieval period of India and Tagore to the modern age--there is an innate affinity between the two, and this must have been the reason of Tagore's irresistible and incessant fascination for his illustrious predecessor whom he refers to in his expository writings time and again, and whose one hundred poems he has rendered into English. True, there exists a close kinship between the two poets whose works are of perennial charm, significance and relavance by virtue of their focus on devotion, mysticism, love, life and death, social and religious reforms, etc. Hence the need and justification for undertaking a comparative study of their poetry from these points of view.

Rabindranath Tagore came in contact with Kabir's poetry at the early age of eleven when he happened to go to the Golden Temple of Amritsar along with his father. There he heard the recitation of some of the songs of Kabir, whose one hundred couplets are contained in *Gurugranth Sahib*--the most significant religious book of the Sikhs--and was thrilled by them so much so that the Hindi saint-poet became an integral part of his being for ever. In fact, before him, nobody seriously thought of Kabir, and it was he who at the beginning of the present century made Acharya Kshitmohan Sen of Visva-Bharati prepare an authentic collection of Kabir's major poetical works, and it was only after this that the two outstanding Hindi scholars, Dr. Shyam Sunder Das and Dr. Ram Kumar Verma separately brought out Kabir's poetical writings. Not only this, it was he who asked the distinguished critic and creative writer, Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, to undertake a full-length study of Kabir in order to evaluate him correctly and dispassionately so as to give a deadly blow to the erroneous judgment of Hindi critics of Kabir, particularly that of Acharya Ram Chandra Shukla who had

estimated Kabir very faultily and casually by calling him *fakkar*, a careless and carefree man, who had composed poetry, studded with metaphors and allegorical utterances, having nothing new but only word-jugglery meant to attract uneducated people.[1] Thus, Tagore endeavoured all his life to bring to light the greatness of Kabir and his relevance to all ages and climes.

Kabir, a saint-poet of the fifteenth century, is out and out a devotional poet and so is Tagore; the two are inalienable from the age-old Indian *bhakti* (devotion) cult. However, the two greatly differ from each other even in this respect. While the former is completely given to devotion to the Eternal, the latter is a staunch devotee of God but is at the same time a great aesthete--a great lover of varied arts as well as the variegated joys of life. Again, whereas the former wholly believes in *nirguna bhakti* (devotion to the Eternal as Abstract and Non-Human), the latter is not that rigid in this regard. But what is common in the two is that both are truly and essentially devotional poets. Tagore's *magnum opus, Gitanjali,* is an offering of devotional songs to the Everlasting from the beginning to the end.

Kabir and Tagore are immersed in mysticism, but the latter cannot be said to be the imitator of the former, despite the fact that the former seized his imagination as a mystical poet. Kabir is universally acknowledged as a mystic par-excellence, as one who could realise in his own being the oneness of soul and God forming one Absolute Reality. He was familiar with the basic mystical approaches of the various sects known in his age, but as a mystic he was mainly influenced by *Sahijiya Sidhas* and *Nath Yogis*, though he maintained his individuality by believing in formless God, and thus by not accepting the *Nath Yogis' Shiva* as his God. Sri Sankaracharya's *Vedanta*, particularly his belief in monism based on the doctrine of the *Upanishads,* also contributed much to the mystical vision of Kabir. Sankara's doctrine of *Advait* also encompasses *Mayavad,* i.e. the world as an illusion, *Maya*. This deeply impressed Kabir, and so he again and again called *Maya,* illusion or ignorance as an inveterate cheat (*thagini*). Kabir pins his full faith in the Indian belief that the realisation of the Absolute Non-Duality in life can be achieved only through love that brings the individual close to the Absolute. No wonder he asserts that even

after reading books and acquiring immense knowledge through them, one dies and does not become learned (*Pandit*).

Tagore followed and strengthened the Indian mystical thinking, and was also influenced by Kabir to some extent. However, we can trace the roots of his mysticism in his intuitive awareness of the kinship between his inner being, the Eternal and the world around him during his stay with his brother in Calcutta. He records it, in detail, in *The Religion of Man.*[2] In fact, ever since his boyhood days, he would perceive the Eternal in every object, static or dynamic, and thus was always deeply concerned with the life within, the inner music that ceaselessly permeates the entire cosmos.

Like Kabir, Tagore believes that it is only by practising the ideal of love in life that man can realise the eternal or divine love which alone can easily lead him to salvation. It is only love which enables man to attain the state of utter forgetfulness of his restricted self and the inner unity uniting the whole universe. The great mystics like Kabir and Tagore believe that the true religion of man is the religion of love. Tagore puts this devotional and mystical conviction in these lines of *Gitanjali*:

> Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart. This golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead.[3]

True, following the Vaishnavism, both Kabir and Tagore are preoccupied with love; they staunchly believe that the eternal bliss can be achieved through love and unification with God. Both lead us from day-to-day life to love and from love to the Infinite; they show love as the inevitable link between man and God.

Kabir and Tagore are much eulogized for their socio-religious-reformative zeal, for they do not profess any formalism and lay emphasis on the purity of heart. Kabir condemns a person who "dyes his garments, instead of dyeing his mind in the colour of love."[4] He vociferously proclaims that the *Puranas* and the *Koran* are basically concerned with rituals and have little practical and felt experiences. Both the poets firmly believe that God resides neither in a temple nor in a mosque nor can He be attained through religious practices and books, but he certainly dwells in every living creature. Apropos of this, Kabir writes:

> O Servant where dost thou seek Me ?

Lo ! I am beside thee.
I am neither in temple nor in mosque.
I am neither in Kaba nor in Kailash
Kabir says "O Sadhu! God is the
breath of all breath.[5]

In the same vein, Tagore affirms that God can not be realised by offering prayers and worship. Therefore, he exhorts man:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of temple with door all shut ? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee.[6]

Kabir was an indefatigable, enlightened champion of the unity of mankind, hitting very hard at the varied barriers of caste, creed and race dividing man from man, and thus spreading the poison of ill-will and hatred in society. True, he had no predecessor so far as the sincere effort to bring the Hindus and Muslims near each other was concerned. He could clearly see that the basic cause of the hatred between the two communities lay in the religious differences of their modes of worship. An iconoclast and an inveterate hater of fanaticism and rituals, he relentlessly assailed both the communities with a view to eliminating all that was bogus and sham in their religions. The following lines of Kabir, rendered into English by Tagore, bear witness to it:

I do not know what manner of God is mine.
The Mullah cries aloud to Him: and why ?
Is your Lord deaf? The subtle anklets that ring on the feet of an insect when it moves are heard by Him.
Tell your beads, paint your forehead with the mark of your God, and wear matted locks long and showy: but a deadly weapon is in your heart, and how shall you have God ?[7]

In fact, Kabir is one of the greatest champions of the unity of religions--particularly Islam and Hindu--by seeing unmistakably the essential similarity existing in all religions, and thus sought to bring about communal harmony in Indian society. He was not only against the religious falsity and fundamentalism, but was also against several social evils prevalent in the Indian social life of his times. He particularly considered caste feelings among the Hindus as a very pernicious evil destroying the very vitals of the Indian society. In this context, we cite below Tagore's translation of Kabir's famous song which reproaches and rejects derisively the division of society on the basis of caste and creed:

It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs;
For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking for God.
It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be;
The barber has sought God, the washerwoman, and the carpenter—
Even Raidas was a seeker after God.
The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.
Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that
End, where remains no mark of distinction.[8]

Like Kabir, Tagore was deeply concerned about the elimination of social and religious evils from the Indian society. Ever since his early boyhood, he was immensely pained to see the country torn asunder on account of the Hindu-Muslim split, caste-conflicts among the Hindus and the religious intolerance in regard to the mode of worship, idol-worship, etc. As a matter of fact, his main objects in life and literature, in the words of Ernest Rhys, were "the unions of Nations, the destroying of caste, religious pride, race-hatred and race-prejudice--in a word, the 'Making of Man.' "[9] Tagore felt convinced that he would be able to achieve his ideals by following and spreading the message of Kabir embodied in his writings, for the latter was the very incarnation of universal values and unprejudiced view of life, championing vigorously the essential unity in mankind and discarding all social, religious and racial differences. Certainly, the religious and social evils, which were sure to destroy the very foundation of Indian life in the fifteenth century of Kabir, were equally dangerous in the age of Tagore, and are also predominant in the present times.

The poem of Kabir, translated beautifully by Tagore and cited below, makes a very suggestive and meaningful use of the words 'sword,' 'fight,' 'battlefield,' etc. which have unfailingly caught the attention of Rabindranath:

Lay hold on you sword, and join in the fight.
Fight, O my brother, as long as life lasts.

.....

He who is brave, never forsakes the battle: he who flies from it is no true fighter.
In the field of this body a great war goes forward, against passion, anger, pride, and greed:
It is in the kingdom of truth, contentment and purity, that this battle is raging; and the sword that rings forth most loudly is the sword of His Name.[10]

To Tagore and Kabir, the sword is a Divine present and is given

to man to fight all vices, such as pride and greed. Thus, the sword is used symbolically by both Tagore and Kabir.

Again, in the following song, Tagore has taken from Kabir the imagery of the musk deer:

> Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and I started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind.
>
> That vague sweetness made my heart ache with longing and it seemed to me that it was the eager breath of the summer seeking for its completion.
>
> I knew not then that it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart.[11]

Employing the image of musk and deer, Kabir has said: "The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself: it wanders in quest of grass."[12] According to both Kabir and Tagore, God is inside man and man, like the musk deer, searches Him there where He can not be found. The influence of Kabir can, thus, be seen repeatedly on the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.

The foregoing discussion clearly brings out the fact that there is a close resemblance between Tagore and the great Hindi poet Kabir. Kabir's vision and thought must have certainly inspired Tagore the poet to a very great extent, but this does not mean that the latter has imitated his illustrious predecessor. A perusal of the poetry of both the poets evinces the truth that despite many similarities between the two, there are also numerous dissimilarities between them, for they are really great geniuses and are original and unique in their own ways.

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[2]Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1958), p.58.

[3]Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (Madras: Macmillan Pocket Tagore Edition, 1987), p.38.

[4]Rabindranath Tagore (Trans.), *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* (Madras: Macmillan Pocket Tagore Edition, 1988), p.75.

[5]Ibid., p.12.

[6]Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, p.7.

[7]*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, pp.63-4.

[8]Ibid., pp.21-2.

[9]Ernest Rhys, *Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p.18.

[10]*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, p.47.

[11]*Gitanjali*, p.12.

[12]*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, p.24.

RAJA RAO'S *KANTHAPURA:* A PLEA FOR THE NEHRUVIAN SOCIALISM

Brahma Dutta Sharma

That Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a plea for the Nehruvian socialism as opposed to Gandhiism comes to light when one turns one's attention to the fact that here Gandhiism and the Nehruvian socialism have been presented as two alternatives available to the Indians fighting for their country's independence; it has been evinced as to what form Gandhiism takes in action and what attitudes people have towards this political philosophy on the one hand and towards the Nehruvian socialism on the other, and there comes a stage when the protagonist and his followers resolve to embrace the political philosophy of the Nehruvian socialism.

Moorthy, the protagonist in this novel, and his comrades are genuinely Gandhian *satyagrahis* in the earlier part of the novel and even though some of them give Gandhiism only qualified support, they do support it. For instance, Moorthy is behaving like a Gandhian when he hopes he can change the hearts of even monsters and says " 'Monsters, monsters, yes they may be, but we are out to convert them, the Mahatma says we should convert them, and we shall convert them. Our will and our love will convert them,' "[1] and, like Gandhi, resolves to depend on none at all for help, as he argues " '... if Truth needs a defence, God Himself would need one, for, as the Mahatma says, Truth is God, and I want no soul to come between me and Truth' " (*Kanthapura,* p.124).

But there comes a time when Moorthy and his fellow *satyagrahis* realize that they committed a mistake in resolving to become the followers of Gandhi. For instance, Moorthy's followers refuse to join the Gandhian fight after Moorthy's arrest, as is evidenced by the following report of the narrator " 'Since the arrest of Moorthy they are afriad.' They say, 'We are not all going to sit behind the cage-bars like kraaled elephants,' and when I say, 'What does that matter, we are for the Mahatma,' they say, 'Yes yes, learned sir, but our lands will go uncultivated, and there will be neither child nor woman to pull the weeds or direct the canal water' " (*Kanthapura*, p.154). Nay, even the narrator herself says " 'Mad we were, daughters,

mad to follow Moorthy' " (*Kanthapura*, p.230).

On reading the novel one infers that as a man Jawaharlal Nehru was as noble as Mahatma Gandhi and that his views about the reshaping of India after her attaining independence were more attractive than those of Mahatma Gandhi. The first of these two facts comes to light when we read the passage in which Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have been compared by the narrator no doubt she likens Gandhi to Rama, she likens Jawaharlal Nehru to Bharata (*Kanthapura*, p.258), Rama's younger brother, whose ideals were as high as those of Rama and whom Rama regarded as an ethically infallible person and believed that the Vedas might err but Bharata would not. What has been suggested here is that even though Mahatma Gandhi was an upholder of values--a *maryada purushottama*--Jawaharlal Nehru upheld the values to an equal degree. It is a historical fact that on the issue as to what means and methods were to be adopted to achieve the goal of independence Jawaharlal Nehru did not much differ from Mahatma Gandhi as he wanted to adopt only legitimate and peaceful means to achieve that goal as he said in his Presidential speech at Lahore in 1929. And this too is a historical fact that Jawaharlal Nehru had as much regard for Mahatma Gandhi as a statesman too as Bharata had for Rama, as he writes "I saw a great deal of Gandhiji. Very often his proposals seemed novel.... But almost always he argued his way to their acceptance, but subsequent events showed the wisdom of his advice. Faith in his political insight grew in me...."[2]

One of the grounds on which the novelist can be believed to be regarding Gandhiism not to be the best choice available is that it has been evinced in *Kanthapura* to be a philosophy that makes one absolutely helpless and defenceless and exposes one to every kind of wrong that the wrong-doer heaps on one as it expects a *satyagrahi* to be absolutely non-violent in his thoughts, words and deeds and reposes unrealistic trust on the goodness of the opponent. How defenceless a Gandhian 'fighter' is comes to light when we read the following account in *Kanthapura* of a 'fight' between the Gandhian fighters on the one side and the British police on the other "...old Ramanna and Dore came forward and said, 'We too are

Gandhi's men, beat us as much as you like,' and the policemen beat them till they were flat on the floor, mud in their mouths and mist in their eyes, and as the dawn was rising over the Kenchamma Hill, faces could be seen and men became silent.... And the policemen twisted their arms and beat them on their knuckles, and spat into their mouths,..." (*Kanthapura,* p.122). There figure several other accounts of humiliating experiences of the Gandhian 'fighters' in the novel. The experience of women fighters is much worse "Gandhi's women followers undergo the humiliating experience of being beaten, being spat on, being trampled on, getting gutter water forced into their mouths, and being raped. Mark the following extract

> And then there is a loud cry, 'Ayoo-Ayoo', and it's Puttamma's, and we rush towards her creeping and crawling beneath the lantana bushes, and then, when we are on the path again, we see a policeman upon her, and we feel our limb earth-like and we want to pull him up, and Puttama is all black in her cheek and her mouth gagged,... (*Kanthapura,* p.213).

These accounts lead one to ask whether it is wise on a political leader's part to make his followers undergo such humiliating experiences. It is unmanly not only to subject but [even] to see womenfolk being subjected to such abject humiliation and atrocities. This kind of 'fighting' may be a proof of the Gandhians' bravery but one is not wrong in doubting the wisdom behind one's exposing oneself to such humiliating experiences. Jawaharlal Nehru's stand on this issue was a little different as he did not regard non-violence as his creed and liked to call it merely a policy, as he asserted "The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds, and if we reject the way of violence it is because it promises no substantial results. But if the Congress or the nation at any future time comes to the conclusion that methods of violence will rid us of slavery then I have no doubt it will adopt them."[3]

Another weakness of Gandhiism mentioned here is that Gandhi was defenceless when his adversaries tried to cheat him and that he had not equipped himself with the intellectual arms to defend himself from cheats as he had too much faith in the goodness of man. It is Moorthy himself who realizes this as he reports in his

letter "Since I am out of prison, I met this Satyagrahi and that and we discussed many a problem, and they all say the Mahatma is a noble person, a saint, but the English will know how to cheat him and he will let himself be cheated' " (*Kanthapura,* p.257). Jawaharlal Nehru was conscious of the facts that the ways of the British were devious and that while dealing with them there was the need for one to be on one's guard as the following extract from his Presidential address at the session of the Congress Party at Lahore testifies to "We have sufficient experience of the devious ways of... British diplomacy to beware of it. The offer that the British Government made was vague and there was no commitment or promise of performance. Only by the greatest stretch of imagination could it be interpreted as a possible response to the Calcutta resolution."[4]

The fact that the Nehruvian socialism has been shown in the novel as an alternative better than Gandhiism comes to light when we read the following sentences from Moorthy's letter to Ratna " 'Ratna, things must change. The youths here say they will change it. Jawaharlal will change it.... he says in Swaraj there shall be neither the rich nor the poor. And he calls himself an 'eq al-distributionist,' and I am with him and his men' " (*Kanthapura,* pp.256-58). And it is a historical fact that Jawaharlal Nehru was a champion of economic equality in the 'twenties and the 'thirties at least and often spoke and wrote in support of this idea. For instance, in his Presidential address in the session of the All India Congress Party he said on December 29, 1929:

> Having attained some measure of religious liberty, Europe sought after political liberty and political and legal equality. Having attained these also she finds that they mean very little without economic liberty and equality. And so to-day politics have ceased to have much meaning and the most vital question is that of social and economic equality.
>
> India also will have to find a solution to this problem and until she does so her political and social structure cannot have stability.[5]

Moorthy's accepting the political philosophy of 'equal distributionism' and his hope that "Jawaharlal will change [things]" [see *supra]* signify that at this stage this political fighter has shifted his faith from Gandhiism to the Nehruvian socialism as for Nehru socialism meant its democratic form rather than a dictatorial one. Here Nehru has been described as an acceptable leader also on

the ground that he is not helpless before the circumstances but is able to make people realize that he "will change [them]" [see *supra].*

Raja Rao's Gandhi is not able to leave that impression as Moorthy believes that the British will cheat Gandhi and even Gandhi will let himself be cheated [see *supra].* There also comes a stage when Moorthy begins to find fault with Gandhi and questions his premise about the situation prevailing in the country. For instance, when he writes to Ratna " 'Have faith in your enemy, he says, have faith in him and correct him. But the world of men is hard to move, and once in motion it is wrong to stop till the goal is reached' " (*Kanthapura,* p.257). He rejects Gandhi's premise that one can convert one's enemy by having faith in him as he says here that " '... the world of men is hard to move' " and he also rejects Gandhi's view that a leader has a right to suspend a movement before it has reached its goal on the ground that his followers had not remained non-violent and disciplined or the like, as Gandhi had done in February, 1922. In the second of these two cases Moorthy agrees with the historical Jawaharlal Nehru, as about Gandhi's suspending the Civil Disobedience movement in February, 1922 Jawaharlal Nehru writes "We were angry when we learned of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts."[6]

It is a *satori* which Moorthy gains when he realizes that political independence or Swaraj is not enough and that what the masses need is economic independence, as he writes to Ratna " 'And yet, what is the goal? Swaraj? Is there not Swaraj in our States, and is there not misery and corruption and cruelty there? Oh no, Ratna, it is the way of the masters that is wrong' " (*Kanthapura,* p.257). That implies that he wants nobody to be made a master. Or, in other words, he becomes a champion of a society in which there exist only workers as a result of which class-struggle has come to its end. This stance of Moorthy is the same as had been adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru in the late 'twenties as he said in his Presidential address at the Trade Union Congress at Nagpur on November 30, 1929: "We are often accused of preaching the class war and of widening the distance between the classes. The distance is wide

enough, thanks to capitalism, and nothing can beat the record of capitalism in that respect.... The class war has existed and exists to-day. By our trying ostrich-like to ignore it, we do not get rid of it."[7]

Raja Rao's making Moorthy write to Ratna " 'I have come to realize bit by bit, and bit by bit, when I was in prison, that so long as there will be iron gates and barbed wires round the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and city cars that can roll up the Bebbur Mound, and gas-lights and coolie cars, there will always be pariahs and poverty' " (*Kanthapura,* p.257) signifies his indicating that for Moorthy the chief cause behind people's poverty and some people's regarding the others as pariahs or outcastes is the unequal distribution of wealth[8] and that what is needed in order to remove poverty and the distinction of the high caste and the low caste is that wealth is distributed equally. The Skeffington Coffee Estate is a symbol of its private ownership and the removing of the barbed wires is the symbol of abolishing private ownership. That is why his suggesting that "the iron gates and barbed wires round the Skeffington Coffee Estate" should cease to exist signifies his proposing that the means of production be owned by the whole society or the state, its representative, rather by an individual. And this is what Jawaharlal Nehru stood for. On this issue Jawaharlal Nehru disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi and rejected his theory of trusteeship according to which the rich are allowed to retain their riches with them with the understanding that they are its trustees rather than owners, as in his Presidential address he said "The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee and he may exercise it as he wills. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of an individual or a group. Many Englishmen honestly consider themselves the trustees for India, and yet to what a condition they have reduced our country."[9]

Skeffington, as portrayed in the novel, exploits the coolies not only economically but also physically as he 'buys' their wives and daughters (*Kanthapura,* p.80). This owner of a large estate even

kills a coolie when the latter refuses to 'sell' his daughter to him (*Kanthapura*, pp.80-81). The way he exploits the coolies working on the estate has made the condition of the coolies pitiable and the reader begins to feel that Skeffington deserves to be deprived of the estate he owns. And these are the sentiments which lie embodied in the following words of the historical Jawaharlal Nehru:

> It is the peasantry that cry loudly, piteously for relief and our programme must deal with their present condition. Real relief can only come by a great change in the land laws and the bases of the present system of land tenure. We have among us many big landowners and we welcome them. But they must realise that the ownership of large estates by individuals, which is the outcome of a state resembling the old feudalism of Europe, is a rapidly disappearing phenomenon all over the world. Even in countries which are the strongholds of capitalism the large estates are being split up and given to the peasantry who work on them.[10]

And while reading *Kanthapura* one feels that Raja Rao has given these views of Jawaharlal Nehru the form of a novel with "a local habitation and a name," to use Shakespeare's words from his drama *A Mid-summer Night's Dream.*

One may argue that the protagonist's liking Jawaharlal Nehru for his equal distributionism may be regarded as the novelist's exposing a weakness in the protagonist's thinking rather than his advocating Nehruism. But for Jawaharlal Nehru, equal-distributionism was a means to remove the poverty of the peasants and the toiling masses and he wanted to see that peasants were able to have "a high standard of well-being," as he observed in his Presidential address in the Punjab Provincial Conference on April 11, 1928: "We must remember that poverty and want are no longer economic necessities; although under the present anarchic capitalist system they may be inevitable. The world and our country produce enough or can produce enough for the masses to attain a high standard of well-being, but unhappily the good things are [had] by a few and millions live in utter want. In India the classic land of famine, famines are not caused by want of food, but by the want of money to buy food. We have famines of money, not food."[11] In the light of this, one has to infer that the intellectuals and the skilled workers have a right to be paid more than the unskilled workers, but the toiling peasants too must have some standard of well-being. It was this

well-being that Jawaharlal Nehru wanted Indian peasants to have when he pleaded for equal-distributionism. People do not agree with Jawaharlal Nehru on the issue of equal-distributionism, but they cannot disagree with him on the goal he wanted to realize through his policy. That signifies the novelist's indicating his favour for Jawaharlal Nehru's views in the novel.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (Madras Oxford University Press, 1989, p.229. All the subsequent quotations from this novel refer to this edition.

[2]Jawaharlal Nehru, *Nehru: The First Sixty Years*, Vol.I, ed. Dorothy Norman (Bombay Asia Publishing House, 1965), p.62.

[3]Ibid., p.207.

[4]Ibid., p.200.

[5]Ibid., p.198.

[6]Ibid., p.82.

[7]Ibid., p.179.

[8]That Jawaharlal Nehru liked socialism comes to light when we turn to his Presidential address at the Lahore Congress, especially the following passage:

> I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than those of old feudal autocracy.... we must realise that the philosophy of socialism has gradually permeated the entire structure of society the world over and almost... the only point in dispute is the pace and the methods of advance to its full realisation. India will have to go that way too if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality though she may evolve her own methods and may adopt the ideal to the genius of her race (*Nehru: The First Sixty Years, op.cit.*, pp.203-04).

[9]Ibid., p.205.

[10]Ibid., p.206.

[11]Ibid., p.157.

FUSION OF MYTHIC AND COMIC MODES IN R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI*

Ramesh K. Srivastava

India has its own culture, its own philosophy and its own myths. Even though a major part of Indian English literature cannot be said to reflect faithfully either Indian culture and traditions, or its myths and philosophy, our ancient classics have certainly immortalized them. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the richest repositories of India's culture. When it comes to Indian writers in English, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai, B. Rajan and many other writers have made an excellent use of Indian myths in all their variety and richness which are so relevant to the modern times. No wonder R.K. Narayan makes use of a number of Indian myths in his novel *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961). The myths in these literary works do not remain mere decorative devices but enrich them in several ways. For myths embody the culture of a country, its soul as it were; by connecting the bygone times with the present, the myths lend universality and timelessness to a work of art.

This is what R.K. Narayan must have had in view when he had remarked at Columbia University in 1972: "At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago I suddenly came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*.... I based this story on a well-known mythological episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura."[2] When Narayan makes use of Indian myths in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, he intermingles the mythical and the contemporary by creating such characters and situations which resemble those in the myths but stripped of their supernatural and improbable traits. The greatness of Narayan lies in fusing the Bhasmasura myth with the theme, plot, structure and characterization

in the novel and then soaking them in his sparkling humour.

Meenakshi Mukherjee points out two ways in which myths have been used in Indian English novels--as structural parallels and as part of a digressional technique.[3] In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi,* Narayan employs the Bhasmasura myth as a structural parallel whereas other myths like Rama-Ravana, Mahisasura, Gajendra Moksha and Daksha have been used in a digressional way. Narayan writes about the Bhasmasura myth which provides a story pattern in the novel:

> Then there was Bhasmasura, who acquired a special boon that everything he touched should be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him. He made humanity suffer. God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty, named Mohini, with whom the asura became infatuated. She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance, Mohini placed her palms on her head, and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes that very second, the blightening touch becoming active on his own head. Every man can think that he is great and will live for ever, but no one can guess from which quarter his doom will come.

In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi,* Vasu has been modelled on the demon Bhasmasura. Vasu is a taxidermist who occupies an attic in the printing press of Nataraj which the latter had got vacated by selling the wastepapers lying in it for ages. Once Vasu occupies the attic, he, like Bhasmasura, begins to create insurmountable problems for Nataraj. Being a taxidermist, he kills birds and animals, stuffs them, and lines them in the attic as well as on the staircase. Consequently, there is intolerably foul smell which bothers the inhabitants of the locality. Like Lord Shiva after he had given the boon of indestructibility to Bhasmasura, Nataraj runs here and there soliciting help against the very person whom he had given his attic free of charge. When Vasu theatens to shoot the temple elephant, Kumar, it is Rangi, the temple dancer, like Mohini of the myth, who becomes instrumental in the taxidermist's death. As Bhasmasura was reduced to ashes by the touch of his own hand over his head, Vasu strikes his powerful fist on his forehead to trap some mosquitoes and in the process kills himself.

While the bare outline of the plot of the novel is parallel to the Bhasmasura myth, Narayan imbues it with such details and lends

such colouring that they make the myth relevant to the modern Indian scenario where the opportunistic Bhasmasuras galore while the weakening altruists like Nataraj squirm in their helplessness. This is quite clear in the contrasting characters of Vasu and Nataraj. Like his mythical counterpart Bhasmasura, Vasu is a modern *rakshasa*, a personified evil, whose activities are all destructive. Like other demons in Indian myths who, after acquiring a boon from Shiva or some other gods, usually made the humanity suffer by their wanton acts of cruelties and destruction, Vasu secures an attic in Nataraj's printing press and makes it a centre of his destructive activities. The tranquillity of the printing press brings to mind the peace and quiet of Shiva's abode on the Mount Kailash. It is this transquillity that Vasu disturbs.

In Nataraj's printing press, Sastri is a cool-headed, knowledegable person who is quite conversant with various mythological figures as well as human beings. For him, Vasu has "all the definitions of a *rakshasa.*" He enumerates the traits which make a *rakshasa*--"a demoniac creature who possessed enormous strength, strange powers, and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or God." Sastri goes on to say, "Every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him" (p.75). Vasu in the novel has enormous strength and had displayed it in public by splintering a three-inch panel of seasoned teak with his fist, by snapping chains, twisting iron bars and pulverizing granite with his hands. In a radio interview, Narayan said, "The man-eater is a man, not a tiger, an ego-centred man for whom the objective world is non-existent--a modern *rakshasa* who wants to kill the elephant that belongs to the local temple."[5] Natraj envisions Vasu as a *rakshasa* who with his enormous strength could "put me up between his thumb and first finger and put me down where he pleased" (p.40). In order to show off his power to the Police Inspector, Vasu breaks his own steel bedstead with his powerful fist, orders the Police Inspector to get out of the attic, snatches the whistle from his mouth and throws it away, and in the subsequent scuffle dislocates his wrist. The incident proves, what Rangi tells

Nataraj later, that Vasu is "afraid of nothing on earth or in heaven or hell" (p.156).

Being a modern *rakshasa,* Vasu cannot have the supernatural powers of moving anywhere anytime, nor has he the power to destroy things at will. But he has a jeep and a gun which give him power to go anywhere at any time and to kill any creature, big or small, if he happens to take a fancy for it. As both divine and human beings were troubled by Bhasmasura, Vasu bullies human beings and kills animals. Vasu had no qualms in killing any creature. After he had killed an eagle, Nataraj reminds him that it was a sacred *garuda*--the vehicle and messenger of God Vishnu. His purpose was to scare Vasu in the name of God Vishnu, but like a true *rakshasa,* Vasu exhibits his arrogance and defiance as if showing that no restraints of man or god exist for him. By depriving God Vishnu of his vehicle--the *garuda*--he mockingly says, "I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet now and then" (p.53). The killing of sacred *garuda* makes Vasu so bold that he decides to kill even the temple elephant named Kumar, which horrifies all the people of the town and neighbouring villages.

No conscience pricks Vasu as no conscience touched the mythological demons. On the contrary, he boasts of indulging in those activities which to the common people would fall in the category of crimes and acts of ingratitude. Being ungrateful, Bhasmasura wanted to harm the boon-giver Shiva, and Vasu harms his benefactor, Natraj, in every possible way and ultimately makes him an outcaste in the society. Vasu also threatens Muthu, the tea-shop owner at Memphi forest, who had helped Vasu in his hour of need.

Like a typical *rakshasa,* Vasu is ferocious and ugly. He is six feet tall and has "a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thin eyebrows, a large forehead" and his unkempt hair form "a black halo" around him (p.15). Nataraj appropriately calls him the "Prince of Darkness" because of his nocturnal activities. This is also the term that Milton uses for Satan in *The Paradise Lost.* For his diet, he takes everyday 100 almonds, one seer of milk, six eggs with honey, rice and chicken. His habits and profession are unclean,

akin to the activities of the *rakshasas*--killing birds and animals and then stuffing them.

In the myth, Bhasmasura had begun to consider himself immortal after Shiva's boon. Sastri refers to this trait when he says, "Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?" (pp.182-83). Bhasmasura was indestructible, having drawn his power from Shiva's boon to scorch everything he touched but this very boon became instrumental in his death when he reduced himself to ashes by placing a hand over his own head. Vasu's powerful fist with which he could solve all his problems finally kills himself as he hits it over his own forehead in order to trap some mosquitoes which had settled there.

Lord Shiva's act of granting the boon of immortality to Bhasmasura finds a parallel in Nataraj's act of giving his attic to Vasu. Incidentally Nataraj also happens to be another name of Shiva. Like mythic Shiva who is well-known for never having disappointed any of his worshippers, Nataraj never says 'no' to anybody. As Shiva got into trouble after granting the boon and had to run around, Nataraj, too, much against his wish, gets into complications for others' sake. The difference between the two here is that whereas Shiva is known to be both Creator and Destroyer, Nataraj is quite weak and harmless.

Bhasmasura was ultimately destroyed by Vishnu who had assumed the form of a beautiful damsel Mohini. When Bhasmasura became infatuated with her, she asked him to imitate her dancing postures and tricked him to keep one of his hands on his forehead, which as per Shiva's boon reduced him to ashes. The precise mythic parallel in the novel would have been if the dancer Rangi had instigated Vasu in killing himself. In the myth, Mohini is a divine damsel with perfect feminine beauty whereas Rangi in the novel is a perfect female animal. Like Mohini, she is an agent, somewhat remotely, of Vasu's death because it is Rangi who informs Natraj

about Vasu's plan of killing the temple elephant and it is Rangi again who has the responsibility of using a handfan to keep off the mosquitoes from Vasu but happens to fall asleep. When the mosquitoes trouble him, Vasu tries to trap them by striking his forehead with his powerful fist and in the process kills himself.

Whereas Bhasmasura, Shiva and Vishnu as Mohini have mythic parallels in Vasu, Nataraj and Rangi, there are other myths of Ravana, Mahisasura, Daksha and Gajendra Moksha which have been used for elucidating a situation or an aspect of a character. When Vasu had decided to shoot the temple elephant and Nataraj was nervous, wondering how could the elephant be saved, the latter remembers the myth of elephant Gajendra "who stepped into a lake and had his leg caught in the jaws of a mighty crocodile; and the elephant trumpeted helplessly, struggled, and in the end desperately called on Vishnu, who immediately appeared and gave him the strength to come ashore out of the jaws of the crocodile" (p.139). Nataraj believes that Kumar, the elephant, like the mythic elephant Gajendra, would have the requisite strength when the opportune time comes and since God Krishna had saved Gajendra, He would save Kumar too. The problem of saving the temple elephant Kumar becomes such a concern, nay an obsession, with Nataraj that unknowingly he lets out a cry, "Oh, Vishnu! Save our elephant, and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now" (p.139). The elephant Gajendra could articulate its helplessness before God Vishnu and request Him to save him; but in the novel, Narayan modifies the myth and allows Nataraj to make a fervent plea on Kumar's behalf.

The myth of Ravana has been used for characterization of Vasu. In the novel, Sastri says, "There was Ravana, the protagonist in *Ramayana,* who had ten heads and twenty arms, and enormous yogic and physical powers, and a boon from the gods that he could never be vanquished. The earth shook under his tyranny still he came to a sad end" (p.76). The myth of Ravana emphasizes some of the traits of Vasu's character which cannot be adequately portrayed by Bhasmasura. Like Bhasmasura, Ravana too had tried to dislodge the Kailash mountain from its foundations, knowing well that it is

the abode of the boon-giver Shiva. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi,* Vasu dislodges Nataraj from the printing press and leaves him in Memphi village. He also attempts to dislodge Nataraj from the respectable position he had in the society. Besides, Ravana's ten heads symbolize his intelligence and his learning which are well-reflected in Vasu's character. Ravana's "enormous yogic and physical powers" can find a parallel in Vasu's physical and intellectual powers. As far as his intellectual powers are concerned, Vasu is triple M.A.--in History, Economics and Literature. He is skilled in scientific pursuits, knows the art of taxidermy and is good in hunting animals. Boasting of his powers, he claims that his aim is to prove human superiority to nature, and tells Nataraj: "Science conquers nature in a new way everyday; why not in Creation also? That's my philosophy" (p.17).

Narayan refers to another myth of Mahisa, the *asura* "who meditated and acquired a boon of immortality and invincibility, and who had secured an especial favour that every drop of blood shed from his body should give rise to another demon in his own image and strength, and who nevertheless was destroyed. The Goddess with six arms, each bearing a different weapon, came riding for the fight on a lion which sucked every drop of blood drawn from the demon" (p.76). The point in these myths is that no matter what kind of powers the demon has and how its invincibility is ensured by the boon, a way is always found for its destruction. Vasu's powerful fist which had given him an illusion of invincibility and which used to solve all his problems becomes an instrument of his own death, and thereby solves the problem of all human beings as well.

In the novel, Narayan refers to the myth of Daksha "for whom an end was prophesied through a bite of a snake, and he had built himself an island fortress to evade his fate" (p.76), but in the end he too was killed. Here R.K. Narayan probably seems to have confused Daksha for Parikshit--the son of Adhimanyu, grandson of Arjuna and father of Janamejaya. Parikshit had died from the bite of a serpent even though he had built an impregnable fortress to escape his fate. Here the point being made is that no matter how powerful Vasu is, his end is inevitable.

All the above myths have one moral: in its fight against the good, even the most powerful evil is bound to be destroyed. Vasu had destroyed order and peace of the printing press which can symbolically be extended to the society, the world and the entire cosmos. After Vasu's death, the sanctity of the blue curtain in the printing press is restored. Sastri returns to Nataraj, the printing work is resumed, and complete normalcy is restored in the printing press. This is a part of Narayan's philosophy, well-reflected in his other novels as well: order, disorder and restoration of order. Meenakshi Mukherjee looks at *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* from a somewhat different angle when she writes: "The conflict is not between Vasu and Nataraj alone, but between Vasu and Society in general, and Vasu's seeming superiority over so vast a force merely underlines the fact that evil is often far more dynamic than the forces of goodness. Nataraj's fascination for Vasu and his attempts to re-establish friendly relations with the taxidermist indicate that evil is not merely stronger but also more attractive than goodness."[8]

Since R.K. Narayan is gifted with a sense of humour, he fuses in the novel the mythic and the comic modes together which occasionally give the impression of his adoption of a mock-heroic mode. The use of humour, satire and irony may bring the novel a step closer to the mock-epic but it would be belittling his novel *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* by calling it a mock-heroic work. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, the theme is the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil in which the good comes out victorious and the evil is destroyed. Hence the fusion of comic mode with the mythic mode can be attributed to Narayan's intention of injecting some delightful elements in what otherwise would have been a grim tale.

Narayan has woven the comic mode so well with the mythic mode that the fusion becomes quite rewarding. Vasu is modern *rakshasa,* who has been gifted with a sharp, witty mind whose repartees, remarks and opinions create a sense of humour even if it happens to be occasionally grim. Once Vasu forces Nataraj to accompany him in his jeep to Memphi forest even when the latter had neither money in his pocket nor a button on his shirt. Instead

of feeling concerned at the pathetic condition of Nataraj, Vasu derisively laughs over the fact that the former was buttonless, saying, "No one will mind *[it]* in the jungle" (p.32). Nataraj's fears of Vasu abducting him for a ransom of fifty thousand rupees trigger his imagination into conjuring up visions which make the knowledgeable reader merely chuckle with amusement. Similarly, when the court summons arrive, Nataraj imagines himself to be in jail the next day and begins to entertain nightmarish visions of the miserable fate of his wife and child. Such wild fantasies of Nataraj enliven the narrative and add a cheerful note to the grim atmosphere created by the horrifying activities of Vasu.

When Vasu brings a tiger's body in his jeep, Nataraj questions him whether he had a license for killing a tiger to which Vasu carelessly replies that "the tiger didn't mind the informality" and laughs at his own joke. Showing his *rakshasa*-like antipathy to humanity, human laws and civilized norms, Vasu expresses his opinions and passes comments which border on nonseriousness and absurdity. He says, "More people will have to die on the roads if our nation is to develop any road sense at all" (p.33). Showing his opposition to the institution of marriage, Vasu says, "Only fools marry and they deserve all the trouble they get," and again, "I really do not know why people marry at all. If you like a woman, have her by all means. You don't have to own a coffee estate because you like a cup of coffee now and then" (pp. 33-34). But Vasu's sense of humour is not genial; as a matter of fact, it is occasionally so stern and joyless, so sardonic and derisive that it matches with the laughter of a demon. When Nataraj points out about the foul smell and bits of flesh lying in the attic, Vasu replies, "What if they are! Don't you have flesh under your skin? Do you think you have velvet under yours?" (p.51). To the Forestry official who finds a stuffed hyena on the staircase in Nataraj's printing press, Vasu not only denies that the animal belonged to his forest, but mockingly suggests that the official could "put a rubber stamp on the backs of all the beasts in Memphi" to identify them.

Though Nataraj is a human counterpart of the boon-giver Lord Shiva, he has been made a spinelessly weak character but redeemed

with a gift of wit and humour which come to his rescue whenever he is confronted with any difficult situation. The fear of Vasu's fist discourages Nataraj from any physical encounter but he invades the adversary verbally through retorts, witty remarks and repartees. When Vasu wants to get 500 visiting cards printed and Nataraj is not confident of receiving the payment from him, the latter begins the conversation in a lighter vein, asking Vasu, "Could you not print them one hundred at a time? They'd be fresh then." After Vasu takes offence at it, Nataraj humorously adds: "Allright. I can print ten thousand if you want" (p.16) and that softens Vasu. To Vasu's statement that "I have to be where wild animals live," Nataraj adds, "And die" (p.19) which provokes his adversary to laughter. After Nataraj's failure to print the visiting cards, Vasu reminds him, saying, "I never forget," to which Nataraj retorts, "And I never remember" (p.20).

Narayan creates humour not only in situations, fantasies, comments and dialogues but also in characterization and situations. In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi,* Narayan has created such a large number of eccentric characters that their temperaments, habits, manners, obsessions, statements, professed aims and their inexplicable idiosyncracies inject a lot of pleasantness in the novel. Unlike the editors who write editorials on the current situations, Sen, oddly enough, has already written editorials for the future issues of a newspaper which is yet to be launched and for which no financial arrangements have been made. Unlike the lawyers reputed to seek speedy justice for their clients, the Adjournment Lawyer knows the art of having a case prolonged beyond the wildest dreams of a client. His act of shaving his chin once a fortnight, his way of crossexamining Nataraj, and his desire not to mix two accounts of printing invitation cards and his consultation fee are examples of his eccentricity which bring some relief to the reader in tension-ridden moments of the story. Nevertheless, what is great about the eccentricities of these minor characters is that they are so innocent, so simple and harmless, that the reader prefers and enjoys them as opposed to Vasu's Satanic activities.

The comic irony of situation has the same function in the novel.

This all-powerful Vasu who could solve all his problems with his powerful fist and was afraid of neither man nor animal is mortally scared of mosquitoes ! He says, "Night or day, I run when a mosquito is mentioned" (p.25). After Vasu's death everyone suspects everyone else of murdering him. The mystery of Vasu's murder is transformed into comedy when Sen suspects Muthu on the ground that rural people are vindictive. Muthu suspects the Police Inspector whom Vasu had assaulted physically, while the Police Inspector suspects Nataraj. The District Superintendent of Police suspiciously eyes Rangi and Nataraj among others. The monosyllabic poet suspects Sen, the journalist, because an iron-bolt was seen in his house and because Vasu had often insulted him. The Postman suspects Nataraj whereas the latter believes Rangi to have poisoned Vasu. Nataraj's wife suspects him whereas his son Babu goes a step further and feels proud that his father had killed the *rakshasa* single-handedly. The most comical moment comes when Nataraj, being surrounded by the people suspecting him, begins to suspect himself of having killed Vasu.

The advantage of fusing the mythic and comic modes together is that whereas the mythic mode helps the reader in a better understanding and appreciation of a work of art through the recognition of the myth and its parallel, the comic mode saves it from lapsing into grimness by periodic doses of wit and humour. And this is what makes *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* the richest and the greatest of Narayan's all novels.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]R.K. Narayan, "Gods, Demons and Modern Times," *The Literary Criterion*, X, 3 (Winter 1972), pp.47-48.

[2]Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann Publishers, 1974), p.132.

[3]R.K. Narayan, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1968), p.76. Subsequent references and page numbers in parentheses are to this edition.

[4]R.K. Narayan, All India Radio interview on September 8, 1961, published in *Writers Workshop Miscellany*, No. 8 (1961), p.50.

[5]Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction*, pp.147-48.

THE COMIC STANCE: A STUDY OF MALGONKAR'S SHORT STORIES

Smita Jha

Manohar Malgonkar emerged on the Indian English literary scene rather late in his life, but has kept on receiving accolades for his books ever since his first novel, *Distant Drum,* came out in 1960. His next four novels, *Combat of Shadows* (196) , *The Princes* (1963 , *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964 and *The Devil's Wind* (197) , are, indeed, substantial contributions to the corpus of Indian English fiction, for while *Combat of Shadows* has "a characteristically Conradian theme,"[1] *The Princes* was a Literary Guild choice in the U.S.A. in 1963, and E.M. Forster selected *A Bend in the Ganges* as one of the three best books published in 1964. Malgonkar keeps on writing still, and his latest novel, *Cactus Country,* came out in 199).

The three collections of Malgonkar's short stories, *A Toast in Warm Wine, Bombay Beware* and *Rumble-Tumble,* were published respectively in 1974, 1975 and 1977. The latest volume of his short stories, *Four Graves and Other Stories,* came out in 1990. It is important to note that Malgonkar started his literary career as a writer of short stories and that a number of them had appeared even before the publication of his first novel, *Distant Drum.* Such of his short stories as "Tiger Trouble," "Bachcha Lieutenant," "Suliman's Courier," "Lemon Yellow and Fig" and "This is to Recommend" appeared in 1954; "A Toast in Warm Wine" and "Fair Wind in Timber Land" were published in 1955; "A Pinch of Snuff" and "Upper Division Love" came out in 1956, while "Air-Conditioned," "Two Red Roosters," "The Rise of Kistu" and "Shikar De Luxe" were published in 1957. And it is indeed interesting and useful to remember that, before embarking on a literary career, Malgonkar was a big-game hunter, an armyman, a wild-life conservationist, a person involved briefly in politics, and a businessman engaged in manganese ore operations. Similarly, it is also pertinent to mention that while the "characteristic mood and movement of Malgonkar's mature novels is one of epic seriousness," his "stories, with a few exceptions, are all in a comic mood."[3]

Malgonkar's short stories--sixty in number--may be placed in five groups. There are quite a few among them that take us directly to the culture or spirit of army life; some of these stories relate to hunting or adventure; a good number of them do give us an idea of the world of business and smuggling; eight of them point to the kind of politics that is practised in our country, while the rest of these short stories may be accepted as assorted pieces, for they deal with a wide variety of topics, situations, moods and movements.

The twelve stories that deal with the army life and depict its pains and joys are highly readable exercises. Readability is one of the hallmarks of Malgonkar's short stories and novels. Since Malgonkar had worked as an officer in the army during the Second World War, he could find himself in a position to write stories on the culture of army life very much from the inside. These stories are indeed realistic, and Malgonkar does succeed in creating the desired kind of verisimilitude in them. It is important to mention that the kind of language and the kind of dialogue that Malgonkar takes recourse to in these stories are typical of the army lingo. At the same time it is also important to mention that while seven of these twelve stories, namely, "A Little Sugar, A Little Tea," "This is to Recommend," "Maggie," "Mission into Malaya," "Tactical Surprise," "Pack Drill" and "Suliman's Courier," are first-person narratives, the rest of them, "Bachcha Lieutenant," "Two by Two," "Green Devils," "Camouflage Tactics" and "Monal Hunt," are third-person narratives.

Four of Malgonkar's short stories, namely, "The Rise of Kistu," "To Hold a Tiger," "Bear on a Plate" and "Tiger Trouble," that deal with hunting or adventure, do give us an impression that here is a writer who has a genuine feel for and understanding of the outdoor life with which he has been closely associated. The descriptions are impressive, the situations presented therein are authentic, and the very atmosphere of these stories makes us conscious of the spirit of hunting or adventure. Nevertheless, these four stories are found to be wanting because of the thinness of material in them. Two of these stories, "The Rise of Kistu" and "Tiger Trouble," we find, are first-person narratives.

Another thirteen of Malgonkar's stories--"Bombay Beware,"

"Hush," "Cargo from Singapore," "Thorn With a Thorn," "A Pass in the Mountains," "Someone Like You," "A Run of Scotch Salmon," "Tourist Distraction," "Lemon Yellow and Fig," "Temple Mouse," "Fair Wind in Timber Land," "Shikar De Luxe" and "Home Delivery"—take us to the world of business or trade, and deal chiefly with the deceit and fraud that are not infrequently perpetrated in business and commercial transactions. Apart from being entertaining, these stories are also highly realistic. Seven of these stories, such as "Hush," "Cargo from Singapore," "Thorn With a Thorn," "A Pass in the Mountains," "Someone Like You," "A Run of Scotch Salmon" and "Home Delivery" deal particularly with smuggling operations, with the betrayal, revenge and also intelligence that go along with them. All these stories, we find, are full of suspense and thrill and excitement, and read very nearly as detective stories. Except for "Bombay Beware" and "Thorn With a Thorn," these stories may be looked upon as highly successful pieces. It is true that Malgonkar writes his stories mostly in a comic vein; nevertheless, three of the present stories, such as "Hush," "A Pass in the Mountains" and "Fair Wind in Timber Land," are rather tragic in spirit. A number of these stories, namely, "Cargo from Singapore," "Someone Like You," "A Run of Scotch Salmon" and "Lemon Yellow and Fig" have been written as first-person narratives. In "Hush" and "Temple Mouse," Malgonkar adopts the technique of cinematic montage by means of which different scenes are joined neatly together in order to give them an articulate form. The story entitled "Shikar De Luxe" stands on an altogether different footing. It is a story that does really deal with hunting, but it has been included in this section, for in it hunting has been transformed chiefly into a business deal. The most remarkable aspect of "Shikar De Luxe," however, consists in the fact that it has been rendered in the form of letters and telegrams and that it is epistolary in form.

Eight of Malgonkar's stories--namely, "The Fixer," "Air-Conditioned," "A Pinch of Snuff," "Pull-Push," "Bondage," "A Slice of the Melon," "Chikamaglur Hookshot" and "Palace Orders"--bring out the basic malady that plagues the Indian society and polity, and from which no escape yet appears to be in sight. These stories

constitute an incisive but lively satire on the ills and weaknesses of India's political form. However, at this point we have to remind ourselves that Malgonkar is neither a propagandist nor a reformist, and that his sole intention as a creative writer, as a writer of short stories, is to highlight the drawbacks and pitfalls of India's political system in a highly entertaining manner. It is so very easy to see that Malgonkar presents these weaknesses and drawbacks as those of the human character itself, and it is thus that we find him interested more in the human stuff than in political institutions. Broadly speaking, these stories are character-oriented, and not addressed to any kind of political theory or system. Three of these stories, namely, "Air Conditioned," "A Pinch of Snuff" and "A Slice of the Melon," are first-person narratives; "Pull-Push" is a montage piece, while the rest are, more or less, conventional pieces. These stories contain plenty of humour and irony, and it is these twin elements of humour and irony that do indeed add a special flavour to them. However, in "Bondage" Malgonkar has been able to combine irony and humour with pathos.

Another twenty-three of Malgonkar's stories, dealing with diverse topics, have been placed in the group of assorted pieces, for they can hardly be bunched together, otherwise, under one, single and common denomination. The topics they deal with range from mining exploration to history and myth and chance discovery, though the themes they seek to project are the differing and different shades or dimensions of human psychology. Fourteen of these stories, namely, "A Toast in Warm Wine," "The Silence of Leopold," "Upper Division Love," "Admit Two," "Married and Harried," "Mr. Cheng's Ducks," "Snake and Ladder," "Tea Break in Jakarta," "Top Cat," "By Post from Potiskun," "Arrival," "Balumama's Secret," "Sitting Bull" and "Tipu," are first-person narratives, while the rest nine of them, such as "The Cheat," "Blame the Army," "Two Red Roosters," "The Fixture as Before," "On Camera," "Giveaway Trouble," "Old Gold," "Keep Your Fingers Crossed" and "Four Graves," are third-person account. At least two of these twenty-three stories, "The Fixture as Before" and "Giveaway Trouble," are presented in the form of telephonic conversation, while in respect

of its informality, its raciness, its urbanized ambience, "Keep Your Fingers Crossed" comes very close to "The Fixture as Before" and "Giveaway Trouble." "Upper Division Love" and "Blame the Army" are montage pieces. While most of these stories are impressive in their own ways, "Blame the Army," "On Camera," "The Silence of Leopold," "Upper Division Love" and "By Post from Potiskun" are not very impressive stories, for they are theatrical, contain a lot of exaggeration and melodrama, or in them Malgonkar seems to be straining for effect. "Old Gold" and "Four Graves" are long short stories, though the ending of the former, unlike that of the latter, is unduly sentimental.

Malgonkar's prose makes its own positive contribution to the success of these stories. It is true that his prose does have its own poise and its own sophistication, yet whenever and wherever the need be, it is also informal, racy and chatty. As such, it is not correct to say that Malgonkar's prose is elitist in quality, or that it suffers from the drabness of uniformity. His short stories contain a lot of Indianisms in the form of specific words, idioms, ejaculations, swear-terms, translations and transcreations. In this connection we may, all at one place, cite such examples as those of *paratha* (p.27), *beedi* (p.28), *thali* (p.91), *angocha* (p.109) and *tez* (p.118) from *A Toast in Warm Wine*;[4] *Kamjor* (p.9), *chalaki* (p.107) and *takkias* (p.127) from *Bombay Beware*; *chamacha* (p.7), *topee* (p.61), *durries* (p.1 0) and *gudam* (p.1 0) from *Rumble-Tumble*;[6] *Arre-Ja* (p.177), *Hare Ram* (p.118) and *Hai-Hai* (p.123) from *A Toast in Warm Wine; Shabash;* (p.107), *Wah-wah* (p.107), *Bah* (p.109) and *Are baap* (p.128) from *Bombay Beware;* "... our own man should come before foreign experts" (p.22) from *A Toast in Warm Wine,* and "... the goddess of wealth and the goddess of learning do not live side by side" (p.199) from *Rumble-Tumble.* It is also through dialogues that Malgonkar creates a characteristic Indian ambience in his short stories. In the following extract from "Hush" we find Malgonkar reproducing the mannerisms of a speaker who belongs to the Konkani-Goan region of India:

> Watches ... whisky! Enh! If we don't even catch these driblets, what will they say, tell me? That we're sleeping on the job-- no? We just have to catch a couple of smugglers every month, no? And even then the new SP says

we're useless. We're to keep him happy too, no?[7]

"The Goan identity of the speaker," observes Prof. G.S. Amur, "is at once defined by the characteristic and inimitable expression 'Enh!' just as the use of 'no' at the end of each question places him in relation to the Indian user of English."[8]

It is indeed so very interesting to place the vividness of Malgonkar's descriptive prose, the intensity of his poetic prose and the crispness of his epigrammatic prose beside the earthiness and simplicity of his nativized prose. Malgonkar's prose is qualified by variety, amplitude and suitability. And though Malgonkar is not as lavish in his use of Indianisms as Mulk Raj Anand is, his eclecticism in this regard is praiseworthy.

Readability, we may reaffirm, is the most important and distinctive quality of Manohar Malgonkar's short stories. Most of these stories contain a lot of suspense and thrill and surprise, and are highly interesting and absorbing exercises. Some of these stories, such as "Hush," "Temple Mouse" and "Pull-Push," are montage pieces, and it is really satisfying to see that the scenes in them have been deftly woven together into articulate forms. A few of Malgonkar's stories, namely, "The Fixer," "A Pinch of Snuff," "A Slice of the Melon" and "Bondage" are character-oriented pieces, for they depend, in respect of their mood and movement, upon their principal characters. And while two of these stories, "The Fixture as Before" and "Giveaway Trouble," have been cast in the form of telephonic conversation, one story, "Shikar De Luxe," has been presented as a series of letters and telegrams. It is important to take note of the fact that thirty-eight of these sixty stories have been written as first-person narratives. And it is true to say that Malgonkar's prose does add a special flavour to his short stories.

These stories are not really elitist in nature, for they deal as much with the rich, the educated and the urban people as with the poor, the uneducated and the rural folk. At the same time there is no mistaking the fact that such of Malgonkar's stories as "The Rise of Kistu," "To Hold a Tiger" and "Old Gold" have either hasty or sentimental endings, that a number of them, namely, "Blame the Army," "On Camera," "The Silence of Leopold," "Upper Division

Love" and "By Post from Potiskun," are rather melodramatic, and that in them Malgonkar does strive calculatedly for effect. All the same, Malgonkar's short stories, being essentially comic in spirit, are highly entertaining; at least, they have nothing to do with propaganda or reforms as such. Thus, Malgonkar's short stories are a tribute to his creative art.

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[1]G.S. Amur, *Manohar Malgonkar* (New Delhi, 1973), p.21.
[2]Ibid., p.26.
[3]Ibid.
[4]See M. Malgonkar, *A Toast in Warm Wine* (New Delhi, 1974).
[5]See M. Malgonkar, *Bombay Beware* (New Delhi, 1975).
[6]See M. Malgonkar, *Rumble-Tumble* (New Delhi, 1977).
[7]M. Malgonkar, *A Toast in Warm Wine* (New Delhi, 1974), pp.56-57.
[8]Ramesh Mohan (ed.), *Indian Writing in English* (Hyderabad, 1979), p.45.

THE DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION: A LACANIAN READING OF GIRISH KARNAD'S *HAYAVADANA*

P. Dhanavel

Of the four plays of Girish Karnad, translated into English by himself, *Tughlag* and *Tale-Danda* are historical, and *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* are mythical. Strikingly, the historical plays explore two great men and the mythical plays examine two ordinary women. Though each of them is unique in its achievements, *Hayavadana* stands out as an incomparable play of incompleteness and identity crisis. While Hayavadana embodies the theme in his physical appearance of equine head and anthropic body, Devadatta and Kapila enact the theme in the transformation of their heads, Padmini, on the other hand, illustrates the psychological and philosophical lack in her through her quest for a complete man. All these characters suffer from the ontological problems of "fate," "desire" and "lack" which are at the root of Lacanian Psycho-analysis. Therefore, an attempt is made to bring out the signifying chain of desire in *Hayavadana* through a Lacanian reading.

Interestingly, Karnad the playwright himself has provided a Lacanian framework in *Hayavadana* in three significant words: "fate," "desire" and "lack." Whether Karnad has used them with a Lacanian awareness or by chance is anybody's guess. Their place of occurrence is also noteworthy. After blessing Hayavadana in his "search for completeness," the Bhagavata tellingly remarks in Act One:

> Each One to his *fate.* Each one to
> his own *desire.* Each one to his own
> *lack* (Karnad 1985 : 11; emphasis added).

And then the Bhagavata narrates the main story without any further interruption. Later in Act Two, the Dolls too speak similarly of Devadatta and Padmini:

> Doll I. Each one to his *fate* !
> Doll II. Each one to her *problems* ! (ibidem:50; emphasis added).

These two passages reinforce the Lacanian framework of the eternal lack in human beings. Karnad's characters seek wholeness due to their divided self. Their fate, then, is to meet with their

problems of identity, complicated relationships and finally their own end.

It is important, however, to notice that the "lack" of 1985 edition has been changed to "luck" in the 1995 edition of *Hayavadana* in *Three plays* (Karnad 1995 : 82). Whether "luck" is a right correction or a printer's devil, it may be suggested that luck and lack are curiously interchangeable. The "lack" of the human beings is their "luck" and their "luck" is their "lack." Similarly "luck" and "fate" are closer in meaning. Since "lack" directly refers to the theme of the play, the 1985 edition seems to be more authentic. Further, almost all the characters in *Hayavadana* are signifiers of the Lacanian lack and desire.

Strangely enough, Ganesha's image that is brought to the stage seems to be a symbol of the real Lacanian subject--incomplete, incoherent, fragmented, divided and centreless. The only difference is that the human subject makes an incessant attempt to seek wholeness whereas the divine subject is not at all bothered about the incongruous appearance. Lord Ganesha is in the form of a man's body with an elephant's head, a broken tusk and a cracked belly. The God is not complete but mysteriously He is "the destroyer of incompleteness" (*ibidem* : 1). He is "the Lord and Master of success and perfection" (ibidem). The Lord by his very physical appearance seems to indicate to his devotees that they should not search for completeness. If the mirrored image of the human subject is duplicitously whole and unified, the dramatized image of Ganesha projects the true Lacanian subject. It is a matter of critical speculation whether Lacan would have identified Ganesha and similar Hindu Gods as "letters" of his subject, for he has shown keen interest in the Upanishads.

The protagonist of the sub-plot. Hayavadana, has a human body and an equine head but he is not a god like Ganesha. Though he is born of a *Gandharva* father, he is not one because he does not have divine powers like his father to change his own shape or that of others. He is not a man nor a horse, though he has features of both. Hayavadana is, thus, incomplete but he is unable to accept his fate. Within his range of experience, he desires to look like other human beings in order that he may belong to their society. Hence

his search for completeness--a complete human being.

His lack/luck, unfortunately, is bad enough to change him into a complete horse, for the Goddess of Mount Chitrakoot does not wait to listen to his full prayer for becoming a full man. Through this change from bad to worse Karnad may ridicule the idea of the supremacy of head as Thomas Mann does in "The Transposed Heads"; the law of head, face, identity, society, and so on is headless. For Lacan, however, the head or the body or both put together is incomplete, incoherent. Lord Ganesha seems to be aware of this Lacanian fact but Hayavadana, despite his horse sense, is unaware that incompleteness is the lot of the human beings. If Hayavadana is "an image of an average Indian citizen," as G.H. Nayak (1973 : 105) suggests, he can also be an image of an average human being in general. Notably, the question of completeness does not arise in Hayavadana after he loses his human voice. Blissfully he lapses from the linguistic phase to the pre-linguistic phase.

Hayavadana's mother, the Princess of Karnataka, is not presented as a character in the play. Even then her marriage with the white stallion that carries the Prince of Araby is important from the viewpoint of Lacanian desire. Marital life is a physical, psychological and social need. To fulfil this need, the Princess could have chosen one of the several suitors from different parts of the land who have assembled at the *suyamvara*. However, she insists on marrying the horse, who is mysteriously a *gandharva* cursed by god Kuvera to become a horse. What is the source and exact nature of her desire ?

The vulgar and reductive Freudian may hold that the Princess's is a case of zooeroticism and nymphomania. Can such a view explain the complexity of the problem? It is not exactly her biological need that bothers her. Further, it is not a satisfiable demand, though her father arranges for the socially unacceptable marriage. Therefore, it appears to be the desire born of the split between need and demand that compels the Princess to choose the horse instead of the horse rider in contrast to Padmini of the main plot who often dreams and sings about a horse rider. When the horse becomes a Celestial Being after fifteen years of his life with the Princess,

she demands him to become a horse again to go to heaven with him as he desires. When she is cursed to change into a horse, she has no more problem of desire as it happens in the case of Hayavadana.

Lacan (1968 : 172) has suggested that animals, including chimpanzees, do not take pleasure in looking at their own image in the mirror. As a result, they do not have any desire for wholeness as human beings do. Both Hayavadana and his mother are disturbed by the desire for recognition so long as they have traces of human beings, especially language. Once they are turned into a complete horse, the Lacanian desire does not operate in them.

Then, it is possible to conjecture that both gods and animals do not suffer from the problem of misrecognition of their own image in the mirror. Consequently, they do not have to seek an imaginary wholeness which may bring them "harmony" and "happiness." But the ill-starred human beings, being what they are, are driven to search for the unattainable ideal. In several cases, this impossible search ends in inevitable destruction, which is performed by the protagonists of the main plot--Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini.

It is Devadatta who is often caught in the tangle of desire, more than fifteen girls in two years as Kapila says. His desire for Padmini, however, seems to be destructive in its end. He is a pundit and a poet. Naturally, he is likely to have a latent desire for outshining Kalidasa and his *Sakuntalam.* His desire, then, is the desire for immortality in the Bloomian sense (Dhanavel 1993 : 118-120). His latent desire surfaces strongly only when he sees Padmini. Thereafter, he develops the fatal desire for possessing her by marriage, allegedly for excelling Kalidasa. His desire is somehow fulfilled by Kapila, his bosom friend. When Devadatta is frustrated due to non-recognition of his desire by Padmini, he proceeds to execute his vow. He forgets his wife, his friend, and most importantly his desire for surpassing Kalidasa.

As the opportunity comes up in the forest, Devadatta goes to the Kali temple and commits suicide after uttering the following words:

> Bhavani, Bhairavi, Kali, Durga, Mahamaya, Mother of all Nature--I had forgotten my promise to you. Forgive me, Mother. You fulfilled the deepest

craving of my life--you gave me Padmini--and I forgot my word (Karnad 1985 : 28).

It is true that his desire is fulfilled temporarily but his "ego" is wounded permanently. As a result, he wounds/kills himself to get the recognition that he misses in life. Following the death of Kapila, both get their life by the grace of Kali. However, the problem of recognition, confirmation of selfhood, continues until all the three are dead.

The nature of Devadatta's desire for Padmini implies an ulterior motive other than her as an object of his desire. He wants her to be his muse, but she is not contended to play this role. She has her own desire for recognition which is truly the ultimate desire for affirmation of her selfhood. Such a desire of Padimini is revealed clearly in her interaction with Kapila, who is on the negotiating mission for his friend's marriage. She is seen humming her favourite song: "Here comes the rider--from which land does he come?" (*ibidem* : 16). Kapila's initial reaction is one of astonishment. Even before he recovers himself from his sense of beauty-shock, she starts grilling him. The wrestler who could catch his rival Nanda "in a crocodile-hold" is shattered by the sight of Padmini. She goes to the extent of checking even his eyesight.

Naturally, it is difficult for any man to "Conquer" her. When Kapila is unable to make any headway in his mission, he surrenders to her in frustration:

KAPILA (*looking around; aside*). No one here. still I have to find her name. Devadatta must be in pain and ... He will never forgive me if I go back now. (*Aloud.*) Madam, please. I have some important work. I'll touch your feet...

PADMINI (*eager*). You will? Really? Do you know, I've touched everyone's feet in this house some time or the other, but no one's ever touched mine? You will?

KAPILA (*slapping his forehead as he sinks to the ground*). I'm finished—decimated--powdered to dust--powdered into tiny specks of flour. (*To Padmini*). My mother, can I at least talk to a servant?

PADMINI. I knew it. I knew you wouldn't touch my feet. One can't even trust strangers any more. All right, my dear son ! I opened the door. So consider me the door-keeper. What do you want? (*ibidem* : 18-19).

Padmini never gives a chance to Kapila for overcoming her in this conversation. But, then, Kapila is equally a real fighter. He will not give up his fight, even if he is decimated.

Then Kapila faces Padmini boldly and straightforwardly. Only when he advances fearlessly and forcefully does she take to her heels calling after her mother. At this point itself, Kapila realizes that his delicate friend Devadatta is no match for her because only an iron man will suit her. The implication of Kapila's realization is not merely sexual; it includes Padmini's desire to be recognized as a person in her own right. She is a powerfully witty and wild woman as she proves herself to be throughout the play. She requires a man of similar temperament who will accept her as she is, not the serious and sulky scholar like Devadatta. Predictably, Devadatta and Padmini are not happy with each other in their married life. She makes a few efforts to accept her lot but the lingering presence of Kapila in their family changes the course of her life.

Padmini understands Kapila as much as he understands her but Devadatta understands neither of them nor himself. He is full of his books and discussions on which neither of them is so keen. Gradually, the cracks in the relationship of Padmini and Devadatta become stronger and stronger. In the forest where they take rest, they speak out their minds in asides. Padmini finds Kapila on the Fortunate Lady's tree 'a Celestial Being' and says, "No woman could resist him" (*ibidem* : 26). So far he could not see his friend's "many muscles" because he did not have Padmini's eyes. When he recognizes them, it is too late. He has no other choice but to commit suicide at the Kali temple. His problem is that he desires Padmini but she does not share his desire for immortality. Perhaps, it is possible that her desire for recognition has already been recognized by Kapila in his first encounter itself. Further, it is also likely that the recognized desire of Padmini cannot be re-recognized again by Devadatta.

However, Kapila too commits suicide as a true friend of Devadatta. The fact is that the bondage between Devadatta and Kapila has been established prior to the introduction of Padmini. A complementary relationship can be seen between them also: head+body=complete man. Padmini as a weak complement of Devadatta and as a strong complement of Kapila is a late arrival. Nevertheless, the crisis has to be faced. Padmini too would have

died but for the interference of Goddess Kali who grants her wish to save the dead. In her confused state of mind, she bungles and waits for more suffering. The transposed Devadatta and Kapila, on the other hand, thank her because, as Kapila says, "Now we are blood-relations ! Body relations !" and he considers the exchange of heads as a "gift" (*ibidem* : 35). While the desire of both Devadatta and Kapila has been to be one, to be unified, the desire of Padmini too is that they should be one head and heart. Apparently, she is happy with Devadatta's head and Kapila's body but time disenchants her Devadatta and Kapila change gradually to their former shape as per the law of supreme head and accept their fate psychologically. But Padmini remains discontended due to her ultimate desire for affirmation of her selfhood. The recurrent song of the Female chorus about "the thick yearning of the many-patalled, many-flowered lantana" (*ibidem* : 11) symbolizes Padmini's mind.

That is why, Padmini does not hestitate to seek out Kapila, the man of her song and dream, in the forest. At first, Kapila is angry with her but accepts her. Later, he asks her "Why have you come from him?" (*ibidem* : 56). She questions him in reply, "What do you want me to say?" (*ibidem*). The Bhagavata intervenes at this juncture and reveals the whole inner mind of Padmini:

> How could I make you understand? If Devadatta had changed overnight and had gone back to his original form, I would have forgotten you completely. But that is not how it happened. He changed day by day. Inch by inch. Hair by hair. Like the trickling sand. Like the water filling the pot. And as I saw him change--I couldn't get rid of you. That's what Padmini must tell Kapila. She should say more, without concealing anything, 'Kapila, if that *rishi* had given me to you, would I have gone back to Devadatta some day exactly like this? But she doesn't say anything. She remains quiet (*ibidem*).

The slow and gradual change in Devadatta has forced Padmini to see whether Kapila too would have changed in the same way. Padmini's is not, however, a scientist's curiosity to test his hypothesis but one of recognizing another human being's desire for recognition. When Kapila asks her again why she has come to him, she replies confidently, "I had to see you" (*ibidem*).

It is possible to bank upon the speech of the Bhagavata for the view that Padmini desires Kapila physically, as U.R. Anantha Murthy (1976 : 40-41) does. Actually, Padmini's "desire is caught

in a multitude of mirrors." It is the Lacanian desire for recognition that pushes Padmini to desire Kapila's desire because she finds her desire being desired by Kapila. Though she is married to Devadatta, Kapila too gradually moves towards her bacause his desire is being desired by her. In this way both of them complement each other and achieve a sense of wholeness, harmony, and happiness, as is evident from the forest scene where Kapila fulfils more than Padmini's desire by fetching a bunch of the Fortunate Lady's flowers about which she just expressed her interest. Therefore, she comes to the forest breaking the marital bond. Consequently, all the three die. While Devadatta and Kapila fight and kill themselves, Padmini immolates herself. Logically, the Lacanian desire leads to death which ends all desires.

The character of Kapila is intimately connected with both Devadatta and Padmini. If he is the complement of Devadatta as body, he is also the complement of Padmini as "person." While Devadatta looks at him as a "slave," Padmini considers him as her "master." As Kapila plays both roles of master and slave, he seems to have much better understanding of himself and others. Once he is caught in the tangle of desire, he has no scope for escape from destruction. Padmini follows him into the deep forest, while Devadatta follows both. Kapila desires recognition of his desire from both and receives destruction from both. After all, desire in the sense of greed and passion is the root cause of evil, as the Buddha would say. For Lacan, desire is not evil but the destiny of mankind.

If Hayavadana and the Princess of Karnataka regress to the pre-linguistic phase of animal life, and if Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini return to the pre-natal phase of all life, that is death, the nameless Child of Padmini progresses to the linguistic phase at the end of the play. He is not a normal child because he is usually withdrawn and morbid. However, when he hears the laughter and speech of Hayavadana, he too starts laughing and speaking. Thus he becomes "a full member of the family and of society" (Belsey 1980 : 60) only after entering the Symbolic Order. Perhaps Hayavadana breaks the Child's moribund attachment to his doll and facilitates him to come into the linguistic stage. The child is incomplete without the human language whereas the horse is incomplete with

the human language. Karnad effects a miraculous transfer of language from Hayavadana to the Child and projects them as complete beings, though he knows well that such a sense of completeness is merely wish-fulfilment. What Karnad seems to suggest is that the entry into and departure from language is a routine cycle for human beings. If the Unconscious is structured like a language, how else can the human beings that possess the Unconscious be structured?

While Lord Ganesha is presented on the stage as an image, an obligatory feature of the Yakshagana tradition, Goddess Kali is shown as a character in the play. The Mother of all Nature resides at Mount Chitrakoot. Once countless devotees used to visit Her regularly but now she is neglected. The Bhagavata directs Hayavadana to Her. Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini come to Her by chance en route to Ujjain. Surprisingly, the Mother is found sleeping and indifferent to the needs of Her devotees. In fact, she brings about more suffering to them by Her casual and non-commital blessings.

What seems to be important for Her is Her own desire for recognition. She feels unhappy with Devadatta because the latter had "promised his head to Rudra and his arms to me !" (Karnad 1985 : 33). Similarly, she is sore with Kapila for not recognizing Her at all, for he "didn't even have the courtesy to refer to me" (*ibidem*). Likewise, she is rather blunt in the treatment of Padmini. The Goddess alleges that Padmini is selfish and remains unconcerned about her problems after the transposition of heads. In case of Hayavadana, Kali is deliberately mischievous in making him a complete horse contrary to his wish to become a complete man. Evidently, the Mother of all Nature is not at all motherly and caring for Her distressed children. Why does the Mother behave in these unexpected ways? Perhaps because the Goddess is also in the human linguistic system which divides the "self" and institutes desire in the subject. Kali is divine but she is a human subject due to Her human language.

To conclude, Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* is, then, a play of desire--a drama as well as a game of the desire for recognition. The Bhagavata and the Dolls provide the Lacanian framework of

fate, desire, lack, and problems for both plots. Hayavadana searches for human completeness but attains animal completeness. His mother marries a horse and is cursed to become a horse. Both of them regress to the pre-linguistic stage of animal life where there is no problem of wholeness nor of recognition. Lord Ganesha, on the other hand, remains at the divine level. Though incomplete and imperfect, He is paradoxically the destróyer of incompleteness as also the master of perfection. Significantly, He appears to be a true Lacanian subject without any illusion of wholeness. At the human level, Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini are trapped in the triangle of desire for recognition. Padmini's metonymic desire is played out through the transposition of heads, leading to the tragic end of all the three. The Child of Padmini refuses to enter the linguistic stage. However, Hayavadana enables him to laugh and speak normally. His entry into language suggests the continuity of the endless chain of desire for recognition. Goddess Kali is unique in the sense that She is a divinity but suffers from the agony of desire for recognition because she speaks the human language. In all, the Lacanian desire for recognition is useful in understanding the complex motives of Karnad's characters in *Hayavadana* who move along the signifying chain of desire till they reach the non-verbal stages of speechlessness and death.

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K. Shivarama Karanth, *The Woman of Basrur*, Trans. H.Y. Sharada Prasad

(Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 1997), pp.150., Rs. 140.00

Basavaraj Naikar

It is a matter of satisfaction to note that the Indian literature is being made available in English translation, though at a snail's pace. Recently there has been a controversy in India about the comparative worth of Indian regional literature and Indian English literature. The nativists claim that regional literature is superior to Indian English literature. And the Indian English writers like Salman Rushdie claim that the regional literature is inferior. Neither of these extreme views conveys the truth which lies somewhere between the two. The unhealthy controversy has created an illusion of antagonism between the two literatures which ought to be complementary to each other. Right now in India, there is a great need for a synthesis of regional sensibility with the Indian English sensibility which can be made possible only through masterly translations of regional classics into English. It is needless to point out the enormous importance of translation theory and practice in a multilingual and multicultural subcontinent like India. But the paradox and pity of the Indian literary situation is that translation remains a voluntary and thankless adventure and is unfortunately not encouraged or institutionalised as an academic activity. The reasons for this phenomenon are too many to be enumerated here.

H.Y. Sharada Prasad's *The Woman of Basrur* happens to be such a voluntary adventure and goes a long way in bridging the gap between the regional experience and the Indian English experience. It is an excellent translation of Shivarama Karanth's *Maimanagala Suliyalli* (1970) originally written in Kannada. It is only the sixth novel of Karanth's thirty novels to be made available in English. Shivarama Karanth, a Jnanapitha Award winner, was a man of many parts, a playwright, novelist, actor and director of Yaksaganas, a social activist and a fiery rationalist.

The title, *The Woman of Basrur*,appears to be a bit disappointing in that it conceals the thematic stress found in the original

Kannada title which means 'in the whirlpool of body and mind.' But the translation of the entire novel makes delightful reading on account of its elegance and exquisiteness. In this novel we see an autobiography set within it. Chandri accidentally discovers a handwritten autobiography of her grand-aunt Manjula tucked in the file of documents in the attic and reads it secretly. Manjula, belonging to the caste of professional prostitution, has no choice but to lead the life of a courtesan. Being endowed with beauty, musical talent and dance talent, she is ideally suited to ply her profession whereby she can attract many customers, some of whom she can accept as patrons. Just as men come to seek pleasure from her, she also hopes to have pleasure from them. But in this process, she begins to feel a widening gap between the pleasures of the body and those of the mind, and feels frustrated. She feels that she really exists only when she can unite the two. But alas! That cannot be.

In her profession, she comes in contact with several customers out of which some four or five stand out as patrons. But she feels a lacuna in every one of them and pines for what is not. K.V. Pai happens to be her first patron who is aggressive and beastly in his sexual encounters, and she is disappointed with his mindlessness. Likewise, she is frustrated by Kokkarane Sheena's feebleness of sexual performance, although she is pleased by his artistic, especially musical talent. Ulloor Subraya is a connoisseur of music and a tender hearted man, but she is frustrated by his failure to satisfy her at the climax of sexual union. The next patron Nanjappa happens to give her maximum sexual fulfilment. The last patron happens to be Ananda Tirtha, a Swamiji of Sooramballi Monastery who sneaks into her bed and offers her maximum physical fulfilment. Thus all through her life, Manjula feels frustrated by the dichotomy between body and mind and finally grows reconciled to it.

H.Y. Sharada Prasad has succeeded in bringing out the subtle dilemma of the female protagonist and the ethos of Karnataka life through his elegant and lyrical use of English language. He has provided a model to other adventurers in translation. The novel provides ample opportunity for feminist discourse and comparative studies.

PRABHAT K. SINGH, *SO MANY CROSSES*

(New Delhi: Pencraft Publications, 1997), pp.41, Rs. 90.00

O. P. Bhatnagar

So Many Crosses is an elegantly printed short collection of twentyfour poems breathing fresh imagination surveying skies to earthquake, life of miners, coolies, women in domocracy and the state of law and order in the country, sometimes with pathos and other times with humour and irony. Prabhat K. Singh's poetry can further be singled out for making graphic descriptions of events and places. "Earthquake: Uttarkashi" recreates the scene as follows:

The planet swung abruptly
Like a cradle at night
With insurgent rocks
Playing brazen notes
Over the trumpet
Like a violent hail
Casting handgrenades.

The life of miners is created equally with poetic sensitivity the following way:

Crouched under a hot tin shed
a ghostly creature
With skin dry like dry twigs
Waiting impatiently
for his turn to descend
in the python's belly. ("The Battle for Bread")

Pity and irony surround the fate of Indian women in poems like "The Twice Born Rape" and "Democracy India, 1996." Humour and satire find their way in poems like "Metamorphosis," "In All Fairness," "Law and Order" and "Chopping of Trees on The College Campus." Glimpses of scintillating satire can be best observed in the following lines from a fantasy poem "HI-Tech Junos in Waiting":

Brides of the world
and ladies of fashion,
We bring you NEWS
of unaging-passion
for now, if you please,
may hire from us
Surrogate mothers,
rich breast-feeders
-both in one
Or Separately
on promise
of anonymity.

Singh's most competent poem "Gaya," though replete with negativity, is not so much a poem in irony as in pathos. A great ancient city Gaya, which once was the prized seat of knowledge and enlightenment, should become a fallen centre of untold degeneration and unbelievable corruption invokes the sentiments of pity and pathos than the intellect to irony with great success.

Singh has other merits to his credit like fine personification of abstractions like hope, despair and fantasy in the poems by the same titles. His poetic comparisons are novel too when he describes 'gloom/as pervasive as coastal humidity' in the poem "Earthquake." Given these qualifications Singh is likely to come out with more excellent poetry in times to come.

A.N. DWIVEDI, *FINE FRENZY*

(Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1998), pp.116., Rs. 200.00

Niroj Banerji

Both Mr. Asif Currimbhoy and R.R. Menon, while critically evaluating Dwivedi's first poetic volume, *Random Reflections* (1994), have been struck by the poet's having his "roots in the indigenous culture" and speaking in "an authentic Indian poetic voice." As one reads *Fine Frenzy* (1998), Dwivedi's second poetic collection, one cannot but agree with Mr. Currimbhoy and Menon. Dwivedi's poetic voice is shorn of all Western sophistication, cerebral image and symbol making and convoluted rhythms. Here is an Asian scholar-poet speaking, unashamedly, in his native voice of his third world social milieu and the palpable reality around him which often stirs strongly felt emotions in his bosom. Sometimes the poet loses himself in metaphysical and existential issues and struggles to forge his own philosophy of life in the smithy of his felt experiences. And yet, in other poems, we find the poet singing of personal pain and anguish or focussing his thematic concern on incidents from his personal life which have somehow affected him strongly.

Placing individual poems of Dwivedi's second poetic collection within the broad thematic divisions already noted with brief critical insights may help us get a clear vision of the poet and the man. Let us first take up certain poems which have philosophical or

metaphysical strands binding them together. "Having Travelled A Long Way ..." is a poem which accepts death in all its finality. The poet muses on the final leave-taking with an air of dignified acceptance. "Mortality" and "Vidyain Avidya" are poems in the same vein and are the sounding boards for the poet's mystical and spiritual ideas. "My Destination" is another poem in which the poet searches for meaning in life amidst existentialist despair.

Moving on from the poems of existential anguish and philosophical, mystical and metaphysical quests, we come to poems which give vent to a whole gamut of emotions arising from experiences on the personal and social plane of existence. "For My Son" is a sensitive peom, elegiac in tone and exploits meaningfully the 'lotus in the pool' symbol. "My English Department," "The Campus Life" and "What A Pity!" have the poet's academic working life as their milieu. These poems are scathingly satirical and bitingly humorous, and through them the poet bemoans the pitiable state in which he finds his *alma mater*--the University of Allahabad--in which he now teaches.

Among the large corpus of poems in *Fine Frenzy,* there are quite a few poems of quiet introspection and uneasy brooding, such as "Free Flying Birds" and "Life's Little Ironies." "Fine Frenzy," "The Poet At Work" and "The Birth of a Poem" have Coleridgean echoes as they ponder over the creative poetic process, while "The Void" and "Life is a Riddle" sojourn into the inner landscape of the poetic mind.

Dwivedi's second poetic collection is not without its fair share of poems on social issues in which the ironical or satirical tone is predominant. "A Working Woman," "Hungers at Large," "Our Freedom in Peril," "Today's Rat Race," "An Assembly of Beasts," "A Clarion Call," "Present-Day Politicians," "Modern Monsters" and "Crowds in Colleges" have for their themes social problems, such as the rapaciousness of political leaders, unemployment, women's liberation, crime, vice and corruption.

Dwivedi has a fecund imagination and is a master word-crafter. His absolute and felicitous command over words ensures the ceaseless gushing of poems like babbling mountain brooks from his facile pen. His poems are authentic and sincere, and unembellished with cerebral pyrotechnics, and we see in him a native son of the soil singing unaffectedly and effortlessly.

A RAGHU, *C.P: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF C.P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR*

(New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1998), pp.63, Rs. 100.00

Sujata Rao

Biographies of eminent personalities--who have constructively contributed to the cause of their country and have made an indelible mark in public life--are of evergreen appeal to the reading public. If the students of literature delve into a biography for its literary worth, the historians and the common readers turn to it for its historical, social, political and cultural relevance. A. Raghu's concise and condensed monograph, *C.P: A Short Biography of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar*, which, as he says in his preface, is the first 'objective biography of C.P' is therefore a welcome event in the literary world of our time.

Dr. Sachivottama Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar is one of the most powerful, fascinating, compelling, yet controversial figures, not only in the history of Kerala and the erstwhile princely state of Travancore, but also in the context of modern India. The task of writing an objective biography of a magnetic and enigmatic personality like C.P. is definitely not an easy one. But credit should be given to A. Raghu for meeting this challenge in a competent and convincing manner.

Dividing the book neatly into three chapters and giving them metaphorical titles as 'Morning,' 'Noon' and 'Evening,' the author tries to trace the splendour and glory, the triumph and failure, the ascent and descent of the last Dewan of Travancore.

In the chapter, 'Morning,' while narrating the childhood and early years of C.P's life, the author attempts to evaluate his personality from a psychological perspective. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, surrounded by opulence, doted on by his parents and grandparents, C.P. had every thing one could ever wish for. This plenitude of his childhood days is highlighted by the author and attributed to 'the vitality and exuberant enthusiasm' which were the hallmarks of the adult personality of C.P. Similarly, from a psychological point of view he tries to explain and understand

'C.P.'s compulsive ambition and the consequent workalcoholism.'

In the chapter 'Noon' in an impartial and shrewd manner, the author chronicles the fruitful half of the historic regime of C.P. in Travancore. For transforming Travancore from a 'backward agricultural principality to a modern industrial state.' C.P. should be given due respect and appreciation. This section is followed by a truthful record of the later part of his regime, which was marked by controversy and turbulence. The massacre in Vayalar and Punnipara and the unwise decision that Travancore should opt to remain as an independent and autonomous princely state in free India earned for him enemies in Travancore and the rest of India. Thus the author truthfully depicts the 'watershed of his Travancore years.'

In the chapter titled 'Evening' C.P.'s scholarly and academic pursuits are described. His international lecturing circuits, his intellectual contributions to journals, magazines and newspapers are detailed and evaluated. Though the author is all praise for C.P.'s skills of articulation and his mesmeric power of speech, but when it comes to his private life Raghu is certainly subdued in his tone and language. C.P. had weaknesses--quite a few indeed. His colonial arrogance, his extravagant style of living, his infamous passion for beautiful, intelligent and rich women cannot be overlooked by even an avowed admirer of C.P. like A. Raghu. Interestingly enough, these weaknesses are referred to very briefly in a conscious and non-committal style. Perhaps his hero worship for C.P. (which he confesses in the Preface) could be the reason for adopting such a diplomatic stand.

Written in lucid prose, with frequent touches of humour, the monograph is certainly readable. The author's 'quarter century-long obsession' with C.P. seems to have paid its dividends.

MITHLESH KUMAR PANDEY, *THE POETRY OF DONALD DAVIE*

(New Delhi: Radha Publications, 1994), pp.172+viii, Rs. 275.00

Susheel Kumar Sharma

As twentieth century is coming closer to its end, a critical evaluation of the men of letters in this era is not only desirable but essential also. Mithlesh Kumar Pandey needs to be congratulated for his effort in writing the thesis which has been published for wider readership in the book form. The book tries to place Donald Davie in the historical perspective and assesses his contribution to "The Movement."

The book has been divided into five chapters. In the first chapter entitled "Introduction," the social, political and literary forces of the forties that gave birth to "The Movement" have been discussed. Based mainly on the second hand critical opinions, the chapter deals with poets like Stephen Spender, Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and Donald Davie, Their disenchantment with "moderns" like Eliot and Pound has been discussed, whereas "The Movement" being disliked by most of the critics and contemporary reviewers because of their post-modernist stances has only been hinted at.

The second chapter titled "The Formative Influences on Davie's Sensibility" discusses Davie's antipathy to Pound and influences of Boris Pasternak, Austin Clarke, F.R. Leavis and Thomas Hardy on him. Pound's influence on Davie's verse as well as his poetic creed has been traced out, though Davie has criticised Pound in his articles and books. Mr. Pandey elaborates on Pasternak's and Davie's relationship and opines that metaphysical elements in Pasternak greatly influenced not only Davie's themes but also his art. In the next part of this chapter, the author brings out Austin Clarke's influence on Davie who regarded Austin to be "the uncrowned laureate of a country where his own books were banned." (p.45) Davie reviewed Clarke's work enthusiastically and established his reputation as a poet and in turn imbibed the love of Irish background, themes, metre and mode. Next is traced the influence of F.R. Leavis.

But once again Mr. Pandey depends more on some statements than on tracing it on Davie's poetry or critical thought.

"The Augustan Phase," the third chapter of the book, is an endeavour to analyse the first marked phase in Davie's poetic career, including the "Movement" poems and also those of divergence. Themes chosen by Davie like "apprehensiveness born out of ... war and its aftermath" (p.66), moralistic principles, geographic beauty, class-consciousness, urbanity, America ("North America was something of a landscape of the mind," p.89), religion, confession and moral concerns are highlighted with the help of Davie's poetic and critical corpus. Mithlesh Kumar Pandey calls this phase of Davie's poetic career "Augustan" because of Davie's moral concerns brinking on puritanism.

The fourth chapter entitled "The Romantic Phase" deals with the second poetic phase and analyses mainly the poems in *Collected Poems* (1971-83). Some of his "most deeply personal poems" (p.129) were composed in this period. Moral and spiritual values are in abundance in this phase also, but the attitude of the poet is more philosophic in this phase. "Confessional attitude of Davie's expanding sensibility" (p.135) also makes his poetry romantic. The author rightly holds that in this phase Davie has "more affinities to those poets whose interests are in art and in connections between art and ethics" (p.137) than to the fellow poets of "The Movement." The author finds this phase of the poet's career romantic because of the manifestation of his emotional life, sensuousness, lyrical and musical quality, obsession with the life of the common and the unsophisticated people, depiction of nature and sticking to certain verse forms.

The last chapter "Conclusion" summarises the findings and the observations made in the foregoing chapters. The detailed bibliography of the primary and secondary sources and a comprehensive index increase the utility of the book for a researcher and a person with interest in modern poetry. There are some printing errors in the spellings and some words have been left out that obscure the structure and meaning of the sentences.

C.S. SINGH, *CREATION COCKTAIL*

Sunanda Mongia

In *Creation Cocktail* we have from Dr. C.S. Singh his fifth collection of poetry. Not for him lesser modes of thinking nor lesser themes. For, in this work too he returns to his preoccupations with such unknowable and indefinable fundamentals as Creation, Time, the teleology, modes, directions of Existence, etc. He visualises these in terms of the earth which is ever the centre of creative processes. This becomes the central metaphor for many myths of creation and also of creation by human beings who in ephemeral temporality and locationality try to partake in the creative process. It is in the nature of things that creation must never be satisfied and it must be a never-ending process, for if Creation is fulfilled it would reach a position of negation. Dr. Singh has ambitiously sought to show all possible modes in which the earth invents itself including geographical processes, and how within creation is the seed of its own corruption and destruction. This gap gives a momentum to the creative processes, for creation must fail time and again if it has to continue.

In reading any creative work an initial co-operation that a work seeks from a reader is an unquestioning acceptance of its initial hypothesis. If then the work falls into place, then it is valid on its premises. This is particularly so in the case of poetry of Dr. C.S. Singh which requires this initial act of sympathy where it has to be read at the level of intuition married to intellectualism. The poem is to be mystically apprehended and visualised more than understood. However, the trouble with visualising mystical meaning is that it must be either accepted or rejected, never analysed; its hypothesis does not allow analysis.

On the other hand, it also allows to the reader unending interpretative freedom, participating as creator in the processes of this poem. There is a narrative flexibility and thematic indefinition, so that the reader may mix his own creation cocktail. In the poem the poet's sweep of thematic ambition is termendous. He ranges from many myths of creation to religion, metaphysics, biological

evolutions, geology, archaeological and scientific narrations of man's development to Sita-Ram, to Job, to Buddha.... The poem is a deluge of ideas. It also indicates the poet's facility for conjuring disparate imagery with such apparent effortlessness. And undoubtedly, the poet has great power of visualisation. Naturally enough, since it defines the mind-scape of the poet, a lot of this symbology reflects that of his earlier works.

This representation of symbology and imagery points to a non-linearity of talent; not a forward movement but an encircling as if the poet has reached a 'bindu' of the creative principle. The symbols also draw attention to the lexicon and the structures of the language which issues forth from his mind making one wonder whether he creates the language or the language creates him.

The narrative, which is best described by the word concentric forms ripples around a core of ideas appearing and disappearing at random in the text. Narrative connections can be located only by repeated and close readings and as is in such works, the beginning and the ending are where the poet begins and stops. James Joyce is supposed to have at a certain stage started writing *Ulysses* backwards from the end. C.S. Singh could just as well have begun at both the ends in *Creation Cocktail.* It is also inevitable that in this narrative non-linearity there is a risk of, at best a thematic, stylistic and a linguistic circularity and at worst a stasis. I suspect that the poem has willed itself to be written by this particular poet and he probably never thought he had any choices about the matter. It conveys too strong an impression of having issued forth and that might be one of the hypotheses we have to accept about the poem before tackling it.

SURYA NATH PANDEY, *STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY POETS*

(New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1998), pp.116, Rs. 220.00

K.K. Sharma

Even a cursory glance through the contents of the book under review can convince one of its immense value to the academics as well as young students of modern poetry in English, for it focuses on the best in the twentieth century poetry right from the earliast decades to the last one. A collection of fourteen scholarly essays on seven outstanding modern poets of England and India--T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Philip Larkin, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan and Dom Moraes--, it throws a floodlight on the basic trends of the modern age--viz. Modernism, Postmodernism, Anti-Modernism, The Movement, Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, Feminism, etc., etc.

The book begins with three critical pieces on T.S. Eliot, who began to impress and influence the poetic world all over the globe as early as 1915 with the publication of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in the magazine, *Poetry*. S.N. Pandey's first article deals with T.S. Eliot's anxiety about the spiritual chaos of our times. Though it is too short--just running over six pages--to treat the subject adequately, it is well-written and is not just sketchy. The new theological, scientific and psychological theories, particularly those by Darwin and the German explicators of the *Bible*, at the very threshold of the century, together with the havoc caused by World War I, created in man a deep sense of moral and spiritual chaos. Mr. Pandey presents an analysis of Eliot's early poetry from this angle, and some of his observations on "The Portrait of a Lady" and "Gerontion" are really incisive.

The next two articles on "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Waste Land" are simply an appraisal of Narsingh Srivastava's translation of these two poems in Hindi. Though these essays are of little interest and importance to non-Hindi speaking people, they contain some brilliant remarks about the difficult art

of translation, which is gaining much popularity and significance these days. The author aptly affirms: "The difficulty of the translator, however, needs no emphasis, because he has to recapture not only the meaning of the original, but also the music or the rhythm of the tone, and the problem becomes all the more complex when one has to deal with a poet like Eliot with uncamny ears" (p.12). Again, he is right when he holds that a good translation is invariably a transcreation.

The fourth article in the book is about Auden's patria, and this is better than any preceding it. Pandey's subtle, critical insight is evident in his assertion that in contrast to Naipaul's negative nostalgia, Auden's nostalgia is positive because the English world could never disappear from his mind and he cherished it fondly. However, his deracinated sensibility made him a unique kind of rebel, who shattered the anti-Semitic bias that he had inherited. What is very remarkable about Auden is that he rejects the very concept of "expatriate," and believes that wandering enriches the creative faculty of a writer by enhancing his cultural awareness; but at the same time he holds that a writer must be very particular about his language because "if language is corrupted, thought is corrupted."

The article "Auden and Spender" is quite impressive, as it convincingly brings to light the healthy influence of Auden on Spender. In the close company of his fellow poet, Spender came to realise that there did not exist any unbridgeable gulf between the romantic and the realistic attitudes towards poetry, between emotion and reason in life and art, though emotion and reason were not without their own limitations. Pandey appropriately concludes that the intimacy between the two was "more in the nature of shared feelings and beliefs than in direct bearing of one upon the other" (p.36). In the next essay Pandey painstakingly endeavours to establish the unmistakable influence of T.S. Eliot on Stephen Spender. The Younger poet's vision grew broader and more comprehensive under the wholesome impact of great Eliot. Spender's book on T.S. Eliot, published in 1973, is the open proclamation of his infatuation for, and indebtedness to, his illustrious predecessor.

Three essays on Philip Larkin constitute the middle of the book, which is certainly the best part of it. The first of them is a study of this Postmodernist poet's preoccupation with the human predicament, with man's painful obsesson of death, age and nothingness in life. But Pandey also points to Larkin's attempt at transcending the consciousness of death, and he illustrates it from his two masterpieces, "Church Going" and "The Building." Then, the scholarly critic demonstrates how Larkin presents Bergson's theory of time poetically in "Next Please" and "Triple Time." The last critical piece on Larkin is an exposition of the satiric strain in his poetry--i.e. his cynical denunciation of sex, envy, jealousy, pride, etc. But unlike Dryden and Popê, this celebrated modern poet is free from personal venom against individuals.

The last five articles are on three contemporary Indian English poets--viz. Nissim Ezekiel, Ramanujan and Dom Moraes. Three essays examine Nissim Ezekiel the poet from varied angles, i.e. the nature of his patria, post-Colonial elements in his poetry, and some basic features of his mind and art like his contemptible portrayal of woman as seductress and cheat, his celebration of human suffering, his humanism, his commendable use of irony as a technical device, his stylistic virtuosity, etc. The article on Ramanujan's feminist concerns is interesting, but not very convincing. On the other hand, the last article in the book is an authentic analysis of Dom Moraes's poetic alienation.

To conclude, the book bears the stamp of S.N. Pandey's solid scholarship, and his clear and correct understanding of modern poetry in English. However, it would have been much better, if the book had an introductory article on the basic tendencies of modern poetry, and had an interweaving, unifying idea or theme, because in the absence of these it gives the impression of a collection of heterogeneous essays written for different purposes at different points of time. Also, I very much wish that the learned author should have used the universally accepted term "Indian English" in place of "Indo-Anglian." Notwithstanding all this, I honestly feel that the volume is an insightful exploration of the variegated significant facets of the poetic sensibility of the current century, and hence of intrinsic worth.

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