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BOOK REVIEWS

SHAKESPEARE'S GARRULOUS GERIATICS

S. Viswanathan

Shakespeare's conception and presentation of nearly all of the several late-middle-aged and old characters would seem to be with a touch of ridicule. He handles certain particular social types in his plays like the few schoolmasters, poets and constables that figure in the plays as objects of ridicule and provides a good deal of fun at their expense for himself and his audience. Likewise, he brings to bear an attitude of satirical exposure of their mannerisms, frailties and follies in his elderly characters. Such figures occur in many plays, early and late, across the canon. Among such characters are John of Gaunt (*Richard II*), Northumberland (*Henry IV*, 1 & 2), the Nurse (*Romeo and Juliet*), Adam (*As You Like It*), Falstaff in his plays, Polonius (*Hamlet*), Belarius (*Cymbeline*), Camillo (*The Winter's Tale*) and Gonzalo (*The Tempest*).

There are perhaps some interesting factors behind the playwright's invariably satirical portrayal of elderly figures. In several sonnets of his, Shakespeare considers himself to be an old man and bemoans the weakness of age which overtakes him.

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
> When yellow leaves, or none or few hang,
> Upon boughs which shake against the cold
> Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang. (Sonnet 73)

This may be just an assumption on the part of the persona of the poems, somewhat like the relatively young Eliot calling himself 'an aged eagle' in his *Gerontion*. But the average life span of the Elizabethan was relatively short and a man at forty-five or so was already taken as old. Shakespeare's Chaucerian eye perhaps caught the foibles and follies of old men so vividly as he presents these in the plays. But the interesting and important point about the presentation, when taken as a whole, is that the satirical exposure is ultimately balanced by a due recognition of the essential dignity of age, of the respect it should elicit and the core of goodness in old men, and, above all, of the need for the sympathy and tolerance with which the aged should be treated and their weaknesses allowed for.

John of Gaunt in *Richard II* is an early example. His utterances

come like outbursts though he has genuine concern and gives views. Especially in the scene when King Richard II comes to meet him on his death-bed, just before the king arrives his strong feeling for his country of England which is going to the dogs under the feckless rule of Richard II finds expression in his eloquent and sustained panegyric. But the irony is that his aria-like paean of a long speech to the mother country, is part of an old man's frantic garrulity. Though the speech has remained a handy quote and was used extensively for the purpose of war-time propaganda during World War II, with the critic Wilson Knight joining in in this, in its original context, the speech does carry the tones of old-mannish verbal non-containment. Amusingly, the Duchess of Gloucester, in conversation with Gaunt (1.2) shows herself as practising speaking automatically at a fevered pitch, as they bemoan the fate of her husband Thomas of Gloucester, murdered, suspectedly at the instance of Richard II.

The Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* is comically loquacious. The moment she starts speaking the flood-gates of words and association are thrown open. Though she means well by Juliet and the family of the Capulets, the fuss she makes about what she goes about is nothing short of ridiculous. Her mode of speech, based on associative thinking (or rather, non-thinking), is such that she brings in irrelevant and disconnected items of associations; see the hostess Mrs. Quickly in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, 2* (2.4. 86-94) and Miss Bates in Jane Austen. The Nurse's long speech on her first appearance in the play, the 'Come, Lammos Eve' speech 1.3. 14-48, far too long to quote here, is an example of how her species are devoid of what Coleridge called 'Method' which is the mark of a connected discourse with a spontaneous overall organization. Her speech is a riot of the 'stream of consciousness' which knows no bounds in its meandering course. When she finds Juliet in a deep swoon under the effect of Friar Lawrence's potion, her wedding morning, she bursts out into a lament which Shakespeare writes like a parody of Hieronimo's laments over the dead body of his son Horatio so much so that the character in her frantic state is a throw-back to Hieronimo of *The Spanish Tragedy*. To quote a passage:

O, woe! O woeful, woeful day!

Most lamentable day, most woeful day,
That ever I did behold!
O day, O day, O day! O hateful day!
Never was seen so bleak a day as this
O woeful day, O woeful day! (4.4. 80-85)

Shakespeare's delineation of Adam in *As You Like It* provides a memorable cameo of old age. Adam is not only loyal to the neglected second son of his dead master Sir Ronald but is really fond of him. He is outraged by the ill-treatment of Orlando by his elder brother Oliver. Adam's mode of speech also shows the characteristics of his being in an exaggerated agitation and hurry. The terms in which he reveals the news of Orlando about Oliver's plans to set fire to his lodgings and pleads with him to go into exile and thus escape the clutches of Oliver are frenetic to an exaggeration, though the urgency of the matter may justify Adam's agitation. He is prepared to share his little all, by way of his life savings with Orlando and accompany him when he decides to go to the Forest of Arden. Adam is a staunch representative of old-world values like loyalty, reverential memory of his dead master, devotion with affection and service. Orlando is also in good part of follower of the then fading values of chivalry, gallantry and the cultivation of magnanimity. It looks as though Shakespeare himself had a nostalgic longing for these values of the feudal times now long past, but was, at the same time, able to see these values would have to undergo a shift in the modern days ahead. It is not surprising that his critical mind questions these idealistic values and the ideals and conventions even as he makes use of these. His portrayal of Adam's plight after he reaches the Forest of Arden is a metaphorical indication of all this. The famished Adam becomes too weak to walk, and Orlando has to rush in search of food for him, and in the process he meets the exiled Senior Duke and company sitting at a banquet. He returns to Adam to carry him to the spot where he could have food. Shakespeare times the arrival of Orlando carrying old Adam on his back with Jacques' cynical picture of old age, 'sans teeth, sans sight, sans taste, sans everything', if we allow the 'covering' of Orlando's long entry onto the spot, centre-stage, where the Duke and party are at their repast. The synchrony can

be looked upon in two ways. It has become customary to suggest that the arrival of Orlando, so protective of old Adam, gives the lie direct to Jacques' cynical estimate of old age, and proves that age far from being unregarded is well cared for. But the visual signals sent by the stage image of Adam the old man limp on Orlando's back would strongly underscore the utter helplessness of old age and its extreme dependency on others for help and care. It cuts both ways, and Shakespeare knows and presents both the sides of the coin, and it shows how intuitively sensitized he is to the infirmities of age and the need for care for the old.

Polonius in *Hamlet* is a classic picture of a person who is supposed to be a sage old counselor getting to be on the point of senility. His extreme distrust of Prince Hamlet's love for his daughter Ophelia is a sign of cageyness. His advice to his son Laertes who is about to leave for his stay at Paris, though considered a handy quote by way of maral precepts and thought to be a straight utterance of wisdom by some critics, has an inevitable touch of parody about it and sounds platitudinous enough. When we next see him setting Reynaldo to spy on Laertes in Paris we find him in his true colours, almost in those of a hypocritical nosey-parker. His laboured discourse to Reynaldo exposes how the latter end of his sentences tends to forget the first. His memory is growing short. But he persists in trying to put up a show of being a know-all.

He is obsessed with the idea of Hamlet being in love with Ophelia and her rejection of his love engineered by him that he could not see that there may be other valid factors behind Hamlet's madness. King Claudius is able to see it. Polonius thinks he has successfully set a trap for Hamlet, and he along with Claudius and Gertrude eavesdrops on him during the encounter with Ophelia, engineered by Polonius. He comes to know about Gertrude's meeting with Hamlet in her chamber as it is arranged, and plants himself there hiding behind the arras, partly to unearth the secret of Hamlet's mind, partly to protect the Queen and also partly to spy on her as well as on Hamlet. He instinctively reacts, in spite of himself, to Hamlet's angry approach to his mother and betrays the presence of an intruder in the room, with the result that he gets killed

instantaneously as Hamlet's sword plunges into his body. Yet Shakespeare by no means makes Polonius a mere caricature. After all, in his own way, he cares for the visiting troupe of players though he helps himself to a use of the players to divert Hamlet, as he thinks. He says he has played Caesar in a play on Julius Caesar, Shakespeare is suggesting that the actor who played him also played Caesar in Shakespeare's play, as Burbage who played Hamlet also played Brutus in *Julius Caesar.* The playwright is sensitive to the inexorable march of years and age, and the changes in the functioning of mind and body it would entail. No wonder some, though a minority, have held that Shakespeare's portrait of Polonius is a sympathetic, if not straight, one. Of course, many others have seen it as ironical in general or at the expense of the Lord Chancellor of Queen Elizabeth in particular.

Lafeu in *All's Well* presents a different kind of picture of an old counselor to a king. He has a good rapport with the King of Paris and is genuinely interested in his welfare. It is he who introduces Helena as a young wonder physician coming to take the challenge of curing the king of his intractable fistula. Lafeu moves closely with the king, using the privilege of his age and position at court, on terms of easy familiarity; he could call the king ' old fox' at one point. He is able to size up Parolles as a mere, pompous braggart and deigns to converse with him only to put him in his place. He is treated with respect in the courts of the king and the Rousillon. In his own way, he has match-making obsession. When it has long been given out that Helena the wife of Bertram is dead, Lafeu is only too ready to offer his daughter in marriage to Bertram. But, with alacrity, he withdraws the offer, once he comes to know at the end how Bertram has cheated and betrayed his wife. Helena who is now found to be very much alive and present there in propria persona.

In the context of Shakespeare's portrayal of the old, his picture of Lear, and Gloucester, in a sense, has a great deal to offer. The focus is on the extreme suffering that Lear and Gloucester undergo, both mental anguish and physical deprivation and discomfort. In Lear's case, his status as king gives a particular edge to his predicament. Lear may partly be a victim of his folly and his rage,

old man-like in many respects. But Shakespeare is equally keen to show how the good characters in the play have their concern for Lear as an old man and king 'more sinned against than sinning'. Kent, the Fool at heart, Albany, the walking Gentlemen and Cordelia not to mention Gloucester and Edgar in his guise as mad Tom, feel for Lear as a suffering old man. One of Macbeth's regrets, after his murderous career, is that he cannot have an honourable old age and all that goes with it.

Belarius in *Cymbeline*, Camillo the old shepherd in *The Winter's Tale* and Gonzalo (*The Tempest*) are of a feather. Generally speaking, the point, with regard to these characters in the final plays is that the recognition, reunion and restoration of broken bonds that take place between two generations, the old and the young, also occur between two, or more, old men in these plays. Cymbeline and Belarius, Camillo and Leontes and Gonzalo and Prospero. Belarius in his middle age in order to spite the king, kidnaps the princes of Cymbeline and repairs to the woods to live there. The princes grow up into five gallant-youths, thinking that they are the sons of a woodlander which Belarius appears to be. When Belarius comes to face with the king Cymbeline in the fortunes of the war against Romans in which the princes get the better of Romans, he makes a revelation of the truths which leads to a reconciliation or reunion between Cymbeline and Belarius, between the princes and their sister Imogen and also between Imogen and her husband Posthumous. Belarius is at best only mildly talkative, otherwise very few peculiarities mark his mode of speech.

Camillo dares to tell Leontes that his suspicion about Hieronimo's liaisons with Polixenes are totally unwarranted. But Leontes persists in his mad wrath against Polixenes and sets Camillo the task of killing him. The good Camillo warns the king of Sicily and overnight Polixenes sails away back home with Camillo accompanying him. After a long gap of time of sixteen years, Camillo is present along with Polixenes at the sheep-shearing feast at which the prince Florizel plans to take the hand at Perdita in the guise of shepherd girl now dressed up as the queen of the feast. When Polixenes rudely interrupts the trothplight and stops it, it is Camillo

who takes upon himself to arrange for the prince Florizel and Perdita to sail away to Leontes' court where they could get married. Polixenes follows them with the intention of preventing the marriage and Camillo is with him. The old shepherd reveals the contents of the bundle found with Perdita as a ship-wrecked infant washed ashore as if by Providence. They all happily reunite and the wedding is agreed to by one and all. And Camillo gets married to Paulina the dead Antigonus' wife, who has stage-managed the survival of Hermione and Perdita as an infant. Camillo also shares loquacious habits of speech with other oldish men in Shakespeare.

The old shepherd also shows a verbal profuseness. Curiously it is the old shepherd who finds the infant Perdita with a bundle beside her, whereas the young son witnesses the sea-storm and the bear making a feast on the body of Antigonus. So the old shepherd could say to his son

> Thou mett'st with things dying and
> I, with things new-born. (3.3. 164-165)

Though he wants Perdita to play the Queen of the Feast, on his own, he enjoys stage-managing the sheep-shearing feast. He is beside himself with fear when Polixenes threatens him with punishment for encouraging his daughter in her love for Florizel. But the old man has the saving wisdom to present the evidence of the bundle found with the infant Perdita, when he rescued her, to the king Polixenes so that it serves to sort of the confusions by revealing the truth of Perdita's royal parentage.

Gonzalo makes his presence in *The Tempest* felt in several ways. In the opening storm scene it is Gonzalo's confident reassurance and his gift of the gab that serves as an answer to the helpless cries of the mariners and the desperate swearing of the boatswain aim as the ship is on the point of getting wrecked in the storm the result of Prospero's magic operated through Ariel. Gonzalo speaks up and his assurance that the boatswain has the destiny to be hanged rather than drowned buoys up his and their spirits. When left on the shore of the island, Gonzalo launches on an elaborate, leisurely banter on purpose to keep the sorrow-stricken Alonso engaged after the loss of his son Ferdinand as everybody makes it out to be. Gonzalo plans an ideal commonwealth

to be set up on the island and goes on to elaborate on Trojan history. what is to the fore is his extreme talkativeness. Through this personality trait, he is able to keep the king from lapsing into despair when he and his company undergo testing experiences such as the harpy vanishes with the table when they are about to help themselves to food spread out for them.

When Alonso and party grow contrite about what they had done to Prospero, Duke of Milan after the experiences, it is Gonzalo's repentance that moves Ariel the incorporeal spirit much. (Though Gonzalo ever so kindly had provided Prospero with a stock of food and his favourite books on the voyage in a boat to nowhere)

> Whom you termed, sir, the good old Gonzalo
> His tears run down his cheeks like winter's drops
> From eaves of reeds, your charm so strongly works 'em
> That it you now behold then your affections
> Would become tender. (5.1. c15)

It is not surprising that Prospero towards the end welcomes him with open hands

> First, noble lord
> Let me embrace thine age, whose honour
> Cannot be measured or confined. (5.1. 123-125)

Perhaps the only critic so far to call attention to the satirico-comic atitude with which Shakespeare treats his old men and women characters has been Richard W. David in his book *The Janus of Poets* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1935), a book on the course of development of Shakespeare's dramatic verse. At one level, the frenetic old characters make for good theatricality. But overall Shakespeare's handling of these characters is further evidence of his exuberantly creative comic imagination counter-balanced by a serious engagement with the problems that may be brought by age in its wake. It would be partial understanding if we look at only one side of the operation of his imagination.

NOTE

Citations from Shakespeare in this essay are keyed to the Norton Shakespeare, Gen. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996).

ROMEO AND THE POLITICS OF GENDER IN *ROMEO AND JULIET*

R.W. Desai

In a paper read at Delhi University recently Professor Zhang Longxi of the City University of Hong Kong pointed our persuasively that in *Romeo and Juliet* physic in the form of poison/medicine plays an ambivalent role, being both salutary and destructive depending upon how we view the events that unfold in the play.[1] The drug given to Juliet by the Frair will enable her to be reunited with Romeo through inducement of the semblance of death, but its effect is so convincing that Romeo takes the final step towards the consummation of this union by consuming a deadly poison. As in ancient Chinese medicinal texts, in Paracelsus, in homeopathy, and elsewhere, medicine can be both poisonous and restorative, depending upon the circumstances. This contrariness becomes a metaphor, or an allegory, of the dualistic nature of many of the elements that run through the play; the two warring families are, ironically and tragically, reconciled to each other through the deaths of their children; the friendship between Romeo and Mercutio is the reason for Romeo's unfortunate intervention in the duel between Mercutio and Tybalt, resulting in their deaths; and the love between Romeo and Juliet is responsible for the double misunderstanding that leads them to suicide.

Building upon Professor Longxi's thesis, I would like to extend his argument so as to encompass within its range what I consider - as I think Juliet does too - the ambiguous nature of Romeo's love for her which would, had death not intervened, have proved perhaps as ephemeral as was his earlier infatuation with Rosaline, but because their lives are so tragically cut short, the love between them has been celebrated through the writing of Shakespeare's play and immortalised for all time to come. The play, then, self-consciously proclaims this achievement, the implication being that in real life sexual passion/love is by its very nature transient, but attains immortality through its termination by death, enabling the dramatist to give it, or rather, as Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream observes, to give to "airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.16-17). Something similar is suggested in Yeats's "Easter 1916":

> And what if excess of love
> Bewildered them till they died?
> I write it out in a verse –
> MacDonagh and MacBride
> And Connolly and Pearse
> Now and in time to be,
> Wherever green is worn,
> Are changed, changed utterly;
> A terrible beauty is born.

and in Stevens' "Peter Quince at the Clavier":

> Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
> Of those white elders, but, escaping,
> Left only Death's ironic scraping.
> Now, in its immortality, it plays
> On the clear viol of her memory,
> And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Art confers upon life permanence.

In what editors of the play agree to have been Shakespeare's immediate source, Arthur Brooke's narrative poem *Romeo and Juliet* (1562), which he followed in all substantial details, the Friar's shock and indignation at Romeo's sudden switching of affection from his earlier heart-throb, Rosaline, to Juliet is not to be found. This is Shakespeare's addition. The significance of Romeo's obsession with Rosaline has not heretofore been recognized as being important for the play's message, except insofar as it is presumed to be indicative of an infatuation which is effectively displaced by genuine love for Juliet, this being seen as the progression of the hero's emotional growth from adolescence to maturity.[2] However, this is not the manner in which Shakespeare's Friar regards the change:

> Holy Saint Francis! What a change is here!
> Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear
> So soon forsaken! Young men's love then lies
> Not truly in their hearts but in their eyes.
> Jesu Maria! What a deal of brine

Hath wash'd thy sallow cheeks for Rosaline.
How much salt water thrown away in waste
To season love, that of it doth not taste.
The sun not yet thy sighs from heaven clears,
Thy old groans yet ring in mine ancient ears.
Lo here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit
Of an old tear that is not wash'd off yet.
If e'er thou wast thyself, and these woes thine,
Thou and these woes were all for Rosaline.
And art thou chang'd? Pronounce this sentence then:
Women may fall when there's no strength in men. (2.3.64-80)

Strong words these in a passage of 16 lines which do not have a conterpart in Brooke's poem. There the Friar's response is initially negative, not on account of Rosaline but because he fears for Romeo's safety in getting entangled in a relationship with the powerful Capulet family :

A thousand doubts and more in th' old man's head arose,
A thousand dangers like to come, the old man does disclose,
And from the spousal rites he readeth him refrain:
Perhaps he shall be bet advised within a week or twain.

In Shakespeare's play the Friar's remarks are an indictment of Romeo for fickleness, shallowness, and inconstancy,[3] their function being to counter the amorous ecstasy of all that has gone before in the Romeo-Juliet relationship: their first meeting at the Capulet ball, followed by the magical Balcony scene for which the play has become the supreme encapsulation of the beauty of youthful love during the past four centuries in all countries and cultures, however diverse, around the world.

Nevertheless, in conformity with the principle of contraries balancing the one against the other with which this paper began, I suggest that the Friar's strongly critical reaction is an essential part of this pattern, cautioning us not to be blinded by the romance but to recognize the possibility of viewing Romeo's professions of constancy towards Juliet with an element of scepticism. Certainly Juliet herself, like all of Shakespeare's heroines in his comedies, is painfully aware of this possibility. In the midst of the exquisite Balcony scene, when Romeo declares,

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow,

That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops –

Juliet interrupts him, exclaiming,

O swear not by the moon, th" inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circle orb.
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

Far from being swept off her feet by Romeo's protestations of undying love, Juliet senses its likely ephemerality. Though captivated by what today we may call his sex-appeal, she has misgivings which she voices in ominous imagery suggesting her fear of abandonment:

Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract tonight;
It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say, It lightens . . . . (2.2.107-120)

Given, then, the uncertainty of perpetuity in Romeo's professed eternal commitment to Juliet,. the play seems to invite the reader / viewer to wish, paradoxically, for the death of the lovers, precisely so that the likelihood of their bliss being terminated by marriage and the passage of time may be decisively eliminated! Juliet, we recall, is not alone among Shakespeare's heroines in regarding male assurances of constancy more realistically than romantically. Rosalind of *As You Like It* wittily refutes Orlando's promise of loving her "For ever, and a day" with the riposte:

> Say a day, without the ever. No, no, Orlando, men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives (4.1.137-41),

while Touchstone, later in the play, puts it more bluntly, " to swear and to forswear, according as marriage binds and blood breaks" (5.4.56-7) where "blood," as Eric Partridge points out, stands for "sexual passion" as in Polonius's warning to Ophelia, "When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul / Lends the tongue vows" (*Hamlet,* 1.3.116-117).[4] It is worth remembering that at least two marriages in Shakespeare end in disaster: Othello murders his wife and Leontes sentences his wife to prison. And Balthaser's song in *Much Ado About Nothing* articulates Beatrice's grievance against Benedick for having won her heart "with false dice" (2.1.288-9):

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never. (2.3.64-7)

Further, and remarkably enough, though only fourteen Juliet knows that the male capacity for the expression of love is, biologically speaking – what we would call today the orgasm – subject to limit, whereas the female capacity – multiple orgasms – is limitless. She tells Romeo.

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep, the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite. (2.2.133-155)

And in a later play, *Troilus and Cressida,* Troilus is yet more explicit in acknowledging to Cressida the same painful truth as pertaining to the male's lack of performance :

This is the monstrosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confined, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit. (3.2.90)

Not surprisingly, the frankly outspoken Porter in *Macbeth*, while denouncing drink for its deleterious effect on the erectile capacity of the male – the inability to "stand to," as he puts it – is, in a larger sense, as were Juliet and Troilus, describing male sexual inferiority compared to that of the female: when asked by Macduff, "What three things does drink especially provoke?" he replies:

. . . Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes. It provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery. It makes him, and it mars him, it sets him on and it takes him off, it persuades him and disheartens him, makes him stand to and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep and giving him the lie, leaves him. (2.3.29-40)

The psycho-biological constitution of the male is an integral part of the inconstancy attributed to him throughout literature, including Shakespeare. Ophelia's song that she sings in her mental derangement turns the spotlight on this feature :

Quoth she, 'before you tumbled me
You promised me to wed.'
He answers,
'So would I a done, by yonder sun,
And thou hadst not come to my bed.' (*Hamlet* , 4.5.62-66)

Male betrayal has, of course, a long and well established presence in world literature: names that immediately come to mind are Rodolphe (*Madame Bovary*), Alec d' Urberville (*Tess*), Arthur Dimmesdale (*The Scarlet Letter*), and Count Vronsky (*Anna Karenina*). This lack of commitment to a relationship by the male, as depicted in literature, is corroborated by contemporay social historians. Consider the following excerpt from the Hite Report, *Women and Love,* by Shere Hite, published in 1987 :

> Pressure to have sex has been a big problem for women since the phony 'sexual liberation' of the sixties, which made us 'free' to do whatever a man wanted us to do. They all had the gall to assume that now that the moral constraints didn't forbid our having sex, of course we wanted to 'do it' with them whenever they asked for it, and AIDS hasn't stopped their attitude one bit.

The basic distinction between the genders, the male predatory and inconstant, the female yielding and loyal, is the psycho-biologcal under-current that permeates *Romeo and Juliet.* As we all know, a Shakespeare play is much more than the sum of its parts, is much more than a series of events constituting a beginning, middle, and end; rather, it possesses a thematic and organic unity which is reflected in language, imagery, and situation throughout the play. Thus *Romeo and Juliet* begins with the sexual imagery of male arousal and aggression seen in the declaration by the servant Sampson - whose very name is suggestive - that "A dog of that house shall move me to stand" (1.1.14-15). This motif is more specifically developed in the garrulous Nurse's bawdy description of Juliet's willingness at the age of three to anticipate a time when she would "fall backward when thou comest to age" (1.3.19-53).

Romeo and Juliet, then, is more than being a painful tragedy of "a pair of star-crossed lovers," as the Prologue so disarmingly tells us; it goes beyond this simplistic definition and explores certain fundamental gender differences that characterise human behaviour. If the Romeo-Juliet union occasioned by love-at-first-sight is the quintessential symbol of the 'love marriage', Capulet's angry outburst at Juliet's rejection of the County Paris represents the argument in favour of the 'arranged marriage':

> God's bread, it makes me mad!
> Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,

> Alone, in company, still my care hath been
> To have her match'd. And having now provided
> A gentleman of noble parentage,
> Of fair demesnes, youthful and nobly trained,
> Stuff'd, as they say, with honourable parts,
> Proportion'd as one's thought would wish a man . . . . (3.5.177-84)

As much recent scholarship has shown,[5] 16th century England saw a shift taking place from the arranged marriage to the love marriage, best encapsulated in Beatrice's declaration,

> Yes, faith, it is my cousin's duty to make curtsy, and say, 'Father, as it please you'. But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtsy, and say, 'Father, as it please me'. (*Much Ado*, 2.1.48-51)

However, as Carol Hansen points out,

> The most felicitous unions [in Shakespeare] do seem to result when the father's and daughter's choice coincide, as in the case of Portia who, while critical of her father's stricture of using the caskets in determining the right husband, is thus shielded from false suitors and ends with Bassanio, her choice.[6]

Romeo and Juliet, I suggest, is delicately balanced between an endorsement of the 'love marriage' as against its rejection in favour of the 'aranged marriage', while complicating the contention between the two with the introduction of a bitter family feud coupled with "disastrous tragic blows" ("Prologue," l. 7). It is this equipoise, this built-in contradiction, this refusal to project itself as a romantic fantasy, a 'lived happily ever after' scenario, that has ensured the continuance of the wide appeal the play exerts in a time when in the west four out of five marriages end in divorce within seven years of their solemnization, resulting in the institution having become near obsolete, and when in India too this trend is developing with widespread rapidity. The alternative, living together without the encumbrance of marriage, has proved to be equally, if not more, perilous for the woman than for the man, as is an oppressive marriage, for, apart from the economic considerations that might place her at a disadvantage, the psychological scars that a separation might inflict have shown themselves to be deeper and more damaging for the woman that the man.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Shakespeare has introduced

certain subtle touches to restrain somewhat the audience's unmitigated desire to be swept off its feet by Romeo, the total lover. Besides raising questions as to inherent male destructiveness as exhibited in the Mercutio-Tybalt-Romeo triangle as well as in the family feud being patriarchal, there is present an additional masculine calculatedness that shows up Romeo as a worldly-wise lover who is aware that he stands to gain economically from the match. Like Claudio of *Much Ado* whose careful choice of Hero as his wife takes into account not only that she seems to him to be "the sweetest lady that ever I looked on" (1.1.178-79) but also that she is her father's "only heir" (l.278), Romeo is no less shrewd – he tells the Friar that his

> heart's dear love is set
> on the fair daughter of rich Capulet (2.3.57-58),

a slight, but nevertheless significant pointer, later repeated when we are reminded that she is an "only child" (3.5.166), towards factors besides love that determine Romeo's choice of Juliet. Unlike France who regards Cordelia as "herself a dowry" (*Lear*, 1.1.241), Romeo is more circumspect.

The play, then, engages us with various complexities ancillary to, but nevertheless important for a fuller appreciation of its final outcome: the burial, as the Prologue states, of the "parents' strife." The disruption of the social fabric of Verona occasioned by the strife between the two most prominent families to which Escalus the Prince refers repeatedly with indignation and disgust, calling them "rebellious subjects, enemies to peace / . . . you men, you beasts – / That quench the fire of your pernicious rage / With purple fountains issuing from your veins" (1.1.88-92), is resolved by the sacrifice of the lovers, a transaction suggestive of their expendibility in the larger interest of achieving social and political harmony.

NOTES

[1]"The Ambivalence of Poison and Medicine: Reading *Romeo and Juliet* From the Perspective of East-West Comparative Studies." 13 February, 2006.

[2]Thus Harold Goddard dismisses it as "a sentimental and unrequited languishing after one Rosaline" (*The Meaning of Shakespeare*, vol. 1, Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1951, p.119); Harold Bloom's reference to Rosaline

is equally brief (*Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York: Penguin, 1998, p.95); and William T. Betken in his edition of the play merely endorses Irving Ribner's view that "the impetuosity, haste, carelessness of the lovers are normal attributes of youth" (Betken, *The Other Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet,* New York : Bardavon Books, 1984, p.168).

[3]Taking an extreme position, James H. Seward regards the lovers as being over-sexed, as slaves of lust, not love *(Tragic Vision in 'Romeo and Juliet'*, Washington, D.C., 1973, pp. 23-25).

[4]Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.67

[5]See, eg., Sarup Singh, *The Double Standard in Shakespeare and Related Essays.: The Changing Status of Women in 16th and 17th Century England* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1988); Lisa Hopkins, *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy Husbands* (Houndmills : Macmillan, 1998). For a more detailed listing of authors on this topic, see *Hamlet Studies*, 17 (1995), 158-59.

[6]Carol Hansen, *Woman as Individual in English Renaissance Drama: A Defiance of the Masculine Code* (New York : Peter Lang, 1993), pp.13-14.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE SOUL

Iffat Ara

Emily Bronte may be regarded as a modern recluse whose confinement to the parsoage, the Moors, her world of fantasy and romance, became for her a source of strength and enlightenment. She studied carefully the inward conflict of the human soul exposed to experience, the role of the unconscious in practical life and the attaiment of happiness though love. Emily's bold assertion to dwell on the theme of the intensity of passionate desire and its repercussions was frowned upon both by her readers and critics.

Emily Brontes's single novel *Wuthering Heights* was a testimony of the fact that she understood life by her deep involvement in it. Though her experiences were limited yet her hold on life and observation of it was amazing. This novel is a careful study of passionate sexual life led by a selected group of characters. It is not the familiar sentimental excesses that are brought to light but terrifying revelations regarding passionate desire. The word 'Wuthering' in local dialect refers to the noise of tempest and, like Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* the lives and moods of characters in this novel are also marked by an agitated state of mind. Emily Bronte, not unlike Shakespeare, revealed the animality ingrained in human nature through a male character who could have been domesticated had he not been exposed to ill-treatmment and ignorance.

The novelist emphasizes the relevance of survival and satisfaction of the spirit more than anything else. And thus the characters of Catherine and Heathcliff are twined together as spirit and soul even after Catherine's death. Heathcliff was able to communicate with her for a period of seventeen years till he followed her to the grave.

Like Chaucer, Emily Bronte employs the narrative and dramatic technique to convey her impressions about human behaviour and natural surroundings. The characters indulge in self-revelation and Ellen Dean and Lockwood interlink the past and the present through narration of events. The past symbolizes passion and the present

is marked by wisdom. Emily Bronte equates childhood with spiritual understanding and the life that follows is either a development of it or its decline. She further believes that man and his environment are interdependent. If there is a break, a split personality is the cause of trouble and agony. The native wildness of Heathcliff became dangerous when Hindley Earnshaw subjected him to ill-treatment. Similarly, Othello's volcanic energy and violence in Shakespeare's play bursts open at the slightest provocation. The relationship between violence and power is shown through the medium of various characters. Some of them are interlinked to inflict pain and indulge in violence. Their success or failure depends on their capacity to do so. Hindley and Isabella create violent scenes but lack the power to succeed in their plans. Catherine behaves violently, for she feels helpless to maintain her relationship with two men. Heathcliff is powerful but does not take to violence when separated from Catherine. A victim of circumstances, he never takes the initiative but merely reacts to it. Heathcliff and Catherine seem to be possessed of excessive energy and therefore they continue to engage our attention all along.

Heathcliff, like Iago in *Othello* and Edmund in *King Lear*, destroys peace at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He is shocked to be rejected by Catherine who preferred Edgar to an illiterate Heathcliff. Though she governs the two men unconsciously, yet things fall apart a short while when a violent scene occurs between Heathcliff and Edgar that leads to Catherine's mortal illness. Passion overrules her and she becomes its victim.

Isabella falls in love with the brutish Heathcliff who is all passion, unguarded and unrestrained, and like Edmund he will spare none. He resolves to revenge himself on life by re-enacting the tragic story in the next generation. And Catherine reflects on his character thus: "Pray don't imagine that he conceals depths of benevlence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He's not a rough diamond—a pearl containing Oyster of a rustic, he is a fierce, pitiless, Wolfish man."[1] Catherine may be possessive in respect of Heathcliff but she understands him well enough to analyse his character critically.

Though religious references abound in *Wuthering Heights*,

yet Heathcliff, like Edmund, does not believe in the Christian God. Heathcliff justifies his claim to take revenge on just grounds and says: "God won't have the satisfaction I shall." Catherine feels repentant for her decision to marry Edgar and Heathcliff is bitter in his response both to human beings and God. The characters do not change in this novel but they merely direct their impulses in a better way to avoid chaos and unrest. The concept of reward and punishment is also disregarded by them though Emily Bronte is firm in her beliefs.

Like characters in Shakespearean tragedy, Emily Bronte's characters are equally wavering, stubborn and passion-stricken. Catherine and Heathcliff are free like the elemental forces out of which they are produced and to them they are united at the end. Another feature that brings them close to Saint Joan in Shaw's play is loneliness and sense of independence. They seek no support from anywhere. But they are different from Saint Joan who seeks the guidance of God. The characters in *Wutherng Heights* follow the law of their own nature and hence are not true Christians.

If Heathcliff plays the role of Hindley Earnshaw in degrading Hareton, he takes full revenge with no mark of repentance. His primitive force weakens to some extent at the end of the novel where, like Othello in his death-speech, he unburdens himself thus: "Come in! Come in! Cathy come oh do — once more! oh! my heart's darling; hear me this time, Catherine, at last!"

There is a mystery about Heathcliff's origin like Othello's mysterious account of his adventurous life. It never enables him to gain recognition in a society of vain and proud Venetians. Heathcliff's soul also passes through the guardians of civilisation. One's judgment of both Heathcliff and Othello tends to be partial and compassionate. Heathcliff becomes a symbol of the atrocious man who is resolved to degrade and crush those who fall a victim to his vagaries. But he also emerges as a homeless boy who gains our sympathy. Othello too is one who is a sufferer and also one who inflicts pain.

Further, like the tragic heroes in Shakespearean drama, characters like Catherine bring about their own fall and one

experiences a sense of waste and decline as in the case of Othello who falls from greatness and suffers loss. It must have been a reflection of the desire for freedom concealed within Emily Bronte. Though confined to her private world, she finds an outlet through her characters and her imaginative thinking.

It is spiritual affnity that binds these two characters together and Linton is merely cool and soothing like the moonbeams: "Whatever our souls are made up of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire (Chapter 9). Revenge will not satisfy their feverish brains and troubled lives and so death is the end of all cares. Away from each other they live without a soul and therefore life is worthless unless they explore what unites them. They are brought together in soul and spirit like Browning conceived of the perfect union of sense and soul. This reconciliation is readily achieved in Hareton Earnshaw's and Catherine's closeness in whom flesh and spirit are perfectly fused together. Thus education and society triumph over primitive energies that are uncontrollable and violent. Still the 'unconscious self' is left free and remains undamaged.

Catherine could not return to the Wuthering Heights, a source of inspiration for her, except through death. And even then she will not rest in peace until Heathcliff joins her: "I'll not lie there by myself ... till you are with me" (Ibid.). And her spirit will not rest till it is united with his soul forever. Hence she is the power that controls and drives Heathcliff. He will continue to communicate with her and she will survive in her grave as if by the magnetic force of a living being.

Love and the urge to revenge are the two ruling forces both in Heathcliff and in Othello. But Heathcliff is powerful like Othello and passive like Hamlet, and so he evokes both a sense of fear and compassion. His power is put into effect at a moment of crisis. He is one who prompts others while he remains passive. He prompts hatred in Hindley, rivalry in Linton, love and then hate in Isabella and terror in his own son. A thought about Catherine's love prevents him from active revenge or physical volence. When she is dead the process of disintegration ends. Like Othello, Heathcliff also has no life but in Catherine who is the chief impetus to him. And when

she dies all his power is curbed. He is passion in an excessive degree and yet not evil in the demonic sense.

Like Edmund, Heathcliff is a refined product of modern society and he sustains his physical strength and rational faculty and is able to confront any opposition without fear: "She's her brother's heir, is she not?" (Chapter 10). Heathcliff knows that his bonds with Catherine were strong and yet he will take revenge upon Linton and possess all his wealth. It is lack of material advantage that had rendered him helpless. His whole life is a struggle against the strong and the powerful.

Like Othello's death speech, Catherine's death-scene leads to Heathcliff's confession of faith: "Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your own heart Cathy? You have killed yourself" (Chapter 15). Forms of jealousy are found in abundance in the novel. Heathcliff exhibits greedy jealousy when he holds Catherine close to him on the eve of her mortal illness. And he is decisive not to let Catherine rest in peace if he is made restless: "May you not rest, as long as I am living" (Chapter 16). She is the spring of joy and Heathcliff cannot stop like the Pontic sea leading on into the Propontic and the Hellespont that continues to flow. He is capable of inspiring both hate and fear and does not spare his own son but he himself fears none: "You must learn to avoid putting me in passion, or I shall really murder you sometime" (Chapter 33).

Heathcliff's task is complete; he has taken revenge, possessed strength, power and wealth and reaches the final attainment of happiness by uniting himself with Catherine. What he leaves behind is very meagre; his strength is submerged in Catherine. The happiness he has deprived of during life time is got after death. The young attain worldly happiness and he gets spiritual ecstasy: "Today I am within sight of my heaven — I have my eyes on it hardly three feet to sever me!" (Ibid.). His speech is figurative like that of Othello who uses pompous language. Heathcliff is also described in terms of images and metaphors. He, like Edmund, is a believer in naturalism but those who abhor him describe him in terms of a devil. And yet one would agree that he is more violent in words than in acts. He uses terms of abuse for hmself and images from natural

life to condemn others. He is called a 'noble sufferer' as Othello calls himself an honourable murderer who killed his wife to safeguard his honour. Heathcliff enjoys his fall like Othello, for both yearn for a blissful union with their objects of love. Browning also valued life after death, a better abode for the repose of the soul. If Linton is associated with lamb-imagery, Heathcliff is described in terms of cat-imagery.

The animals live along with the humans and enjoy greater safety and protection with their masters. Like the inmates of the two houses Heathcliff is almost erased from the face of the earth. He resembles the Byronic hero in *Child Harold.* Emily Bronte who had read the poem with keen interest associates the broodings of the hero over his perpetual failure with Heathcliff. The cynicism and mockery that he pours forth on others and his sensitiveness to his deprivation makes him look half-tragic and half-ironic like the hero of the poem. His undying remorse also secures for him a tinge of compassion, which fascinates the reader who is pained to see a male leave such an unpleasant impression on the minds of others.

Hence one concludes that Heathcliff not only completes his task of soul's exploration and becomes like Shakespeare's beloved, a single body and soul, united with Catherine but he also glorifies his existence by proving himself to be a true lover. He is an image of life reflected through his passons, and the vigour of life he exhibits is unique. He lived bravely, faced all opposition and died in the same spirit. In her poems Emily Bronte refers to the immortal energy of God but, like Bernard Shaw, she also does not seek expression for her thoughts in terms of orthodox religion but through fantasy. Thus Catherine is not satisfied with the colourless existence of Edgar compared to the fiery spirit and impressive soul of Heathcliff who ultimately won the game.

REFERENCES

[1]Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (A Casebook Edition Edited by Miriam Allott;London: Macmillan, 1970), Chapter 10.

All subsequent references are indicated in parentheses in the text.

TWO NOTES ON *THE WASTE LAND*

K. Narayana Chandran

Harold Monro and T.S. Eliot: A Source for "A small house agent's clerk"

Harold Monro's "Suburb" is a satirical sketch of ten varying stanzaic and rhyme patterns. It presents a suburban view whose particulars are captured on the run from a speeding train. The initial view of a row of "dingy houses" along the banks of a "sullen river" narrows down as the train "emerges on the plain" and the poet breaks into a reverie in which the 'actors' are a young woman and her lover whom she brings home. The meatier section of the poem details their amorous tryst, a close parallel to what Tiresias perceives and foretells in Part III of Eliot's *Waste Land:*

> Sometimes in the background may be seen
> A private summer-house in white or green.
> Here on warm nights the daughter brings
> Her vacillating clerk,
> To talk of small exciting things
> And touch his fingers through the dark.
>
> He, in the uncomfortable breach
> Between her trilling laughters,
> Promises, in halting speech,
> Hopeless immense Hereafters.
>
> She trembles like the pampas plumes.
> Her strained lips haggle. He assumes
> The serious quest....
>
> Now as the train is whistling past
> He takes her in his arms at last.
>
> It's done. She blushes at his side
> Across the lawn — a bride, a bride.[1]

Eliot appears to have remembered not only the indecent hurry of this suburban pair in Monro but also the earlier poem's incongruous rhymes reflecting it (clerk/dark; laughters/Hereafters) which he replicates in the typist-clerk scene of *The Waste Land* (lover/over;

alone/gramophone). Of course the clerks have no names ("He" in both) but while the Monro prototype is introduced prosaically as "Her vacillating clerk," Eliot would have us gather from a simile how unsure of himself or his motives *his* clerk really is: "One of the low on whom assurance sits/ As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire."[2] *The Waste Land*, again, fleshes out the tryst and stretches Monro's silent stanza-break and the cryptically wry conclusion ("It's done") to a full line: " 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over'."[3] It is difficult to say, though, who between the two poets is more charitable to these poor suburban lives — Monro who sees in the young woman a future bride, or Eliot who leaves us in no doubt that the episode ends just as sordidly there as it began.

There are at least two other reminiscences of Monro here, far too subtle and scattered for immediate recognition. The first of these is "one half-formed thought" which Monro literally allows his brain to pass, before Eliot's typist allows hers, as he reflects on the tidy suburban gardens:

> In all the better gardens you may pass,
> (Product of many careful Saturdays).... [4]

Eliot's Tiresias reflects on the disorder of the typist's divan what with its heap of assorted lingerie and slippers, and comments parenthetically: "(at night her bed)." Less manneristic, however, is Eliot's significant recall of Monro's clerk whose "Promises... /Hopeless immense Hereafters" that turn up later in a Thames daughter's song: "After the event/ He wept. He promised a 'new start'."[5]

NOTES

[1]Harold Monro, *Children of Love* (London, 1914) in *Collected Poems*, ed. Alida Monro (1933. London, rpt. 1970), p. 160.

[2]T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 234.

[3]Ibid., line252.

[4]Monro, p.160.

[5]T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 298.

T.S. Eliot and Wilbur D. Steele: The Fishermen Lounging

Footfalls echo in the memory.
"Burnt Norton I"[1]

In his notes appended to "The Defects of Kipling (1909)" by T. S. Eliot in *Essays in Criticism* for January 2001, Christopher Ricks suggests a source for a line in *The Waste Land:*

> Wishing, naturally, to find something in 'The Defects of Kipling' that might connect directly not only with Eliot the critic but with Eliot the poet, one would have to fall back upon the 'Gloucester longshoremen' and 'lounging about the wharves': *The Waste Land*, III, 'Where fishmen [*sic*] lounge at noon'.[2]

In the passage to which Ricks's note refers, Eliot faults the 'realism' of Kipling: "I have heard from the lips of Gloucester longshoremen that *Captains Courageous* is quite incorrect, the product of [its author's] three weeks lounging about the wharves."[3] The point is that the fishermen are not 'lounging about the wharves' but Kipling who was, apparently, gathering material for his 'realism'. We need, I think, to look elsewhere for a scene where the fishermen indeed are lounging; if, that is, we are looking at all for a 'source'.

I have spotted a clear instance of fishermen lounging, nearly as boisterously scenic as in Eliot's "public bar in Lower Thames street". Eliot appears to have borrowed the phrase itself from a passage in Wilbur Daniel Steele's "Footfalls", an American short story of 1920. Introducing its chief character Boaz Negro, a native of an old Puritan sea town, the narrator remarks:

> He was happy. An unquenchable exuberance lived in him.... He came into his shop singing. His voice, strong and deep as the chest from which it emanated, rolled out through the doorway and along the street, and the fishermen, done with their morning work and lounging and smoking along the wharves, said, 'Boaz is to work already'. They came up to sit in the shop.[4]

If, as attested by the passage Ricks quotes from the Preface to *Fishermen of the Banks*, Eliot was fascinated by the lounging fishermen, he is unlikely to have missed Steele's vivid phrasing of their assembly in Boaz Negro's shop.

There are, to my mind, compelling reasons to believe that Eliot had read "Footfalls", widely celebrated then as the O. Henry memorial Award Prize story of 1920. Apart from its *Waste Land*ish commonplaces of dark foreboding, blindness and old age, fire,

revenge, and mayhem, the American story reworks the Senecan/ Elizabethan theme of father avenging his son's foul murder, *à la* Hieronymo. The villain of this story is one Campbell Wood, a bank clerk, a detail Eliot would have found oddly intriguing. Above all, the protagonist of this catastrophic narrative is a Tiresias of sorts: Boaz Negro is old, blind, caring, and, in a manner of speaking, given to 'mixing memory and desire'. All through his life he perceives the scene, and foretells the rest of the 'story' for us! This Tiresian parallelism could go much further, but there is at least one line in *The Waste Land* which Boaz Negro might as well have uttered with hardly any offence to his life's mission and narrative logic: "I too awaited the expected guest" (*The Waste Land*, l. 230).

The clinching evidence of "Footfalls" echoing in the poet's memory is, however, the order of words that happens exactly in the two texts:

> [A]nd along the street, and the fishermen, done with their morning work and lounging and smoking... [Steele].[5]
>
> *And along the* Strand, up Queen Victoria *Street*.
>
> .....
>
> And a clatter and a chatter from within
> Where *fishermen lounge* at noon... [Eliot].[6]

NOTES

[1]T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton I," line 11.

[2]Christopher Ricks, "Notes" on "The Defects of Kipling (1909)," *Essays in Criticism* LI (2001), 6-7.

[3]T.S. Eliot, "The Defects of Kipling (1909)," *Essays in Criticism* LI (2001), 4.

[4]Wilbur Daniel Steele, "Footfalls," *A Book of Short Stories*, ed. Secondary English Editorial Staff, 2 vols. (Florida, 3rd edition, 1983) II, 113-4.

[5]Steele, "Footfalls," 114.

[6]*The Waste Land*, lines 258, 262-3; italics supplied.

SUFFERING AND REGENERATION: BERNARD MALAMUD'S *A NEW LIFE*

Manjula Davidson

Bernard Malamud's novel *A New Life* centers on a migratory orphan. It, to some degree, reflects the writer's experiences on the faculty of the Oregon State College making Cascadia College a more realistic setting. In it he "emerges from the private world of fantasy into the larger world of the academy."[1] The academic figures have their counter parts in real life. The novel discusses with subtle irony departmental objectives, the politics and the idiosyncrasies of the so-called academicians of the Cascadia College. Lenin the protagonist feels that the education system at Cascadia fails to teach how to keep civilization from destroying itself.

The novel is not merely an academic satire; it is about a man in search of a meaningful life, love, values and identity. It probes the development of the soul of Seymour Levin. As the title of the novel suggests, it is mainly a study of the protagonist's difficulty in undoing the hold of a wasted and deprived past. The hero, Seymour Levin, is a former drunkard and a depressive, unsuccessful lover with a desolate childhood and a burdensome past. His search for a new life makes him find his way to Cascadia. On arrival he first meets Pauline Gilley, who narrates her husband's scholarly activities and his other hobbies. She relates her own background and her father's. She asks Levin to say something about himself. He refuses to say much about his own past except that it was a wasted one. When asked why he has come so far, he says that he has hoped that a new place will bring about change in his life.

In college, Dr.Gilley takes him around to make him familiar with his surroundings. Levin meets others of the faculty, Dr.Fabrikant and Professor Fairchild, the Head. The latter tells him to work conscientiously and refrain from dating students even when provocated and keep away from the wives of faculty members. In the interview scene between Seymour Levin, the new English instructor and Fairchild, the chairman of Cascadia College English Department, the latter goes through the crucial list of items that every new Cascadian instructor must be subjected to.

On his second day in Easchester, Levin learns from Gilley, the director of the Freshman English program, that Cascadia College is not a liberal Arts College but mostly a Science and Technology College and that the English Department is "service-oriented", having no majors and offering primarily grammar oriented composition. Sadek, a Syrian graduate student who lives in Mrs.Beaty's house, befriends Levin. Once Levin and Sadek visit a booth in a tavern. There Sadek starts wooing the waitress. Although Levin warns him to behave, he feels himself growing jealous of the Syrian as her affection for him visibly blooms. We see Levin's isolation makes him go in search of love which involves him in a comic incident with the waitress, Laverne. Unfortunately, he is robbed not only of the fulfilment of physical pleasure but is berated and humiliated by the waitress, Laverne.

Levin is invited to a pot luck held customarily on the evening of the first day of class where he is introduced to the faculty members' wives. Professor Fairchild welcomes the new recruits. Levin goes on to ask him what changes and ideas he had for running the Department. C.D. Fabribant says that his chances of becoming head are remote. Levin in his discussions with Bucket expresses his opinion that C.D. Fabrikant would make a better head than Gerald Gilley to which Bucket agrees.

Levin is attracted to his student Nadalee Hammerstad. He tries to control himself but finds that he gets excited at the thought of her. One day he meets her in the book store. She tells him about herself. They go out for a walk and she tells him he appeals to her. They decide to meet near the sea in her aunt's place. Levin does consummate his affair with the student. She arouses his lust and he thinks that he cannot betray her because of her trust: "The girl trusts me, I can't betray her. If I want sex I must be prepared to love, and love may mean marriage."[2] But soon he realizes that he never felt any real affection for her. His chivalric spirit is depressed by the thought that he took advantage of his position as a teacher. Thus finally he comes to grief. Disenchanted by everything, he catches a miserable cold and sinks into the depths of despair. He thinks he can no longer expect the promise of a new life of fulfilment. He

recalls in dirty detail each disgusting defeat from boyhood, his weaknesses, impoverishment, and indiscipline in the fabric of a will-less life. "More than once he experienced crawling self-hatred.... It left him frightened because he thought he had outdistanced it by three hundred miles...."[3]

However, Levin again goes through an interrupted seduction with Avis Fliss, a faculty member. His struggle for romantic fulfillment is full of incidents which bring out his comic ineptitude. She is a symbol of a life-denying character and of corruption. It is at this point when he is in a dejected mood and falls sick that Pauline pays a visit to his room. The visit restores him. When he rises from his sick bed, he returns to a world transformed. He initiates his love affair with Pauline when he inadvertently comes across her while entering an enchanted forest. Prompted by her, he tells her about the secret of his past and his life of utter degradation. Then he relates the mystical experience he underwent which was a revelation to him and convinced him to go on living. When he finishes telling her about himself, she says she sensed it and knew who he was which means that he corresponds to her dream image of a man, that he is meant for her and that their destinies are interrelated. Consequently, he indicates a willingness to enter into a deeper relationship with her. But he felt he was betraying Gilley who had befriended him when he needed a friend. Moreover, she is the wife of his superior and a mother of two children. He is in a dilemma and is unnable to escape feelings of guilt. But he does not withhold his love from her.

After his landlady finds out that Pauline has been visiting his room and her infidelity is nearly discovered by her husband, Levin feels it is wrong to see her. The guilt has hurt both of them, and they begin to see much less of each other. He thinks that the strongest morality resists temptation so he must renounce continuing to be immoral. Morality, he feels, gives value to others' lives. One's life receives value when he values other men's lives. So finally he stops seeing her altogether. But he is eventually trapped when she confesses her love for him. Soon he avoids thoughts of Pauline, and his rejection of love is supported by his discovery of the Pauline-

Duffy affair. Pauline Gilley admits that she intends to divorce Gilley and become Levin's wife. He asks her why she had hidden the fact that Duffy and she had been lovers. She informs him that she fell in love with him after he left and that now he is dead.

Gilley admonishes Levin for stealing his wife and tells him not to depend on her love because all she saw in him was a certain resemblance to somebody else. He further tells him that he was appointed because among the pile of discarded applications his application appealed to Pauline as she thought that his experience was good and she liked his ideas of teaching composition. The application-picking scene explains how Levin got a chance to come and teach in Cascadia and it demosntrates how much the new life is tied to the old soul and that it is not free choice but fate which determines the future. Gilley is ready to pardon Levin if he resigns and leaves, and he promises him good references. Since the latter does not reply, he receives an official communication from the President dismissing him and terminating his services.

Pauline asks Levin to request Gilley for the custody of the children. Meanwhile, Levin feels he wants to give back everything he had taken from him. Nevertheless, he asks for Pauline and the kids. Gilley responds by enumerating all the drawbacks in her, a chronically discontented woman, and the burden of assuming the responsibility of children and married life. But when he fails to dissuade Levin in giving up Pauline and the children he offers him a despairing alternative. The price Levin has to pay for being allowed to go off with Pauline is that he has to renounce college teaching. When he seems determined on going through with his decision, Gilley is amazed.

To establish convincingly his transcendence, Malamud shows Levin fighting for Pauline and the children besides accepting the responsibility for them. Finally, although Levin is left without a job or a prospect of one and a life with her that holds little promise of happiness, he achieves a kind of heroism. He is neither a mythical folk hero nor a saint but a coward.

The period in history when the novel was written was one of mistrust, suspicion and failure of the moral nerve. The impact of

these feelings are reflected in the teaching community of Cascadia. Cascadia is perhaps a paradise to which most of the characters have come to establish themselves and lead materially successful lives or escape the wearying demands of existence. Levin himself, when he comes to Easchester, is in search of a new life to evade an increasingly frightening America and the burdensome, fearful past. Though dissatisfied, all Malamud's characters do not have desire to try their abilities elsewhere. People in Easchester are content and complacent with the place and people. Anyone like Leo Duffy or Levin who tries to get to know more than his share is neither accepted nor appreciated. The hidebound Cascadians' aversion to the creativity, introduction of new ideas and their contentment with their drab and drowsy existence are universal features and the Cascadia College community is a reflection of contemporary humanity.

Levin is appalled and his ideals are shattered when he discovers that the teaching of literature is ignored for grammar. He finds there is no individualism and his colleagues accept the chairman's outdated text and his views. They teach to enable the students to pass the departmental examination. He thinks that as a teacher he " could do everything he could to help bring forth those gifted few who would do more than their teachers had taught, in the name of democracy and humanity"[4]

The novel also upholds the view that romantic notions of love are not adequate to nourish a lasting relationship. Levin at the beginning of the novel is a deluded romantic. He is afraid of any entanglement. He avoids Pauline out of fear of getting involved. He wanted to harden himself: "He wanted no tying down with ropes, long or short, seen or unseen — had to have room to move so he could fruitfully use freedom."[5] He is a serio-comic figure. His excessive romanticism reveals the comic perception of *A New Life*. Early in the novel when Levin first arrives, Pauline drops tuna casserole on his lap, then later Erik urinates on him just at the moment of sexual consummation and his trousers get stolen by the Syrian, and a little later when he has an appointment with Nadalee Hammerstad and is looking forward to it he loses his way to an

erotic tryst. This is a kind of deflationary technique combined with slapstick and mock heroic satire which is the source of humour in the book.

Levin's affair with Pauline Gilley is vital to him because it confirms his move towards the beginning of a new life. Through her, he comes to acquire knowledge of himself. They are ambivalent in their attitude to each other. As their relationship strengthens it threatens his career and the comfortable, secure life which she leads as the wife of Gilley. Levin realizes that one must be prepared to confront human complexity if his life is to be fully lived. In the end, he remains inspired of some new life, spiritually active, ever alert to new possibilities and a better fate heading for an open road. He accepts suffering as a necessary part of life and realizes that life is holy. His final decision to choose the encumbrances of marriage and swear never to take up college teaching again is a combination of the ludicrous and heroic. In the end, Levin is heroic in that he proves to be not just a deluded romantic but one who recognizes reality and has accepted in principle a life of patience, submission, responsibility and defeat. His integrity is undeniable.

To end, *A New Life* is a novel about a man in search of love, values in life and identity, and a hero who would fit into the twentieth century, into the life of our times. Ultimately, although Levin fails as an adventuring hero, in the larger sense, he triumphs because his ordeals have chastised him making him emerge with a liberating insight into life. Malamud affirms that redemption cannot be achieved by moving out of one place in search of a new life to another, but what he suggests is that salvation is possible when there is a change of heart in man. Seymour Levin, in accepting fatherhood and responsibility, has transcended himself and achieved triumph.

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EXISTENTIAL SYMBIOSIS AND ADAMIC AMALGAMS: THE NOVEL OF THE AMERICAN WEST WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FRANK WATER'S *THE WOMAN AT OTOWI CROSSING* AND FREDERICK MANFRED'S *GREEN EARTH*

K.B. Razdan

As a nomenclature and a phenomenon the American West remained a misconceived and misinterpreted entity for quite some time. In American parlance, the West became synonymous with awesome expanses, deep canyons, treasure hunts, gunfights, and aimless and mindless violence. The West in the hands of its writers, particularly the novelists, went on to become a literary cocktail, a creative hybrid of the geographical and the metaphysical embellished with an exciting spectacle of intriguing psychic wildernesses. Thus, the West becomes not only a physical presence but an attitude, a state of mind that represents a tension besides a dialectic of an affinity to nature and proximity to culture. The novels of writers like Vardis Fisher, A.B. Guthrie, Frederick Manfred and Frank Waters made the American West "that fabled land where the restless pioneer moves ever forward, settling one frontier after another, where the American character becomes self-reliant, democratic, and endlessly eager for the new ...."[1]

Two well known novels, Frank Water's *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* (1966) and Frederick Manfred's *Green Earth* (1977), symbolize the West as a place, a process, a direction, a form of society or a way of thinking. Both these works idealize, romanticize, observe and picturise the West through a feast of narrative wizardry in which the prominent elements become a subtle synthesis, a thematic amalgamation and a symbolic integration of the outer physical landscape with the interior existential geography of the mind and the soul, the emotions, thoughts and feelings. The protagonists of *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* and *Green Earth* make themselves as parts of a natural environment, imbuing themselves with a Jungian tapping of the unconscious and most of all taking an

active interest in primitivism, connecting and fusing the past with the present. The connotations and ramifications of the epic, the romantic or even the mythic and the lyrical get displayed as an existentially problematic dome of multicolored glasses. A separate look at the two selective specimens from the American novel of the West would justify the preceding observations.

In *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* Frank Waters has tried to dramatize the themes that had been maturing in his earlier works, *The Colorado* (1946) and *Masked Gods* (1950). The novel is based on a real life story of an American lady from the West, Edith Warner, who ran a tearoom at Otowi Crossing just below Los Alamos. In his novel, Waters gives the story of Helen Chalmers who runs a tea-stall and who as an individual from the West amalgamates herself with her environment in an Adamic ambience of wondrous and infinite possibilities. Helen is also depicted as a close friend of the first atomic scientists who frequent her tea shop. The female protagonist herself as the woman doing business of existential innovation, renovation and recreation as ingredients of a symbiotic syndrome, forms a kind of link, a bridge between two antithetical orientations and value systems: the passive, intuitive, docile nature of the Indians on the one side and on the other front, the lady herself as a product of the power-oriented, aggressive, national white world. Waters himself declared once: " ... a primary concern of all the peoples everywhere is their relationship to their land. This has been the basic source of conflict between the White and Red Races on this continent.... This theme of their conflicting relationships to their earth has provided something of a thematic continuity in all my books, novels and non-fiction."[2] Such a bonding beats with an intoxicating Adamic pulse and at the same time, paradoxically, creating conflicting formulations and challenging predicaments in the lives of the fictional protagonists. *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* is guided and moulded by the power of the primary Indian world as well as by the artistic metamorphosis of the White mind, a mind liberated from mere factualness. The central protagonist, Helen Chalmers, gradually assumes the title of the mythic "Woman" as the people around her become aware of her mystic powers. Bidding

adieu to a fractured and frustrating marriage in the East, Helen leaves an infant daughter and makes a living for twenty years by running a small lunch outlet on the banks of the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

The narrative opens after a 'Prologue' which foreshadows Helen's later mysticism, and the lady seems to have arrived at a crisis. The world is on the verge of World War II, the Chile line is being torn up and Helen finds out that her daughter, now grown up, is coming to visit her. The pressure mounts: international, financial and personal. Adamic ardour of the self turns into one of pain, confusion and crisis as Helen discovers that she has a tumour in her breast. In a flash, She comprehends the "indivisible unity" of "one immortal existence that had never had a beginning nor would ever have an end."[3] This "Cataclysmic explosion that burst asunder the shell of the world around her, revealing its inner reality with its brilliant flash" (*WAOC*, 30), becomes the role-playing matrix of the novel. Having realized the central truth, Helen henceforth becomes a different person. She becomes, one may say, an instant Buddhist. In spite of some dull and tense periods, she does not forget the meaning of the vision she had experienced. Thus, this unusual and captivating woman attains the level of female Adam with the understanding of saints and sages. It has rightly been observed that "the Four parts of the novel correspond to the four stages of the mystical way: Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Unification."[4] On one level, the narrative offers the feverish, secret activity at Los Alamos where a number of scientists are working on the atomic bomb, and another level presents Helen's personal and family relationships, including her daughter Emily, her former lover Jack Turner, Emily's lover Dr Edmund Gaylord, one of the atomic scientists, and Facundo, the cacique of San Ildefonso Pueblo across the river, who helps Helen serve dinners to the scientists and who eventually moves into an abode on her property. An unspoken language amalgammates these humans into an Adamic essence of deeper perceptions. All the same, it takes Helen some time to adjust to the vast and seemingly impersonal consciousness she has entered into. The vision is one of great unity and when Jack expresses his desire to marry her, she refuses and tells him:

> "Something's happened inside me. I can't explain it because I don't understand it. But it's changed my whole life — the way I see us, everything! If I could only explain how it suddenly shook me awake and made everything clear!" (*WAOC*, 61)

In order to make Jack understand her love, Helen starts her "Secret Journal", meant only for him, so that she could translate her thoughts and feelings and express her mystic dimensions. The journal is made an instrument to comprehend the incomprehensible. Helen's "ME" becomes an enigmatic entity and her consciousness a totality of everything, "an infinite world that embraces all time and space, a consciousness that pervades all forms of life in some degree" (*WAOC*, 137). At the end of the novel when Helen is dying of terminal breast cancer and Jack takes her on one last pleasure trip to New York City, a strange and inexplicable corollary comes to the surface. The incidence of breast cancer which ends the life of the chief protagonist seems to get intrinsically linked in an apocalyptic fashion to Dr Gaylord's attainment of destructive nuclear fission. The Bomb is made and the dissolution and disintegration of an awakened mystical self in a demonic human world, sends the message clear. The awe-inspiring landscape and terrain of the American West comes under the shadow of the Apocalypse. *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* finally seems to convey that Adamic amalgams and existential symbiosis can become a case of Quixotic redemptions and Adamic failures unless the "leech's kiss", "the squid's embrace" and "the prurient ape's defiling touch" are dealt with firmly to preserve the chain of mankind from fracture and fission.

II

Frederic Manfred's *Green Earth* is written in the autobiographical mould with the narrator's name as Free (the name of Manfred himself). The work concerns itself exclusively with the family of Manfred, especially his mother Ada Engleking and his father Alfred Alfredson, besides his brothers and maternal uncles. Manfred becomes a fabulator, employing the typical postmodernist technique of story telling by juxtaposing close relatives in the autobiographical narrative of the hero. We have the same looming presence of the Western family across the awe-inspiring landscape

with the consequent trials, tribulations, ecstasies, agonies and the different stages of a family's evolution as comprehended by one of its own members, none else than Manfred himself. Conceived in its totality *Green Earth* becomes a piece of writing executed in a "special moment of revelation."[5] All the three books, constituting the novel, cumulatively depict Manfred's emphasis upon his own self, his mind and psyche as the eldest and the tallest of the brothers in the family. The author-narrator inherits the Saxon line through his mother's family. The autobiographical work begins with Ada the author's mother and ends with her death in the last Book of the novel.

As a young boy, Manfred's physical prowess became synonymous with the tough and tumble of the Western landscape, as the lad would run the entire distance of seven miles daily between his farmhouse and his school. The turning point comes when on April 19, 1929, his mother dies followed by a quick remarriage by his father. In such a circumstantial disorientation within the family, Manfred found himself absolutely free to carve out his own futuristic career and course of action, both as a typical individual of the American West and as a hero of the Western landscape. Manfred's father Alfred and uncle John are depicted as zealous protagonists of the farmland, wedded to agrarian existence, taking this type of existence as a big challenge, maintaining all the while a consistent scriptural conscience. John says: "what's wrong with being a farmer?.... That's what I am going to be. America gives you one chance to make it big and that's on a farm. That's what's so wonderful about this country."[6] John's statement symbolizes a subtle thematic variation, one among many, that depicts the "pervasiveness and the complexity of this part of the American experience."[7] Ostensibly, *Green Earth* is no different from other novels of the American West in furnishing a perfect amalgam of the experience of human exploration and quest coupled with the philosophically metamorphic account of a single family's trials and tribulations in the total context of Western culture as well as the landscape. Throughout the first book exclusively devoted to Manfred's mother Ada, it becomes clear that the author is creating the picture of mid-western rural life as a metaphor for Eden and the reader feels compelled

to think in terms of the Adamic image, the notion of the American Adam. The attachment of Manfred toward his mother is like that of Adam for God of the Genesis.

As the reader goes through the second book, it is "Free" and "Free" everywhere. Without any exaggeration one can say that the second book of *Green Earth* represents the author as a consummate psychologist manoeuvring his own psyche and thereby creating a kind of a contemporary myth of the Western Self. "Free" as a grown up tough boy wants to play freely amidst the glory, the grandeur and the magic of the Western landscape in an uninhabited manner. A free-wheeling existential axis operates between Free, Ada and Pa, creating a narrative brilliance. All the same, the perennial motif in the Western novel which is the movement across the landscape, the quest to seek out new possibilities and avenues for the Self remains always there. In the thirteenth chapter of the second book titled "Free 13", the narrative informs the reader about Pa and Ma having to move again. This symbolizes an established thematic as well as historical generalization regarding the novel of the American West: the subject of movement as an act of primacy of the spirit besides suggesting a cardinal fact about the Western aesthetic: the unavoidable compulsion and the sheer necessity to put in practice "an inherited duty to know and to respect the land."[8] What "Free" does in the second book of the novel is "Westering", a way of life, the effort to discover the unity of body, soul and land."[9]

In the third book of the novel titled "Angel Country", "Free" or Manfred is supposed to talk about his maternal uncles whose names are given as Henry Van Engen and Herman Van Engen, yet this concluding part of the narrative reflects through the autobiographical consciousness of the author the sad death of his mother Ada. Manfred climaxes the novel on an esoteric note when Free records his mother's prowess in having visions. Ada wants her son to do some "special work in the Lord's vineyard" (*GE*, 491). Thus, Ada becomes a kind of prophetess seeking the forgiveness and the mercy of the Lord, freedom from temptation, and eagerness to seek the God and the Virtuous, all in the name of Jesus. The last Book also presents a medley of instances focusing upon Ada and the kind of emotional

satiation and turbulence the lady would experience after a motherly encounter with her baby and a sexual one with her husband. Free's family symbolizes a sacred world presented to the reader in its naked purity. In fact,, to understand *Green Earth* as a novel of the American West, the reader has to keep his inner self in order to imbibe truly the spirit of Free's climactic emphasis upon his mother's spiritual and mystical resurrections. Ada makes her entry into eternity on a hopeful note with brimming optimism, extending an invitation to her son to join her in the partaking of heavenly glory:

> "I hope to go to heaven tonight Free". Ma looked down at her fingers when they fumbled through each other in her lap. "And, son, I'd so like it if someday you could join me there and live beside me in glory." (*GE*, 714)

It would be befitting to conclude with what Ada tells her son just before bidding adieu to her mortal frame:

> "Don't be a hypocrite. God hates a pious fraud. In fact, God may very well have more time for the honest soul that denies Him than for the covenant member who offers Him lip service only .... And then there's the question of living with one's own conscience. So, son, be honest about your true feelings, no matter what the consequences may be ...."(*GE*, 714)

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DECONSTRUCTING GENDER: A LIBERATING APPROACH TOWARD MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S *A JEST OF GOD*

Rashmi Gaur &
Rano Ringo

The present paper attempts to show how traditional gender norms are a limiting factor in one's search for identity and how they create artificial boundaries regarding one's sexuality. Culture decides our understanding of biological differences and so according to Butler our gender norms structure our biology. It is socially constructed gender that gives heterosexuality a central place of importance and heterosexuality determines the binary difference between male and female as the fundamental difference on which society is founded (Alsop 97). However, the male/female binary is generally perceived as a natural phenomenon and presumed to be unchangeable. The male/female binary in turn becomes the basis of masculine/feminine binary. At this point, it becomes necessary to distinguish between the terms gender, sex and sexuality. One's gender is determined by the gender roles assigned to males and females in the society. One's sex identity is what one feels about one's body and by sexual orientation is meant individual desire and attraction. Thus, we see that the three terms are non-inclusive and are more a creation of humans for their own convenience. The portrayal of man-woman relationship in popular media and literature generally depicts the hero as a patriarch. While the hero is shown as sexually active, the heroine's role is only passive. This sharply distinguished binary opposition between masculine and feminine proves to be a limited approach as it excludes anything that falls outside this rigid categorization. Deconstructing sexual and gender relations implies the rejection of the hierarchy of heterosexual relations based on binary oppositions. Once we apply the tool of deconstruction to masculinity and femininity, we find that they are varied, dynamic and changing concepts and this brings us to the point that gender-relations can

be based on a healthy ground if we talk of masculinities and femininities, instead of masculinity and femininity.

Margaret Laurence, the author of *A Jest of God,* has vividly depicted the stifling effects of gender expectations in her fiction. The psychic-social conflict is sought to be presented in her fiction in the context of sexual politics. The male characters in her novel have been dealt with sympathetically and are shown to be as much a victim of patriarchy as women. The book depicts the life of Rachel Cameron, a thirty-four year old unmarried woman whose life has been singularly uneventful. She has lived all her life in Manitoba and has led a conventional life of caring for her mother, teaching her second grade class and occasionally attending church or movie with her friend, Calla. Rachel, at the beginning of the novel, is a meek, vacillating and silent character who is completely dominated by the voice of her manipulating mother. Her allegiance has been to her father and mother, and because both are associated with death — her father by virtue of his profession as undertaker and her mother by her life-denying words and actions — Rachel has been increasingly alienated from other people and from life. An affair with Nick Kazlik, a high school acquaintance who returns to Manawaka for a summer visit, provides the motivation which Rachel needs to escape from the tyranny of her mother's voice and from the memory of her dead father. In choosing to love Nick despite her mother, Rachel also chooses to end her detachment from life. Even though Nick leaves her for good and provides her with neither love nor the children that she craves, yet he does help her reach the point of speaking unreservedly, passionately, "from faith, not logic" (130) for the first time. A liberated man-woman relationship demands that both are self-actualized individuals. It is ironical that it is Nick's inconstancy that finally helps Rachel find her own identity. Nick is as much a victim of circumstances as Rachel and, as such, has been depicted in a sympathetic light.

The staid Manawakan society in which Rachel lives has fixed notions about how a woman is supposed to behave. Living with her mother, Rachel has ample opportunity to be reminded of the voices

of patriarchy. May Cameron has taught her daughter to identify unacceptable behaviours and beliefs and has stressed on the notion that a woman's virginity is her 'most precious possession'. As an adult Rachel is able to act according to her own rather than her mother's beliefs and has a relationship out of wedlock, but is torn apart by doubts. Thus, we see that passivity is one of the conditions of being feminine. Luce Irigaray criticizes patriarchal system for stifling female sexuality and says, "Feminine pleasure has to remain inarticulate... if it is not to threaten the underpinnings of logical operations. And so what is most forbidden to women ... is that they should attempt to express their own pleasure" (Eagleton 317). Deconstructing gender would imply giving scope for the expression of women's sexuality without limiting her to it. What is needed is an *empowered* sexuality for women in an atmosphere free from dependence (Tarrier).

Rachel's affair with Nick is her attempt to free herself from the conventional gender norms in order to attain self-actualization. This quest of Rachel should be seen in the light of the subtle manner in which we become gendered subjects. Our understanding of the world depends on the significance we attach to certain things and this is learnt in a social context. Masculinity and femininity depend upon the subject's understanding of what it is to be masculine or feminine. But very often we are oblivious of the process of interpretation and take as natural what is in fact learnt. This can be called the naturalizing trick of gender (Alsop 35). In *A Jest of God*, we see this naturalizing trick at work in Rachel's upbringing. She is weighed down by what she considers the natural and right code of conduct and we witness her mother's role in her gender socialization which draws limits on her sexuality. Rachel only remembers her mother's preaching voice which makes her feel guilty whenever she fails to act acceptably. In patriarchal culture with rigid binary divisions between men and women, women exist only as the reflections of men and as 'other of the same', and not as 'the other of the other'. Feminists have written enormously about stereotypic constructions of 'femininity' such as docile, caring, passive and obedient. The alternative man-hating model of women provided

by them also does not solve the problems that women like Rachel face. Constructing a plurality of positive images for women and men would help much more than focusing on how femininity and masculinity are formed. When gender is viewed as a fluid concept, it gives men and women greater liberty in choosing their identity.

By the time we are introduced to Rachel, she has begun to question openly the necessity for reserve. In fact, she is almost desperate in her need to express herself to others, especially Nick, the first man with whom she has been in any way intimate. Rachel is impressed by what she perceives as Nick's fluency and is hopeful that with him she will find a more fluent voice of her own. But still she continues suffering from silences. Her silence is better understood once we take into account the gendered nature of language and the marginal position of women within the Symbolic Order. Lacan calls the centre of the Symbolic as Phallus and this effectively brings out the patriarchal nature of language. Women are closer to the Imaginary which is the realm of desires and fantasies. Consequently, women are removed from the Phallic linguistic structure which is based on fixed and stable language. Rachel finds it difficult to communicate since the language she has been born into fails to express her feelings.

Rachel has to discover her identity within the constraints of patriarchal language in a similar way. The voices that she hears within herself are various, each clamouring for attention, each expressing a different facet of her personality. Those critics who complain about Rachel's whining have listened to one voice to the exclusion of others, and so have missed a vital part of the character. Certainly, Rachel frequently indulges in self-pity, and, as Laurence observes, tends "to exaggerate vastly her own inadequacies and shortcomings" (Gadgetry 58). However, in contrast to the voice which bemoans Rachel's failures and weaknesses is another voice, an ironic voice of wit and perception. According to H.J. Rosengarten, "this second voice can step back from the mental action and mock the self-pity and the self-dramatization; there is an internal conflict between that part of Rachel which does wail pitifully, and that part of her which is harshly self-critical" (192). There are other voices as

well. The problem which Rachel must solve in the novel in order to find her identity is the reconciliation of the conflicting voices that sound in her head. A voice that Rachel struggles hard to free herself from is the voice of her mother which stands for the traditional patriarchal values. To take an instance, when Nick first engages her in conversation, she finds herself bridling at one of his comments:

> Who does he think he is? High school or not. Nestor Kazlik's son. The Milkman's son. It can't be myself thinking like that. I don't believe that way at all. It's as though I've thought in Mother's voice. (60)

The process that we see here occurs repeatedly in the novel. As she increasingly rejects May's ideas, she moves farther from the living death of her mother and nearer to a life of her own.

If mimicry and constant analysis of her thoughts is one way in which Rachel tries to subvert patriarchal language, imagination is another. Language, according to Lacan, belongs to the Symbolic Order that works in tension with the Imaginary order. The Imaginary is the place of necessary illusion (Felluga). It is the hierarchy of gender that gives a privileged position to the Symbolic over the Imaginary. Rachel's world is divided between the public realm and the private: in Lacanian terms between the Symbolic and the Imaginary order. The Symbolic Order's insistence on denying the Imaginary comes at the enormous cost of repression of desires. Rachel tries to escape the constraints of society and language by giving vent to the Imaginary double of her self in the form of fantasies. She uses imagination not only to analyze the voices that she hears but also to invent the voices that she would like to hear. The mental scenarios that she constructs often involve Nick. She sees her fantasy conversations as a sign of weakness, but the reader understands that they are an outgrowth of her vivid imagination and a sign of hope — if she can imagine a happy future, then happiness becomes more possible.

Rachel's emotional outlet at the meeting at the Tabernacle proves yet another act of subversion of gendered language. Her voice comes out uncontrolled and out of time as mystical 'speaking in tongues' and she can repress her silence no longer. This hysterical voice of Rachel's is the opposite of her normal spoken

voice, which is as restrained and unrevealing as she can make it, and marks an important early step in the development of the voice which will be hers by the end of the book.

Rachel, in order to survive, must release some of the feelings so long and sternly repressed, and the only voice she can find for this release is an incoherent babble. This incoherent babble is an aspect of human communication that is suppressed by patriarchy. It would be relevant here to mention the distinction between the semiotic and symbolic elements of signification that Kristeva makes. Whereas the semiotic is linked with rhythms, tones, and movement of signifying practices, the symbolic is associated with the grammar and structure of signification. Since gender is based on the hierarchy of binary oppositions, it privileges the symbolic over the semiotic. This leads to repression of feelings in both men and women.

Rachel's emotional outlet is the beginning of her freedom. She finally disregards the insistence on proper appearances, correct speech and decorous behaviour. Beginning with the hysterical outburst at the Tabernacle, however, Rachel's voice begins to change, and her relationship with Nick is eventually affected by the new sound. The pride that has kept Rachel from uttering what she wants is what the Manawakan society has inculcated in her. In rejecting this false pride, she has reached a new level of self-realization. On what turns out to be their final evening together, she again sneaks to Nick in her new voice, without reserve. In a glow of happiness after their successful love-making, she tells him what has been in her mind for some time: "If I had a child, I would like it to be yours" (130). He has in fact indirectly helped Rachel at least to begin solving her problems. He brings her to the point where she is compelled to break the barriers of silence and gives vent to her suppressed emotions.

It now becomes important to analyze the role of Nick in Rachel's life. She is pained by Nick's desertion and the first reading of the novel makes Nick appear as a seducer. But a closer reading suggests that Laurence intends Nick to be as deserving of our sympathy as the woman he is involved with, and without that sympathy the novel is only partially understood. Even though he finally deserts Rachel, Nick cannot be accused of stiff-necked

authoritarianism, self-righteousness, false respectability and pride that society normally desires in a man. In fact, he can be viewed as an outstanding exponent of the alternative type of masculinity that defies the social constrictions established by the dominant patriarchs at the cost of losing respectability. It is impossible to isolate 'a role' that constructs masculinity or another that constructs femininity. The problem in the relationship between Rachel and Nick stems from the fact that she fantasizes about him and Nick declines to accept the role of Prince Charming that Rachel has assigned to him in her fantasy. It also puts Nick in a difficult predicament: if he did behave as one of those masculine riders, he would only promote Rachel's dependence; if he deserts her, he risks being seen as a seducer. There is the historically recognized irony that difficult men are characterized as sometimes beneficial for women.

Rachel's problem is definition through a man. Her passivity is evident in her responses to Nick. She likes "just to sit here beside him, in this security and hear his voice, whatever it happens to be saying" (105). Paradoxically, Rachel's state of security is her greater danger. Desiring security, she seeks protection with a man. In making him protector, though she assigns him responsibility to determine the bounds of protection. The determination can be a sacrifice of liberty and even amount to repression. Rachel is unaware of that and will suffer for it, but Nick is also victimized in being made the mistaken repressive agent. Nick has done nothing more than Rachel permits, yet the latter in discovering her facades implicitly accuses him of responsibility for it. Nick in his vulnerability provides a critique of patriarchal authority. His Ukranian ancestry is responsible for his being marginalized in society and his case becomes one of 'subordinate masculinity'. Thus, our conceptions of gender, sexuality and race are closely linked (Alsop 150). This connection further highlights the fact that Nick is as much a victim of patriarchy as Rachel.

The ambiguity of its conclusion complicates *A Jest of God*. Laurence symbolizes Nick's final effect on Rachel with her suspected pregnancy being a tumour. The autonomy Rachel achieves is made ironic through the cancer metaphor for her

hardened emotional state with which Nick's desertion leaves her. But he has also been fighting the demon of his dead brother and his father's attachment to that brother to the detriment of himself. Without a consideration of his difficulty with Rachel, it is unclear whether or not a conviction of his deceit is justified.

Laurence has depicted male presence founded on uncertainty and binarism, not just in relation to women but within men themselves. The binary opposition of gender subordinates the female body, the feminine gender and female sexuality. Oneness of the male body, the masculine gender and male sexuality enjoy a privileged status in patriarchy. But this 'privileged status' also alienates several men who do not match the traditional standards of manliness. Thus, we see man-woman relationship is a complex phenomenon. Laurence shows through the effect of Nick's father and brother on him that he is himself a victim. Rachel is able to achieve independence when she acknowledges Nick's problems, ceases looking upon herself as a victim and acts as an individual, independent of hierarchical gender constraints.

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"BROTHERHOOD OF DIVERSE CREEDS": SAROJINI NAIDU'S VIEW OF RELIGION

Anuradha

Religion, according to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, is "recgnition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship."[1] True, religion is one's faith in one of the prevalent systems of worship; it is the unfailing union of soul and spirit; it is the bond that unites humanity with eternity. Sarojini Naidu was a Hindu, but she respected all the systems of worship. Her ambition was to create a feelig of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Naturally, she believes

> In brotherhood of diverse creeds,
> And harmony of diverse race:[2]

It was faith in the Almighty that stirred her soul to sing to the rhythm of the infinite time:

> For my glad heart is drunk and drenched with Thee
> O inmost wine of living ecstasy!
> O intimate essence of eternity![3]

Sarojini's religion is embedded in invincible faith in goodness, truthfulness and love. She believes that ecstasy is born of deep faith in the Eternal. To her, each human soul prays:

> Give me to drink each joy and pain
> Which Thine eternal hand can mete,
> For my insatiate soul would drain
> Earth's utmost bitter, utmost swee![4]

Sarojini's notion of religion runs intermittently from one religion to another. She feels devotional and emotional uplifting of spirit when she addresses God with various names as in the poem, "The Call to Evening Prayer". She advocates emotional oneness of all religions. For her, human growth depends on religious faith. Without religion human life is like a rudderless ship, tossing on the waves of endless ocean. She believes that the world's weariness sinks into the "esssence of eternity."[5]

The tune of the Infinite irresistibly lures every heart. It releases human soul from the bondage of mortal cares and attachments as shown in the poem, "The Flute-Player of Brindaban". Human soul

wanders like "a homeless bird" and seeks resort in faith. The cadences of the tune of the divine flute fall on dew-drenched golden fields and ever-flowing streams. The infinite rhythm in silence engulfs the "lampless woe".[6] "The attitude of Vaishnava philosophy with its mystic, rapturous devotion"[7] is revealed here. The divinely inspired being moves in whatever direction the Flute-Player calls.[8]

In the poem, "Song of Radha, the Milkmaid", Sarojini Naidu shows how the new buds of the spring season, symbolising budding dreams and desires, are carried by human beings to the Divine Beloved. The materialistic world mocks[9] at the offerings. The devotee loses her heart and is disentangled of human distress before the brightness of a thousand torches. Charmed by the shrine, she cries the divine name "Govinda" and gets lost in the eternal glory, while the river ceaselessly flows with added brightness.[10]

In the poem, "Kali the Mother", all gifts of life and death are offered to the Eternal Mother, Kali. Ambika or Parvati. She is addressed in devotional prayer by many names, and women offer her buds and berries, bridal prayer, "sweet travail of motherhood" as also "the bitter vigils of despair" and all "gladness and all grief".[11] Artisans, peasants, victors and vanquished alike offer Her tributes of their toil. The men of wisdom, priests, poets and patriots strive to join in one voice to the eternal tune of the subtle music of our hearts and offer their sleepless worship to Her.

Sarojini Naidu, in her poem entitled "The Festival of Memory", points to a divine miracle which casts spell on human memory. Deep agony and bliss are shrouded in mystery. The heart of the poetess is deeply steeped in the fathomless eternal bliss. She says:

> Silence and song and tears
> Delight and dreams are thine,
> Who mak'st my burning soul
> The sacrament and shrine.[12]

Sarojini's religious poems deal with the devotional ecstasy and eternal longing of the human soul to comprehend the mystery of life and death. Each animate and inanimate object is magnetized with the omnipresence of God. In this context the poem, "Bells", is worth referring to. In it the call of temple-bells wrecks the sky and

resounds with the incessant cry of man's sad lot; it ushers in the dawn and dispels the dark gloom by the brightening "wings of prayer". Prayer after prayer is offered in eternal silence for life's despair and solace by the agonized hearts.

The golden dawn, the bejewelled stars, the beauty and the bewitchment of music touch the heart of the poetess as with a magic band. She sees divinity scattered in insignificant objects of Nature like Wordsworth in "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Mark the following lines:

> Divining the magic of unblown lilies,
> Foretelling the stars of the unborn night.[13]

Arthur Symons admires and wonders at her "consciousness older than the Christian."[14] This ancient consciouness and tranquility of mind adds to her vision a divine faculty. Indeed, she sings of divine splendour and eternal peace in a world torn of strife. Her vivid images soar into a world of "intimate essence of eternity."[15]

In the first stanza of the poem, "To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus", she asks:

> What mystic rapture dost thou own,
> Immutable and ultimate?[16]

The satiable thirst and hunger of the soul continue for divine summits to attain. The last stanza of the poem speaks of the destined hour – the elusive end – which lures and tempts human soul to a destination where each moment having passed through the journey of life becmes

> A session of the Infinite.[17]

The tempestuous ocean beckons to fight the waves as the religious instinct crosses the indefinable line. Then it strives to unweave "the webs of life" to attain

> Nirvana of thy Lotus-throne?[18]

In her religious poems, there is profound understanding of diverse cultures and cults. She speaks of the divinity in man, and points out that the Eternal may be presented in multiple religious cults, but He is one and His image remains unchanged. The truth is that the religious instinct appears in diverse forms of human worship and invariably retains the image of the Supreme. Hence she says:

> And everywhere – in blowing skies

And flowering earth – I find anew
The changing glory of your face
The myriad symbols of your grace.[19]

The poem, "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace", is the expression of gratitude to God, and so the poetess writes:

But I, sweet Soul, rejoice that I was born,
When from the climbing terraces of corn
I watch the golden orioles of Thy morn.[20]

Of all the living creatures, man is the one who is most drunk and drenched with the Divine. He is the

O inmost wine of living ecstasy!
O intimate essence of eternity![21]

Sarojini's poetry demonstrates that God is all compassionate. His radiance is the shine of the stars. He is the destination of the pilgrim of life. He is the life of the sunbeam and the seed. He transmits power to the weak and liberty to the people in bondage. He is the true reality, and that is why Sarojini states:

We are the shadows of Thy light,
We are the secrets of Thy might,
The visions of Thy primal dream....[22]

In the poems of Sarojini Naidu, human soul is in quest of self-revelation to the tune of the eternal music, which fills the vacant hours. The love poetry of her early life soon merges with deeper emotions and becomes religious. Her heart wanders wailing with the restless wind to catch the music of the stars, seek the truth and foster faith in Him. No wonder she says:

God give you joy, God give you grace
To shield the truth and smite the wrong,
To honour Virtue, Valour, Worth.
To cherish faith and foster song.[23]

In his book, *The World as I See It*, Albert Einstein affirms that the religious feelings of a scientist are of amazement at the harmony of natural law, and that science encourages us to adopt an empirical attitude. Scientific research includes para-normal phenomena and spiritual states. Religious experience is not mere magic or witchcraft, and its roots are not in rituals and superstitions alone. Likewise, for Sarojini Naidu religion explores the inward nature of man and leads him to the ideal:

And Truth thy pure imperishable goal....
All hail to thee in thy transcedent flight
From hope to hope, from height to heav'nlier height,
Lost in the rapture of the cosmic soul.[24]

When man concentrates on the outward world by his senses, he loses contact with his inner self and fogets his goal. Not only the Indian thinkers, but the Greeks also lay emphasis on self-knowledge. Hiraclitus says: "I sought myself", and Socrates begins his quest of the self with the awareness that he does not know himself and does not know anything. The awareness of ignorance is the beginning of the quest of knowledge. Sarojini Naidu endorses this concept of human nature in the poem "To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus", and wishes to seek the knowledge of the "Mystic Rapture". She wants to know the great Infinite and the path which may lead her to *Nirvana*. She believes that the supreme bliss of *Nirvana* can be attained with the discovery of the self. She feels in her a "sleepless pain"[25] in quest of the Truth. In the poem, "Guerdon", she speaks of the earthly gains of gems from the tides and of the youngman's joyous dreams of the bride; but

For me, O my Master
The rapture of Truth![26]

In fact, Sarojini Naidu is full of the dreams of divinity, and has no erroneous notions about rligion. She strives for an elevated state of mind; she longs to break through the outer darkness to enter into the world of light and spirit. Her religious thoughts are deeper than her perceptions, feelings and passions. She realises the presence of the ultimate reality in each individual. Human life has the primacy of spiritual experience. The doctrine of Indian culture and religion, "*tat tvam asi*" – the eternal is in one's self –, finds expression in her poetry. Her soul and spirit are merged with the music of the Eternal:

Still must I like a homeless bird
Wander, forsaking all;
The earthly loves and worldly lures
That held my life in thrall,
And follow, follow, answering,
Thy magical flute-call.[27]

In the end, we refer to Sarojini Naidu's exquisite poem, "The Call to Evening Prayer", which dramatically portrays the presence

of One Father under whom the devotees of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism are united in the bond of divine worship. The most noble message of Sarojini in her poems is that of the oneness and greatness of all religions. Her poetry shows inherent harmony, emotional integration, and the futility of mutual strife and hatred. She expresses man's lyrical feelings for creation and the creator.

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[24] "In Salutation to My Father's Spirit," *The Sceptred Flute*, p.160.

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R.K. NARAYAN'S *GRANDMOTHER'S TALE:* THE EPITOME OF INDIAN CULTURE

C.P. Sharma

Grandmother's Tale is the last creation of R.K. Narayan. In it the narrator is an old woman who sits and tells the tale to her inquisitive grand child. Here Narayan is the author as well as the listener and his grandmother, Ammani, the narrator. Narayan writes what he has heard from the grandmother, with minor alterations here and there. It partakes of both fact and fiction, biography and tale. Narayan candidly confesses this:

> Readers are bound to question how much of it is history and how much is fiction. I do not know the answer myself. The composition grew as I wrote it from my grandmother's narration, in daily instalments, of her mother's search for her errant husband....[1]

Narayan further concedes that the grandmother's narration by its very nature and manner was inimitable due to the multiplicity of its directions and because of its being a mixture of asides and irrelevancies:

> Day after day, I sat up with her listening to the account, and at night developed it as a cogent narrative. As far as possible, I have tried to retain the flavour of her speech, though the manner of her narrative could not be reproduced as it proceeded in several directions back and forth and got mixed up with asides and irrelevancies. I have managed to keep her own words here and there, but this is mainly a story-writer's version of a hearsay biography of a great-grandmother. (8)

Grandmother's Tale is the story of Narayan's great-grandmother called Bala. She is the central character and is married at the early age of seven to Viswa, a boy of ten from the same village. A few months after the marriage, Viswa comes over the rear wall of the backyard of her parents' house and just announces: "I am going away. Keep it a secret..." (20). Bidding her a hasty good-bye, he joins a group of pilgrims going to Pandaripura, singing a *bhajan*. Parents from both the sides make frantic search but to no avail. Life becomes extremely difficult for Bala in the prime of her youth. People of the village pester her to shave off her hair and put on the white clothes of a widow. Her inner strength helps her defy the wrath and condemnation of the whole society and its dogmatic

conventions. She refuses to believe that she has become a widow.

Adversity steels Bala's tender heart. Hoping against all hope, she leaves her house and undertakes an arduous journey northwards. She finds herself in Poona where she is the only Tamil surrounded by Marathis. She has to behave like the deaf and dumb, neither understanding nor being understood. It is fortuitous that she happens to find Viswa living with Surma as his wife. He thrives on the business left by Surma's late father. Whenever Surma is away, Bala catches Viswa as it were by neck and shows him her 'Thali', the sacred thread that he had knotted in the presence of God. Her persistent pleadings bear fruit and Viswa gives in and requests her only to be patient for some more time. Thereafter, Surma, Viswa and Bala arrive in Bangalore and camp near a holy tank, Sampangi. Here Bala steps into neck-deep water threatening to drown herself until Viswa sent Surma back to Poona. Subsequently, Bala and Viswa return to their village where no one recognizes them. They move away to Kumbakonam and live there a happy married life, bearing three daughters and a son. Eventually Bala dies after a brief illness and Viswa, who fails to rid himself of his weakness for women, gets ultimately poisoned by his woman cook.

Grandmother's Tale is through and through an Indian narrative. It delineates the various features of Indian life in a fresh and vivid manner. Indian tradition survives owing to the presence of women who are more pious, God-fearing and religious than men-folk. The novel gives rich glimpses of temples, worships, prayers and child marriages.

This is Narayan's only novel in which action takes place outside Malgudi — first in 'that village' then in Poona, and later in a non-descript town known as Kumbakonam. The village is described with the typical features of any village in India:

> ... a hundred houses scattered in four or five narrow streets, with pillared verandas and pyols, massive front doors, inner courtyards, situated at the bend of a river or its tributary, mounds of garbage here and there, cattle everywhere, a temple tower looming over it all, the temple hall and corridor serving as a meeting ground for the entire population, and an annual festival attracting a big crowd from nearby hamlets.... (9)

The description of a village would look unrealistic without the

mention of a villiage-deity that presides over the destiny of its inhabitants. The grandmother ventures to guess as to "what God was He?" ..."Could be Ranganatha, the aspect of Vishnu in repose in a state of yoga lying on the coils of the thousand-headed Adisesha. The God was in a trance and watched and protected our village..."(9).

The whole atmosphere of the village is charged with religiosity and piety. The first lesson that the author's grandmother has taught him is on recitation of prayers. True, temple is an inseparable feature of Indian tradition. It is a symbol of our cultural values. It is a place of worship and a rendezvous for the whole village. Here marriages are solemnized, and people come to shed their diffidence and get a new zeal to live life under all circumstances. The pious ambience of the family passes down to the younger generation. Viswa and his wife Bala are only ten and seven years old respectively, yet they show a lot of interest in devotion. When the whole village is rife with rumours of Viswa's death and Bala is constantly pestered with quesitons about the possibility of his ever coming back, the poor, helpless girl has no other source of support and solace except the temple and the idol placed therein.

The temple-priest is responsible for the upkeep of cultural and religious beliefs of the people. If anyone defiles the sanctity of a place of worship by violating the conventional code of conduct, the priest is held a sinner in the eyes of God. The priest of the temple wonders why Bala, wearing all her ornaments, should visit the temple. This impropriety of her might even incur the wrath of God. A temple never betrays people who visit it with an unwavering faith. It is the temple that indirectly helps Bala to get re-united with her lost husband.

The middle class people in India are basically devout and God-fearing. Superstition holds a sway on their minds and hearts. This is the reason why swamis and conmen continue to attract large gatherings in every nook and corner of the country. People here are willing to believe whatever they are told in the name of the *shastras*.

In the hour of crisis people turn to the scriptures for guidance and inspiration. When Bala launches her difficult journey in search of her husband, she looks like goddess Kali. Most people in the

novel are named after some or the other god or goddess; Bala, Ammani and Viswanath are divine names. When Bala is back to her village after twenty years of absence, the first place she visits is the temple where she was married to Viswa.

Grandmother's Tale is a woman's story told by another woman. Here the story of the author's great grandmother is narrated to him by his grandmother-Ammani. The world of the *Tale* is women's world. Indian women are the holders and carriers of cultural values. They are intensely religious and deeply rooted in the cultural ethos of their country. They are far ahead of men in matters like prayers, worships, *bhajans* and pilgrimages.

The novel gives numerous glimpses of a woman's journey from childhood to death. Bala is a completely innocent child of seven playing in the streets with her friends when her father announces that she will be married to Viswa the next week. When her friends tease her, the bride-to-be refuses to marry. Her mother explains to her that marriage is something that cannot be avoided by any human being. The girl sulks and weeps. She is kept strictly indoors and is not allowed to go out and play. As the marriage day comes closer, a lot of change overtakes her. Jewellery, decoration and chanting of *mantras* are the usual corollaries of a wedding ceremony. Viswa, the bridegroom, too wears new clothes, a gold chain and a big garland around his neck. Marriage and death are in God's hands. The teacher in Viswa's school tells the children:

> "…. There is no shame in marriage. It's all arranged by the God in that temple. Who are we to say anything against His will?..." (14)

Bala's life changes rapidly after her marriage. A shyness overcomes her entire being, and her movements become restricted.

In villages, it is not easy for boys and girls to meet each other, and even after their marriage they cannot afford to be too forward. When Viswa goes to Bala's house on the pretext of meeting his father-in-law, she deliberately keeps herself in the deep recesses of the house lest she should be considered too forward. Shyness and sulking are the essential conditions for the women in rural areas. When Viswa suddenly leaves the village for Pandaripura, Bala suffers in silence for several days and dares not tell her agony

even to her mother:

> She wanted to tell her mother, but was afraid she might begin to investigate how she came to know Viswa had disappeared, and then proceed to raise the wall to keep them off. She suffered silently, toyed with the idea of seeking Ramu's help but she had never seen him. Others at home did not bother. (23)

A woman is not supposed to utter her husband's name for fear of reducing his longevity. When Bala's mother asks her the reason of her brooding silence and gloom, she only says: "He...He... is gone" (23).

Woman is only man's shadow. After her husband's death, life remains no longer worth living. Being weak and vulnerable, she constantly needs protection— first of her father, then of her husband and thereafter of her sons. Though yet untouched by her husband, Bala imbibes it from the village tradition that death is preferable for a woman to a life of widowhood. Her prayer in the temple is:

> "Oh, Lord. I don't even know whether my husband is alive. If he is alive, help me reach him. If he is dead, please let me die of cholera guickly." (29)

Love affair or love outside marriage is against the norms of Indian culture. The only permissible mode of love is the one between husband and wife. As a wife, Bala suffers a lot in salvaging Viswa from the world's wilderness. When Surma is away, she tells Viswa in no uncertain terms:

> "....The trouble and the risk I have undergone to search you out, God alone is our witness! I am not going to allow it to go waste. I am taking you back even if you kill me...." (56)

For the time being, man may drift away from the normal course of life prescribed by the *sashtras,* but finally he has to come to the right path. The middle class society does not allow aberrations and abnormalities beyond a certain limit. Bala's words impress this fact of life upon Viswa who has unscrupulously forsaken his own wife and has started a sort of live-in relationship with another woman named Surma.

Another important norm of Indian culture is renunciation in old age. The old and aged people have a pious longing to live their last days at some holy place. Bala's old mother is fascinated by the idea of living in Kasi. Our *shastras* teach us that one can not attain peace and equanimity without renouncing worldly possessions. Bala comes to know of her mother's wish from the

strangers living in the ancestral house in her village.

Narayan has made use of myths and legends to make the narrative vivid and authentic. The portrayal of Bala reminds one of the myth of Savitri who forced Yama, the lord of death, to return the life of her husband Satyavan on the sheer strength of her moral and religious integrity. Although this resemblance between Bala and legendary Savitri is only partial, yet it speaks volumes for the power of religious faith, moral integrity and fearless spirit of an Indian woman in times of crises. The pain, suffering and humiliation in public enthuse Bala to bring Viswa back to the village. She is the same Bala who would not come out of her house when Viswa wanted a glimpse of her. The loss of her husband and respect in the village steels her heart and brings out all latent strength and courage. Her arduous journey to Poona and her tact in dealing with the delinquent husband rapidly efface the impression of her being a weak and helpless woman.

Narayan is a writer who draws inspiration from scriptures, *Puranas, and Upanishads. Grandmother's Tale* is replete with allusions to legendary personage like Kali and Brahaspati, the rivers Sarayu and Kaveri, the temples like Ranganatha, Triambaka, Krishna, Gunesakaram, and the holy tank known as Sampangi. No wonder the novel gives us a great moral lesson by demonstrating how it is Viswa's undue attachment to the worldly ties like wealth and women that drags him into an unhappy end. These twin evils, being turbulent by nature, carry away the mind. *The Bhagvadgita* warns us against attachment to the sense objects which ultimately prove debasing and destructive:

> The man dwelling on sense-objects develops attachment for them; from attachment springs up desire, and from desire (unfulfilled) ensues anger. From anger arises infatuation; from infatuation, confusion of memory; from confusion of memory, loss of reason; and from loss of reason one goes to complete ruin.[2]

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EZEKIEL AND RAMANUJAN: THE IRONIC MODE OF PERCEPTION IN THEIR POETRY

A.N. Dwivedi

Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan are the two shinning stars in the contemporary Indian English poetic firmament. There are points of comparison and contrast between them. They are alike in being the sons of the Muse, turning out poems in English, and in taking to the profession of teaching, one at the University of Bombay and the other at the University of Chicago, but in background, education and even temperament they are poles apart. As practising poets, they display certain recognisable features which are common to both, — such features as the conflict between tradition and modernity, the 'autochthonousness' or Indianness in heart and mind, the contemporaneity of subject-matter, the treatment of love theme in poetry, the astute application of metaphor, imagery and diction, and the ironic mode of perception of the life-events and personalities. It is the last feature mentioned here that will form the nucleus of this paper. An apt use of irony speaks of the sharpness of the poet's wit and mind. Irony is an established literary device in which a writer says something and means other than that 'something'. The two poets under discussion have amply used the ironic mode of perception and utterance in their vibrant and austere poetry.

Ezekiel being a poet of the city of Bombay with all its noise and crowd, din and dust, resorts frequently to what scholars call "the urban theme",[1] and the treatment of this theme in his poetry breeds a sense of restlessness and scepticism, of frustration and alienation, of disillusionment and objectification in him. Consequently, he adopts the ironic mode of perception to cope with the disturbing and alienating elements in his surroundings. As we all know, Ezekiel has written a fairly good number of poems on the urban life and surroundings, especially on the sprawling metropolitan city of Bombay. This great city of the poet's birth evokes, right from his schooldays, a sense of frustration and despair in him, and in the poem "Background, Casually" he writes about himself in a tone of alienation thus:

I went to Roman Catholic school,

A mugging Jew among the wolves,
They told me I had killed the Christ,
That year I won the scripture prize.
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears.

The above-cited lines present a pen-portrait of Ezekiel as a school going kid placed in an adverse situation and surrounded by houndsmen ('wolves' is the precise word used for the sturdy Hindus, Muslims and Christians), but the entire portrayal is done not without an ironic intent. The use of 'wolves' shows that Ezekiel was terribly frightened in the midst of his school-mates, who might have accused him of killing 'the Christ', and yet he was, ironically enough, offered 'the scripture prize'.

In reality, Ezekiel develops a love-hate relationship towards the "multiracial, multireligious urban society"[2] where he is so much alienated that 'One noisy day I used a knife'. He wants to live in peace and 'to feel at home' in the city of Bombay, but the circumstances won't allow it. In "The Edinburgh Interlude", Ezekiel writes:

I have become
part of the scene
which I can neither love nor hate.

Getting disgusted with the fears, doubts and futilities of the sprawling city, he utters aloud:

I cannot save Bombay
You cannot save it
They don't even
want to save it. ("The Edinburgh Interlude")

And though he does not approve of the large city's iniquitous ways, he makes a sort of compromise with his situation. And in "Background, Casually", he announces thus:

I have made my commitments now.
This is one: to stay where I am
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am.

The poet's choice goes against his immediate background, and yet Ezekiel has proved to be true to his announcement made, in my view, out of compulsion.

While reviewing V.S. Naipaul's travelogue, *An Area of Darkness* for the *Imprint* in 1965, Ezekiel clarified his social position in unambiguous terms. He remarked therein:

> I am not a Hindu and my background makes me a natural outsider; circumsatances and decisions relate me to India. In other country, I am a foreigner. In India I am an Indian.[3]

Being 'a natural outsider', Ezekiel has to assert his identity and attachment to India vigorously. Considered in this light, his "Background, Casually" proves to be highly self-revelatory and "pivotal to Ezekiel poetic *oeuvre*."[4]

Right from the beginning of his poetic career to its end, Ezekiel has experimented with the ironic mode of perception and articulation. Sometimes the irony subtly surfaces in his poetry, as in "The Old Woman" (in *A Time to Change*, 1952):

> After a timid childhood, cautious youth,
> She walked in to a marriage safe as Cain....

But here the irony (or 'the sardonic strain') loses much of its force by ending as a barren statement of the facts of life about the woman. More than this poem is successful "A Short Story" (in *Sixty Poems*, 1953) in its pointed, ironic conclusion:

> He learnt the lesson, kept his own counsel,
> No longer wanted to be loved or understood,
> But rightly broke with Spanish girl.

A serious matter like falling in love with a girl is treated here with an apparent lightness.

The horrors of a degrading and disintegrating culture of the tantalizingly strange city are brought to the fore in "The Double Horror". In this poem, the irony is combined with the urban ethos, and the mass culture is badly exposed. Here the poet writes thus:

> Posters selling health and happiness in bottles,
> Large returns for small investment in football pools,
> Or self - control, sex easy lessons for a pound,
> Holidays in Rome for writing praise of toothpaste.

The irony exposes here the shams of modern life — its false hopes, its pretensions, its advertising details.

In *The Exact Name* (1965), there is a poem entitled "In India" where the sardonic view of the club-attending women is clinically presented. The third section of this poem offers us the following:

The wives of India sit apart.
They do not drink,
They do not talk,
of course, they do not kiss.

The men are quite at home
among the foreign styles
(what fun the flirting is!)
I myself, decorously,
press a thigh or two in sly innocence.
The party is a great success.

The irony becomes devastating here, drawing a sharp contrast between the lifeless yet morally conscious Indian wives and the loose, flirting Indian men. Obviously, Ezekiel's irony operates here, as in many other poems, at the level of social satire, reminding us of the practice of Dryden and Pope in their poetry.

Ezekiel does not spare even God and the Scripture. Thus, in "Poster Poems" he writes:

'Kick me around a bit more, O Lord,
I see at last there is no other way for me to learn your simplest truths
...Who can rescue man if not his maker?'

and

'Do thy duty, Lord,...'

and such utterances immediately produce the ironical effect. After all, why should he remind the Maker to do his duty? Is it his humility or arrogance? In the opinion of T.R. Sharma, this is simply his arrogance: "Ezekiel is not applogetic for this tension [caused by his 'un-Indian root' *vis-a-vis* his immediate environment] but rather arrogant. The gentle and subtle irony that he employs in his poems belies fierce arrogance towards the natives."[5] Not merely towards the 'natives' but also towards 'the Maker of the Universe'.

In *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982), Ezekiel's intentions are not different, and he attempts to recast the Psalms in order to overturn their meaning. For example, the poet writes in one place: "How can I breathe freely if thou breakest the teeth of the ungodly?" as a pert reply to the Psalmist who says: "Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly" (Poem No. 2). Speaking of Ezekiel's Psalms, Zerin Anklesaria has rightly remarked: "Their humanity, their tolerance,

their self-mocking irony contrast sharply with the vengeful conceit of their Biblical counterparts."[6] In a way, we can say that Ezekiel's irony spares none, not even himself, and it becomes an integral part of his aesthetic experience, rendering his art very spicy and witty.

Ramanujan, "the most talented of the 'new' poets",[7] also uses irony in his poetry in no small measure. In "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing", irony assumes the shape of satire when the poet speaks of a grown-up woman who tries to perpetuate her immoral practice in modern metropolitan cities:

> Now she looks for the swing
> in cities with fifteen suburbs
> and tries to be innocent
> about it ....

Apparently, the ever-increasing craze for modern ways of living invites the poet's attention and critical response in some other poems too. The opening lines of "Conventions of Despair" are a pointer to this assertion:

> Yes, i know all that. I shold be modern.
> Marry again. See stripers at the Tease.
> Touch Africa. Go to the movies.

The details furnished above are closely associated with modernity or ultra-modernity, and they definitely evoke the poet's sense of frustration and disillusionment in life: "The complex pattern of living, the extreme sophistication, and the sickening drabness of the contemporary life — the life of routines — in big cities have ... disillusioned him."[8]

Ramanujan's ironic mode of perception comes out vividly in his long poem, "Small-scale Reflections on a Great House". The wonderfully assimilative power of this great house is portrayed in an ironic, even sarcastic, vein herein. It possesses all that comes its way:

> lame wandering cows from nowhere
> have been known to be tethered,
> given a name, encouraged
>
> to get pregnant in the broad daylight
> of the street under the elders'
> supervision, the girls hiding

behind windows with holes in them.

The 'lame wandering cows' are not only tethered but also encouraged to get pregnant in broad daylight. The whole scene tends to be funny and ludicrous.The shams of shy-natured girls who secretly watch it through the window-holes are brilliantly exposed herein.

Even the title of the poem is indicative of a contrast between 'small-scale reflections' and 'a great house', and in this contrast the reader discovers an undercurrent of irony. The irony is further aggravated by the contrastive details that follow about the things that come into the great house without ever going out and about the things that go out of the old great house returning with dividends. The things permanently absorbed in the house are: the 'lame wandering cows', the 'unread library books', the 'neighbors' dishes', the servants, the phonographs, the inherited blood diseases, the intimate sons-in-law, and the humble daughters-in-law, whereas the things that go out and return with profits are: the redirected letters, the borrowed ideas, the beggar song now being sung by the cook, the widowed daughters, the run-away sons, and the martyred nephews. Very graphically does the poet portray the plus and minus points of this 'great' house indulging in 'small' activities. And the portrayal becomes Whitmanesque in technique — the technique of 'cataloguing'— and ironic in intent.

The ironic mode is occasionally witnessed in Ramanujan's poems of religious import. For instance, in "Prayers to Lord Murugan", he writes:

Unlike other gods
you find work
for every face,
and made
eyes at only one
woman.

Here the poet attempts to underline the benevolent and moralistic nature of Lord Murugan, but the tone of the expression 'and made/ eyes at only one / woman' is decidedly ironic. Similar is the overall impression created by the following lines in the eighth stanza:

Lord of headlines,

help us read
the small print.

Lord of the sixth-sense,
give us back
our five senses.

Lord of solutions,
teach us to dissolve
and not to drown.

Certainly the poet's attitude is not reverential towards the Lord; he is rather poking fun at him. This attitude may be the result of the poet's overpowering sense of scepticism and modernism strewn all about him in the present-day questioning world. The biting teeth of irony get sharpened in the tenth stanza:

Lord, return us.
Bring us back
to a litter

of six new pigs in a slum
and a sudden quarter
of harvest.

No doubt, Murugan is the lord of birth[9], but the poet awfully thinks of 'a litter/ of six new pigs in a slum', and not of the multiplication or propagation of the human race.

The poem "Pleasure" in *Second Sight* (1986) ridicules 'a naked Jain monk' who has practised celibacy for long years and who now wants to pursue the life of pleasure. This is how the said monk is portrayed:

his several mouths

thirsting for breast,
buttock, smells of finger,
long hair, short hair,

the wet of places never dry....

So hotly the monk is 'burning' in the fire of lust that he starts beautifying his body by annointing it thoroughly with lotion. He stands at last on an anthill of 'red fire ants' and feels a strange sensation at every

bite of his body by them.

Another poem showing Ramanujan's ironic stance is "Astronomer" in *Second Sight*. The tone is equally incisive and biting here. Speaking of the astronomer, the poet pens down the following:

> Moving in Sanskrit zodiacs,
> forever troubled
> by the fractions, the kidney
>
> in his Tamil flesh,
> his body the Great Bear
> dipping for the honey
>
> the woman-smell
> in the small curly hair
> down there.

The said astronomer is torn between the twin pulls of the soul and the body, and the entire portraiture becomes satirical here. Though laved in Sanskrit, the astronomer is distracted in his pursuits by the woman-smell. For one thing, the poet directs the tool of irony against the so-called religious and righteous persons who fall a prey to the female snares and charms.

In *The Black Hen* (1995), there is a cluster of three poems on the Hindu mythology, and the third poem is unqestionably cast in ironic tone and modernistic outlook upon life. In it we have a young female worshipper of Lord Shiva. She adamantly turns down the advances of her new groom, saying:

> Keep off when I worship Shiva.
> Touch me three times, and you'll never
> see me again....

Even when she is in her bed, she intones 'Om, Om!' with every breath. Her man, however, thinks of nothing else but 'her round breast, / her musk, her darling navel and the rest'. At long last, his patience exhausted and he touched her. At once, she threw away 'her modesty' and experienced a 'new birth', the bliss of a married life. The irony effectively evokes the sudden transformation of the young woman.

To conclude, Ezekiel and Ramanujan, the two notable Indian

English poets of the post-Independence era, employ the literary device of irony in their poetry in a perceptible way, and this device renders their mode of perception amply witty and sharp-edged. Sometimes their irony operates on the surface, but more often than not it goes deeper in hitting at social and political evils, in exposing the individual traits and shortcomings. As the two poets chosen for this study seem to be somewhat ill-at-ease with their immediate surroundings, they resort to the ironic mode of perception and articulation to drive home their views and ideas in an effective manner. In their hands, the irony comes to assume diverse shades and colours — satire, sarcasm, wit and fun, exaggeration, understatement, etc. — and the diversity of its application arouses the reader's immense interest in their poetry.

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[9]According to A.K. Ramanujan, Murugan is the "ancient Dravidian god of fertility, joy, youth, beauty, war, and love. He is represented as a six - faced god with twelve hands." — See his *Selected Poems* (Delhi: O.U.P., 1976), p.51.

THE STRANGENESS OF BILLY BISWAS: AN ANALYSIS

Rajesh Ranjan Verma

Arun Joshi contrives his plot around the psychic imbalances and aberrations of his protagonists. Most of them suffer from neurosis. There is a troubled intro-direction of their psyche. Some emotional wound received in childhood or adolescence has fixed in them a deep seated uneasiness and a tendency to lapse into a dissociated state. Flaring up of old injuries, hysterical impairments and neurotic compulsions are nerve-racking and strike at their psychic integrity. They are complex, conflict-ridden and lopsided personalities. They cannot live a happy, contented and, what we call, normal life. They face troubles in establishing and maintaining inter-personal relationship. Futility of living haunts them. They unscrupulously violate norms of social life and indulge in actions which are instinctive and irrational. They are typically anxious, dejected, guilt-ridden, lonely and sad persons. They are torn by the fierce conflict between basic instincts and social enforcement or pulled apart by their Id and Ego. They are disturbed by their complexes and to cope up with disturbances their behavior becomes abnormal. The 'complex', in narrow sense of the word, means the repressed elements of some painful experience due to an unresolved conflict brought about by the presence of two strongly antagonistic tendencies aroused by the same object. The complex and conflicts give a twist to their self and engender neurosis in them. Neurosis is a mental sickness and it embraces a wide range of abnormal behavior, the common core is a maladaptive life-style typified by anxiety and defense-oriented avoidant behavior.

Irregularities in the sex life — frustration of sex expression particularly — is an important cause of neurosis. There are other important symptoms of neurosis besides the sexual one. They are: constant state of worry, tension, diffused uneasiness, repeated thoughts and impulses which the sufferer realizes are irrational, but which are persistent nonetheless, amnesia, insomnia, prolonged dejection, constricted interests, lack of initiative, enthusiasm, and

joy of living, feelings of meaninglessness, alienation, apathy, little sense of purpose or control over one's life, unreasonable fear, nightmares, erotic dreams, etc. Neurosis is, to a considerable extent, a by-product of civilization. Many primitive societies, with a minimum of taboos, show a minimum of neurosis, but the more complicated a society becomes, the greater is the number of things 'one must not do.' This increase in taboos brings about an increase in the prevalence of neurosis. Every neurosis represents a war in the mind of the person who suffers from it. On the one hand, some instinct or desire in his unconscious mind demands satisfaction. On the other hand, some element there related to the pressures of the outside world says 'No' to this demand. The demand may be rejected for a variety of reasons: it may be immoral or extreme . Or it may in some other way conflict with social requirements. The demand,in any case, is repressed. Repression is a kind of self-censorship for self-protection. It helps us to save our image in society from being tarnished. But these repressed feelings and ideas, though hidden from our conscious awareness, remain active and powerful in the unconscious of the mind. Here, too, we are not consciously able to control them. Unable to assert itself in its true forms, this demand then seeks out some weak point in the defense of the individual. Here , disguised in a less objectionable form, it breaks through and enters his conscious life. The demand of the unconscious to express itself is thus satisfied by means of a sort of substitute. The way in which this substitute shows itself in his life is usually a symptom of the individual's neurosis.

Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* unfolds the case history of a neurotic. Billy, who is rich in his intellectual endowments, is the only son of a Supreme Court Justice. After his higher education abroad, he becomes a lecturer in Delhi University. He, who lives in the society of the sophisticated elite people of urban upper class, deserts his family and the civilized world for good and escapes into forest to lead the life of a tribal. He has a beautiful wife and a lovely son. Yet he ignores their love for him and his duty towards them. He marries a tribal woman and gives rise to another family. Thus, in a short span of forty years of his life he

leads two sharply contrasted lives — life in the civilized world of cosmopolitan city and life in tribal community in forest and hills. All this may appear amazing and strange, but there are obvious reasons behind this metamorphosis. Nerve-racking neurotic compulsions are behind this extremely selfish and irresponsible behaviour. His complex and conflicts coerce him and create chaos in his mind.

At the most impressionable and hyper-sensitive age of fourteen a tremendous shock of wild erotic waves passed through the core of Billy's being causing psychic imbalance in him. He had watched in the romantic setting of forest, hills and moonlit night the open orgiastic love making of the wild and intoxicated men and women with rapt attention and passionate involvement. His sex instinct, libido and Id were wildly excited. In adolescence he observed the height of perversity, obscenity and primitive sensuality. Since then he felt restlessly the most perverted obsession for indulging in extreme sexual deviation in an orgy. He yearned to experience the explosion of senses, eruption of wild erotic energy, rapture of body and ecstasy of soul in an orgy. But his mother came to know of it . She was so shocked, hurt and enraged by his sexual aberration in his tender age that she reprimanded him severely, condemned him roughly and threatened him with dire consequences if he tried to attend the orgy for the second time. Billy's Id was trampled over cruelly. He rebelled in sharp retaliation to his mother's repression of his over-excited sex and pleasure seeking instincts. He deserted home in vindictiveness. But ultimately he had to repress his fascination and craving for orgy. This emotional wound formed a most disturbing complex in him and he suffered from the terrible conflict between his Id and Ego.

Id is the tremendous storehouse of instinctive energy for the individual entirely submerged in the unconscious. It forms the great reservoir of 'libido'. Libido is the energy of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word 'love'. It includes the instinct for sexual love, love for oneself, love for humanity in general and devotion to an abstract idea. Id is the region, the hinterland, of the passions and instincts, also of habit and

tendencies; the pleasure-principle reigns supreme in it ; it is amoral, illogical; it has no unity of purpose; and the repressed merges into the Id. Id is the vital core of human being including our animal being; it expresses the basic, the ultra-primitive, the initial nucleus of psychic life. The life of Id is closure to that of primitive man. In the Id reflection we see ourselves as Adam and Eve. Billy wanted to attain the divine state of Adam. Adam was neither barbaric nor civilized, he was divine. Billy vaguely felt that he had been looking for god and to do that he needed first to peel off his civilized self and then his barbaric self and finally attain the divine state of Adam. Billy was obsessed by his baser feelings and wild sex. He could not repress them successfully. So he got annoyed with his civilized self. Getting rid of civilization became indispensable for him as catharsis of his baser feelings was not possible. So he preferred extreme indulgence in primitive sensuality to austere abstenance from it.

The drive of Id to achieve satisfaction in the life of the individual is often complicated. This is because it seeks to gratify its needs without any regard for morals or logic. The Id knows nothing of reality. Its exclusive interest is the satisfaction of its own demands, no matter what the cost. It is completely dominated by the pleasure principle. In attitude, the Id is entirely uncivilized, blindly demanding, not the least bit interested in anything but its own needs and desires. The demand of it is largely anti-social. Billy's indulgence in orgy was the extreme of selfishness. Earlier than disappearing into the forest he had seduced Rima shamming love for her, though it was indeed sexual exploitation of her. He deserted her too quite unscrupulously. Actually he was incapable of romantic love as his love was a neurotic compulsion. He did not bother at all how unhappy his parents woluld be if he left them for good . He enjoyed orgy leaving his family in sorrow and despair. His obsession, perversion and neurotic compulsions coerced him to follow their dictates. His starved and rebellious Id overthrew his Ego and followed its own course of self-fulfilment.

In contrast to Id, which is essentially lawless by nature, the Ego is primarily a civilized product. It is a kind of control room in each of us which tries to keep us leading a generally moral and law-

abiding life. In every person the lawless desire of the Id clashes head-on with the moral sense of the Ego. The Ego has two different censorial duties in respect to the Id: (a) to watch the outer world and seize the most opportune movement for a harmless gratification of Id urges, and (b) to induce the Id to modify or renounce its urges, or to substitute or postpone its gratifications. There is no inherent opposition between the Ego and the Id; in the normal person it should not be possible to distinguish between the two.

Bill's repressed desire to relish orgy and satisfy his sexual urge remained active and powerful in the unconscious of his mind. His dominant Ego permitted him relief and some satisfaction by providing him disguised substitute which was less objectionable. It was the influence of his repressed desires that Billy gave up studying engineering and took up anthropology passionately. He wanted to read about tribal life. All he wanted to do in life was to visit the places they described, meet the people who lived there, and find out about the aboriginalness of the world. His interest lay in only bizarre happenings, mysterious things and abnormal behavior. The Freudians hold that the urge to explore is nothing but a deviate of sexual curiosity. Billy used to perceive intuitively the mysterious signals coming from the unknown world and his over-inquisitiveness used to dart away on the wings of romantic imagination to grasp the meaning of the mystery. He used to have dreams, hallucinations and moments of revelations. He intuitively felt that some revelation was at hand. He said, "I soon discovered that the hallucination would occur without any apparent stimulus whatsoever."[1] Billy was obsessed with a latent quest for God. And for this he tried to attain the divine state of Adam living in Eden Garden. He wanted to go closest to Nature. He said to his friend, the narrator of his story:

> Becoming a primitive was only a first step, a means to an end. Of course, I realized it only after I ran away. I realized then that I was seeking something else. I am still seeking something else.
> 'What is that?
> He seemed to be thinking.
> 'God?' I prompted
> 'There , there old chap, that is too big a word.'
> 'Something like that?'

'Yes, something like that.' (189)

This 'run-away imagination' insight into the abiding truth in objects of Nature used to give him vivid sensuous comprehension of the jungle life and the tribal orgy. Then he used to feel that he belonged to tribal life and jungle and that he was a tribal man and his life in Delhi was quite unreal and unnatural. He started having dreams related to a tribal woman . He distinctly felt that jungle was calling him. And when he heard the drum beating he felt like running amuck and lapsing into dissociated state. He developed the moral weakness to sink lowerer and get down to his primitive self. He longed for enjoying perversity, dross, vulgarity, ugliness, wildness and other baser feelings. The indelible mark of orgy on his mind radiated erotic waves of primitive sensuality and he felt a mesmeric pull to plunge into the vortex of it. The reasons for his mysterious experiences are to be traced in his mind, its complex and conflicts.

Billy's second substitute was his academic expeditions into forest with his students. Under this pretext he was able to spend some days in the jungle. While briefing his students on the area they were going to investigate, and giving them information about the geography, the tribal people, their origin, their livelihood, their customs, he used to have odd sensations and feelings as though he was a tribal himself, that he was one of the primitives to be investigated and not one of the investigators. When he returned from an expedition, he took some days to shake off the sights, sounds and smells of the forest. But no substitute of his repressed perversity and obsession could relent the restive Id and it broke loose one night when he was on an expedition. He was camping near the river with his students. He went to collect some ropes from the tribal people, particularly Dhunia . There he met Dhunia's niece Bilasia — his sex object. Though she was unsophisticated, she exuded passion and he was irresistibly drawn to her. Bilasia excited his Id and libido to the maximum. His repressed primitive sensuality and wild erotic energy wanted to explode. He explained, "It was I who had changed. Or, rather, quite suddenly and unaccountably I had ceased to resist what was real me. All that I had been confusedly driving towards all my life had been crystallized, brought into focus"

(116). Dhunia invited him to join the festivity that night — singing, dancing, drinking and love-making. His obsession for Bilasia and orgy flared up and he feared his final downfall was inevitable and imminent. That night he had a dream, a dream so erotic, the like of which he did not know could still be conjured up by his unconscious. He came out of his tent and sat on a rock in the moonlit night. He felt he was the first man on earth facing the earth's first night. A furry little animal came out of a bush. He felt as if it were calling him , " come to our primitive world that would sooner or later overcome the works of man. Come we have waited for you"(120-21). And he, too, felt that he had been waiting for embracing tribal world and jungle life. He could not resist the outer temptation and inner promptings. He stealthily escaped from his students to eat the golden apple of the Eden Garden — the forbidden fruit of wisdom. His Id emerged triumphant. His baser feelings took hold of him. His sex object Bilasia seemed to him the essence of primitive forces that had called him night after night, year after year. He took strong country liquor. He was in a trance and Bilasia seemed to him a vision. His conflict brought about the split in him. His civilized self got burnt to cinders in the flames of primitive sensuality. Something grave and decisive happened to him in those thirty six hours he spent with Bilasia. He said, " I had arrived at the fork in my life that, without being conscious of it, I had waited for all my life. I took the turning that was as irrevocable as it was awesome"(144). The experience had been severe enough to cut him off from the thirty years of his past life but not strong or coherent enough to provide him the basis of a new one. He attempted to go back to Delhi on the fifth day but could not. His ego prevailed upon him and prevented him from returning. Jungle life or tribal life was thrust upon him and he had to accept it for good.

Though Billy's experiences were vast and varied, he could not infer any philosophical truth of life because his was not a healthy thinking. His complex and neurosis tainted his feelings and thoughts. Complexes are disturbances of behavior through desires, fears, anxieties and concerns strongly emotionalized, suppressed into the sub-conscious, centering around sex and often traceable to an

initial shocks in early childhood. They grow with general growth and appear in neuroses of adults. The fountain-source of complexes lies in libido with its dominant sex-components. Billy, in the most impressionable age of adolescence, when all varieties of erotic susceptibilities remain at the peak, saw orgy of tribal people. But he had to repress his yearnings for orgy. That primitive urge when repressed formed complex in his mind. Nature fascinated him, perverted wild sex exerted mesmeric pull on him and civilization irked him. The violent opposition between temptation and repression, fierce conflict between baser feelings and nobler feelings, Ego and Id engendered neurosis in him. Neurosis, dreams and lapses occur due to complexes and repressions. Consciously a man with a complex rarely understands the full extent to which his mind is at the mercy of those emotion-tinged ideas. He may try to explain and discuss his odd behaviors, his queer thoughts, with reasons which seem more logical than they actually are. Billy did the same with Tuula and Tuula explained it all as the consequences of repressed 'urkraft'. She said , "A great force urkraft, a...a primitive force. He is afraid of it and tries to repress it .... But , it is very strong in him, much stronger than in you or me. It can explode any time "(23). Billy's 'urkraft' is his overcharged explosive Id. Id is the obscure and inaccessible part of personality, and what little is known about it has been learnt from the study of dreams and neurotic symptoms. Id is the source of instinctive energy, the great reservoir of libido, and the pleasure-principle reigns supreme in it. All repressed merge into Id. It is the vital core of man including his animal being. So, Billy's case is quite explicable, not very strange. The novel depicts the workings of rebellious Id, wounded Ego, and disturbed super-ego.

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TEXT AND CONTEXT: A POST-COLONIAL APPROACH TO THREE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS — *THE NOWHERE MAN, MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AND *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

Om Prakash Dwivedi

The Indian English Novel has come of age and has won recognition and reputation the world over. It has gained in strength, variety and authenticity due to the solid contributions of a number of gifted novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghose, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, and several others. These novelists and their texts are being studied today from different perspectives, and I propose to examine three well-known Indian English novels from the post-colonial perspective. The three texts and their contexts to be studied here are: Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).

At this stage, it would be proper to look into the meaning of terms like 'colonialism' and 'post-colonialism' before taking up a discussion of the three selected Indian English novels. Colonialism, as we know, points to a perod of history when a foreign power subjugates another country and thrusts upon the latter its own governance, language, and culture. Colonialism is usually associated with imperialism, and is considered to be 'a settlement in a new country'. According to Ania Loomba, colonialism is "... a forcible takeover of land and economy, and, in the case of European colonialism, a restructuring of non-capitalist economics in order to fuel European capitalism."[1] In other words, colonialism is the story of the territorial expansion of a foreign power in another country and the forcible occupation of the latter's economy, labour and raw material. This kind of colonial picture is remarkably portrayed by William Shakespeare in his famous drama, *The Tempest* (1611), wherein the island is already inhabited by Caliban, his mother and

others before the arrival of the storm-tossed Prospero, his daughter Miranda and his courtiers and his obedient attendant Ariel. Ania Loomba examines *The Tempest* from the colonial perspective and advances her arguments for the inhabitation of the island — that Shakespeare wants to show the colonial encounters of Prospero with local subjects, and that he wishes to form a new community of the colonizers and the colonized. Ania Loomba concludes her discussion by stating: "Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history."[2] These relationships leave a deep impact on the psyche of the subject nation.

In due course of time, the subject nation sheds off the slough of stupor and trauma, and comes to realise the need of rising against the colonial power and asserting its own dignity, identity and sovereignty. Consequently, "The old Order changeth, yielding place to new", and colonialism makes way for nationalism, independence, and decolonization becomes quite evident in the twin areas of language and culture. The distinguished literary critic, Jonthan Culler, rightly speaks of "the superimposition of conflicting languages and cultures."[3]

Post-colonialism is a natural offshoot of colonialism, and largely expresses the reactions of a free nation against the colonizing forces. The term 'post-colonialism' denotes a contemporary state in literature and is very much in fashion with the literary critics currently. The term gained immense popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, so much so that 'Post-Colonial Literature' has come to replace terms like 'Third World Literature' and 'Commonwealth Literature' because of their narrow range (leaving out the literature of England).

Edward Said's book, *Orientalism* (1978), represents the first phase of 'post-colonial' theory though the post-colonial aesthetics was set in motion in Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Edward Said's *Orientalism* seeks to study the post-colonial texts written in the former colonies in the context of European imperialism. Edward Said makes a division of the world into two

unequal halves — 'Orient and Occident'. He has defined 'Orientalism' as 'a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, having authority over the Orient'. Naturally, Edward Said's version of 'Orientalism' becomes totally Euro-centric and confirms the theoretical concept of the ruler and the ruled, the exploiter and the exploited, and the colonizer and the colonized.

Some other important post-colonial theorists are: Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (who have combinedly written the epoch-making book, *The Empire Writes Back*, 1989); Homi Bhabha (who has produced such significant books as *Nation and Narration*, 1990, and *Location of Culture*, 1994); Gayatri Spivak (who has written *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 1993); and Aijaz Ahmad (who has brought out *In Theory Classes, Nations, Literatures*, 1994).

Of the three novels selected for a detailed study from the post-colonial perspective, *The Nowhere Man* (1972) brings to the fore the problem of transculturation and the relationship of the Orient and the Occident. The novel revolves round the central figure of Srinivas. The title of the novel aptly applies to Srinivas, who is a displaced person waging a relentless war against the adverse surroundings. Shuttling between the Orient and the Occident, Srinivas is a victim of the British cruelty and highhandedness in India before he leaves for England along with his wife Vasantha. In England, Srinivas starts an import-export business, and is blessed with two sons — Sheshu and Laxman — who identify themselves with the country of their birth. The two sons get enrolled in the army to fight for England during the Second World War. Sheshu dies in the fierce War, while Laxman marries an English girl and becomes an Anglophile. But Vasantha sticks to the Indian way of life even on 'an alien shore'.

The shock of losing both the sons — Sheshu is no more and Laxman grows indifferent — proves too deep for Vasantha and she dies soon, leaving behind Srinivas quite lonely and dispirited. Srinivas also loses all interest in life until he meets Mrs. Pickering one day. Both develop friendship and feel the necessity of living together under the same roof. At this point, the transculturation grows deeper and in the post-colonial discourse the Orient and the Occident — the two halves — draw nearer to each other. *The*

Nowhere Man actually depicts the conditions of Indian immigrants in England before and after Independence. It is more a novel of confrontation than of reconciliation between the East and the West.

The second Indian English novel to be invetigated in this paper is Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), which deals with India's Independence, her partition and the aftermath. The title is suggestive of the unfortunate fate of those children who were born at midnight, at 'the benighted moment'. It points to a period of tension in national history. The protagonist is Saleem Sinai whose personal experiences are as significant as the history of the nation. Thus the question of identity is of paramount interest in this novel.

Culturally, India is a country of various religions and communities. Apart from her cultural richness and variety, India has, in the past, experienced the painful partition into two countries. Evidently, the culture of Pakistan with its Muslim fundamentalism, its strict enforcement of Islamic laws, its *burka* system, its adherence to Urdu as the first language, is diametrically opposed to all that India stands for.

Apart from this religious and cultural divergence, *Midnight's Children* offers a unique feast of linguistic experiments. The language used here is in accord with the thwarted personality of the protagonist. Sinai's pathetic condition is brought out vividly in the following passage:

> Please believe that I am falling apart .... I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug .... In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of an acceleration.[4]

Sinai's sense of 'disintegration' and 'self-alienation' is aptly expressed by a kind of language that is truncated and syncopated, yet simple and direct.

The third novel to be examined here is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). It is a typically inventive story on the life of Ammu, a divorced woman with two children, Estha and Rahel, living in her parental house at Ayemenem. Very powerfully does the novelist evoke the image of the oppressed, downtrodden and dalits or untouchables. The post-colonial image of the female subaltern is projected here through the leading character of Ammu,

against whom even Baby Kochamma in consultation with Mammachi conspires. Ammu, a woman of the higher caste, longs to be one with Velutha, a youngman of the lower caste, but the patriarchal society would not permit it. So, Ammu starts meeting Velutha across the river in the haunted house. Koachamma lodges a complaint with the police against Velutha, who is arrested at midnight, beaten and bruised badly and thrown into the lock-up where he breathes his last. Ammu could not stand it, and she also meets a tragic end. Thus, both the issues — the assertion of a woman over her body and the rising of the untouchable — are treated deftly by Arundhati Roy in this novel.

What is more significant in this novel is the linguistic innovations. Punctuation marks, italics, capital letters, even grammatical items are employed at will. Mostly the traditional rules are flouted in it. Arundhati displays a remarkable dexterity in coining words, especially through the process of 'compounding'; for example, "Thiswayandthat"[5] and "Stoppited".[6] She employs punctuation marks and capital letters as she wishes — "She used her windows for specific purposes. For a Breath of Fresh Air. To Pay for the Milk. To Let out a Trapped Wasp...."[7]

To conclude, I have focused on the texts and contexts of the three contemporary Indian English novels in the post-colonial perspective. The three novels chosen for my study comprehensively represent the growth and expansion of Indian English Fiction in our times. They also highlight the significant aspects of post-colonialism in theory and practice.

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PARENTS IN THE MIRRORS OF CHILDREN IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Ashok Kumar Tyagi &
Ravindra Kumar Singh

One of the distinguished features of the novels of Shashi Deshpande is that they highlight the attitude of children towards their parents in the changing social, cultural and educational scenario of the country. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the novelist exposes the unpleasant and bitter attitude of a mother towards her daughter on account of her gender bias and vice versa. In traditional patriarchal families, the birth of a son as a first child is preferred to that of a daughter. Sarita was born in a traditional Brahmin family and she was the first child of her parents. Dhruva, her brother, was born three years after her. Sarita's mother, Kamala, did not feel happy when she was born as her first child. This is what Sarita tells us:

> But of my birth, the mother had said to me once....'It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible. And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains.[1]

Dhruva's birthday was always celebrated with a *Puja* followed by a festive lunch in the afternoon, and *aarti* in the evening. Sarita's birthdays were almost the same but there was no *puja*. Dhruva was made to sleep all alone in the dark room so that he could be brave and bold like Shivaji, whereas Sarita was made to sleep with her mother. Her father used to take out Dhruva on his bike perched in front of him on a small seat, whereas Sarita was left to the charge of her mother. When Dhruva drowned into a pond and died, his mother held Sarita guilty of her son's death. She thought that her daughter watched her son drowned; she could have risked her life for her borther's sake. She cursed her daughter saying: "Why didn't you die? Why are you alive and he dead?"[2] She did not allow Sarita to enter her house after Dhurva's death. It was Sarita's Mavshi who took her to her own house where she was kept for a few days.

When Sarita was selected for medical profession and she was getting admission to his hostel, her mother vehemently opposed it. When her father told her mother that he was prepared to

mete out her expenses, Kamla began to cry saying, "She killed her brother. She killed her brother."[3] The words of Sarita's mother were like a dagger to her. She felt hurt. She hated her mother; she wanted to hurt her, wound her, and make her suffer. She wished her mother dead.

When Sarita went for a love marriage with a boy of lower caste against the wishes of her parents, she was dead for her parents for ever. Her mother never uttered the name of her husband; she rather called him "that man". When her mother was suffering from cancer and dying in the hospital, somebody advised her to go to her daughter. She refused to reconcile with her daughter and said in anger, "Which daughter? I have no daughter."[4] Saru hated her mother because she held her responsible for her family unhappiness:

> I hate her, sapping me of happiness, of everything. She's always done it to me... taken happiness from me. She does it even now when she's dead.[5]

There was a long silence between her and her parents for fifteen years. When she heard about the death of her mother, she returned to her parental home to restore her lost bonds with her father. The complex relationship between Sarita and her mother cannot be simplified as hatred nor can it be claimed that Sarita is anti-matriarchal. In order to achieve her freedom, she seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by her mother. Her mother almost forced her to stay within the four walls of her house and opposed her admission to the medical college.

When Sarita returned to her father after fifteen years of her marriage, she was not welcomed by him because he thought that it amounted to a sort of treachery to his dead wife. He, too, held his daughter responsible for the death of his son. The fact is that there was no good relationship between Sarita's father and mother. Her father used her as weapon against his wife. That was why her mother disliked her. When Sarita's mother passed away, her father had a sign of relief. In order to seek revenge on his dead wife, he did not put up her photograph. Sarita admitted that it was because of her father's fight against her mother that she could receive her medical education. Now on her return to her parental home, she wondered whether that fight was for her or against her mother, and whether or

not her father used her as a weapon against her mother.

In *Root and Shadows,* Indu, the protagonist of the novel was motherless. Her father was a free lance photographer. He was non-interfering and a man of independent views. He set her daughter apart from others and sent her to a convent school. Indu lived like a modern girl under the patronage of her orthodox and tyrannical Akka who called her "an ippy". Indu, in retaliation, called her "an old witch." She was often heckled and rebuked by Akka for her hobnobbing with her boy friends. She hated her grandmother so much that she had sworn not to return to her ancestral home after her marriage with Jayant till her grandmother's death. When Akka passed away bequeathing her money to Indu, the latter decided in hate to give the money to strangers instead of spending it on her ancestral family. With the demolition of Indu's ancestral house, the old barriers crumbled down and Indu was free to live an independent life with Jayant.

In *That Long Silence,* Jaya had no confrontation with her parents. She was born on the 3rd of September, 1939. To any other parents, a child born on that day would have seemed an ill-omened child but not to her parents and Akka. It was her Appa who named her *'Jaya'* because he had joined Gandhi's freedom movement and was certain of his ultimate victory. Her parents were educated and lived a very happy and good life in Saptagiri. Her mother was very fond of classical music whereas Jaya liked film songs sung by Rafi and Lata. Her parents sent her to a convent school where she learnt to speak English fluently and could impress any one with her eloquence. Her father passed away when she was fifteen years of age. The whole family moved to Ambegaon where her maternal uncles and aunts lived. Jaya was married to Mohan. Her marriage was arranged by her maternal uncles and her own brother.

Urmila, the protagonist of *The Binding Vine,* was fatherless. She lived with her grand parents and parents in a splendid Ranidurg House gifted to her grandfather by a king. She had seen her father and grandfather dying. After the death of her father, she lived with her grand parents in a big room, on one of the doors of which a paper was stuck which said "Baiajii's and Urmila Room". She

married Kishore against the wishes of her family knowing fully well that he was without father and mother. Since Kishore was a sailor in Navy and posted in a place far away from her house, Urmila had no option but to stay with her mother with her two children. Like Indu and Jaya, she, too, had normal relations with her mother. However, in this novel, the novelist exposes Urmila's feelings of profound grief after the sudden and untimely death of her girl child. Though it was the girl child, Urmila had deep love for her. She mourned her death as intensely and feelingly as any mother over the death of her son. She felt that after the death of a child, there was so little left. She was haunted by hallucinations. Her lost child visited her in day dreams but somehow she tried to get back to normal knowing that nothing could undo what had happened and she had to go back to living.

In *A Matter of Time,* the novelist deals with the relationship of Sumitra with her parents on the one hand, and Sumitra's relationship with her children on the other hand. Sumitra's parents Sharipati and Kalyani lived in a big house. They were not on speaking terms. They had not spoken to each other for the last thirty-five years since the day their son was lost and Shripati had held his wife responsible for the loss of their son. Sumitra married Gopal defying the wishes of the parents and stayed with her husband and three grown up children in a rented house. The life of Sumitra's parents and Sumitra's own life with her husband and children went on normally till she was deserted by her husband. When Gopal did not return home after the expected time, Sumitra's family moved to the house of her parents in its evil days. Both father and mother supported their daughter in her bad days. There was a great division in her family. On the one hand, there were Sumitra and her three daughters, and on the other hand, there was Gopal. Sumitra, being educated, intelligent and forward, wanted her independence and the recognition of her identity. She moulded her daughters in her favour and turned them indifferent to their father. One day Gopal resigned his university job in frustration and disappeared from his house, leaving his daughters and his wife. When Sumitra died in an accident, Gopal's daughters did not return to him. They rather

preferred to live with their grandmother, Kalyani. Aru was so angry with her father that she even hired a lawyer to get justice for her wronged mother. The novel comes to an end with the bitter and uncomproming relationship between the father and her daughters because her daughters felt that their father was wrong and he was responsible for their mother's miseries and death.

Like Urmila in *The Binding Vine,* Madhu in *Small Remedies* is presented grieving over the sudden death of her seventeen year old son in a bomb blast while travelling in a city bus, and trying to come to terms with her life. The novelist tries to highlight the plight of a mother after the sudden loss of her son and her efforts to rehabilitate herself in the wake of utter emptiness and blankness before her. Side by side, the relationship between Savitribai and her daughter, Munni, is also highlighted. In order to get name and fame as a musician, Savitribai not only deserted her husband but also denied to accept Munni as her daughter for the sake of her social respectability. Munni was her daughter by her lover, Gulam Saheb. After getting name and fame in society, Bai struggled hard for her social acceptance which was not possible without deserting her lover and discarding her daughter. Both Bai and Munni were never reconciled with each other. While Bai showed her album to Madhu, it was Munni's photograph that was found missing in it. The author wondered what kind of a woman Bai was, denying her own child: "Only the lowest, the meanest kind of creature could do such a thing."[6] Madhu herself was motherless. Being the first child of her parents, she was a pampered child. By the time she was two, she was weighed in gold ornaments. Her mother was a sweet singer. She mostly song devotional sangs. She got time to teach songs to her daughter but her life was cut short untimely and Madhu, being the daughter of a doctor, passed her childhood silently under the care of her father who had very little time to sit and gossip with her. Later, she became childless. She knew the pains of being motherless and childless as well.

In *Moving On,* Badri Narayan, a bone doctor, had two daughters. Both Badri Narayan and his wife, Vasu Narayan, had good relationship with their daughters. Manjari was the first-born.

She was followed by Malu. With Malu's entrance, Manjari became a foil to Malu. Manjari was strong, while Malu was delicate. The former was practical, whereas the latter was dreamy and absent-minded. Manjari's father wanted her to get into medicine, but she, being ugly in looks, wanted to be loved and get married at the earliest. When a boy fell in love with her, she decided to be his wife in spite of her father's opposition. She left her medical career and went for her love marriage with Shyam Ahuja. Wen Shyam died by drowning into the sea three years after his marriage, Manjari was widowed but she had a son by him. She returned to her parents and passed the rest of her life with them. When Malu and Mai died, only Manjari and her father were left in the family. They had sympathy for each other as Manjari was husbandless, while her father was wifeless.

Thus, it is only in two novels, i.e. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *A Matter of Time,* that we find parents and their children interacting with and reacting against one another. In the first novel there has been complete silence between Sarita and her parents for fifteen years since her marriage. Even when she is with her parents, she has an endless war with her mother. In *A Matter of Time,* Gopal deserts not only his wife but also his three daughters for reasons best known to him only. In other novels, such problems do not arise because the protagonist is either motherless or fatherless or without both of them. Indu is motherless, while Jaya and Urmi are fatherless. Madhu is without both her parents. So is the case with Manjari. The main cause of trouble and disquiet in the lives of protagonists is either the failure of their love marriages or their desire to dominate their families and seek independent identities for themselves.

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FUSION OF HORIZONS IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S *SUCH A LONG JOURNEY*

Surekha Dangwal

The term 'fusion' may be defined as 'the process or result of fusing' or 'the state of being fused'. It has a Latin origin from 'fundere' meaning 'pour, melt'. The Parsis are the ethno-religious minority in India, who did have 'such a long journey' all the way from Persia to India. They were permitted to settle in Gujarat at Sanjan by the king Jadav Rana. The Parsi Dustur (priest) agreed to certain conditions imposed by the king. Since then the Parsis have adopted the language, customs and traditions of Indian community. Zoroastrianism is the religion followed by the Parsis.

Rohinton Mistry is one of the well established writers of Indian origin settled in Canada. A Parsi Zoroastrian who was born in Bombay and lived there for twenty-three years before emigrating to Canada in 1975, he has four books to his credit. In his first novel, *Such a Long Journey*, he returns to his motherland, Bombay, and to the Parsi world where his roots lie. The backdrop of the novel deals with the historical events, such as the partition of India, 1962 Indo-China war, falling of Nehruvian dream of a secular India, scam of sixty lakh rupees during Indira Gandhi's rule, and 1971 Indo-Pak war giving birth to Bangladesh. Though *Such a Long Journey* is primarily centred upon the marginalization of minorities in multicultural India, the present paper is an attempt to show the undercurrent of 'assimilation' and 'fusion' in it. With the help of stereotyped views, expectations and preconceptions, Mistry defines the hurdles and difficulties faced by the Parsis and other minorities in India. The difference is merged into sameness and this fine 'fusion' is possible "in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different," and the different colours of a single unified rainbow project the 'fusion' and "difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity"(Young 1995:36).

Gustad Nobel, a true Parsi Zoroastrian, lives with his wife Dilnavaz, two sons and a daughter namely Sohrab, Durius and Roshan at Khodadad Building in Bombay. He often talks to himself by convincing himself regarding his expectations, desires and

dreams. He is always ready to take steps to preserve his identity and his community. His room is dark due to black paper taped over the window panes and the ventilators during Indo-China war. His wife Dilnavaz is fed up with darkness and laments: "In this house, the morning never seems to come"(11). During Indo-Chino war, Dilnavaz frightened Darius by saying that the wicked Chino would carry him if he did not finish his food. The latter replied: "... he would get his Diwali cap pistol, put a roll of *toati* in it and bang-bang, kill the Chino if he ever dared come near their flat"(10). Patriotism is revealed in the blood of these people. No wonder Darius demands newspaper for raising funds for the refugees.

As a true wife and a caring mother Dilnavaz loves and respects every member of her family. She believes in truth which is considered as one of the greatest virtues for the Parsis. She is always optimistic. She has a good relationship with all the Parsis living in Khodadad Building and even outside it. She also feels comfortable with those belonging to other communities.

Gustad performs his prayers under the Neem tree, which is inside the Khodadad Building which is surrounded by a black stone wall which acts as a cacoon for the Parsis. Opposite the black stone wall, he does gardening by growing vinca and mint. His love and affection for the family members and outside world are outstanding. He meets an artist who sits at the corner of the pavement of Vir Nariman Road, with his Gods and Goddesses drawings with crayons. He asks him if he has enough drawings to cover three hundred feet wall. The artist's following reply evinces the author's deep concern for the fusion of all religions and cultures:

> I can cover three hundred miles if necessary. Using assorted religions and their gods, saints and prophets: Hindu, Sikh, Judaic, Christian, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Jainist. Actually, Hinduism alone can provide enough. But I always like to mix them up, include a variety in my drawings. Makes me feel I am doing something to promote tolerance and understanding in the world. (182)

The artist has a B.A. degree in World Religions. The wall is cleaned and washed by the street-sweeper. The artist is unnamed and thus belongs to every religion. Gustad rejects the idea of Zarathustra painting and accepts the painting of Trimurti (Brahma,

Vishnu and Shiva), and this is a clear indication of 'assimilation'. Though 'assimilation' is a tough task for Gustad, yet he accepts it, as it is the need of time. The artist avoids the picture made of crayons: "All pictures in oil and enamel only. Completely permanent. Nothing will spoil them"(212-213). The artist after merging and assimilating the pictures makes an effort to preserve them. The chief work of the artist is

> Gautama Buddha in Lotus Position under the Bodhi Tree; Christ with Disciples at the Last Supper; Karttikeya, God of Valour; Hazi Ali Dargha, the beautiful mosque in the sea; Church of Mount Mary; Daniel in the Lions' Den; Sai Baba; Manasa, the Serpent-Goddess; Saint Francis Talking to the Birds; Krishna with Flute and Radha Holding Flowers; the Ascension; and finally, Dustoor Kookadaru and Dustoor Meherji Rana. (212)

The wall called 'the black stone wall' is now full of various Gods and Goddesses of every religion, presenting a fine example of a secular country. The fragrance coming from the *agarbatti* lit in front of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, fascinates Gustad. It acts as a character. The picture of Gods and Goddesses changes the tone of the novel and elevates it from marginalization to 'assimilation'. It also signifies an 'urge to merge'. By protecting the wall, Gustad is successful in preserving his Parsi identity. He thanks God:

> Dada Ormuzd, you are wonderful. Instead of flies and mosquitoes buzzing, a thousand colours dancing in sunlight. Instead of the stink, this glorious fragrance of paradise. Heaven on earth.... God is really in His heaven, and all is right with Khodadad Building.... The black wall had verily become a shrine for all races and religions(286).

The wall is the symbol of 'fusion' and 'assimilation'. It also acts as a protective cover for the Parsis living in Khodadad Building. Soli Bamji, an Inspector residing in Khodadad Building, is a Parsi. He calls Gustad bossie. Soli appreciates him and the artist for changing the complexion of the wall. Though a Parsi, he avoids discrimination and criticises the Parsis who are against the pictures of other community Gods and Goddesses on the Parsi wall, for it is against the healthy 'fusion' and 'assimilation' of different cultures and communities. He states:

> A good mixture like this is a perfect example for our secular country. That's the way it should be. The *ghail chodias* will complain even if God Himself comes down. Something they will find wrong with Him. That he is not handsome

enough, or not fair enough, or not tall enough. (214)

A fine 'fusion' of humanity is depicted through the relationship between Bilimoria, Ghulam Mohammed and Gustad. Mohammed is the mediator between Gustad and Bilimoria. It is Mohammed who tells Gustad that Bilimoria is in jail, and arranges the tickets for Gustad. It is again Mohammed who performs the funeral of Bilimoria. Seeing the vultures circling at the Tower of Silence, Mohammed drops his head and weeps. He says to Gustad: "Your Parsi priests don't allow outsiders like me to go inside"(322). If there were no restrictions, he could go inside and see his beloved friend for the last time. Gustad appreciates the depth and intensity of his love for Bilimoria.

Malcolm Saldanha is a true Christian friend of Gustad. The latter feels sad for not keeping in touch with him. During their college days they both would visit Church on Sundays. Gustad, being a Parsi, respects every religion which shows his tolerance and secularism. They often discuss religions. During a discussion, Gustad observes:

> Our prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before your Son of God was even born; a thousand years before the Buddha; two hundred years before Moses. And do you know how much Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?(24)

Despite believing in different religions, Gustad and Malcolm have one and the only sense of belonging to the wall. Malcolm belongs to Christianity and lives outside the Khodadad Building, but he understands the sensibility of the minority and comes to the rescue of Gustad whenever the sense of marginalization overpowers the latter. It is under the supervision of Malcolm that the wall is to be demolished. He curses himself for getting such a horrible task. Hema, the prostitute, though not Parsi, comes forward to protect the wall. She is in her best dress and warns Malcolm and his men: "You see that painting? Yellamma, Goddess of Prostitutes? . . . You spoil that picture, you break any part of this wall, and I promise you, I will make *hijdaas* out of you all"(328).

Major Jimmy Bilimoria, a true friend to Gustad, is another dweller of Khodadad Building, suddenly disappeared without informing Gustad. Bilimoria, a retired Major narrates the tales of army and war to children — the war with Pakistan in 1948 and how Indian

troops defeated Pakistanis. He is a true patriot: "Kashmir was safe, the battle was won. . . as he described the various episodes — the crossing of Banihal Pass, the battle for Baramullah, the siege of Srinagar — were so fascinating that Gustad and Dilnavaz too would listen, enthralled"(13). It was Bilimoria who took Gustad to Madhiwalla Bonesetter, when he met with an accident. Gustad trusted Bilimoria more than anyone. "He had been like a loving brother. Almost one of the family, a second father to the children. Gustad had even considered appointing him as their guardian in his will, should something untimely happen to himself and Dilnavaz"(14). Gustad received a letter from Bilimoria with his sincere apologies and asking a favour from him. Bilimoria writes: "I am still not at liberty to tell you details, except it is a matter of national security. You know I was doing work for the government after leaving the army"(54). For the sake of national benefit he refuses to disclose his intentions to his best friend, and this embodies his determination, dedication, and discipline towards his nation. He is ready to take risk. In his second letter Bilimoria mentions that he is working for RAW. He requests Gustad to go to Chor Bazaar and collect a parcel on his behalf. It is the 'dispersal' state of Bilimoria. He thanks Gustad for going to Chor Bazaar and asks him to deposit the money in the bank by the name Mira Obili. The dispersal/ journey of Bilimoria from Khodadad Building to Delhi was not fruitful. He lost everything. He does become nostalgic. His true love and affection for Ghulam Mohammed is glorious. Bilimoria knows that the money he has is illegal, and so he thinks of making a profit for himself, Gustad and family, and Ghulam Mohammed. Bilimoria is arrested on the basis of his confession. He is asked for ten lakh. People belonging to minority community are questioned and punished. As a true friend, Bilimoria does not reveal the names of Gustad and Ghulam Mohammed, who are involved in ten lakh. The effort of being assimilated as made by Bilimoria is remarkable.

Dinshawji is another character who finds himself comfortable within the secular fabric of India. At the dinner table in Gustad's residence he recites a poem to Roshan. They call him "Dinshawji Poet Laureate." But he reacts: "Laureate - baureate nothing, I am a son of Mother India. Call me Kavi Kamaal, the Indian

Tennyson!"(47). He is a fine example of 'assimilation', calling himself the 'son of Mother India', no matter his ancestors were Persian.

A woman of seventy, Miss Kutpitia represents old age, isolation and uprootedness. She belongs to the second generation of Parsi community in Postcolonial/ independent India. Dilnavaz is her only friend. To her, life is static and unchanging. Those who use her telephone are not allowed to go more than two steps inside her house. No one goes to her flat, and telephone is her only means to have an interaction with the outer world. She is a schizophrenic who warns Dilnavaz that even she may have the same problem when her three children get married: "Old age and sorrow come to everyone some day"(87). One day suddenly smoke emerges from her flat and the thirty-five years old memories are burnt to ashes. She is no more schizophrenic. The fire that turns everything into ashes, re-creates another phoenix out of her. It also symbolises rebirth of a decaying Parsi community. However, Mistry suggests that Miss Kutpitia's rebirth is a powerful symbol of the 'fusion' of Parsi community into the Indian national life.

Patently, *Such a Long Journey* binds all the communities into a 'unified whole'. The novel points to a new harmonious society where the different cultural and ethnic communities are coming together. Gustad's efforts towards 'fusion' and 'assimilation' are sometimes painstaking. It brings into focus his emotional and psychological experiences of belonging or non-belonging to the nation where his ancestors arrived after completing a long journey. When boundary lines dissolve, as is the case after the demolition of the black wall, then 'fusion' takes place and a new culture based on the harmony of different cultures emerges. The novel concludes with the hope that the differences among different communities and religions would gradually melt away to develop a new harmonious race of Indians sharing a common culture and a common space.

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MYTH AS AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN GIRISH KARNAD'S *BALI:THE SACRIFICE*

O.P. Budholia

The operation of the myth in *Bali: The Sacrifice* is made in such a way as it brings forth the motifs of drama and the principles of dramaturgy. Karnad derives the tale of this play from the traditional ritual of sacrifice — the slaughter of animals for the sake of religious rites. The narrative is based on the thirteenth century Kannada epic, *Yashodhara Charite* by Jenna; it also derives some of its dramatic motifs from the eleventh century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja and further goes back to the ninth century Sanskrit epic *Yashastilaka* by Somadeva Suri for exploiting the inner paradigms of the myth of the *Cock of Dough* in the context of contemporary realities and for creating the aesthetic experience through the medium of art. Acknowledging the tremendous effect of this myth on his teenage mind, Girish Karnad writes:

> I first came across the myth of the *Cock of Dough* when I was still in my teens. Since then my career as a playwright has been littered with discarded drafts of dramatised version of it. But looking back, I am happy closure eluded me, for the myth continued to reveal unexpected meanings with passing years.[1]

Almost all the major writers of the world such as W.B.Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Jean Paul Sartre, Eugene O' Neill, Girish Karnad, Badal Sarkar, Mahesh Dattani and others have worked out the use of myths with extensive and intensive motifs. Myth becomes a reality when it is coded with the right motives of the situational complexities and contextual referents. Gilbert Highet describes the multi-dimensional contents of the meaning through the operation of myth:

> The central answer is that myths are permanent. They deal with the greatest of all problems, the problems which do not change. They deal with love; with war; with sin; with tyranny; with courage; with fate; and all in some way or other deal with the relation of man to those divine powers which are sometimes felt to be irrational, sometimes to be cruel, and sometimes also to be just.[2]

Myth as the centripetal force of the unconscious mind emerging from the forces of religion, culture and society becomes the properties of poetic imagination. The operation of myth becomes all pervasive and more evocative than the power of language itself.

It represents a self-growing point (*vija)* and the choice of multiple thoughts with mystifying effects on the reader. The cluster of words and their meanings, the ternary conception, the cultural and religious referents make myth pervade religion, culture and society. On the one hand it represents the phenomenology of signifiers, and on the other the cognized behaviour of the mind. Myth, if it is applied to the linguistic principles, mystifies the meaning and range of words through the connotative meanings of the contextual and situational referents. It awakens the structuration instinct, which is found in the cultural and religious motives. The myth of the *Cock and Dough* remained an integral part of Karnad's psyche and formed its base for the art of drama. Through this myth he suggests the connotative and denotative meanings, the deeper structures of human language and the psychological effects of the myth on the social consciousness of man and woman. Having no concrete validity in history and even in scientific knowledge of society, the myth itself becomes a metonymic metaphor which shapes the paradigms of human culture and human relationships. Myth as a religious and cultural force of society without any historical engrossment represents the historical, social, cultural and psychological reality of human beings. The main function of the operation of myth is to widen the artistic and imaginative range of the writer and the reader.

Deviating slightly for the dramatic pattern from his earlier plays, Girish Karnad makes an inclusion of the series of songs in *Bali: The Sacrifice.* Out of the total seven songs, four songs are sung by the singer. At the instance of T.S. Eliot's Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral,* these songs work for the purposiveness of glorifying the memories emanating from the inner effects of myth on the characters, the rhetoric application and the aesthetic experience. The first two songs — one by the queen and the second by the king himself — become symbolic of contextualization. The song of the queen divides symbolically the world 'into two orbs': the one is meant for the 'light' while the other is meant for 'shadow'. These two ways symbolize the two ways of life: violence and non-violence. The image of 'two orbs' again becomes suggestive of the queen's split into two parts: her husband and the Mahout whom she loves. In

continuation the song of the king puts forward his inner pangs and helplessness as a husband:

> Woe betide the times
> Where the king sits alone
> Outside on the steps
> racked by sighs
> While the queen cannot
> escape her lover's thighs. (74)

The operation of the myth and its translation into metaphoric language heighten the emotional range of the drama. The four songs are sung by the singer, and these songs effect the application to the forces of memories (semantic and episodic):

> Memories slide
> melt and fuse
> discrete moments
> get flung together
> strung in a single moment
> then the moment
> distends, spreads
> into years. (93)

The queen with her cognition of Jain religion hardly bears even the sight of the myth of the *Cock of Dough* which is symbolic of violence. Sliding of memories and the flinging of discrete moments create some impression for the case of *'amnesia'* — a mental state of forgetfulness. This forgetfulness makes the queen explore the subtle range of imaginative sight ("the moment distends, spreads into year"). However, the state of *'amnesia'* becomes symbolic of a particular mind set. Thus, the phrase of 'two orbs' with reference to queen and 'racked by sighs' bring into being some theoretic principles. One out of the remaining three songs with its *sthayin* of disgust gives some reflections of *bibhatsa rasa* through racked sighs and the abnormal condition of human mind — "does my heart tremble/at the hound's burning eye?" (110)

The remaining two songs out of the total seven songs are suggestive of the non-shared environment of the two cultures. The image of 'fowl', 'bird' and 'cock' of nine new months are functional. Along with the expression of connotative and denotative meanings, they become suggestive of the effects of the myth of the *Cock*

of Dough. Amidst such an occasion the poetic imagination of the dramatist creates the sense of *alankara* (image), *rasa* and *dhvani,* and finally they coalesce together to form *rasa-dhvani* theory. Myth as a centripetal force in the thematic contents has spontaneously figured as an unconscious mental force in the form of language. On the one hand, the images of 'fowl', 'bird' and 'cock' give some dramatic relief to the audience; but soon after this relief, they are acquainted with the phrasal expressions such as "the dying breath of an infant /grows as the thorny cactus between bleached ribcages" (123). The last song with its philosophic vision explores the underlying signifiers for the total concept of life. The tragic death of queen because of her cultural diversities and differences prepares the mood of serenity. These songs prepare a subtle line of differences between two religions, two cultures and between two men for a woman.

The presentation of these various songs discloses the secret how Amritmati, the queen, comes in relation with the king through the flashback device. The drama opens with an emotion of disgust (*jugupsa).* It has been worked out that Amratimati leaves the bed of her husband in the midnight and comes to Mahout, her lover, in the ruins of a temple. The ugliness, the low status and even the low caste of Mahout do not deter her from her passionate love with him. Mahout as the lover of the queen acknowledges his ugliness and at the same time he also acknowledges the ill-effects of stars on his birth. The queen assures him that he is not so ugly as he thinks. The queen finds the reason of his ugliness in the fact that he remains alone and alienated. The complexity arising out of the process of repression and depression due to isolation and alienation fills him with *dainya bhava* (depressive mood).

In *Bali : The Sacrifice,* the lover of queen, Mahout, requests the king that he should check his mother for performing the ritual of the sacrifice of animals. He knows the art of sacrifice: "It's witchcraft, sir, brand me. But don't don't take away my voice" (105). Even the low person of society as Mahout does not regard sacrifice as the highest worship of God. The queen as his beloved promises Mahout to keep his voice enliven: "I'll see that nothing happens to you"

(Ibid.). Even at the cost of her husband's disgust with her act of sexuality with Mahout she hardly feels guilty. She becomes bold and assures her lover Mahout: "Trust me. I shall not desecrate it" (Ibid.). Even in the presence of the king, she begins to caress Mahout's hair. The king turns his face "in disgust" and says to his queen ironically "Bravo" (Ibid.). On this oblique statement of the king, the queen acknowledges in an unrestrained manner : "Spare me your disgust. You take your blood and gore. I'll choose his voice"(Ibid.).

Girish Karnad has also worked out the theory of dream for displaying the unconscious mental forces and for arousing the latent emotions for aesthetic experience. The dream becomes a symbol and the metaphor of human psyche. This symbol of dream universalizes the theory of emotions; it work out the process of *sadharnikarana.* For showing the love of the queen and the Mahout the theory of emotions of Indian aesthetics (*vibhavas, anubhavas* and *sancaribhavas)* is so skilfully worked out as it exhibits the universal validity of human emotions. The dialogues between the king and his mother become symbolic of their respective inner conflicts. To a responsive reader, the perception for the guilt takes place ever before it is being translated into language. The process is known as *purvavasna* just through the description of the dream dreamt by the king. The dream contents become suggestive expression: "In the dream ... (pause) I saw that the royal swan in our garden had got and was flapping its wings" (103).

The oblique expression of the mother after hearing the dream contents of his son becomes noteworthy for the realization of aesthetic experience: "And you came to check if the swans were all right" (102). She in the continuity of her statement stamps the real validity of the dream thus: "Dreams speak to us. They come to warn us"(103). Thus, a woman reveals the nature of another woman. Patently, one finds the emotion of *bibhatsa-rasa* with its *sthayin jugupsa* (disgust) in the entire narrative pattern of this drama. The fundamental ingredients of *bibhatsa-rasa* are self-disparagement, debility, hatred, indolence, depression, recollection through memories, shame, dreaming, awakening, etc. Almost all these

sentiments are to be seen in the dramatic construction of *Bali : The Sacrifice*. The mother asks her son about the approximate location of her daughter-in-law in the midnight and the king confirms her presence in the royal bed of the palace inspite of knowing the fact that her wife is engrossed in amorous activities with her lover, Mahout. Again, the son raises a question without question mark before her mother, and that statement becomes an example of eroticism: "You mean she is lying between someone's thighs this moment"(107). The king knows that someone and yet he speaks in favour of his wife. He, however, feels an obtrusive sensation in hiding the facts related to his wife. This, again, becomes an example of the emotion of disgust.

In *Bali: The Sacrifice,* the original myth of the *Cock of Dough* pervades the entire structural plan of the play. So deeply it pierces the natural, social and cultural phenomenology as it explores the central point or 'sign' through the mode of different signifiers and signified objects of human relationships. The mother of the king, putting aside the morality of a mother and social paradigms, forgets even the proper articulation of ideas into words before her own son. The language she uses before her son becomes a wonderful example of *varna vinyasa vakrata* (vakrata in the composition of letters). The myth of the *Cock of Dough* exhibits the binary of human motifs: violence and non-violence. The language of the unconscious human psyche seeks its outlet with the contextual referents. The words uttered by the mother become suggestive and give an oblique expression to the relationship of two women of the same family — mother and daughter-in-law — before the man who also represents two relationships — son and husband. The mother and the daughter-in-law are *bibhava* and *anubhava* and the son represents the *sancaribhava* of *bibhatsa rasa* with its *sthayin jugupsa* (disgust). The contextual referents between the mother and the daughter-in-law exemplify the *padapurvardha-vakrata* (in the use of nominal *vakrata).* There comes the formation, de-formation and re-formation of human psyche through the impressions of the original myth of the *Cock of Dough.* The mother asks her son :

> Has she fallen so low? The whore. And you.

> How can you stand her like?
> I should cut her to pieces.... feed her to wolves and vultures.
> Do it son now! (107)

Shattering all the limits of motherhood, her dialogues with her son and daughter-in-law present an instance of *angiras* or dominant emotion that ends into its *sthayin disgust* and it produces *bibhatsa rasa* in human relationships. Her son tries to make her mother understand the situational complexity and contextual modesty: "Don't be hysterical, mother" (107). Filled with the emotion of disgust because of her racial and cultural upbringings, she hardly understands the deeper sense of human propriety. The psychologists affirm that the level of frustration emanating from 'disgust' makes one "a severely disturbed psychotic person whose bizarre words, gestures or actions may reveal fragmented irrational thought processes and wildly fluctuating emotions."[3]

The psychological causes bring forth some negative effects (*tamas)* which make the mother irrational — an irrationality that seeks its outlet in violent anger. This wilderness of nature becomes an apparent contradiction to human culture which transforms love into disgust. She loses the control of her body and forgets the articulation of appropriate morphemes. Her conversation with her son becomes suggestive of her latent thoughts which are called in psychology the basic instincts of the unconscious mental forces. A mother speaks to her son thus: "What kind of a man are you? You have lost your manhood. You, you impotent..."(108). Again, she remarks, "You love her. But such love is meant for harlots. She has drowned our family in sin. She has called out to demonic forces"(108). These textual citations show the level of her disgust. The king as son confesses before her mother: "Mother, whatever's happened, concerns me, my wife. And I need her *(Anguished)* I can't let her go" (109).

The mother finally stamps the efficaciouness of the original instinct of *juguspa* (disgust) when she replies to her daughter-in-law: "The only relationship in the world which does not wither and fade away is that of hate"(115). Overpowered with mother-consciousness, the king tries to pursue the queen for the religious rite of *bali*

(sacrifice). At this juncture, the voice of Mahout with the *sthayibhava of rati* (eroticism) is displayed before the audience. He tries to make the king understand that every slip of a woman is not meant for the worse. But the king under the influence of mother-consciousness hardly heeds the advice of his wife's lover. Thus, his persuasion for the rite of flagellation mingles love (*sringar)* and disgust (*bibhatasa)* creating a *rasa dosa* (unrealised emotion): "No one's written about her. While she sinks her teeth into the man and drinks blood, plucks his entrails like strings, the man's head only laughs and signs"(116). The disgust of the king and the mother, and Mahout's eroticism as love with queen suggest so many aspects of human relationships. The king regards the suggestion of Mahout in defining his relationship with the queen as "Erogenous", and so he ignores it. On the other hand, acknowledging his guilt, Mahout is ready to become "an image" of the "dough" for his punishment. The queen, his beloved, unhesitatingly acknowledges her love for Mahout: "I do not regret anything that happened. I will not disown him or anything he gave me"(118).

The candid confession relieves one of the burden of guilt-consciousness. The confession of the queen is free from any concealment; it becomes suggestive of the latent emotion of her psyche. Even the persuasions and negotiations of the king before the queen for the religious rite of *bali (sacrifice)* as symbolized by the myth of the *Cock of Dough* fail. Thus, her final leanings on Mahout's advice, her candid confession and her refusal for the sacrificial act weave suggestively a new myth within the myth that needs to be translated afresh for defining the microwave system of human relationships.

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[1]Girish, Karnad, *Two Plays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.70. All subsequent references to this play are indicated in parentheses in the text.

[2]Quoted by R. G. Joshi in *Myth in Indian Drama* (New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1984), p.11.

[3]Gerald S. Blum, *Psychodynamics: The Science of Unconscious Mental Forces* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p.5.

THE POETRY OF I.K. SHARMA: AN ASSESSMENT

O.P. Mathur

I.K. Sharma has been writing verse steadily from the seventies of the previous century. His first book of poems, *The Shifting Sand-dunes* (1976), was brought out after he had translated a few poets of Rajasthan into English. In it he has crystallized his concept of what is essential for the making of a poet:

> He bleeds into himself, crucifies
> Self in his poetic chamber
> — a Gandhi, a Jesus in ink —
> the liquid wealth of poetry, then
> meanders its way down
> through regions, steep and rushing
> making signature of the poet.[1]

The lines enshrine with a throbbing delicacy the intermingling of the poet's soul, his personal values and visions, with his manifold voices in "the liquid wealth of poetry." Sharma's imagination is like that of a lyricist, condensed, penetrating and profound. For him brevity is the soul of poetry.

Deeply rooted in Indian culture and metaphysics, I.K. Sharma shares the Indian belief in the repetitive cosmic cycle of destruction and creation which he suggests as "The game of making, unmaking pits" going on "through the night" — the shifting sand-dunes being symbolic of that cycle (*SS*, p.22). On a smaller scale, the transformation in the human civilization is represented in 'White Ants' who are its agents:

> Age after age of man's history
> his art, culture, and poetry
> lie unbound, in bits, without a babble
> like remnants of a dinner on a mahogany table. (*SS*, p.36)

Against such vast canvases, the individual's magnification of Self, like pride, the first of the Seven Deadly Sins, is made ridiculous in 'Inland Letter', and in 'Probe' the pride of the lice on a monkey's body is punctured as they are destroyed and consumed:

> Deftly he pins down the veterans
> filled with substance and sloth,

and locks them in the cemetery of his mouth.[2]

Similarly, the false and shallow pride of 'holy' men in the 'holiness' of their ambience is unveiled in the ironical description of 'the holy cow':

in search of holy food
baptized by holy water
in corners of holy streets
hallowed by holy men. ('My Holy Land', *SS*, p.13)

Discarding such sham holiness, the poet adores what is really sacred and adorable. Among such poems two deserve special mention — 'To the Ganga Maiya' and 'A Tribute to Chidambaram'. In the former after a reference to the magnificent vastitude of the Ganges stretching from the lofty Himalayas to the deep sea, the poet describes its manifold beauties and blessings, the cheer and solace it provides to its worshippers. This address 'To the Ganga Maiya', a brief and rough Indian parallel to Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind', ends with the request for a merger with the divine and for the uplifting regeneration of this worldly life:

Slay, slay all torments of life
with your maternal knife;
You, Mother, the nurse of the living,
and cradle of the unreturning. (*MLB*, p.3)

This remarkable poem, with its wealth of imagery suggesting multi-dimensional approaches to the grace of the Ganga and the prayers of its various devotees, occupies a unique piace in Indian English devotional poetry.

Another devotional poem, 'A Tribute to Chidambaram', is of quite a different type — not descriptive or discursive like the poem on the Ganga, but sharply focused on a moment of devotional ecstasy which has suffused the poet's whole life, like Browning's "moment, one and infinite" which makes his whole life "a proof of this" ('By the Fireside', stanzas XXXVII and XXXIX). Sharma's expression of the pervasive effect of the one moment in Chidambaram through epigrams and paradoxes is so glowing and inspiring that it is difficult to resist the temptation of quoting the whole of this short poem:

Time dampens love, your love dampens time,
each day that passes, you grow on my mind
and multiply like a man in a mirror-house,

silence growing larger, larger than noise.

The great hour of welcome sends curls of pain,
Shall I ever return to that hour again?
Your arches, your address — those lyrics of love
Wooed the surging ASIA, made me a dove.

To bask in the sunny moment I was there,
Each day I touch you in dreams, to be sure;
Time is great but moment is greater,
Does it not alone in life that matter?

The celebration of such moments characterises some of the best poetry in English, as in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale', to mention only a few. But it is only great poets who have had such moments of vision, and perhaps I.K. Sharma's 'A Tribute to Chidambaram' makes him eligible for entry to that exclusive club, at least in this respect, with the added flavour of paradox. I. K. Sharma's two poems embodying his reverence for those in whom the divine has made its shrine need mention. One is on "the saint of the sky", Naarad, a symbol of the lighter side of divinity (*MLB*, p.15) and the other on Tulsidas whose magical recycling of an old tale still echoes "in huts and havelis" (*MLB*, p.19).

A major subject of I.K. Sharma's poetry is man and human life viewed with religious and spiritual perspectives and suffused with the traditional Indian values juxtaposed against the 'modern'. The opening poem of *The Shifting Sand-dunes* entitled 'Sow the Seed Deep' is a sort of manifesto of the poet's belief in the sanctity and the pervasive influence of 'roots', for "cosmos rises from a cell" (*SS*, p. 9). A few poems give charming glimpses into the traditional Indian life, like a seller of raspberries, who calls the small, lovely and delicious fruit coated by a thin crackling veil, his "gals" (girls) (*MLB*, p.30).

The charm of the old Indian countryside is portrayed in poems like 'Wedding' and 'Harvest'. In the former the transition in the life of a country-maid going from open fields to settle into a small room full of "balloons and dreams" (*MLB*, p.23) seems to have an open

ending. The pattern of the transition from the traditional to the modern is brought out more touchingly in 'Harvest' in which, while the jolly and bumptious 'slickers' are at their work, a man of the previous generation is the victim of the loss of his own harvest of his son and his family presumably gone abroad:

I stand, head bent,
like a shorn sheep
that has lost
its three bags full. (*MLB*, p.22)

A similar contrast between the two cultures is brought out in 'Light' through the symbol of the individualistic electric lamp and the clay-lamps which can "light many a meanest lamp", illuminating the togetherness of the traditional community life in which

Each house glows with a happy fire.
Each head turns into a walking spire.
"I" goes out the door.
"We" comes in the front door. (*MLB*, p.5)

These last four lines of the poem, each a complete sentence, are yet united by the stanza like the individuals merging their 'selves' into their community.

Repulsive pictures of modernity and its effects on the traditional life are the subjects of quite a few of Sharma's poems. In 'Bombay', the city of 'Sai, Sachin, and Stocks', "speed, smoke, and cinema," "paints, plastics, and parlours", the old world is diminished to

birds of colour on a holiday,
trees in a cancer ward,
cows on the unholy job,
only crows guard the island .... (*MLB*, p.8)

The effects of such an ugly modernity are portrayed in poems like 'The Foundling'[3] and 'The Quest for Mother'. In the former an unclaimed baby is compared to "an unsigned letter posted in the dark", and the latter feelingly brings out the degradation of Indian womanhood whose breast today is "geometrically draped, arithmetically calculated" for "subtle barbarians" while

in the birth before, the breast had no rest,
the child's nest, the lover's rest,
and endlessly flowed the milk
of love and life,

of kindness and humanity. (*SS*, p.20)

Thus, while glorifying the animating and the inspiring tradition, the poet does not lose sight of the predominance of the individual, the powerful 'He' (which includes 'She') both over the dead past and the flashy 'modern'. By crystallising his sturdiness into his initial capital letter 'H', "the Head, the Himalayas and He", Sharma makes it highlight a host of the highest virtues of a human being like simplicity, straightforwardness, dignity, balance and integrity. But does mankind always live up to this model? Of course, not. And Sharma picks up a particular type of persons who, against the wishful hopes of the people and their own tall promises, present a contrast to what a capital 'H' (a 'Hero' of the people) should be. They are more like the small 'h' so crushingly described by the poet in the same poem:

a picture of three-dimensional crookedness,
a creeping creature moving in the garden
in search of easy prey. (*SS*, p.28)

The description can be an oblique reference to the class of politicians some of whose characteristics Sharma has opened up in a few of his poems with the fine surgical knife of his witty obliquity. The creeping creatures "in search of easy prey", they are like the 'roundworms' in our intestines sharply identified through a number of transparent expressions — with one dose of decaris "all the *sitting members... well-fed... sitting in gastro-galleries"* being flushed out in one *motion*, for "When the limit is crossed/ parasites deserve this treatment." (Italics mine) (*SS*, p.12). 'The Leader' too is a brief but tellingly oblique satire on the political leader who, like the cock, is the first to announce a dawn, presumably before an election, but soon "hides the rising sun", (*SS*, p.10), not allowing even his followers to bask in the warm comforts of sunshine which he reserves for himself. There is another poem, a masterpiece of oblique political satire on the Emergency, entitled 'Gandhi at a Crossroads'[4], which hints at the unrestricted grazing even close to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, of the green grass, i.e. the wealth and property of the nation, by the "asses" of today, making the poet wonder what is the use of his 'lathi' if it cannot drive them away. The politicians have made the name of Gandhi into just a screen to hide all their sins and misdoings.

I.K. Sharma's glimpses of international politics are equally suggestive. 'The Death of Atlas' (*SS*, p.21), through a myth-based pun, demonstrates how easy it is to tear apart the pages of a school-boy's atlas but difficult to rejoin them, thus hinting at the difficulty of uniting nations once divided or separated. Sharma portrays the ideal for international relations in Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, an embodiment of universal love, in 'The Light Traveller' (*MLB*, p.137), for whom warring nations are "like babes in the mother's arms". Treating all religions as having the same goal, he followed the trail of Love and Ahimsa blazoned by Gandhi, "the Truthful one/ who dwarfed the giant with a handful of salt."

I.K. Sharma has a number of poems on nature and the lower animals also. But, being essentially a poet of man, he uses nature as a lens to focus upon man, his life, hopes and ideals. 'Sow the Seed Deep' (*SS*, p.9) is almost a seminal poem through which, as we have already seen, he conveys the message to the artist to draw his artistic sustenance from the "re-creative sleep" of the inspiration drawn deep from his soul, treating it as "a green room for the second coming" (*SS*, p.9). Another poem 'The Shifting Sand-dunes' (*SS*, p.22), the title-poem of the book, is a pointer to the cosmic annihilation and creation celebrated in the Indian scriptures. A similar hopeful lesson of transformation and resurrection is conveyed in 'After the Storm', a lesson which is applicable both to the cosmic and the individual levels of existence (SS, p. 37). Coming to our daily lives in the poem 'Sadabahar'[5] the poet glorifies the cheerful and successful struggle of a small plant, five inches tall, against the hot sun and the scavenger's broom, and the sympathy of a stray bee which drones above the plant but does not perch for fear of uprooting it by its weight, the friendliness of the plant towards its close neighbour, the drain, and, lastly, the persistence of the joy and hope of the little plant. Has not man got to learn so much from its tiny and frail but determined existence? Dr. Prema Nandakumar in a letter to the poet observed, "'Sadabahar' is beautiful. It could be a symbol of the millions of abused child workers in our bangle-factories, match-box factories, hotels." There are two poems on the lower animals too. 'Peacock' (*MLB*, p.6) celebrates the bird's

magnificent beauty, melodious notes and its dignity and reserve which raise it to the level of the glorious heroes of mankind, inspiring both love and admiration. In 'Probe' (*MLB*, p.127) a monkey delousing his mate becomes a symbol not only of deep affection but also of a probe into what ails our beloved country and to exterminate those responsible for it.

Another characteristic common to Sharma's poetry is that it is dramatic, not because all poetry, in fact all literature, is dramatic as embodying somebody's, even the poet's or the novelist's words as spoken to the reader if not to anyone else, but because the modulations of Sharma's voice are not the same in all the poems ranging from the devotional to the ironical. In the poems of the latter type we come across devices which can variously be called 'suggestion', 'sub-text', 'Vakrokti' or 'conceptual deviance'. We have already examined a number of poems of this type, especially, 'Roundworms', 'The Leader', 'Gandhi at a Cross-roads' or 'The Foundling' — to mention only a few. His satirical poems, like most satirical works, present the inverse side of an ideal, turned inside out. At heart, Sharma is an artist with a vision of glowing values and ideals. Though most of his poems are in unrhymed lines of varying length, they often have an inner rhythm based on alliteration, assonance or even the beat of emotions and ideas, as in the lines:

> The chatterers of the town
> carry volumes of knowledge
> about the spanking disorder.
> Stalkers, snipers, scamsters rule the street
> and the secretary's office. Unseen hands
> chop a wallet with computer.
> Scientists are new moms
> longing for newer bombs and babies ....('A Shadow on Your Face', *MLB*, p.33)

In lines like these rhyme would be an unnecessary decoration: it may even take away from them the depth and spontaneity of expression. The above lines also illustrate Sharma's functional use of appropriate imagery which may arise from even a word or a phrase and does not require amplitude of space.

It appears that Sharma's forte lies in his shorter poems. Behind most of them, as in the case of 'A Shadow on Your Face' (though

not so short) there is, to use Charles Wheeler's phrase, some "presiding intellect"[6]. Sharma's shorter poems are, as we have seen, on a variety of subjects handled in a variety of moods, but they have, in general, certain values and poetic techniques in common. J. C. Ransom has classified poetry as "poetry of things" and "poetry of ideas"[7]. But Sharma's poetry, including his shorter poems, though mostly written about 'things', has at its kernal, some 'idea' or the other stated directly or suggested obliquely. Even a minor poem like 'My Lady, Broom' (*MLB*, pp.17-18) suggests the "artist invincible". Similarly 'The Nurse' (*MLB*, p.11) presents "a glow of light and love".

It seems that the huge mass of modern sub-standard 'poetry' written in English has made critics and historians of Indian English literature so impatient with practically the whole lot that they could not separate the grain from the chaff, and so a number of poets including I.K. Sharma have, it appears, been more or less ignored. Perhaps it is high time that these poets may be subjected to proper evaluation. I. K. Sharma's poetry should then emerge as having a solid foundation of values based on what has been called a "sensuous, emotional and intellectual awaress of life."[8]

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[3]I.K. Sharma, *My Lady, Broom and Other Poems* (Jaipur: Sand-Pra Publications, 2004), p.12. In this paper all further references to this book have been absorbed after giving its abbreviated title '*MLB*'.

[3]I.K. Sharma, *The Native Embers* (Jaipur: Jaipur Publishing House, 1986), p.22.

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[7]John Crowe Ransom, 'Poetry: A Note on Ontology,' Calderwood and Toliver, *op. cit.*, p.34.

[8]H. Coombes, *Literature and Criticism* (Pelican books; London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), p.87.

THE THEME OF AFFIRMATION AND SANGUINITY IN THE POETRY OF D.C. CHAMBIAL

Anita Myles

Published in September 2004, The *Collected Poems* (1979-2004)[1] of D.C. Chambial are "... indeed a true unification of sensibility, ideas and images merging into a poetic synthesis (3). Credited to have a wide range of thematic concerns, the collection deals with human relationships, human nature, Nature, morality, the Indian social scene and some well-known personalities thereby being a true dispensation for 'Suffering Humanity and Peace and Fraternity". The dedication itself sheds ample light on the poet's extreme sensitivity of mind, his sagacious concern and commiseration for the disconsolate human beings all over the globe. Most of the poems in the collection revolve around life as the nodal point, the poet's thoughts emanating undeviatingly from his obsevations and experiences of life. Intermittently, the permanence of the personal note manifests the poet's perception of oneness with specially those who suffer on account of others. The poet himself opined:

> Writing of a poem, for me, is an anthropological process: A prospective mother cannot help delivering a child, so does a poet in bringing forth a poem nurtured in the womb/crucible of his mind. A period of gestation is necessary for both.
>
> (Prefatorial Note to *The Collected Poems*)

Each poem comes from the core of the poet's sensitive heart giving adequate expression to his deep concern for the enigma of the wayward coetaneous existence. The spirit of universality which colours the poems finds better locution in Chambial's poems getting rendered into various languages such as Bengali, Danish, Portuguese, German, Romanian and Greek.

A critic and censor of modern life, Chambial recollects the depravity of human existence today more so when he realises how life has changed due to the coming of scientific advancement and technological discoveries which the poet has so appropriately termed as the "jungle of automation". A "robot culture" has emerged giving "rise to a new set of ideas". In the "land of Gandhi" one must constantly wear a mask to be able to survive. The poet observes:

To live successfully
at the present hour
one must have two faces —
one of the angel's,
other of the devil
bedecked with
synthetic perfumes and creams
to hide the rotten smell
of blood bedaubed nails and teeth. (58)

Living is like a
voyage
in the forest
infestd with howling beasts,
hissing serpents, hooting owls; (61)

Several poems in the collection depict the egoistic, selfish and materialistic world of today. The poet has deftly employed animal imagery alluding to the world as a "jungle of Hyenas" where man unflinchingly preys upon his fellow beings without any qualms of conscience whatsoever. The poem "Vultures and Crows" exhibits this idea amply.

While pondering upon the corruption prevalent in the world today Chambial's humanism surfaces to the forefront. In "A Cry for Peace" he pleads for some kind of peace and bemoans the loss of lives in battles instigated by selfish leaders. The cry is apparent in the following lines:

Let's lie starved and naked;
Tell us — where are our brothers,
Fathers, sons and husbands
You sent to Vietnam and Bangladesh? (60)

The inexorable impact of war has been described in poems like "Yugoslavia" and "Upon the Snowy Heights" where a veritable portraiture of mass destruction both emotional and physical has been rendered vividly merely to indicate the degradation of mankind. "Death By Fire" encapsulates real life tragedies leading to the death of hundreds of innocent people.

Equally touching are Chambial's poems describing the plight of children of working parents. "The Difference" picturizes a wailing child who is left in the care of an elusive maid-servant while the

father drudges in office

the mother at the type-writer.... (72)

Ultimately the child

overpowered by sleep
lies down on the cold floor,
robbed of milk, robbed of love,
and tears roll down the cheeks. (73)

"The Lapicide" is the heart-rending tale of a stone-breaker's child. While the mother continues to break the stones the baby lies on the pebbles:

She serves unto Him
and unto Humanity.
Now and then
the baby cries hunger;
wipes her sweat from her face
and sits down on a stone
to suckle her child-manna. (74)

She tries to kiss away the agony of her neglected child. It is the mother's strength and sustaining power which is echoed in yet another poem:

With her swollen eyes
She lullabies
her weeping babe
with the softest melodies. (78)

A note of reverence for the hard working Indian woman resounds as the poet assures the women folk that they "have passed the fire-test", they are "The Shakti", "The Savitri" and "The Lakshmibai" who are well-armed to fight out the "ashuras".

All is not lost in a world full of corruption and devoid of mercy. The poet optimistically believes in the presence of the Divine Spirit who is there to guide mankind constantly:

Who is the third man
besides
you and me? (124)

We only have to recognize his omniscience which will help us conquer the darkness of life. The poet offers reverent prayers to the Divine for appropriate strength to face the challenges of the corrupt world ("A Prayer on this Day"). When the "short sojourn" on earth is over, the poet is keen to go to the "beautiful home" that exists beyond, for he is sure that

All the hungers and all the greeds
Left here on this land, carry no trace,
serene satisfaction, sons deeds,
writ large on every face. (14)

D.C. Chambial reiterates the existence of God as a supreme energy which controls the reins of man's sojourn on earth. Howbeit, man's faith is sometimes shaken by life's delitescent umbrages and by the innumerable untimely as well as intractable afflictions. To quote the poet:

Man a helpless mortal
in this drama of despair.
The ship out in the stormy sea
Charred with little hope of repair. (142)

Uncertainty looms large as the poet derives alleviation from the fact that life's journey must end "across the canyons of TIME" culminating in ecstasy, weal and tranquillity when one conjoins with God — the master musician who begins and ends the music of life. The surest way to reach the Divine is to know the real meaning of love and truth. But love and truth are like mysteries unresolved, for the poet stipulates:

Life-time not enough
to know the stuff —
love and truth.
A dive is must
to know the world
to know love and truth. (84-85)

Nature is a subject close to the heart of Chambial, as he delineates both the aspects of nature: the calm, serene side which offers constant solace and revitalisation to dissipated, impoverished man ("Drink Deep the Nature's Bounty"), whereas the turbulent, vociferous side captivates his attention in poems pertaining to manifold natural calamities. Spring evokes hope in man. "Virtue Weeps" embodies an exquisite analogy where man like the innocent dewdrop can reflect the rays of the sun. Unfortunately, he is tainted by the sensual and materialistic temptations of the world rendering him powerless to bathe in the crystal rays — an idea which is further extended in "The Moral Void". "Frantic Rhythm" is a description of the attractive charm of

nature which, of course, loses its lustre "when men resolve to play beast" and attempt to devour one another. "In Harmony with Nature" exhibits the poet's closeness with nature more so when he is in a disturbed state of mind. In the midst of the serenity of nature the poet gets peace. The awesome fury of nature, too, captivates the poet's thoughts. "The Storm" describes the panic-stricken creatures on earth. The traumatic cyclone of Orissa allures the poet's thoughts in "I Wonder at His Judgement". The aftermath of the Gujrat earthquake spells out the aggressive, vociferous facet of nature.

In *Collected Poems* D.C. Chambial exhibits his prowess and adroitness as a subtle craftsman having employed a medley of poetic forms. The befitting application of imagery is noteworthy, for it appends flavours and gusto to the poet's expression. Images seem to come naturally to him. Animal imagery is mostly used to show the decadence and the negative forces working in the contemporary world, and hence scavenger birds and animals figure frequently in his poems. Nature imagery finds unforgettable and original metaphorical expressions such as "frozen lake", "whirlpool of despair", "Bleeding clouds", "frosty winter", etc. Personifications abound the poems making the abstract lively, and at several places obvious descriptions are utilised not in their usual meanings but as imagery which makes Chambial's poems pictorial, vivid and realistic. Chambial daringly experiments in intermixing conceits, symbols, images and metaphors successfully in order to share his innermost feelings with the readers. This technique, though complicated, provides a unique charm to his poems.

An earnest inquisition of Chambial's poems reveals the poet to be a conscious artist and a meticulous craftsman who does not waste his words because each and every description and phraseology is loaded with specific connotations. Words are used in such a way so as to reflect the varied shades of meaning and also their nuances. The subtle use of words gratifies the aesthetic sense of the readers, simultaneously enhancing the emotional appeal of the poem. True enough, the poet has written non-metrical poetry, yet in no way can the absence of metre and rhythm be felt, for his diction and the sound of words add to the pleasure of the

rhythm. The poems abound in free verse with occassional rhymed lines here and there. Nevertheless, every poem exhibits internal rhymed pattern thereby extending the versification a rare amalgamation of the Romantic and the Modern strain.

About four decades ago modern English poetry in the West as well as in India was judged by complex images, complicated thoughts and obscurity. After the death of T.S. Eliot the new phase in English poetry under the influence of American poets took recourse to ironical and satirical expressions. In this sense Chambial is a modern or to be more specific a post-modern poet because his verse abounds in satire with traces of irony here and there. Satire is not used as done earlier with a view to censor or condemn individuals or social system. Satire in his poems is a tool to make the readers conscious of the decadence of the finer human values all around. Hence satire and irony in the poet's universe take the form of moral and ethical instruments. A fine example is found in the poem "Man is Lost" where the poet laments how India, the land of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and Lord Buddha, is enslaved to the power of new Lords who unflinchingly

> ... teach an ultra-philosophy
> Of corruption, scams and hawalas. (133)

An impressive bard of Himachal Pradesh, Chambial is a preceptive writer, for his is the poetry of life explicitly unfolding the ultimate truth of human existence. Thematically, the poems of Chambial are neither sceptical nor defeatist inspite of the fact that the prevailing subject matter focusses around the seamy side of life emphasising the continuously falling values of life. He observes life as a realist, not hiding even the ugly paradigms but at the same time the poet projects his firm faith in the positive aspect of the divine pattern. In a nutshell, the poems of D.C. Chambial exhort mankind not to reject life but to face all adversities stoically working towards a unified object of preventing the cosmos from turning into chaos.

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[1]D.C. Chambial, *The Collected Poems* (Maranda: Poetcrit Publications, 2004).

All subsequent references to this book are given in parentheses in the text.

BOOK REVIEWS

P. RAJA, *K.D. SETHNA: AN INTRODUCTION THROUGH INTERACTION*

(Pondicherry: Busy Bee Books, 2005), pp.124, Rs.100.00

R.K. Singh

Kaikhushru Dhunjibhoy Sethna, now 102 year old poet-scholar-critic and spiritual seeker and a "wheel-chair man" since 1992, has been a true interpreter of Sri Aurobindo's genius. Renamed Amal Kiran by Sri Aurobindo, he has been staying in the Pondicherry Ashram since the age of 23, and writing about literature, philosophy, history, culture, mysticism, spirituality, scientific thoughts, and composing first-rate poetry and criticism besides editing *Mother India,* an Aurobindonian mouthpiece. He has published fifty-one books. Sri Aurobindo taught him "how to concentrate on poetic effect (p.71) and helped him bring out the best in his creativity.

P. Raja has done a great service to the cause of Sri Aurobindo thought and culture by providing an in-look to the life and vision of K.D. Sthna, a versatile genius. He has developed the book from a series of ten interactive sessions, varying between 20 minutes to 40 minutes, with the great living man of letters. P. Raja asks him questions that lead him to reflect on the entire gamut of his life and time. He successfully brings out various aspects of Sethna's creative mind, vision and personality in a very lucid and readable form. His meticulous probe into Sethna's family background, childhood, upbringing, education, personal nature, marital life, inner quest, and active experiences in such diverse areas as poetry, philosophy, criticism, yoga, mysticism, life in Ashram, journalism, etc. makes the book a significant document. It must have been a great experience for P. Raja to talk to a man, who has "a certain equanimity arising out of that inner peace, so that the usual things of life don't obstruct or disturb one" (p.26).

K.D. Sethna was the first person whom Sri Aurobindo had chosen to show the opening lines of the 1936 version of *Savitri*, which was "a great secret" then (pp.61-62). It was because, as Sethna

tells us, he too was trying to write "overhead poetry." Sri Aurobindo used to send him only 15 lines a day and reading and criticizing them was an overwhelming experience.

The book also reveals some little known interesting facts about Harindranath Chattopadhyaya joining the Ashram and leaving it soon (p.67), local people's prejudices against the Northerners (pp. 65, 68-69), the Ashram developing as a "human laboratory" where all kinds of people were welcomed (p.68), the future of the Ashram (p.69), Sri Aurobindo's contribution to world literature (p.73), Sri Aurobindo's plays and short stories (p.74), P. Lal and Ezekiel as "not great in the field of either poetry or criticism" (p.75), compassionate nature of Sri Aurobindo (pp.78-79), Sethna's experiences as Editor of *Mother India* (pp.80-98) and rough spots in his marital life (pp.47-49), etc.

The artist in Sethna makes him assert that "we must all strive to make things shapely. In life, in language, in thought, in action, but not too shapely. Then it becomes somewhat artificial, mechanical" (p.90). A man bred on Byron, Shelley or Keats and devoted to spiritual pursuits is naturally at home with "psychic being", or the real soul in him, and dislikes meanness of spirit and lack of generosity in people (p.92). He expects a writer "to express the best in himself, the highest perception which he has (and) the deepest response he has to things ..."(p.96). His advice to the younger generation of writers is: "Write with some depth in what you say and not merely a flashing of cleverness, which seems to be the temptation of most writers. And try to understand the depth from which some kind of life would come out to express it. That way your own writing will be some kind of revelation even to yourself" (p.103).

The book's epic canvas presents not only the life and views of K.D. Sethna's hundred years but also his insightful observations about his mentors, and the Ashram which has now become a futurist institution. His reflections reveal the great legacy of Sri Aurobindo and the global humanity he stands for. P. Raja deserves kudos for recording his very thoughtful conversation with the grand old scholar-poet-devotee of The Mother and publishing it for use by Ashramite and non-Ashramite readers, scholars and researchers everywhere.

R.C. SHUKLA, *THE PARROT SHRIEKS*

2 Vols. (Kolkata: Writers Workshop, 2005), pp.136+100, Rs.360.00

K.K. Kapoor

R.C. Shukla's two-volume anthology, *The Parrot Shrieks*, recently brought out by Writers' Workshop, has appeared as a whiff of fresh air amidst the chaotic scene of Indian English poetry. The poems in these volumes have a definite structure focusing on the caged parrot and his dilemma — the leitmotif — while elaborately playing with the texture of multi-hued imaginative responses capturing the fleeting moods and movements of a captive heart. The poet has taken the intransitive *Shriek* as his chosen verb because the word defines a sound rather than an act. This clever choice gives him enough leg-room to lead a merry dance of emotions — after all a shriek may as well be a mating cry as a mourning wail.

R.C. Shukla carefully sets up the defining imagery in the title poem:

> The man /with a well-dressed avidity ...
> Gets ready to be imprisoned
> And become a parrot ...
> The parrot Shrieks
> The parrot cries
> It is wrong it discourses
> Probably to be released. (p.59)

The word 'probably' in the last line is a clear signal by the poet that human responses are ambiguous and it will be silly to come to any facile conclusions about human relations. The shriek is both an ecstasy and an agony, the relationships are simultaneously alluring and repulsive, the desire to escape is thwarted by the temptation to cling on. This ambiguity is the strength of Shukla's poetry.

The word 'shriek' is primarily expressive of four responses – – pleasure, pain, anger and plaintiveness — which loosely approximate to the four *Rasas* of *Shringara, Karuna, Vibhatsa* and *Shanta*. R.C. Shukla has explored these four *Rasas* in the different poems of the present anthology, all accompanied with rich imagery,

metaphors and objective correlatives. The sheer ecstasy of love is seen in euphoric poems like "Sex is not Cohabitation Alone" which project various erotic images of the mating season:

Clouds simply thunder ...
The peacocks dance ...
The two grown up leaves touch each other
Or one curious branch
Amorously bends over the other ...
The pigeons touch ...
And the two penguins bathe. (Vol.I, pp.18-19)

Karuna is the predominant *Rasa* in many poems like "Love Is an Illusion", "How Long Will the Mendicant Wait", "The Fire Warming the Wax Dies" and "You Once More Stifled My Desire". However, the most startling imagery is found in poems that explore *Vibhatsa*, the horror of a woman's wanton callousness towards one who is devoted to her. The poet seems to be obsessed with the *Black Beauty* syndrome that enlivens the archetypal woman images of *Venus/Amazon* or *Menaka/Shurpanakha*. The poems that expose the female psyche are too numerous but mention must be made of "The Unmanageable Self-willed Woman"and "I Met a Woman" from Volume I, and "You Consider Callousness Your Faith" and "A Woman's Romatic Exercise" from Volume II. Wwoman is often called a fox, a knotty tree, a riddle, an unfathomable enigma. Consider these lines:

Woman is a mystery miserable
A Story without theme
And a long letter without contents. ("My Eros Inspires Me", Vol.I, p.57)

The fiery emotions of love, sorrow and anger are finally silenced by the *Shanta Rasa* of wisdom and acceptance in poem like "Our Peace in His Will". The serene poems in this anthology include "Romance Is Not Bigger than Life", "Adieu Friends Adieu", "The Toils of Love", and "For Me the Festival Ended". Perhaps it will be in order to end this brief study with an illustration of how the poet wins peace by accepting the inevitable:

The fancy closed the box ...
Where these days it resides
And often sings a song
Wisdom sometime composed. ("Today It Was a Sun Eclipse", Vol.II, p.80)

JAYDEEP SARANGI AND GAURI SHANKAR JHA (EDS.), *THE INDIAN IMAGINATION OF JAYANTA MAHAPATRA*

(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006), pp.xii+193, Rs.450.00

K.K. Sharma

Of late, there is a spate of critical miscellanies on Indian English literature in general, on the major forms of Indian literature in English and on individual authors as well. The trend began healthily with the publication of the monumental volume, *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*, edited by M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai, and G.S. Amur in 1968, and continued slowly but steadily in 1970's with such invaluable collections of critical essays as *Indian Literature in the Past Fifty Years* (1970), *Indo-English Literature* (1976), *Considerations* (1978), *Indian Writing in English* (1978), and *Indian Writing in English* (1979) edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, K.K. Sharma, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Ramesh Mohan and K.N. Sinha respectively. In late 1970's and 1980's came out some remarkable critical miscellanies on particular genres of Indian English literature and on Indian English authors of global fame, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and others. But right from the beginning of the present century, there is an unending flow of edited books, most of which are, in one way or another, substandard and uneven. Of this recent critical phenomenon in India, the book, under review, is an exception, and hence deserves some serious consideration.

The first Indian English poet to have received the prestigious Sahitya Akademy Award in 1981, Jayanta Mahapatra is a distinguished bilingual man of letters. Though he began to write poetry late at the age of thirty-eight, he is quite prolific with seventeen volumes of poetry in English, besides a lot of poetry and prose in Oriya. Landscape and people around him constitute the subject matter of his writings. Nature, poverty, social injustice, the plight of the Indian woman, etc. are, thus, the major themes of his creative writings because as he himself avers, " All these things happen around me."

The volume, which consists of seventeen articles plus an interview, opens with a poetic tribute to Jayanta Mahapatra by Rudra Kinshuk, who sees Mahapatra's greatness in his fusion of the local and the global which is the consequence of his "glocal (i.e. global+local) aspiration,/ of lobal (local+global) colour..." (1). The next piece by Reema Kansal and Amit Sarwal examines Mahapatra's concern with conflict, grief and guilt in his collection of short stories entitled *The Green Gardener and Other Stories.* Forgetting all about the religious and aesthetic traditions, the author in this work focuses on the ordinary people, specially their inner world of thought and imagination.

In his brilliant paper, Niranjan Mahanti, himself a well-known creative writer and scholar, focuses on Jayanta Mahapatra's exposition of pain and/ or grief in his two famous collections of poems, *Shadow Space* and *Bare Face.* The poet is deeply moved to see everywhere in India unending human sufferings and miseries, the loss of faith in human relationships filling him with helplessness and pessimism. Mohanti talks a lot about the poet's preoccupation with pain, but I fail to understand what he means by the expression 'the poetics of pain'.

The next article by Syamala Kallury and Anjana N. Dev is an attempt to bring out "the topographical and political dimensions of Mahapatra's national identity"(31). It also discusses the poet's obsession with the historical and mythological past of the country together with geographical locations with special reference to Orissa. He is not reticent about the stark realities of life; his writings are, indeed, the most scathing indictment of the socio-economic and political system of the nation. Also, he highlights the suffering, despair and hunger which have haunted the country since ages. The poet is particularly sympathetic towards the women and children of India and is rudely shocked by their miserable plight.

The next piece by Malati Mathur is not only sketchy and vague but is also the repetition of the preceding studies with a focus on pain as the integral theme of Mahapatra's creative works. This is followed by Asha Gupta's useful essay, which, though at first gives the impression of repetitiveness, is cerainly an impressive "attempt

to voice certain issues pertaining to writing as an activity towards circumscribing space, validity of the universal in literature, predicaments of the Indian English writer and the resultant tension in general. The same issues were also analysed in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry with 'Dawn at Puri' as case study" (75).

In "*A Whiteness of Bone*: A Treatise of Jayanta Mahapatra's Meandering Sparks and Fury", Binod Mishra endeavours to set aside the misconceptions that his poetry is complex and deeply rooted in the idle ways of the past, and to reveal the poet's true self by analysing the poems of the volume referred to in the title of the study. He convincingly concludes that Mahapatra's poetry "is a living example of the inner sparks and fury that keep mankind oscillating between the shadows of lived experiences and the sun of unlived expectations" (87).

Pradip Kumar Patra's essay that follows it, frankly speaking, does not mean much to a serious reader, as it discusses, rather sketchily, the poet's notable work, *Random Descent*, just to show his concern with "the still sad music of humanity". This aspect of his poetry has already been examined in almost all the papers preceding it. The next piece by Robert Gnanamony is devoted to Mahapatra's famous collection named *Life Signs*, which consists of thirty-five poems about the poet's variegated impressions and experiences in Puri, Cuttack and other places in Orissa. These poems record his incessant search for the root cause of his countrymen's maladies; he wants to know whether they suffer — "gasping in the darkness", to quote his own words from the poem "Violence" — due to fate or culture or religion. It is not without meaning that we notice in his poems of *Life Signs* three binary opposites — light and darkness, wet and dry, and love and cruelty towards men and women. Thus, his poetry is a 'think-tank'. Gnanamony's following inference is justifiable: "Just as the postmodernists give more weight to the negatives of the bipolar opposites, Mahapatra too seems to be attaching more importance to the negative aspects of life" (99). The poet feels tortured to note that people have no sense of togetherness and friendship — the essence of humanism — in the present-day world.

The tenth article titled "'Learning for Ourselves': A Study of Jayanta Mahapatra's Select Poems" by K.S. Anish Kumar is rather poor. In about six pages that he has written, he has cited six times from only one collection of the poet, *A Whiteness of Bones*, which has been analysed, in detail, in the seventh essay of this volume. The critical piece, "Contemporary Abuses and the Need for Edifying Generality: A Study of Jayanta Mahapatra's Poems" by Kasthuri Bai, demonstrates how contemporaneity is the core of his poetry and it is this which lends unity to it. His poetry is a remarkable specimen of 'indicative' texts. His poems on Gandhiji lay bare his anguish and agony over the fact that the Father of the Nation has been thrown into background and his birthday celebrations are mere hollow rituals.

Himadri Roy concentrates on Mahapatra's delineation of woman's pathetic life in Indian society. It is true that in the orthodox, patriarchal world woman can never have a socio-cultural identity, and has always been and will ever be a sexual object to man. Her activities and ambitions are usually restricted to marriage, housekeeping, child-rearing and adherence to the traditional manners and culture. She is destined to a 'conditional existence' with little freedom in the marginalised space. The critic cites from the poem "A Brief Orissa Winter" to show how the poet attempts to shatter the chains tied around women to confine them to the rigid patriarchal set-up.

This is followed by Gauri Shankar Jha's good piece of criticism in which he traces Mahapatra's poetic contours and establishes him as a muddled poet. He builds up his thesis on the poet's own statements like "... I'm so muddled up now with English and Oriya. I'm neither here nor there...." and "Physics taught me that all observation is uncertain, ambiguous." He illustrates his assertion from Mahapatra's various poems. Jha analyses the poem "A Summer Poem" to reveal the poet's negative impulse, and is at a loss to see why the poet often thinks of the unfulfilled, why "all his queries lead to abstainism" (148) and why a great poet like him takes us to nothingness.

The next essay by T. Sai Chandra Mouli is an effort to prove

that Mahapatra is a poet 'with a heart of gold' because he is deeply concerned with the contemporary social conditions or evils like human suffering and exploitation, hunger of several types, futility of traditional marriages, the miserable plight of woman, lust for power, violence, etc. Patently, there is little newness in this article as it reproduces most of the inferences of other writers in the volume. Moreover, it is centred upon Mahapatra's just one collection, *Random Descent*. The same is true of Nigamananda Das's article, "*Random Descent*: Matrix of Legends". But Amar Nath Prasad has something new to say in "Jayanta Mahapatra: A Poet of Competent Craft". This is the only attempt in the volume to examine, in detail, the technical side of Mahapatra's poetic genius. His deft craftsmanship is evident in his use of images and symbols as well as in his "lexical cohesion, epigrammatic expressions, metaphysical conceits and modern flavor" (180).

The last two pieces in the volume are certainly significant. The first one is devoted to a study of Jayanta Mahapatra's Oriya poetry, i.e. poetry in his first language. Strangely, he published his Oriya poetry quite late: his first collection came out in 1993, the second in 1995 and the third in 1997. But before bringing out his first collection, he had translated Jadunath Das Mahapatra's *Wings of the Past* (1976) and Sitakanta Mahapatra's *Song of Kubja and Other Poems* (1981). Like his poems in English, these poems are also marked by integrity to felt experience which results in contemporaneity attaining transcendentalism. At the end of the book there is a useful, though not comprehensive, interview with the poet by Jaydeep Sarangi; it contains the poet's invaluable comments on images and symbols, Indianness, poetic language, the difficult nature of his poems, human relationships and the future of Indian English poetry.

In fine, the book is a valuable contribution to Jayanta Mahapatra criticism, for the poet doubtless deserves more critical attention than what has been given to him hitherto. But candidly speaking, the volume is uneven, as only a few articles are really good and upto the mark. What is remarkable about it is that it has been very well produced: the jacket design is meaningfully artistic, the printing is commendable and the binding is beautiful.

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