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## **THREE SHAKESPEARE BUTTS: SCHOOLMASTERS, POETS AND CONSTABLES**

**S. Viswanathan**

Built into the very fabric of the plays across the canon, is Shakespeare's intense and wholesome aversion for such grave human failings as ingratitude, hypocrisy, obsequious flattery, the apeing of melancholy, and other such fashions, and drunkenness. Shakespeare, like many other writers of the age, often makes laughing stocks of lawyers and tailors. He in particular parodies excesses of rhetoric or euphuisms and also often ridicules the use of heavy cosmeticization by women and men. However, he treats with gentle respect the friar who occasionally appears as a character in the plays, while almost all other playwrights ruthlessly satirise them, a factor which is sometimes adduced as a supportive argument by those who believe that Shakespeare had Roman Catholic leanings if he was not himself a Roman Catholic. Likewise, he treats actors with considerable respect, according them a dignity, a mark of the upward movement in society and class of the actor's profession which M.C. Bradbrook called 'the rise of the common player' in her book of that title, a feature not in evidence in other playwrights' treatment of their actor-characters. It is interesting that he considers three social types, occurring here and there as characters in the plays, as his pet aversions and objects of generally gentle but sometimes not so gentle ridicule. These are the schoolmaster, the poet and the constable. It may be worthwhile to enquire into what factors could have operated behind Shakespeare's habit of making these characters butts of ridicule.

Schoolmasters, as a rule, were treated with respect in the Elizabethan age. With the heightening of standards in grammar schools, and their growth, they came to play a key role in the shaping of the rising middle class from which came leading playwrights and writers like Shakespeare and Marlowe themselves, it was, among other things, the age of schoolmasters, with such great teachers as Sir John Cheke, Roger Ascham and Richard Mulcaster arriving on the scene. Shakespeare himself was greatly benefited by the Strat-

ford Grammar School where he could acquire his Latin which was not 'small' by any means. He carried strong memories of the texts of Latin grammar and literature which he studied at school, and also put them to good use as a means of enjoying fun at the expense of the schoolmaster figures of his creation, and sometimes makes more of the Latin he had as he does with Ovid. What is more, he himself is said to have spent some time as 'a schoolmaster in the country' and a private tutor in a noble household during the so-called 'lost years' of his youth. If he treats such figures as the schoolmaster, the poet or the constable as handy and suitable figures of fun, it may be the expression of our instinctive tendency to treat figures of authority as those of fun in a playful or holiday mood.

In spite of being the poet *par excellence*, a narrative and lyric poet as well as a dramatist, Shakespeare sets the poet as character in the plays in an unfavourable enough light. This in spite of his high estimate of and perhaps faith in the power of poetry as expressed in the Sonnets. It may be a case of his taking liberties with his own tribe for the nonce. It emerges in the plays that he had a profound distrust of the poetry of satire and complaint, genres in the vogue in the nineties of the sixteenth century. Although he himself had to resort to patronage by lords and nobles, he seems to have felt that such dependence of the poet on the patron should change, though such a change was only in the bud then to blossom later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In a way, it need not be much of a surprise that he seems to have had little to do with the lady of the patron of his company the Lord Chamberlain's men, Elizabeth, wife of Lord Hunsdon, who was a patroness of Spenser, Nashe and the musician Downland and was befriended by them.

If the constable provides much matter of fun, it is partly because of the secret pleasure that such reversal of authority could yield, and partly because of the social problem of the times about the recruitment of constables and 'watches' as also of men for the army who were 'pressed' for the purpose. Most of them were uneducated to the degree of illiteracy and were simpletons. But the great irony is that in spite of themselves the bungling Dogberry and Verges succeed in exposing, though late, and bringing to book the villains

and their villainy against innocent Hero. All this in the case of the three types of characters, makes for rich comic possibilities. Now, we may turn to a few of the details of Shakespeare's portrayal of the three types in question.

What Shakespeare exposes to ridicule in Holofernes the schoolmaster in *Love's Labour's Lost* is his indulgence in pedantry which is, basically, a display of bookish knowledge where it is not needed. Pedantry is in a sense the occupational hazard of scholars as a tribe. But Holofernes crosses the limits in this. He is linguistic consciousness gone awry. His penchant for Latin grammar, questions of grammar and diction and expression and his idiosyncratic ideas of spelling and pronunciation always get the better of him. He has congenial company in Sir Nathaniel the priest who feeds his vanity in his linguistic preoccupation and looks up to him with awe. Holofernes finds a rival sprung as if from nowhere in the Spaniard pseudo-courtier Armado with his bombastic speech and foppish demeanour and speech. Holofernes puts him down to be language-mad without the faintest thought that that is what he himself is. The joke on him is that he criticizes Armado for his 'silken words, taffeta phrases and three-pil'd hyperboles' in the same language. In all this, Shakespeare's ultimate targets are the heavy and deliberate Latinity of the English tongue practised by several Renaissance English humanist scholars like Gabriel Harvey, the 'divorce between the tongue and the heart', as Roger Ascham called it, in the preponderance of attention to words rather than matter, Lylyean euphuisms and overemphasis on balance and symmetry in syntax, and the curious habit of several writers of the period such as Elyot in his *Governor* (1641) to explain terms with variation or equivalents with several grades of difficulty or familiarity. All these habits are in abundance in Holofernes' speech. The point about the character is that Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* is himself writing a play with a centrality to linguistic practices and questions a play full of word games, which is part-imitation and the part-parody of Lyly's court comedies. Holofernes is in effect an *exemplum ad horrendum* of linguistic madness gone to the extreme.

But Shakespeare also invests him with other roles. School-

masters of the times also served as social leaders and organizers. They occasionally played several roles in one person. Dr. Pinch in *A Comedy of Errors* is a schoolmaster and also a sorcerer who effects cures by exorcising, as he claims, evil spirits which come to possess people turning them mad. It is Holofernes the schoolmaster who 'invents' and stage-manages the device of entertainment, that of the pageant of the Nine Worthies, to be presented to the visiting Princes and her companions by the king. Again, it is Sir Hugh Evans the clergyman of Windsor in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* who also teaches school who thinks of and organizes the enactment of the boys and girls as fairies who would suitably torment the terror-stricken Falstaff as he is finally gulled by the ladies of the town. Indeed, schoolmasters of those days were called upon to present formal addresses of welcome to visiting royalty coming in 'progress and procession' to the village or town.

Much in the background of the schoolmaster's organization of entertainment 'devices' is the factor that the great Renaissance humanist schoolmasters of the time took care to train their pupils in dramatics and theatricals keeping their contact with the continuing medieval English visual-cultural traditions of pageants and processions in town and country. Such training in their formative years would have left its impact on poets who took to playwriting later. With such mixed feelings about schoolmasters which combine imperfect sympathies with a residuum of fairness, it is perhaps only to be expected that Shakespeare makes Antony's schoolmaster, at his nadir of haplessness after his ignominious defeat at the hand of Octavius's forces, his ambassador to Octavius on a peace embassy, making Octavius remark contemptuously on it.

Shakespeare shows the poets or for that matter, the characters who make an attempt at verse in a not so favourable light. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus groups the poet, the lunatic and the lover as birds of the same feather. Though Hippolyta provides a defence of such, it looks as though Shakespeare saw many likenesses among the three. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the King of Navarre and his fellows in the Academy read out the love sonnetteering pieces, each imagining that he is doing it unbeknown

to any of his fellows, and the verses they come up with are conventional and pedestrian, the kind of love verses fashionable youths of the age addressed to their lady loves in a case of life initiating art, that of Petrarchan sonnetteering when the witty, hard-headed Benedick produces is love verses, the verse invites the ridicule of Hero's maid, Margaret (*Muck Ado About Nothing*, 5.2). The love verses which Orlando hangs on the trees in the Forest of Arden provoke parody by Touchstone, and Rosalind goes only by the feeling behind the verses and not the verses. The fate of Hamlet's love poetry seems to be no belter. The specimen that Polonius quotes to Claudius and Gertrude is enough of a sample of its commonplace quality.

Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
 Doubt that the sun doth move;  
 Doubt truth to be a liar;  
 But never doubt I love.

The latent ironies in the lines were certainly not intended by Hamlet, but Shakespeare would seem to take occasion to suggest these. With the advent of the heliocentric world-view in place of the medieval geocentric one and the new astronomical findings, it is what Hamlet takes to be unassailable givens that came to be distrusted. In several ways, the play of *Hamlet* with its mood and themes could be considered, as it has often been by critics, characteristic of the transition to the 'age of doubt'. Similarly, when Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* improvises verses on the pricket killed by the Princess in the park with Sir Nathaniel all too ready to applaud him, he produces banal lines which have only the virtue of alliteration.

It is in *Timon of Athens* that a poet figures in some sustained fashion. With his painter companion he opens the play and his utterances become relevant in the progression of the play. Especially his poetic elaboration of the idea of Fortune's hill on the top of the wheel of fortune with Timon presiding over it, only to be brought down to the lowest point in the wheel's movement. Though he benefits by Timon's bounty, he is able to make a prophetic utterance, the kind of prophecy that poetry can make. But Timon hardly heeds the implicit warning; in his intoxicated involvement in careless bounty

and taking in flattery he does not seem to take a look at the verse, much less the metaphor. The poet's dependence on patronage in the painter's company is so heavy that he repairs to the banished Timon in his cave hoping to get some of the gold dug out by him and gets ruthlessly beaten away and banished by Timon after he makes a tantalizing offer of gold to lure him and his companion the painter close enough. Behind it all is Shakespeare's dissatisfaction with a social situation in which the poet has to depend on patronage rather than a reading public to earn his livelihood.

But it is the poet Cinna in *Julius Caesar* whose fate is to die an ignominious death. The lynching Roman mob in their riot against the conspirators comes across the poet Cinna and takes him for the conspirator Cinna as soon as he gives them his name. His protests are in vain, and they gleefully tear him dead saying that they do it for the bad verses he writes, a lurid example of what can happen to a poet.

Constables figure in *Much Ado* and *Measure for Measure*. Dogberry and Verges are a source of endless entertainment with their gross malapropisms, wandering way of speech and bungling simpletonism. This is what prevents Dogberry and Verges from disclosing the truth about the villainous design of Don John against Hero in time before she goes to the wedding. But in time they make the disclosure in their own style. Shakespeare meant the part for the leading clown then Will Kemp of his company as a vestigial speech-prefix in the play-text proves. It is in the portrayal of Elbow, 'a simple constable' in the list of *dramatis personae*: in *Measure for Measure* that Shakespeare openly raises the then existent problems in the recruitment of constables. Having taken trouble to arrest Pompey and his companions in vice, Elbow is so lacking in bare articulacy that he is not able to present the charges against them to Escalus and the Judge. The result is that they are let go, and Escalus has to think of recruiting another suitable person to carry out the office in place of Elbow.

*Escalus*: Alas! It has been great pains to you! They do you wrong to put you so oft upon't. Are there not men in your ward sufficient to serve it?

*Elbow:* Faith, sir, few of any wit in such matters. As they are chosen, they are glad to choose me for them. I do it for some piece of money and go through with all.

*Escalus:* Look, you bring me in the names of six or seven, the most sufficient of your parish.

*(Measure for Measure, II.i. 285-295)*

Another set of characters at whose expense Shakespeare derives fun are the garrulous middle-aged or old characters who may have to be treated separately on the lines of the present essay.

## **SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS: THE OVERWHELMING QUESTION OF 'IDENTITY'**

**A.N. Dwivedi**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the world-renowned poet and playwright, lived in an age of 'the glorious harvest-time of English sonneteering', an age which saw the publication of a number of sonnet-sequences by Sidney, Daniel, Spenser, Lodge, Giles Fletcher, Constable, Drayton, Percy, Barnfield, Griffin, William Smith, and Robert Tofte. In such an age when England had become 'a nest of singing birds', Shakespeare also took to sonneteering and composed some 154 odd sonnets, breathing all fire and fury in them. So elastic and expressive he made his sonnets that the Elizabethan sonneteering came to be identified with his name. Though this literary form was introduced in England by Wyatt and Surrey whose sonnets appeared in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), it was accorded a native shape and character by the Bard of Stratford upon-Avon. This blessed son of the Muse was gifted with a remarkable genius or with a 'fine frenzy' which enabled him to scale the heights and to fathom the deeps in order to give 'airy nothing' a local habitation and a name. According to Irving Ribner, "there was nothing remarkable about the life of William Shakespeare, aside from the fact of his genius." And this 'genius' is well-reflected in his sonnets, much before in his plays. His sonnets have been widely analysed and interpreted, and they have evoked a varied response from scholars and critics in regard to their date of composition, their order, and their dramatic conflict. The question of their 'identity' is so intriguing that no definite answer is found to it. Here in this paper, I propose to dwell on this overwhelming question of 'identity' of some prominent personages figuring in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Of a total of 154 sonnets by Shakespeare, sonnets 1-126 are clearly addressed to an extraordinarily handsome youngman; sonnets 127-152 are evidently devoted to a dark lady; and sonnets 153-154 are mere renderings of fanciful exercises by a Byzantine poet called Marianus (a writer probably of the fifth century A.D.) on Cupid bordering on eroticism. In the first group of sonnets, we come across nine

sonnets (78-86) which portray a rival poet who seems to be finding favours with the noble youngman. All these personages — the 'man right fair', the 'woman colour'd ill', and the 'rival poet' — are shrouded in mystery more or less. A tentative attempt is made here towards their identification.

First of all, who is this 'man right fair', having two attributes about him — 'uprightness' and 'fairness' ? The answer that naturally comes to us is 'one Mr. W.H.', to whom most of the sonnets are dedicated. But the Dedication in the original 1609 Quarto edition is made by the publisher, T.T. (or Thomas Thorpe), and not by Shakespeare himself. This further complicates the issue. In the Dedication, Mr. W.H. is called 'the onlie begetter' of 'these insving sonnets', and he is certainly the addressee who is promised 'eternitie' by our 'ever living poet'. The 'eternitie' promised for the fair youngman is of two kinds: one to be achieved by marriage and children and the other by poetic commemoration. And these two kinds of immortality are hinted at by the poet in Sonnet 17:

Who will believe my verse in time to come,  
If it were fill'd with your most high deserts...  
If I could write the beauty of your eyes  
And if fresh numbers number all your graces,  
The age to come would say 'This poet lies ...'  
But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice — in it, and in my rhyme.

The 'onlie begetter' is evidently the inspirer of the moving sonnets, and in this sense Mr. W.H. is also the addressee. But if the 'onlie begetter' simply means the gatherer or procurer of the manuscripts of the sonnets, as suggested by scholars like Sidney Lee and E.I. Fripp, then we may forget all about the Dedication. And if this latter view is accepted, two names come out prominently before us — Sir William Harvey, who married the Countess of Southampton in 1598, and William Hall, who was perhaps related to Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall. If Sir William Harvey is the person who secured the 'copy' of the sonnets and passed it on to T.T., then why 'Mr.' and not 'Sir' precedes his name? If William Hall is taken to be the person, then 'Mr. W.H. All' of the Dedication seems to support it (with the omission of the stop after H — 'Mr. W. Hall').

But if we sport with the idea that the addressee is also the dedicatee, the two probable candidates in view are: William Herbert, the son of the Earl of Pembroke, and Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton. E.K. Chambers thinks that the friendship between Herbert, who was born in 1580, and Shakespeare lasted three years (1595-98), during which period the sonnets were composed. In 1595, an attempt was made to have Herbert married to Sir George Carey's daughter, and this strengthens his candidature. But in his case too, the real title has been replaced by a mere 'Mr.', and he was of a tender age at that time. This, according to Edward Dowden, "may well cause a doubt"<sup>2</sup> about his candidature. A greater claim is that of Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare had dedicated his *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). He was born in 1573 and was 20 to 23 years when the sonnets were written. The initials of his name might have been 'reversed as a blind to the public'.<sup>3</sup> An abortive attempt was made to arrange a marriage between him and Lord Burghley's daughter.

Apart from these, a non-aristocratic person has also been suggested by Oscar Wilde and others on the basis of Sonnets 20, 135 and 136. In this connection, Sonnet 20 is quite a pointer:

A woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the Master Mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;  
A man in hue all hues in his controlling,  
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
And for a woman wert thou first created,  
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting .... (ll. 1-10).

The clear-cut hint here is at William Hughes, a boy-actor who used to play women's parts in Shakespeare's plays. Hughes was a 'lovely boy' who generated a sense of deep attachment in Shakespeare. But Hughes, despite his extraordinary charm, does not fit in the scheme of things, belonging as he does to a lower stratum of society.

When we bring together all the probables for a closer scrutiny, it seems more likely that 'Mr. W.H.' was the Earl of Southampton in Shakespeare's sonnets. Hence Henry Wriothesley or his step-father William Harvey is the probable person to be identified with 'Mr. W.H.'. That the title of 'Earl' has been transformed into 'Mr.' serves as a camouflage to cover up the truth. The noted critic Dowden advances the argument that "... a nobleman might be styled Mr...."<sup>4</sup> Middleton Murry is for the Earl of Southampton, and he is backed by A.L. Rowse and Seymour-Smith. Another group of scholars like E.K. Chambers, Edward Dowden and Dover Wilson supports the claim of the Earl of Pembroke. Murry, Rowse and the other Southamptonites argue out that Southampton was Shakespeare's only known patron, but Chambers, Wilson and the other Pembrokiens maintain that the First Folio of 1623 was dedicated to Pembroke and his brother. Commenting on this contentious issue, Gareth and Barbara Lloyd Evans have observed:

The two main claimants (and there have, of course, been others) to that dedication are — Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, to whom both *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were dedicated, the initials being cunningly reversed; and William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, whose initials at least are in the right order.<sup>5</sup>

Though both the claimants are almost evenly matched, the internal evidence seems to tilt slightly towards the Earl of Southampton (Sonnets 1-17 make entreaties to the young nobleman to marry and to breed, and Southampton had already become a lover of Elizabeth Vernon).

Brushing aside all these considerations about the 'identity' of 'Mr. W.H.', Mark Van Doren suggests that Shakespeare's sonnet-sequence is a sort of allegory. He thinks that 'the beloved person' is 'his own poetry', and that the subject of his sonnets is 'existence'. He upholds the view that 'Mr. W.H.' is 'William Himself' (Shakespeare himself), and that the lovely youngman might be 'Ideal Manhood'. By making use of allegorical figures of the fair friend, the false rival, and the dark woman, the poet is taking us to "the myriad circles and slopes of Hell and Purgatory, hewing a pathway to the ultimate Paradise."<sup>6</sup> But the urgency of purpose, the intensity of emotion,

and the repentance of a contrite heart do not permit such an allegorical interpretation of the sonnets. The following lines from sonnet 137 carry home this point:

If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,  
Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,  
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,  
Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?

These cannot be mere allegorical lines, as they are intensely subjective and autobiographical in nature. As such, Doren's suggestion that 'existence' is the subject of the sonnets is acceptable insofar as it applies to the life of the poet himself. The two persons — the fair youngman and the dark lady — may not be fully identified, but they certainly represent, in K.R.S. Iyengar's words, "the Apollonian and Dionysian pulls in Shakespeare's life, and these ministered to Shakespeare's own innate 'bisexual' urges".<sup>7</sup>

As regards the identity of the 'woman colour'd ill', who makes her delayed yet effective entry in Sonnet 127, it is again difficult to discover. The sonnets dealing with this dark woman are tinged with a familiar equality and bitter ferocity. Apparently, the woman of his heart's desire betrays the poet during his absence on a travel to earn his livelihood. She deceives him to be in the arms of his fair friend. The poet describes her promiscuity in a language of tough and unpoetic realism:

Is't not enough to torture me alone,  
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be ?...  
Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken;  
A torment thrice threefold thus to be crossed....

(Sonnet 133)

The same kind of realistic description is found in the following lines too:

For, thou betraying me, I do betray  
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;....

(Sonnet 151)

When the poet returns from his travels, he is somewhat baffled to discover that he has lost his mistress as well as his royal friend (who is now giving favours to a rival poet). The poet is now convinced that the dark woman — a married woman, of course — is

no more than a whore (see Sonnet 129 for this). In a mood of disillusionment, he starts self-searching and self-scanning to resolve the conflict between the body and the soul — 'poor soul the centre of my sinful earth'. He advises the soul to thrive by denying the body:

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,  
And death once dead, there is no more dying then.

The idea contained here comes so close to that in John Donne's tenth Holy Sonnet: 'And death shall be noe more; death, thou shalt dye.' The poet tries to live in memory of good, old days and to transform it into a higher reality, defying Time, Death and Reason. For one thing, the poet is so bitter about this betraying woman that he uses for her the words 'false' and 'falsehood' at least nine times and 'lie' or 'belied' six times in the text. Thus, in Sonnet 138, he writes:

When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her though I know she lies, ....

And again, in the concluding couplet of the same sonnet:

Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

Sonnet 148 also corroborates this truth when the poet writes thus:

If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,  
What means the world to say it is not so ?

The poet laments to have loved a false woman like her, as it is a total reversal of the moral order. In other words, 'fair' becomes 'foul' and 'bright' becomes 'dark' here, reminding us of the three witches in *Macbeth* juggling and equivocating 'fair' against 'foul'. Thus, in Sonnet 137, we have:

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,  
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

This reversal of the moral order is also seen in the final couplet of Sonnet 150:

If thy unworthiness raised love in me,  
More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

What the poet suggests here is that he has loved her for her 'unworthiness', and this in turn has infected him and made him unworthy. Further, the 'unworthiness' of both should have made them a

suitable match, but that was not to be. In Sonnet 151, we witness a slight change of tone and attitude, a relaxation of the moral struggle, and a sardonic acceptance of the utter wrongness of the whole love-affair. The poet does not hesitate to address her as 'gentle cheater' and 'sweet self'. The sonnets on 'the dark woman' range from 'religious solemnity' to 'bawdy mockery'. But nowhere does Shakespeare mention the name of this woman. We can simply speculate that the Earl of Southampton probably engaged Shakespeare to write the sonnets on his dark beauty called Elizabeth Vernon. We can also say, on the authority of Dover Wilson, that she is not Mary Fitton (who had an affair with the Earl of Pembroke) and that she must have been 'a married woman' and 'no common courtesan'. The Pembrokeians suggest that Shakespeare wrote these sonnets, on Pembroke's persuasion, on his dark woman, Lady Rich. It is, however, not possible to arrive at a conclusion in this matter.

Then, sonnets 78-86 unequivocally introduce a 'rival poet' who is shown finding favours with the fair and aristocratic youngman (to whom the sonnets are addressed). Some of the pointed references to 'the rival poet' are the following:

1. As every alien pen hath got my use,  
And under thee their poesy disperse .... (Sonnet 78)
2. But now my gracious numbers are decay'd,  
And my sick Muse doth give another place .... (Sonnet 79)
3. O, how I faint when I of you do write,  
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name .... (Sonnet 80)
4. Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,  
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,  
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,  
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew .... (Sonnet 86)

Now, the question is: who is this 'rival poet'? He has been variously identified with Marlowe (who died in May 1593), Chapman, Drayton, Spenser (who was certainly learned; but what ghost 'gulled him with intelligence'?), and Daniel. Rowse identifies him with Marlowe; Robert

Gittings with Gervase Markham; and Dover Wilson with Chapman. The last-named has a greater claim to being 'the rival poet'. Chapman's *The Shadow of Night* had appeared in 1594, and he was definitely the most learned of all Elizabethan poets.<sup>8</sup> In this matter, one has to recall the allusions to the rival poet's learning in sonnets 78 and 86.

To conclude, Shakespeare's sonnets unquestionably deal with the theme of love in its various shades and modulating moods. And these sonnets mainly concentrate on three persons — Mr. W.H., the dark woman, and the rival poet. Though the process of their identification is beset with difficulty, we can make some speculations about them. On the basis of internal evidences (as shown in this paper), we may say that 'Mr. W.H.' seems to be the third Earl of Southampton and the 'rival poet' Chapman. Writing about the 'mystery' of these persons, Walter Raleigh judiciously remarks: "There are many footprints around the cave of this mystery, none of them pointing in the outward direction."<sup>9</sup> Hence we can say that the question of their identity remains a tantalising puzzle, an impenetrable enigma, to all of us to this day. All the same, it is an overwhelming question.

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## ROMANTICIZING FEMINISM: THE SHAPING OF THE FEMALE IDENTITY IN JOHN KEATS'S POEMS

Seemin Hasan

In their attempt to understand and ultimately alter patriarchal norms, and to explore actual and possible sex roles and gender identity, feminists have in the last fifty years established ideological perspectives with widely divergent concepts of identity. Certain theorists like June Singer, Carolyn Heilburn and Julia Kristeva maintain that sex roles and characteristics, conventionally associated with gender identity, are learnt rather than innate psychological differences between the sexes. In the process of reclaiming and renaming woman, they have revived interest in matriarchal cultures and religions. Yet, there remains valuable terrain between these polar opposites.

Feminist criticism, according to Jonathan Culler is:

... a reading or interpretation of woman's experience — her own and others' — which can be set in vital and productive relation to the text....as a reference to the maternal or the paternal relations or to a woman's situation and experience of marginality, which may give rise to an altered mode of reading.<sup>1</sup>

Feminist questioning has made infinite attempts to determine the status of women. Feminism has focused time and again on the exploitation of women that has come about as a result of their continued commodification as sex objects or domestic slaves by the patriarchy. Women as subjects in literature have not always been unproblematically reproduced or fully represented. Sometimes we find the author has been unable to maintain the elusive aspects of the subject and has let it slip out of reach. The author is then faced with the inability to know and understand what was treated as known and understood at the outset. The parameters of history, nation, class, experience, etc. that feminism defines and also the rhetoric that it provides help to identify the essences and essential truths of womanhood with greater accuracy and insights.

John Keats's poetry provides fertile ground for such a re-reading. Every major poem involves at least one feminine character. Almost always, she is the controlling metaphor. The romantic poet

is sensuous, emotional, passionate and imaginative. His poetry is located not in the actual world but in a world remote in time and space. His ballads and medieval romances recreate the fresh, informal, wild and irregular world of myth, mythic impulses and mythological divinities. Alongside, they also present an interlocking of personal and psychological impulses with the mythical material. The original woman occurs as the Mother Goddess in mythology and surfaces repeatedly in Keats's poetry. She is immortal, changeless and omnipotent, and motherhood is her prime attribute. She is also linked with the seasons. In spring, she is a maiden and gives birth to new buds and leaves, in summer she is a nymph and bears fruit, and in winter she is a crone who has ceased to bear. All female family associations can be traced to her. In Keats's poetry, she occurs variously as Cynthia, Mnemosyne, Moneta, Cybele, Maia, Psyche, Madeline and Isabella. She is the archetypal given of comfort and solace and the archetypal wise guide to whom the bruised and wounded hero turns again and again. Sometimes, she appears in her evil aspect. Then she is the fatal enchantress like Lamia and Belle Dame. All of Keats's women can be catalogued as representing one or the other of her aspects. Through complex inter-relationships they combine to evoke her magnanimous stature .

Keats believed in the Romantic doctrine that the artist does not proceed to the root of all feelings and impulses by the simplest path. His artistic intuition leads him to the elemental forms of nature and of human life in all its aspects. The idea is reinforced by Keats's use of negative capability, which allows him to perceive instinctively the essences and truths of womanhood and guides him in framing a critique of womanhood.

*The Eve of St. Agnes* is a medieval tale that romanticizes erotic fantasy. St. Agnes' Feast is celebrated annually on January 21<sup>st</sup>. According to tradition, a virgin, who follows certain rites on St. Agnes's eve, dreams of her future husband on the same night. The setting is within the patriarchal society. Keats's rendering of the romance is in the gothic mode. The chief effects are atmospheric, created out of associative magical, mythical and supernatural imagery. Porphyro loves Madeline with whose clan his own has bitter

differences. On the enchanted St. Agnes's eve, he undertakes a dangerous quest. He secretly enters her ancestral castle, follows her old faithful nurse, Angela, through mazes of cold, torturous passages to her chamber. The lovers consummate their union and then disappear into the stormy night.

The three opening stanzas describe the penance of the old beadsman on the saint's night in the chapel of the castle. The portrayal of the old man is typically Christian whereas his role is a mythic archetype. Through his lonely, ritualistic prayers he is playing the patriarchal role of casting out evil and thus extending ethical support to the quest of the younger man. The host of images of bitter cold, old age and implied death in these three stanzas suggest the violation of conventional patriarchal arrangements.

Angela represents the inherent female power of nurturing and homemaking. By helping Madeline to elope with Porphyro, she defies the stereotypical patriarchal ideology where the female must be subjugated and feminine voices silenced. Madeline, the heroine, is chaste and pure. She enters her chamber, holding a silver taper like 'a missioned spirit'<sup>2</sup>. She says her prayers and then retires to bed. Porphyro rouses her from the 'lap of legends old' and begs her to accompany him over 'the southern moors'. In spite of her fragile appearance, she is independent and self-willed. By displacing the patriarchal ideology, she assumes the strong, assertive role, whereas Porphyro appears 'pallid, chill, and drear!' Thus she takes the weapons of patriarchy into her own hands. To facilitate this process, Angela is sacrificed. Her death on the same night suggests an appeasement of the conservative ideological definitions.

*Isabella, or The Pot of Basil* is a romantic expansion of Boccaccio's narrative *Decamerion*. Keats derived the story from the fifth novel of the fourth day. Isabella, the only daughter of a mercantile family, has fallen in love with a poor employee called Lorenzo. Her two evil brothers, wishing her to marry someone of wealth, trick him into going on a journey with them, murder him and bury him secretly in a forest. Lorenzo comes to Isabella in a dream and describe the place where he is buried. She brings home his head and buries it in a pot of basil. Her brothers steal the pot. As

a result she goes mad and her brothers have to flee into the desert.

Lorenzo is a member of a marginalized society. He is an outsider in terms of the patriarchal setting who will not inherit the land he works on. The romance is considered to be outside social norms and right from the outset is treated as a disruptive force, which will inevitably be destroyed. That Lorenzo is to die is implicit in his utterances right from the beginning. He tells Isabella 'I cannot live/ Another night and not my passion thrive'. Isabella, like Madeline, is a pure and chaste woman. Lorenzo, like Porphyro, imagines her to be 'A seraph chosen from the bright abyss/ to be my spouse'. The killing of Lorenzo signifies his symbolic castration. Isabella cuts off his head, and

In anxious secrecy they took it home  
And then the prize was all for Isabel.  
She calmed its wild hair with a golden comb,  
And all around each eye's sculptural cell  
Pointed each fringed lash.

(Stz. LI. LII 401-5)

This is the ritual resurrection of the manhood of the lover. The greatest service of Isis, the Egyptian moon-goddess, was to locate and tend to the castrated organ of Osiris. Isabella, through her erotic association with Lorenzo, assumes maternal as well as sensuous aspects. When she first falls in love, the poet says her cheek

Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek  
By every lull to cool her infant's pain.

(Stz.V. II 35-36)

Love inculcates in Lorenzo 'the meekness of a child'. When Isabella learns that he is dead, she visits his grave to sing him 'one latest lullaby'. And, later, when she has planted his head in a pot of basil, she sits by it 'patient as a hen-bird'. She leaves it only for an occasional visit to the chapel and hurries back. The basil flourishes 'as by magic touch'. Her brothers steal the pot and they recognize the face of Lorenzo. Like sinners repelled at the touch of a sacred thing, they flee into the desert.

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn.

Imploring for her basil to the last.

(Stz.LXIII. II497—98)

Isabella's experience can be read as part of the process of negotiating new social meanings. She challenges patriarchal assumptions by negotiating female subjectivity. By opting for a lifetime of

feminine nurturing she is alerted to the power inherent in women.

Both Madeline and Isabella are chaste and virtuous women. These pure, virgin, virginal attitudes represents but one aspect of the female entity. In a sinister shift, the virginal heroine is replaced by the young witch of Keats's poetry. She is bewitchingly beautiful and she leads the hero into a field of demonic forces where she ensnares him in a net of illusory love and this ultimately results in the destruction of the hero. Lamia and the Bella Dame represent this evil aspect.

Keats derived the story of *Lamia* from Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Part 3, Sec2, Memb, 1<sup>st</sup>, Sub 1<sup>st</sup>). Keats's adaptation and elaboration of the story is a re-enactment of archetypal attraction and menace of archaic forces and of conscious resistance to them. Keats's poem begins with an introductory episode set in a forest on the island of Crete. The messenger-god Hermes during his search for an elusive wood nymph is accosted by an unusual snake. She has a woman's mouth in her 'Circean head'. She claimed that she had made the nymph invisible and if Hermes changed her into a woman's shape by touching her with his caducean wand, she would once again make the nymph visible. The deal is transacted and through a hideous process, rather Dantesque in its rendering, she is transformed into a woman. Hermes was famous for his amorous intrigues. This episode does not occur in Burton's account. Within the patriarchal mode this addition defines a society in which women have existence only in relation to men.

Lamia appears in a valley near Corinth. Now she is a 'virgin purest lipp'd'. This state is in total contrast to her earlier dazzling image. Her release from her reptile imprisonment initiates a new power struggle. As a 'virgin' she is a link between the past and the future. The future is envisioned as a new mode of existence where furnished with extra-human powers of magic and hypnosis she will attempt to overpower the masculine tradition symbolized by Lycius and proceed to ensnare him in her dangerous trap. Lycius is enchanted and he swoons into a death-like trance of love. She leads him to her 'purple-lined palace of sweet sin'. Confined in this palace, Lycius loses his ambition and his earlier intellectual purity is re-

placed by pleasures that are carnal. Lycius desires a marriage with 'his paramour'. After much resistance, Lamia prepares for the nuptial feast. Apollonius, Lycius's 'trusty guide and good instructor', comes uninvited to the feast. Apollonius is Lycius's spiritual father. In Keats's poem, Apollonius is the patriarch of rational and masculine orthodoxy. Lamia's magic does not work on Apollonius and

The bald-headed philosopher

Had fixed his eye, without a twinkle or stir

Full on the alarm'd beauty of the bride. (Bk..II. 245-247)

Lamia wilts and writhes, her own eyes recessing like a snake's. The 'spear of his gaze' cuts through her and she vanishes before the entire congregation and Lycius dies of shock. By killing Lamia at the end, the poet moves us back into the safely structured and recognizable world of patriarchy. By living on, Lamia would have served as a continual challenge to the patriarchal society and possibly constituted a new critique of social harmony and justice and of the nature of fidelity. Lycius, the aberrant individual, is redeemed by death and Lamia who had value only in illusory terms is silenced with absolute negation.

The title used by Keats for his ballad *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* may be roughly translated as 'The beautiful woman without mercy'. The Belle Dame, like Lamia, ensnares the knight-at-arms in a web of sensual illusion. She leads him to her 'elfin grot' and 'lulls' him into a deep sleep and thus makes him her 'thrall'. To the knight it seems that only a day has passed, but it is autumn when he wakes 'on the cold hillside'. The knight has a sinister dream. He dreams of pale kings, princes and warriors who gape skeletally in the gloom and tell him that they, too, had been enchanted by the Belle Dame and then killed after the rapturous experience. This ghostly and ghastly vision of the charnel house leaves the knight unnerved and impotent and unable to resume his former glory.

The Belle Dame is an independent and autonomous subject. She has no acknowledged parentage. Her descent is described matriarchally 'a fairy's child' and so not recognized by society. Like Lamia, the Belle Dame endangers conventions of patriarchal social propriety. According to the dictates of patriarchy, exceptional women

are not only unusua but also dangerous. Hence she is cast as a magical, illusory character whose role is essentially evil. Thus positioned, she is permitted to reject the traditional female role of passive receptivity, take charge of her destiny, and find emotional fulfillment in a reversal of gender ideology. As a logical consequences she, like Lamia, is annihilated at the end of the narrative. The knight, who had once been the epitome of ideal manhood, is completely bewitched by her. His thralldom is a visible state and is treated as a redeeming factor that permits him to live on.

The exquisite rapture of ruinous sensual allurement can also be treated as an articulation of the self-destructive psychological impulse even present in the human mind. Birth, love and death represent the continuities of the natural order. The mystery that shrouds the figure of the Belle Dame suggests an obscurity of emotional attitude also identifiable in some of Keats's letters. In a letter to Bailey, he described this attitude as a 'gordian complication':

I am certain I have not the right feeling towards Women... When among Men I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen...When I am among women I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen... The only way is to find the root of evil and so cure it 'with backward mutters of disserving Power'. That is a difficult thing;for an obstinate Prejudice can seldom be produced but from a gordian complication of feelings, which must take time to unravel and care to keep unravelled.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude, Keats's romances are the 'backward mutters of disserving power' that attempt to unravel this gordian complication. His romantic heroines are the various projections of his 'feelings' towards women. In the basic scheme, they represent the many aspects of the female entity whose maternal principle binds mankind to the even-revolving wheel of time.

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## RITI SIDDHANTA AND STYLISTICS

B.D. Sharma

Vamana's *Riti Siddhanta* and modern Stylistics spring from one and the same board as they begin with the same postulate that the literariness of a discourse lies in its style. Acharya Vamana believes that *riti* (=style) is the soul of a literary discourse as he says in his book *Kavyalankarsutra "ritiratmakavyasya"*<sup>1</sup> (= *riti* is the soul of literature), in the same way the stylisticians like Jacobson and Enkvist focus their attention, while dissecting a text, on its stylistic features, indicating thereby that the literariness of a text, according to them, lies in its style.

Secondly, the two define the style in one and the same way: Vamana defines '*riti*' as "*Vishishta padarachana riti*"<sup>2</sup> (= Deviant morphological features are known as the style). The word '*vishishta*' in this definition refers to the fact that according to Vamana a discourse which can be called literary must be linguistically different from an ordinary one. In other words, Vamana regards *riti* as the linguistic deviation from the norm and the discourse that is normal has no *riti* in it. Exactly this is the view of A.E. Darbyshire when he defines style as "deviation from the norm." Since style as well as *riti* has been defined as "deviation from the norm,"<sup>3</sup> it can be inferred without any reservations that Vamana's Sanskrit word '*riti*' and the English word 'style' mean one and the same thing. Thus upto this stage the views of the poeticians of the *riti* school and those of the stylisticians of the West converge and there is no difference of opinion between them. And one can say that Acharya Vamana is a stylistician, while Jacobson, Enkvist and Darbyshire are *ritivadi* critics.

In both these schools of poetic thought there is an attempt to arrive at an objective way of studying literature and in both of them they find the literariness of a text in the expression or the language. Here the issue as to who has influenced whom or who has imitated whom is not being taken up, though it can be mentioned that Vamana lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>4</sup> while the stylisticians of the West appeared on the literary horizon in the nineteen fifties.

Though these two schools of thought uphold the same theory, as they find the literariness of a composition in the expression, as

has been pointed out, yet when they come to drafting the framework for practical criticism, they take different roads.

When Vamana turns to explain what form *vishishtata* or deviation takes in a discourse, he asserts that it is characterized by, what he calls, the *gunas* (= desirable features or merits) as he says: '*vishesho gunatma*'<sup>5</sup> (= By deviation is meant having the desirable features). This means that Vamana considers the *gunas* to be an essential ingredient of a literary discourse, as he says: "*kavya shobhayah kartaro dharmah gunah*"<sup>6</sup> (=the features which make a literary text literary are called *gunas*").

Vamana identifies ten *gunas*, namely, *shlesha*, *prasada*, *samata*, *Samadhi*, *madhurya*, *oja*, *pada-sukumarata*, *artha-vyakti*, *udarata*, and *kanti*. Vamana suggests as to which kind of text needs which kind of phonological features. For instance, the retroflex phonemes of Sanskrit suit a text with fire-like quality, while the lateral consonant phonemes suit a text with water-like quality. This signifies that according to Vamana a literary text arouses emotions in the reader's heart. If it is so Vamana has, at last, accepted the assertion of the *rasa* theory that a literary discourse necessarily evokes some emotion in the reader's heart. And if it is so, he has rejected his own original stand that it is *riti* (=style) that is the soul of a literary discourse.

Bhamah reduces the number of the *gunas* to three, namely, *oja*, *madhurya*, and *prasada*. The first of them, according to him, is the fire-like quality, the second of them is the water-like quality, and the third is the air-like quality. These *gunas* have come to be associated with emotions: the *ojas* arouses the emotion of zeal, bravery and anger, *madhurya* is associated with the emotions of love and grief, and *prasada* is associated with the enlarging of the sympathies. The writer of *Dhwanyaloka* writes:

Shringareva madhurah parah prahaladanorasah

*Tanmayam kavyamashritya madhuryam pratishthati* .(*Dhwanyaloka* II, 7)

(= *Shringara* alone is the most delightful sweet *rasa*. The *madhurya guna* is dependent on the element of love in a literary work).

He adds:

*Shringare vipralambhakhya karune cha prakarshavat*

*Madhuryamadratam yati yatastatradhikam manah. (Dhwanyaloka II, 8)*  
 (= *Madhurya* is in its elevated form in a literary discourse where the *rasa* is *vipralambha shringar* or *karuna*).

According to him,

*Raudradayo rasa deeptya lakshante Kavyavartinah*

*Tad vyakti hetu shabdarthavashrityaujo vyavasthitam. (Dhwanyaloka II, 9)*  
 (= The *rasas* like *raudra* in literary texts are characterized by *deepti*. The *ojas* is dependent on the words and meanings expressing that *deepti*).

He believes that the *guma* named *prasada* is present in all the *rasas* as he says:

*Samarpakatwam kavyasya yattu sarva rasan prati*

*Sa Prasad guno gyeya sarvasasadharana kriyah. (Dhwanyaloka III, 10)*

Vamana identifies three styles, namely, *vaidarbhi*, *gaudia*, and *panchali* as he says:

*sa tridha vaidarbhi, gaudia, panchali chaiti. (Kavyalankar Sutra II, 9)*

Even though these names have been given on the basis of geographical regions, as he says,

*vidarbhadishu drishtwat tatsamakhyah. (Kavyalanlar Sutra II, 10)*

they have been identified on the basis of the *gunas* each one of them has:

*samagra guna vaidarbhi, ojah kantamati gaudi, madhurya sukumara sampanna panchali. (Kavyalankar Sutra II, 11, 12, 13)*

Vamana has also given the morphological features of these styles: the *vaidarbhi* style is one in which there is no compounding as he says: "*Sapi samasabhava shuddha vaidarbhi*" (*Kavyalankar Sutra*). According to Anandavardhana, the *vaidarbhi* style is characterized by the absence of compounding, *panchali* is characterized by a moderate use of compounding, and *gaudi* is characterized by a profuse use of compounding.

Thus, the ground on which Vamana and his followers distinguish styles is the length of words in terms of compounding as they identify chiefly three kinds of morphological constructs, namely *deergha-samasa-rachana*, *alpa-samasa-rachana*, and *samasviheen rachana* (i.e. a construct having a series of compounds, a construct having only a few compounds, and a construct having no compounds). If we regard compounding as a deviation, there remain only two kinds of deviation, namely, the one involving multiple com-

pounding and the other involving unitary compounding.

Some of the *gunas*, as discussed by Vamana, have nothing to do with morphological features. For example, *oja* or *zeal* is the name of a mental state or an emotional state of the mind, rather than that of any morphological feature. *Pada-rachana* is, actually speaking, a morphological feature. A morphological peculiarity may have something to do with a mental state of the speaker, but morphology and mental state are not one and the same thing. So is the case with the other *gunas*, like *prasada*, *madhurya*, *udarta* and *kanti*. When Vamana identifies the morphological features with the emotion-evoking features of the text and limits the morphological features to ten, he exposes himself to manifold critical assaults. For example, the author of *Dhwanyaloka* says that the morphological features and the *gunas* cannot be tagged together as he asserts: "*tasmanna sanghatanaswarupah, na cha sanghtanashraya gunas*"<sup>7</sup> (= The *gunas* are not the morphological features, nor are they dependent on the morphological features). And when Vamana tags styles with regions while naming them as *vaidarbhi*, *gaudi* and *panchali*, he exposes himself to even sharper critical assaults, as no style can be restricted to a particular region and no region produces writers writing in one and the same style.

Vaman's discussion on the figures of speech has little relevance in this context as they, according to him, are the features which only increase the aesthetic appeal of a text, as he says: "*kavya shobhayah karttaro dharmah gunah tadatishayahetavastwalankarah*,"<sup>8</sup> and are not a characteristic feature of a literary discourse, meaning thereby that, according to him, figures of speech can make an aesthetically appealing text more attractive, but if a text has no *gunas* (=literary features), the addition of figures of speech cannot make it even literary.

Since '*vaishishtya*' (= peculiarity) is nothing but a kind of deviation from the norm, the views of the exponents of '*riti*' and those of the stylisticians converge upto this point but on the issue as how to identify the '*vaishishtya*' or deviation, the two differ. Vamana, as has already been pointed out, finds the *gunas* to be the characteristic features of '*vaishishtya*' and by restricting the number

of *gunas* to ten, he has formulated a closed system consisting of ten paradigms.

Stylisticians take the help of Linguistics to identify deviation in a discourse. They say, for example, that we have deviation wherever collocation is disturbed. We can take a few examples to illustrate it. In normal situations we put a time-denoting inanimate noun before the word 'ago' and say "... two months ago ...", "... two years ago ...", or "... two centuries ago ..." but when G. Chaucer's Wife of Bath says, "Two husbands ago my ears were whole," she puts an animate human noun before 'ago' with the result that here we have a case of disturbed collocation, and, consequently, that of deviation. Likewise, when Dylan Thomas says: "... a grief ago ..." he has put an emotion-denoting noun before 'ago' and, thus, disturbs the collocation or deviates from the norm. Likewise, when e.e. cummings uses the word 'did', which is normally used as an auxiliary verb, as a noun in his line: "he sang his didn't he danced his did", it is a case of deviation. In the same way when Wordsworth writes in his poem 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality': "... trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God who is our home: ...", he makes the linking verb 'is' link 'who', a relative pronoun normally used for human antecedents, with 'home', a noun which is not only non-human but also non-animate. So here too we have a case of deviation. Likewise, when Bacon says; "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested", he uses the words 'tasted', 'swallowed', and 'digested', which are normally used with edible stuff, with books, he is deviating from the norm. Such phenomenon is described in linguistics as a case of disturbed collocation. We have a case of disturbed collocation in the following lines from P.B. Shelley's poem 'A lament': "O World! O Life! O Time! / On whose last steps I climb / Trembling at that I had stood before ...." As here the word 'steps' has been put with the words 'world', 'life', and 'time' and they have been described as having steps, though normally this word is employed while talking of buildings, stair-cases and ladders.

Another kind of deviation they have identified is inversion, that is, arranging groups in a sentence in an order different from the

normal order 'Subject + Predicator + Complement + Adjunct'. For example, when Wordsworth writes: "Three years she grew in sun and shower ...." he has arranged the groups in the order 'Adjunct + Subject + Predicator + Adjunct' and has brought the adjunct 'three years' to the front position. This is a case of inversion.

Another form of deviation identified by stylisticians is repetition. When one repeats one's phrases or sentences, one is deviating from the norm. For example, we have a case of repetition when Robert Frost repeats a line of his in the last stanza of his poem 'Stopping in the Woods on a Snowy Evening':

The woods are lovely, dark and deep  
 But I have promises to keep  
 And miles to go before I sleep  
 And miles to go before I sleep.

Repetition can occur in various forms. Sometimes a word is repeated with different suffixes. For example, this occurs in the following two lines from Robert Frost's poem 'Gift Outright':

Possessing what we still were unpossessed by  
 Possessed by what we now no more possessed.

Sometimes it is the repetition of one syntactic structure. For example, in the following lines from Wordsworth's poem 'My Heart Leaps Up' we have the use of one and the same structure, namely, Adv. + Linking Verb + Third Person Singular Inanimate Pronoun + Adverb Clause of Time beginning with the word 'when':

So was it when my life began  
 So is it when I am a man  
 So be it when I grow old or let me die.

It is so also in Rabindranath Tagore's poem 'Where the Mind is without Fear' as in this poem we have a series of Adverb Clauses of place:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;  
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action  
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

At times there is the repetition of some item performing the same grammatical function. For example, in the following line from P.B. Shelley's poem 'A Lament' we have three nouns in the vocative case: "O World, O Life, O Time!". Likewise, in Tennyson's line "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield" we have three infinitives in the positive form and the fourth in the negative form.

However, the approach is not absolutely free from faults: the stylisticians have not been able to give any objective criterion to find out what the norm is. And if we are not sure of the norm, how can we be sure of the deviation? We have to depend on our intuition to know what is the norm and intuition is something subjective. A.E. Darbyshire draws our attention to this problem when he calls the norm abstract in his observation: "... the norm is something abstract which does not exist in any language-use except as some sort of idealization in the background."<sup>9</sup>

There is one more problem: one can deviate from the norm not only for literary reasons but also of incompetence. A.E. Darbyshire draws attention to this fact when he says: "If, for example, a sentence is found which is made of a predicate followed by a subject, it would deviate from the norm and its deviation would be interesting for one of two reasons: it would be so badly formed that it would be a matter for pedagogues or psychiatrists, and out of the hands of the linguist entirely; or it could be so well formed as to be better formed than the average, in which case it would be of great interest to the students of style. Indeed, the celebrated sentence from *Paradise Lost*, "Him the Almighty Power / Hurl'd headlong flaming from the Ethereal Sky," is deviant in this way, and has received the attention of literary critics because it is so."<sup>10</sup> That shows the limitation of the word 'deviation' and we have to replace it by a word which shuts out the deviations resulting from incompetence. In the light of this it would be better to use some term like obliquity and assert that it is obliquity that makes a discourse literary.

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## MULK RAJ ANAND'S *MORNING FACE* : A PERSPECTIVE

Raihan Raza

*Morning Face*<sup>1</sup> is the second volume of Anand's proposed seven volume long novel *Seven Ages of Man*. Of the intended seven volumes, Anand published four volumes, *Seven Summers*, *Morning Face*, *Confession of a Lover* and *The Bubble*. That Anand believed in the confessional novel becomes clear from his statement: "I believe in the confessional novel. In the first person singular one can be nearly honest, peel the onion layer by layer, and get to one's conscience."<sup>2</sup> Anand uses the technique of the first person singular in his *Seven Ages of Man*. In *Seven Summers*, which is the first volume, Krishan Chander, the narrator-hero, recollects the experiences of his childhood. These experiences are similar to those of Anand's own early life. In his 'Dedication' to *Morning Face*, addressing Krishan Chander, Anand says: "When you first appeared in *Seven Summers*, the critics said variously that you were an incarnation of Krishna of the Yadus or just a Punjabi 'Spark'. They were not far wrong, because, if I may confess to you the truth, the old myth was dormant in my heart and mind as these myths are inherited by every Indian .... The 'spark' of the street urchin was, however, also in me and I may have imbued you with it. But... you are really not the Krishna of the age of the gods. You cannot be, because the age of the gods is over. You seem to be aspiring to the new contemporary myth of man of the Kaliyug, the iron age, in which Money itself, as a vast impersonal mechanism of Power, inexorably governs life, like an Unknown Fate, as the Unknown Gods, or the Unknown evil in men, commanded life in the past, pursuing its seemingly mysterious ends, indifferent to the feelings of men and women." Superficially, it appears that the four published volumes of *Seven Ages of Man* are autobiographies with fictional overtones.

*Morning Face* was published in 1968, nearly two decades after *Seven Summers* (1951) of which it is a sequel. It won the Sahitya Akademi English Language Book Award for 1972. At the surface level it deals with only six years in the life of Krishan Chander, the

protagonist of the series, from the beginning of World War I to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919. Unlike *Seven Summers* it has a wider range and a far larger number of characters. Furthermore, it presents Krishan during his adolescence — a period of life which is, "likely to yield much more in the way of the drama of inner tensions than childhood".<sup>3</sup> The result of these features is that *Morning Face* emerges not only as an autobiography of Krishan's boyhood but also an imaginative document of the period.

Anand has divided the story of Krishan's boyhood as presented in *Morning Face* into three parts: 'City of Dreadful Nights', 'The Prison' and 'The Regiment'. These subtitles are related to the hero's three principal places of residence: Kucha Fakir Khana Lane in Amritsar, the prison compound in Ludhiana where his brother Harish is an Assistant Jailer, and the Regiment barracks in Jhelum cantonment where his father is posted after his return from France.

As Krishan Chander moves from the parochial world of cantonments to Amritsar to live in a joint-family ethos, he is further exposed to the tradition-bound conservative world of dogma and superstition. His parents appear here as they were in *Seven Summers*, but his zestful enquiries about God, religion and society are brought into prominent focus. When he finds his devout mother and his sceptical father clashing with each other, he wonders:

... why the talk about religion always ended up in a quarrel. And I was to be forever frightened, in my secret heart, of ash-smeared ascetics and began to loathe all the shrines and symbols of all the religions, and found my mind, at that moment, set in the direction against the Almighty. God. (25-6)

The development of Krishan's character is revealed through his reactions to things around him. Living in Amritsar among the superstitious people of a joint-family, he raises questions about God:

Which of these Gods was the really Supreme and good spirit - the Aga Khan, Guru Nanak, Sain Lok, Krishan Bhagwan, Indra, Shivaling or Brahman? The arguments of the elders had not resolved my doubts. And from the conflicts around me I suspected that there was no big God people spoke about. (153)

At Ludhiana he lives with his brother Harish. He is tormented by his sister-in-law, Draupadi. Her peculiar plight in turn has made her irritable. He finds that his elder brother does not love his wife and realizes

the evils of arranged marriage and so reaches a new view of morality:

Nothing was right or wrong. Only there was love or no love. All those who despised others were unhappy in their own hearts. (384)

His brother Harish visits his mistress, a Muslim prostitute Mumtaz, and Krishan also gets sympathy and succour in her. But he begins to appreciate the plight of women. Harish loves her and yet he cannot marry her. Young Krishan sows the seed of a new morality in him while sleeping on the ground next to Mumtaz:

That night I registered the half-conscious desire, that, when I got bigger, since Harish could not marry her, I would forget all the prohibitions against her status as a prostitute and surrender myself heart and soul to the gaiety of her spirit and wed her....

How dear seemed that night as I clung to her! And how it was to sustain me through the darkest nights of my later sordid history! The strange thing about it was that it could not be mentioned without shame! But the warmth of her certainly whittled down, forever, the sense of morality which had been infused into me by the contemptuous, references to 'prostitutes'. (288-89)

Krishan gets some respite from his studies and political activities when he goes to visit the villages of Kauowan and Daska. He goes to Kauowan to stay with his aunt, Devaki. Devaki is one of his three loves in this novel. It is here that he, a Freudian boy, attains puberty. It is shown through a rather coarsely humorous episode. While riding a mare, he finds his pyjamas sodden and fears that he has been struck by some illness. When he explains it to Devaki, she laughs, twists his cheeks and says:

'Go, go there is nothing to worry about! All that has happened to you is that you have become a man. Now you can no longer sleep with your arms around my neck.... You will have to get a little wife of your own.... I will write a postcard to your father and tell him....' (396)

Krishan's emotional and physical development is matched by his social awareness. Aunt Devaki is constructing a well in the village for Mahant Nandgir. As he goes down into the well which the labourers are digging, a new awareness dawns upon him:

Suddenly, the vanity and hauteur that had once filled me gave place to compassion for the men who toiled so hard down in the bowels of the earth, who were so strong and above whom Mahant Nandgir and I, and to a lesser extent, Devaki, all put ourselves....

I felt the difference between man and man, just then, finally and forever. The upper order of the well-to-do who always got more, and the poor who

worked with hands and had a nibble at everything. This sentiment burnt itself into my heart, though I went on pretending to be a good, well-brought up, educated, little Babu....(405-06)

It is in the village of Kanowan that Krishan comes to know of the rumours of Devaki's liaison with Ananta. Ananta gives his advice on sex to Krishan, and the latter enjoys a delightful idyll of life and is enriched with a new awareness.

As Krishan grows through the pages of the novel, he gradually matures into an uncompromising rebel, both through his personal experiences of British cruelty and the revolutionary ideas that he imbibes from his contacts with men like Dev Dutt, Kedar Nath, Dr. Chuni Lal and Hari Har. The inexhaustible, masterful and heroic energies of the young protagonist make him ignorantly break the curfew at the time of Jallianwala Bagh incident in 1919. He is caught by the police and given stripes of the cane until his agonized mother rescues him from the lock-up. He burns with indignation against the white Sahibs. When he is acquainted with the French and Russian revolutions, he dreams of seeing a revolution staged in his own country. He sees through the chicanery of the imperialists in their several activities. Apart from the Rowlatt Act, he sees how Dr. Chuni Lal is dismissed from his service for his nationalist views. His uncle, Dev Dutt, tells him how he has been failed twice by Professor Hemming, for he belongs to Arya Samaj, an anti-British organization. Master Hari Chand, similarly, has been failed in B. A. by Mr. Garret for his connections with the Ghadar Party, another revolutionary organization. Meanwhile, he is drawn towards Gandhi and his concept of non-violent struggle for freedom. He decides to join hands with others in the pursuit of freedom. He is expelled from school for taking part in a political demonstration along with some students, but is reinstated through the good offices of an Irish officer of his father's regiment, Capt. O'Sullivan. There is, however, no change in Krishan's attitude to the British. At the end, he has decided to be "... a revolutionary, a visionary...." (565).

*Morning Face* has no plot in the conventional sense of the term. The movement of the story is discursive and desultory as the hero moves from Amritsar to Ludhiana and thereafter to Jhelum. But

then it is an autobiographical novel. In composition an autobiographical novel tends to become formless, amorphous, incoherent and fragmentary. It is, as Percy Lubbock believes, one "which refuses, the recognized principles of literary forms."<sup>4</sup> The success of the novel lies not so much in its attempt to connect the fragmentary tales together as in the artistic fidelity with which the events are presented in the framework of the development of the protagonist. Krishan Chander is an un-self-conscious boy but under the pressure of his experiences he emerges into the self-consciousness of youth: fiery, tense and brilliant, like a rough diamond. What is, however, significant to note is that his experiences of persons, places and things are so deeply etched in his mind that they obsess him day in and day out so much so that they crop up again and again in the writings of Mulk Raj Anand. They have their share in the making of a novelist. Anand himself has said: "... the significant novelist broods upon human existence, feels himself at one with its sources, becomes obsessed in his soul with a theme, interprets experience, arranges the disarrangement...."<sup>5</sup>

Of the three events which left a lasting impression on Anand and the one which he has fictionalized in *Morning Face* is the death of his cousin, Kaushalya. As Anand himself has noted: "I could not understand why an innocent girl should be singled out to die. And what was death? Was there survival after the passing away of a person? If not, then life was the only time for happiness. And yet there was pain and suffering in life. Why was all this? . . . No answer came to my questionings, but I could see the contrast of life and death."<sup>6</sup> The illness and subsequent death of Kaushalya loom large in *Morning Face*. Krishan's mother thinks that Kaushalya has fever because she is possessed by the spirit of the dead body whose bones she and Krishan played with near the pond, and she suggests that the spirit of 'Sain Lok' be invoked through Agni, and offerings be made to priests so that the ghost possessing the girl may go away. Later, the visit of the English doctor to examine Kaushalya arouses some hope. When, however, little Kaushalya lies mortally ill, the women folk try out superstitious cures. But, after a while, she dies of tuberculosis. The shock of her premature

death is redoubled when uncle Pratap dies and Krishan returns to Amritsar to find that

... the women stood lined up on both sides of the gutter, like soldiers on parade, their bosoms bare and their heads uncovered, even as they struck, with rhythmic strokes of their palms, first their foreheads, then their breasts, and then their thighs, chanting the while a unanimous dirge, as the barber's wife led the chorus: 'Hai ! Hai ! Shera !' The sharp, clear and repeated sound of the palm slaps electrified the atmosphere, making me feel as though I was almost at hell's doorstep, where these women, having consigned the body of uncle Partap to oblivion, were now mourning for his spirit, perchance Chitragupta, the accountant of hell, might forgive him his misdeeds in recompense for the physical suffering they were imposing on themselves. (229)

Face to face with death, Krishan, in a mood of contemplation, concludes: "Death was a strange thing. Inexplicable. Sudden. And terrible..." (227). His experience of death is time and again repeated by Anand in a number of novels like *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, *Big Heart* and *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts*. In all the portrayals of death in his novels and short stories, Anand's personal experiences of death as fictionalized in *Morning Face* are at work. In consequence they are clearly felt by readers of his autobiographical novel.

That Anand's realism is related to his own observation of life around him is confirmed by *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face*. The source of the theme of untouchability lies in various episodes of the two novels. Both *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face* reveal that caste consciousness is too deeply ingrained a malady among conservative people to find any easy solution. In *Morning Face* it is presented as sheer inhumanity. Krishan's mother is very conservative and considers outcastes as crude and rough. She does not allow her sons to play with them. But right from his boyhood days he learns to sympathize with the lot of his untouchable friends. When Ghughi expresses his desire to learn through him, since he would not be admitted to any school, Krishan not only readily agrees, but decides to live in life-long friendship with him. Nonetheless, Ghughi's attitude to the problem of caste is depressing in as much as he believes that his position in society is unchangeable: "The

sins of my ancestors have condemned me to be an outcaste for several lives and there is nothing I can do but accept this" (137). Like Ghughi, Bakha also represents the problem of caste in *Morning Face*. Lakha who appeared in *Seven Summers* is by now dead. Bakha appears several times in this novel, some times playing with Krishan, at others requesting Krishan to teach him English. The hero sympathises with Bakha's lot. He cannot understand how God could be great if He punishes outcastes, for their caste is not their fault. Why is he not allowed to play with Ghughi, Bakha and other untouchables? Because they are dirty sweepers! Bakha complains to him: "As I wield a broom, the sepoys think I am just dirt, because I handle dirt..." (411). When Krishan is full of sympathy for the sufferings of Bakha, he asks him if he believes in God. When the outcaste replies that there must be some power above men, he says in a rebellious mood: "If there is a God,' ...'he must be very unkind to make you an untouchable' (412)! Furthermore, many other characters such as Bakha, Lakha and Sohini, and situations such as those that occur in *Morning Face* also appear in Anand's first novel *Untouchable*. Anand's treatment of untouchability vis-à-vis Indian society in *Untouchable* therefore is motivated by his actual experiences. Moreover, Anand in the guise of Krishan feels the problem even more acutely when he is himself treated as an untouchable by his sister-in-law, Draupadi, and is asked to eat his food outside the kitchen.

*Morning Face* shows how Krishan comes to have a closer view of the inhuman plight of women in Indian society as also the cruelties to which they are subjected. Draupadi, his brother's wife, is ill-treated by her husband as well as her mother-in-law who prays to God to grant death to her daughter-in-law. Draupadi tries to end her life but fails in her desperate attempt. Her existence is now made tragic. Her plight makes her ill-tempered, and she therefore torments Krishan. Parvati's is a similar case. In spite of his modern views, Dev Dutt, her husband, ill-treats her. Her miserable life makes her conclude that life is full of pain. Krishan also perceives the miserable life of prostitutes in the character of Mumtaz, the mistress of Harish. She is an unfortunate woman. She is condemned to live the life of a prostitute. She loves Harish very much but he is not bold

enough to divorce his wife and wed her. Anand has portrayed a similar predicament of women in his short stories such as "Lajwanti", and in his novel *The Old Woman and the Cow*. The plight of Draupadi has its counterpart in the character of Lajwanti, the central female character of "Lajwanti". The plight of woman highlighted lyrically in "Lajwanti" forms the focus of attention in Anand's novel *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Gauri, the heroine of the novel, faces travail in her life and struggles to achieve emancipation. Although she is a devoted wife and enjoys connubial union for a while, she is subjected to ill-treatment at the hands of Panchi, her husband, and Panchi's possessive aunt, Kesaro.

*Morning Face*, apart from presenting Draupadi, Parvati and Mumtaz, the characters whom Anand has used in the above mentioned works, also portrays Devaki who loves her husband but she is progressive and free from traditional taboos and does not mind having an affair with Krishan's father. After her husband's death she has a liaison with Ananta in the village of Kanowan. Devaki is able to enjoy life because she is without any inhibitions. Devaki and Ananta appear in *The Big Heart* also. In this connection, M. K. Naik aptly observes: "Echoes from *The Big Heart* are also heard in *Morning Face*. When Krishan and his parents arrive at Amritsar, the copper smith brotherhood which meets them at the station includes Lala Sadanand and one Lala Anant Ram. Any misgiving about the hero of *The Big Heart* having suddenly become a respectable pillar of society (as this reference seems to indicate) are, however, quickly dispelled by the complains of Krishan's mother, a few pages later, that Pratap can do better than 'spreading a carpet so that he can get drunk with Ananta' (*Morning Face*, p.11). Later allusions to the rumours of Devaki's liaison with Ananta, his 'hearty, bluff manner' (*Morning Face*, p.396), and his advice on sex to Krishan show that the hero of *The Big Heart* is the same man, whether in Billimaran lane or in the village of Kanowan."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Anand has portrayed women in his short stories and novels and it has something of its inspiration from his real life experiences of women as recorded in *Seven Ages of Man*. His Lajwanti, Gauri, Janaki and other women characters have their roots in his mother,

Devaki, Draupadi, Parvati, Mumtaz and Yasmin, the heroine of *Confession of a Lover*. The plight of women and their struggle for emancipation as recorded by Anand in his fiction with realism and candour are directly linked with his real life experiences, although in some of them such as Gauri his intellectual stance has stealthily crept in.

In short, *Morning Face* makes it clear that Anand's real life experiences provided the raw material for his novels and short stories. The themes, motifs, characters of his fiction as well as his fictional stance are all influenced by his real life experiences. Hence *Morning Face* also serves as an imaginative document of the period. His philosophy of 'protest' is a consequence of these real life experiences. In *Morning Face* his protest is largely against caste restrictions, corrupt social institutions and the pathetic position of women in Indian society. Here, as well as in the other three volumes of *The Seven Ages of Man*, these and similar issues are focused upon. The avowed purpose behind Anand's fiction is to teach men "to recognize the fundamental principles of human living and exercise vigilance in regard to the real enemies of freedom and socialism"<sup>16</sup>. He employs his fiction to raise the lot of the peasants, the coolies, the untouchables and all other downtrodden people. He is a novelist of 'protest' and 'change' and stands out as a social reformer. He relentlessly exposes the festering sores of Indian social customs and practices. His fiction celebrates the love of man.

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## MEANINGFUL MEDIOCRITY: ISMAT CHUGTAI'S *THE WILD ONE*

Kuhu Chanana

The first work of Ismat Chugtai, *The Wild One* (*Ziddi*) is universally criticised for the melodramatic innocuousness of the subject and treatment. It was written in 1944 for Bollywood, and hence a certain level of artistic compromise is evident. Apropos of this, Asaduddin in his monograph on Ismat Chugtai writes: "... there is a certain heavy-handedness in the treatment of the theme which was hemstrung by the compulsions of the requirement of the Bollywood"<sup>1</sup> He further comments disparagingly on the plot construction: "The novel is quite weak as far as the plot or other formal accomplishments are concerned. The narrative remains largely a collection of episodes loosely strung together."<sup>2</sup> Despite being discarded by the critics, this work is extremely potent from the feminist perspective and demonstrates a penetrative insight into the issues of feminine sexuality, burden of motherhood, child marriage and patriarchy as a tool to victimize not only woman but also man. This article is an attempt to unearth the radical feminist stance beneath the apparent mediocrity.

Let me first give a brief account of the story line. The protagonist of the novel is Puran, a young idealistic, educated aristocrat, who is in love with an orphan, low caste maidservant of the house. The entire family is against this relationship due to the caste and status of the girl. Finally, the family separates them. Puran suffers immensely both physically and mentally, and in such a vulnerable state is coerced to marry Shanta with whom he never lives as a husband. Hence the life of both Asha and Shanta are jeopardised due to the stereotypical cultural and social codes. At last, Shanta breaks free and asserts her individuality by exploring her sexuality through a married man Mahesh, who happens to be the brother of Puran's *bhabi*. Puran does not see anything wrong in it, for he acknowledges his own incapability to accord love and satisfaction to Asha. However, in his dying days both he and Asha die together.

The ingenuity of the writer lies in the fact that not only the major characters, but also the minor characters exhibit the profound

feminist concerns, such as child marriage and the burden of motherhood. A beautifully crafted scene between Asha's grandmother and the mother of Ranji, Asha's prospective groom, brings to light the problem of financial and sexual exploitation along with child marriage. Asha's grandmother in her dying days wants a groom for Asha and the only available one is Ranji, who is out of job. But it is a bitter social reality of rural India that jobless males get brides, who toil for them throughout their lives. It is a common feature of working class and has been poignantly portrayed by the author when she describes ironically the life of Ranji's mother who suffers from severe identity crisis. She is always identified by the man in her life: "His mother had been known at different times as Kirya's bride, Moti's daughter-in-law and Ram Bharosa's wife, and had changed roles quite often. All the men she had been associated with died one by one. Ranji was the offspring of one of these men and as such his place in society was akin to that of a *thor* tree; he expressed no desire to be useful."<sup>3</sup> And this *thor* tree is all set to become the groom of the hard-working Asha. Also, it is once again through the minor characters like Ranji's mother and Puran's *bhabhi* that the author is able to highlight subtly the issue of child marriage and the consequent burden of early motherhood. When Asha's grandmother is reticent to marry Asha due to her tender age and maintains that she is so young that she has just started wearing *lehanga* and *dhoti*, Ranji's mother instantly remarks: "...lehanga and dhoti had nothing to do with anything — at Asha's age she had already had two miscarriages and was pregnant for the third time."<sup>4</sup> Similarly Puran's *bhabhi* is depicted by the author as some one who looks just little older than her eldest son: "It was difficult to imagine she was mother to these children. Judging from her looks you would think she was only a little older than Nirmal. As a matter of fact when Nirmal was born she didn't quite know how to wrap a sari."<sup>5</sup> The issue of child marriage once again finds its articulation in the conversation between two women at the time of Shanta's marriage. One of them states: "Well, Shanta is a child. When I insisted on seeing my *barat*, my uncle picked me up in his lap and took me to the window."<sup>6</sup>

Marriage being a tool to regulate the sexuality of a woman

finds its manifestation in the author's vociferous attack on physical incompatibilities, which invariably function for the benefit of a man. For instance, Ranji is an ugly and very heavily built man, whereas Asha is very thin and beautiful. Naturally, Asha's grandmother momentarily shrinks at the thought of delicacy of Asha and the massive physique of Ranji. But soon due to her conditioned thinking she gets consoled. She contemplates: "But who was conducting a beauty contest? True, he was short and his teeth were slightly inverted; the lower line of teeth protruded while the upper row was pushed in...."<sup>7</sup> This clearly brings to light the fact that woman's desire for masculine beauty is constantly negated in favour of his being only a provider and protector. Apropos of this, John Berger pertinently remarks in his widely read book, *Ways of Seeing*, that women are still depicted in a different way to men because "the ideal" spectator is always "assumed to be male and the image of the women is designed to flatter him."<sup>8</sup> The reversal of this stereotype is still not much prevalent in society, and consequently woman's desire for the masculine physical charm has been incessantly negated. Hence woman is conditioned to accept deformed man as long as he is fulfilling the role of a provider.

The entire new dimension to this whole issue is provided by the author through an apparently jocular conversation between Puran and an old maid servant. Puran is in the habit of teasing this old woman about marrying him. When this old lady hurls abuses upon him and calls him son, he takes it humorously. The following bits of dialogue between the two are worth citing here:

"You are calling me 'son?' Puran pretended to be seriously offended."

"Shouldn't call you son, shouldn't call you brother, so should I call you husband?"

And once again the old woman let loose a tirade of invectives.

"I suggest we get married. Now how old are you?"

"Wretch! Don't court trouble, bastard!" The old woman roared in a heavy voice.

"Bhola's aunt, when you start swearing, I want to kiss you. Wonderful! Excellent!"<sup>9</sup>

One can comprehend a very ironical reality here. When an eighty year old man marries a young girl, no one finds it improbable and

this farcical situation is largely accepted, but when the situation reverses, (A young man courting an old woman) it appears a hilarious preposition. Hence, through a very subtle and apparently innocuous scene, the writer is able to present obliquely the bitter social fact that there is continual annihilation of female sexuality and desire which emanates from the fact that there is a large number of marriages in which teenage girls are married to old men, regardless of the issue that an old man might not be able to satisfy her physically. However, no one finds it farcical, for the sufferer here is a woman and not a man.

Freud opines that repression always backfires and despite a traditional country, somewhere down the line people may have recognized the need for unleashing the libidinal desire and that is why festivals like *Holi* are seen as a legalised occasions for mild flirtations and a means to release the sexual repression. The writer highlights this in a sagaciously crafted scene of *Holi*. Asha finds it an occasion to release her otherwise constrained self: "And then comes Holi and it's as if a volcano has erupted. If Holi didn't come around every year, this heart would burst out of it's cage in frenzied madness. How long can a river be held. But why hold back in the first place? On the day of Holi Asha's spirits danced too....It seemed as if colour from the powder had penetrated her very skin. What does vermilion do? Does it contain some secret ingredient which affects you like alcohol? The more it is rubbed on the more delirious you become."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, when *Bhabi* accuses Puran of tormenting Asha with colours and asks him to play with her brother Mahesh, Puran retorts: "But Bhabi, did you ever hear of men playing Holi with men? Why should I be playing with Mahesh?"<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the ways of unleashing the otherwise repressed sexuality of both man and woman find its manifestation in the form of granting licence to mild flirtations to few relations, such as *Devar*, *Jija*, etc. To quote the writer's words: "*Devar*, the world is as lively as sister-in-law, *devrani*, is dull. Until the *devrani* comes along, the *bhabi* is the queen of the household, and the centre of interest for the *devar*.... *Bhabi* can be teased and then pacified by putting one's arms around her neck."<sup>12</sup> The need for the release is obliquely an acknowledgment of the

presence of sexual oppression.

However, the fullest exploration of the subjugation of feminine sexuality is accomplished through the character of Puran's wife, Shanta. The writer ironically evinces that marriage is treated as a means of emotional and physical gratification, but many a time marriage itself becomes a tool for regulating the sexuality of a woman as in the case of Shanta who is neither emotionally nor physically satisfied because her husband Puran is already a spent force. In a conventional society only physical abuses and being a rake are seen as atrocities against woman, but there is subtle violence prevalent in many marriages in the form of severe emotional and sexual rejection and Shanta suffers immensely due to that. After the incisive probing by *Bhabi*, Puran contemplates: "After all, why was Shanta unhappy? All any Hindu wife wanted was to have a husband, and she had a husband. So what other goodies did she require? He was not a philanderer, he wasn't absent from home at night, he didn't hit her, didn't sell her jewellery in order to buy alcohol, didn't have eyes for other women, so what spiritual anguish was he causing her? Why did she go about looking like the very soul of suffering?"<sup>13</sup>

Finally, constant subjugation leads Shanta to break the shackles and she ultimately seeks satisfaction in the arms of married Mahesh, who gives words to the turbulent thoughts of Shanta in these words: "What? What kind of destiny would that be? Get rid of it, throw it into the fire, I say. listen, you create your own destiny, do you understand?" And she, indeed, rewrites her destiny and like a true progressive woman refutes to see marriage as an obstacle in fulfilling her desires and physical needs. The writer vociferously approves her decision not to bow down before the oppressive social constructs and asks a rhetoric question to her readers: "Was Shanta going astray, then? Who knows what going astray really means. Sometimes we go astray and, without being aware, digress from the crooked path to the straight one; often the difference between the straight and crooked paths is barely discernible."<sup>14</sup>

The gratification of sexual desire is the major theme of many of Ismat's works ("*Lihaf*," *The Crooked Line*, *The Heart Breaks Free*,

etc.) and could lie somewhere in her religious and cultural training, for, unlike Christianity, Islam believes that sex is not filthy and the fullest satisfaction of physical needs is the right of every individual. Apropos of this, Ausaf Ali states in his seminal book, *Islam Re-thought*: "Let me restate the essential view of sexuality in Islam by re-emphasizing that Islam has a wholly positive view of sexuality and encourages sexual intercourse."<sup>15</sup>

Further, Ausaf Ali emphasizes the point by quoting Qutb (the writer of *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*), who states that because of prescription of the fulfilment of the sexual longing "repression will never originate under the rule of Islam. If young people feel the urge of the sexual instinct, there is no evil in that, and they need not to regard the sexual instinct as a dirty repulsive feeling."<sup>16</sup> Hence, Islam clearly endorses the need for the full satisfaction of sexual desires. No wonder Ismat unabashedly describes the sensual longing of a sexually starved Shanta: "Shanta too was faced with two paths. One on which she was treading, on which she was rolling along like a true ... wife who worships her husband, as a good daughter, a chaste and pure woman rolling along like a ball of loose dirt. Actually like something worse. She had been burning in this cold funeral pyre for nearly a year....Why did she quiver when she set eyes on Mahesh's body? Why did she feel as if that bulky figure was an engine threatening to crush her very being? But not crushing her so as to destroy her soul. Instead, it was like a pestle crushing a piece of sandalwood on a stone slab to make it more fragrant. Her soul, her mind, her heart were being pounded and poured into new moulds."<sup>17</sup> When she finally elopes, unlike the other shocked family members, Puran does not see it as an act of immorality. When his brother asks him the reason for not checking her actions, he states: "Stop her? No bhaiya, if I can't give her love, how can I stop her from asking for love from someone else?"<sup>18</sup>

Ismat, through the character of Puran, highlights the fact that not only women but also men are victims of patriarchy. Puran feels crushed under the burden of stereotypical concept of masculinity, which view any sign of emotional vulnerability and sensitivity as a weakness. He cries vehemently: "Women have the prerogative to

jump into the funeral pyre and burn, but a man must stand firm like a shameless toy even when he is crushed from all sides. The rules are not the same for all of us."<sup>19</sup> And finally this aspect is symbolically presented through the poignantly portrayed last scene where Asha sets fire and burns herself along with the body of Puran. Like the burning scene of *Jane Eyre* (where Bertha Rochester destroys symbolically the entire structure of patriarchy by burning herself with it), this scene also symbolically represents the annihilation of patriarchy as both Puran and Asha immolate themselves in the fire which is meant to destroy completely the stereotypical structure of patriarchy. Patently, it exhibits the writer's intentions of highlighting the issue that patriarchal mindset is at times oppressive for both man and woman.

Thus in the light of the above discussion, it is safe to conclude that despite being constantly rejected by the critics for its loose structure and melodramatic character portrayal, this so-called immature work is soaked with bold feminist stance. Ismat's radical feminist approach, which establishes her as one of the foremost feminist modern Indian women writers, finds its concrete manifestation in this novel through the exploration of the forbidden issues, such as extramarital affair, female sexuality, burden of masculinity, child marriage, implicit social acceptance of the release of libidinal desires in the form of festivals (*Holi*) and the permission of mild flirtations in some relations (*Devar*, *Jija*, etc.). Hence, despite being mediocre at many levels, this very first novel of Ismat is remarkable for its meaningful feminist stance.

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## MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR: A POET OF OPTIMISM AND CERTITUDE

Anita Myles

To critically evaluate a collection of translated poems is an arduous task because the critic's attention is equipollently divided between the creator and the translator. The poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar, an eminent poet of Hindi, have been so adroitly translated by various scholars that there lies a thin line between them and the original composition by the poet. Many a times the reader feels so comfortable with the translation in English that he tends to forget the original mind from where the ideas and thoughts have overflowed. Hence equal credit goes to the translators for having accomplished the task in such an immaculate, unblemished fashion. However, the purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the translated poems in a manner which would highlight the poetic qualities of Mahendra Bhatnagar — particularly his theme and style.

In a work of art there has to be a proper combination of sensibility and expression. Content and form ought to be harmoniously adapted to one another. Excess of form results in artificiality while excess of content inevitably leads to boldness. Bhatnagar maintains a fine balance between form and content, sensibility and expression in his poetry. He develops his theme on two levels: the naturalistic, that is external imagery and situation, and the surrealist, that is the poet's dreams, visions and psychic analysis of situations. Like any other artist, Bhatnagar is a creator of his own world coloured by his very personal thoughts, presented artistically.

Bhatnagar has been involved with the writing of poems for the past six decades. The translated poems have been compiled in five volumes, namely *Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* (1968)<sup>1</sup>, *After the Forty Poems* (1979)<sup>2</sup>, *Exuberance and other poems* (2001)<sup>3</sup>, *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry* (2002)<sup>4</sup> and *Death Perception: Life Perception* (2005)<sup>5</sup>. These poems have been translated into several foreign and Indian languages. Two other volumes, *Poems for a Better world* (translated by Shri Kedar Nath Sharma) and *Passion and Compassion* (translated By Dr. P. Adeshwar Rao) are in press.

As a poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is very careful in selecting words and invariably these words are developed in the form of powerful symbols or images. Life-like word pictures provide a great force to his poems. Through his poems Mahendra Bhatnagar has said volumes about life. Words for him are alive, walking and communicative. In "It Has Never Happened Before" he writes:

Words with feet

Words that work and run

Not one

But so many of them.

(*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.23)

Adding more puissance to the capability of words he goes on to say:

Words

Do not walk on crutches

Their feet

Are winged

They rise to the boundless sky. (*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.23)

But today the aesthetic expression of words has become limited. The "unfettered voice" of the poet becomes choked all of a sudden. Man is the creator of words but contemporary decadence and spiritual sterility have caused a decline in the finer values of life robbing fine arts of their ecstasy and enchantment. Today even these powerful words fail to convey the plight of modern man. Nevertheless, the poet is highly optimistic that one day words will be free of this bondage. Poetry will be able to express the truth in an uninhibited manner. Hence Bhatnagar is not prepared to accept negativation of "words" as a medium of expression. He writes hopefully:

Let the voice be free,

Unbound,

Speak —

This softness will end !

And each word will become radiant ! (*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.29)

This type of proleptic prophecy is the real charm of Bhatnagar's poetry for which virtue he can be placed equal to Rabindranath Tagore.

Nature is invariably a backdrop in Bhatnagar's poetry but it is mostly used to explore the human situations. "The Splendour of the Earth" is fully devoted to the description of Nature. The earth is

Bedecked with fineries,

A bewitching beauty every branch today,  
Carefully adorned with foliage patterns. (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar*  
p.24)

He personifies the wind in the following lines:

O Wind!  
Mad and over-brimming with youth  
Come kissing  
These new leaves! (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* p.22)

The poet feels that we must spend more time in the midst of Nature because there is a living spirit in Nature which has a healing, soothing power. Each object of Nature, for instance the moon and the stars, if observed closely, help in resolving the intricate mysteries of life:

Know the mysteries of life,  
Talk to the moon and stars. (*Death Perception: Life Perception* p.41)

Nature has the message of selflessness.

In the early poems the poet seems to be fascinated by the moon. Several poems have the moon-imagery. The moon is personified in the following lines and is shown to spread its radiance all around:

With happiness oozing out of each breath,  
With hopes nectareous  
And thirst eternal;  
Clasping light luminous to his heart!  
Cosy lies the moon on the star-spangled Carpet! (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* p.40)

So fascinated is the poet by the beauty of the moon that he yearns to have physical communion with this great mystery of nature. He writes:

Please pause in your path and enshrine me softly  
in your heart! (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* p.48)

In the ensuing poem, "Moonlight", it seems that the moon has heard his plea, for the moonlight approaches him at night, plays on his rooftop and all of a sudden disappears at the approaching dawn. The poet is left with mixed feelings of sadness and joy when he writes:

This moonlight speaks not to me no one knows why,  
Fills the heart with strange nectar this moonlight! (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* p.50)

Even the "Chakore" is thrilled by the presence of the moon. The moonlight brightens up the world of not only man but also the "Chakore".

One of the most outstanding qualities of Mahendra Bhatnagar's

poetry is his unfailing optimism which is conspicuously present from the first volume of poems to the last one. In fact, optimism seems to be the forte of the poet, for it encourages him to ride the rough tempestuous sea of life where unexpected and inexplicable calamities present themselves before man time and again. In "Conviction" he writes:

Firm is the conviction  
Someday the sky shall clear of dark clouds!  
Sunny days, not one but countless  
Shall descend on earth  
With laughter pure chipping with delight! (*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar* p.88)

Again,

Undoubtedly,  
Light  
Will conquer darkness,  
Yes undoubtedly! (*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.37)

Another example of optimism is the poem entitled "Compatibility" where the poet says:

I sing  
I sing the songs of victory!  
I sing about the triumph of life over death! (*Death Perception: Life Perception* p.66)

Coupled with the poet's optimism is his determination to live life to the lees. He does believe in destiny and that man is a mere puppet in the powerful ever tightening grip of destiny, yet he encourages one to live on with grit, fortitude and determination. To quote the poet:

O Winged steeds of Destiny!  
Holding the reins  
With confidence  
And with firm hands,  
We will pull them  
To give ye direction,  
Every time! (*After the Forty Poems* p.3)

He is confident that one day by his efforts man will be able to break through the "citadels of distress and destruction". In his poem, "Enlightenment" Bhatnagar writes:

There is nothing one can controll  
O, nothing indeed  
Does life

Mean

'Helplessness'?

(*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.119)

True enough, "man is powerless before chance" but this does not imply a complete mute surrender. Bhatnagar's optimism is similar to Robert Browning's who states that life is a struggle and that man is a fighter who has to combat each attack of destiny with bravery, courage and stoicism. Bhatnagar writes:

Come

Let's strike

Strike together —

The situation will change,

Rocks and sprout,

And will dress up

In verdure!

(*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.163)

Thus the poet's repeated message is a sort of roconciliation with destiny. One cannot avert the harsh strokes of destiny but can definitely bear them with dignity, courage and determination.

Man's tragedy is enhanced by materialism and selfishness — an idea which Mahendra Bhatnagar explores in his poem "A Mirage". Life is a gift of God which man ruins by being in constant pursuit of wealth and pleasure. However, this material pursuit leads only to a

Shattered and disorderly life

malady stricken

frustrated wounded life

momentary

eager to fall into

the death-pool!

(*Death Perception: Life Perception* p.46)

The poem "Building" contains an appropriate imagery portraying the self-centred man of today. The very architecture of modern cities reflects the selfishness of people. Bhatnagar writes that architecture today is

An image

Of the cramped heart

A mirror

Of self

Trapped in itself!

(*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.9)

Trust is easily broken and life becomes meaningless, empty "Destroying his identity". In the long run the selfish people go ahead in

disrupting the peace of the nation. To quote the poet:

Let a handful of selfish people  
Not plunder the wealth of the developing nation! (*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.141)

Religion is a pliable tool in the hands of a "narrow minded" man who is utterly "unfamiliar with benevolence!" The poet longs for a change when he writes:

If only once we  
Our dwarfishness  
Our meanness  
Could abandon  
And could experience  
Jubilation  
Of getting on the summit! (*Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry* p.91)

The sensitive soul of the poet is moved and immensely pained to see the plight of suffering man. There are several poems which portray blatantly the stark realities of life. For instance, in "Inhuman" he writes:

Racial jealousy born  
Religious hatred spread  
Regional-linguistic jealousy barked,  
Dirty is environment!  
Giant's garb everywhere!  
Breaths choked  
Polluted air  
Poison-mixed water  
Restless life! (*Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry* p.149)

Everywhere there is the sense of betrayal and loss, rootlessness, loneliness and deep isolation.

In spite of his optimism, determination and dauntless faith in a better life, Bhatnagar cannot ignore the fact that modern man leads a life of isolation. The very title of the poem "Lonely" indicates this. Here the poet says that though modernisation has given us all sorts of physical comforts, yet at heart man is lonely; he has no one to talk to, "to share the secrets of his heart" or "someone whose door/you can knock boldly". The agony is apparent in the following lines:

All are unfamiliar  
All are strangers  
In this large, sprawling city! (*Exuberance and Other Poems* p.79)

Man has donned the garb of animals, he is responsible for his own

deterioration:

We ourselves  
 Have abandoned the shape of man  
 And have put on animal hides,  
 We growl  
 And snatch away the lives  
 Of our own descendants! (Exuberance and Other Poems p.127)

The note of compromise and acceptance of the present human condition resounds in Bhatnagar's poetry. If loneliness is one's destiny, accept it willingly and wholeheartedly. He says:

To try to escape it —  
 Is aberration!  
 Only accepting it  
 Is a boon!  
 Therefore  
 Accept this willingly,  
 Respect this whole-heartedly! (Exuberance and Other Poems p.145)

Nevertheless, the poet is not without hope, for love is a boon in human life. He writes:

In this life  
 There is nothing  
 Nothing indeed  
 More beautiful than Love.... (Exuberance and Other Poems p.65)

Bhatnagar is also aware of the fact that in the backdrop of selfishness love is difficult to achieve. It is overshadowed by various evils.

Mahendra Bhatnagar's collection entitled *Death Perception: Life Perception* deals with the concept of death in its varied aspects. Paradoxically enough, the poet is grateful to 'Death' as it makes him realise the value of 'Life'. Death teaches us the real meaning of love, so why should we fear death? He writes:

Death made life  
 very beautiful,  
 Transformed this world,  
 infact,  
 into a pleasant heaven,  
 We learnt  
 the meaning of love.... (Death Perception: Life Perception p.4)

Fear of death makes life worthless and one cannot enjoy the divine gift of life. It is difficult to compromise with this positive attitude to-

wards death; one does not know much about death because it's a "mystery" and "queer puzzle" or as the poet terms it "a wonderful puzzle".

The poet comes out with a quaint and novel idea that death gives meaning to the existence of God. It is a truth that

If there were no death,  
 God wouldn't have any existence,  
 man  
 would have never reconciled  
 with his fate!

(*Death Perception: Life Perception* p.14)

Death which is the reality of life — "the final truth/About every life" has many forms: natural or accidental; it is the conclusion of life, no doubt, as also "the writs of Providence". However, the poet disapproves of terminating life by suicide or murder or other forms of destruction.

Several poems in the collection point towards the unbreakable ties between death and birth. If there is birth, death must necessarily follow. In "Destruction: An Assault!" Bhatnagar draws up a comparison between birth and death. Death is a truth as much as birth is. His concept of life and death is beautifully summed up in the poem "A Wish" where he urges mankind to enjoy life as long as it is possible. To quote him:

Let there be  
 no existence of death-serpent  
 in the garden of life,  
 let human self  
 not be terrorized  
 of death scare!

Let every person enjoy life (*Death Perception: Life Perception* p.58)

Bhatnagar's ideas about life and death may be equated with the Tagorean concept. Tagore in all his poems specially *Gitanjali* feels that life and death are complementary to each other and as birth results in death, similarly death prepares the human being to embark on a higher journey of the soul. Bhatnagar also visualizes that the shackles of death ultimately lead to the final liberation of the soul, and hence instead of being terrorised by the idea of death we must accept it as essential part of human existence. Related to this life-death-emanicipation syndrome is the common current of optimism found in both these poets. Life is not to be rejected but

should be accepted as an essential challenge.

Bhatnagar's poems have not only thematic charm leading to tranquillity of the mind for the reader, but they also have enough subtleties of poetic serenity to provide aesthetic satiation to the readers and critics alike. His poems are highly pictorial, energised with powerful symbols and enjoyable imagery. At the same time his poems are full of an extremely high level of sensuousness. While enjoying his poems one is reminded of statements by John Milton and Matthew Arnold who claimed that good poetry must be simple, sensuous and life-like. Bhatnagar's poetry proves true to this touchstone. It must also be mentioned that his sensuousness is not limited like that of Wordsworth to merely the realms of sights and sounds; his sensuousness is complete and comprehensive like that of John Keats.

Undoubtedly, the translations fail to do justice to his poetic talent so far as rhythm, resonance and poetic diction are concerned. However, a poet of his stature needs to be translated so that his ideas may be conveyed to a greater number of readers.

Contemporary life, whether in India or in other nations, is full of destructive complexities. While man is struggling for gaining material affluence and thereby entering into cut-throat and unhealthy competition ignoring religion, he tends to be mentally disturbed, psychologically unbalanced and spiritually sterile. While loss of faith in religion has snatched away the only possible platform for reconciliation and inner peace, such poems as composed by Bhatnagar may provide him an alternative succour for his troubled mind and agonized existence. The optimism and the message of reconstructive idealism, found in Bhatnagar's poetry, is the real need of the hour.

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## GIRISH KARNAD'S *BALI : THE SACRIFICE* — DOUGH-COCKS DO NOT CROW

Madhuker Bansal

Karnad's *Bali: The Sacrifice* (performed in 2002 and published in 2004) is not exactly a new play. It first appeared in Kannada as *Hittina Hunja* (1980) and was later translated into Hindi as *Atte Ka Kukkut*. However, as Karnad notes in his *Preface*, he "rewrote the play from scratch, not for the first time, when the Leicester Haymarket Theatre commissioned me to write for them."<sup>1</sup> *Bali: The Sacrifice* in its final published version is impressive theatre, precise, minimal but loaded with layers of thought ranging from existential dilemma of sin and piety to the feminist issue of female sexuality. All the time, in the background hovers the question of *Bali* — Blood sacrifice — as a religious ritual.

Thus, the central plot— there being no sub-plots — presents a night in the life of a King and a Queen who have a rather uncomfortable relationship. The *Queen* goes to a love-tryst with a hardy *Mahout* in the sanctum of a deserted temple (echoes of *Lady Chatterly's Lover*) where she is followed by the King and the Queen Mother. After a bout of savage love-making the *Queen* tries to go away quickly but is confronted by the King and the Queen Mother. The Queen Mother — a ritualistic Hindu — says that the sin of sexual lapse can be obliterated with a blood sacrifice, but the King and the Queen — devout Jains who abhor violence — refuse to participate in the blood-rite. As a compromise the Queen Mother makes a cock of dough that can be sacrificed before the Goddess without blood-shed. The King and the Queen reluctantly agree to perform the ritual sacrifice, but as they get ready to slay the dough-cock, it begins to crow. As they draw back, the Queen tries to feed the dough-cock, which, as it turns out, is after all dough; the crowing cock being one outside the temple precincts. Yet the moment is gone, the ritual is abandoned and the play ends on an enigmatic note. Karnad has suggested three alternative endings for the play — the Queen may slaughter the King, she may commit suicide, or they may go on as they did before — living and partly living.

The story of *Bali: The Sacrifice*, as Karnad says in his *Preface*, belongs to the Indian mythology:

For *Bali: The Sacrifice*, I have drawn upon the thirteenth-century Kannada epic, *Yashodhara Charite*, by Janna, which in turn refers back through an eleventh-century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja to the ninth-century Sanskrit epic, *Yashastilaka*, by Somadeva Suri. (69)

Karnad has also explained the significance of the fable in these words:

Vedic fire sacrifices, conducted by Brahmin priests, involved the slaughter of animals as offerings to the gods, which the Jains found repugnant. To the Jain, indulging in any kind of violence, however minor or accidental, meant forfeiting one's moral status as a human being.... The dialectic found some resolution when the Brahmins renounced blood sacrifice. Miniature figurines, made of dough, were substituted for live animals, a practice that continues to this day. Still, the Jains argued that this was no solution. The Jain position raises the question : if intended violence condemns one as surely as actual violence, that is, if one is morally responsible for merely intending to commit an act one has not actually carried out in real life, is one not shutting oneself up in a solipsistic world, a bleak, guilt-ridden existence with no hope of absolution? (69-70)

The central theme, thus, brings one back to the existential dilemma where just to live is to be sinful, where the moral choices are really no choices at all. Each breath that man draws is a sin, each thought — acted or unacted — is a transgression. It is *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* schism revisited, the body-soul dualism re-emphasized. Caught in this dilemma the so-called civilized or moral man is torn apart, denying one part of his existence to feed the other — a kind of self-cannibalising asceticism or self-annihilating sexuality — falling prey to self-alienation and identity crisis. Karnad has focused on such moral schizophrenia in his earlier plays as well, consider Devdatta and Kapila in *Hayavadana* or Appanna and Naga in *Nagamandala*. What Sisir Kumar Ghose has said of Aldous Huxley may well be applied to Girish Karnad:

(He) is irate with the idealists, they are but death-worshippers who pervert and stigmatise all that is normal and good in man and try to turn him into a fossil, an unavailing monument of consistency. He takes up arms against the Christian ascetics and their modern counterparts, the worshippers of abstractions.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of *Bali: The Sacrifice*, these abstraction-worshippers would be the Jains who abhor all acts, even thoughts, of bloodshed. Such blanket condemnation of blood-rituals does not look at the life-affirming function of sacrifice, the significance of fertility rites. The Jain Queen knows only one side of blood-flow, the menstrual cycle that haunts her, denying her motherhood:

Queen: Line after line of carrion crows, watching, waiting, ready to caw at the palmful of blood that spurted. And spurt it did — every month — every bloody month. How I hated myself when that happened.(95)

But the Queen Mother, a ritualistic Hindu, knows the life-giving aspect of blood. She tells her daughter-in-law:

I cast one last glance at my darling son — a farewell look, I thought — and saw him drenched in blood, half-wrapped in my placenta, and I began to laugh. I lived. I drowned him in blood. You, however, are drowning him in guilt. (116)

The King, a Jain convert, is also against blood-sacrifice but his reaction to the prospective ritualistic sacrifice is interesting:

King: I don't know. But when I was waiting outside, lost ... adrift...sunk in misery ... Mother brought the offering. I looked at it and I felt better.(112)

Karnad wants to emphasize that any abstraction like *Ahimsa* overlooks the violence latent in human mind and denies a channel of release making one obsessed, neurotic and perhaps, impotent. *Bali*, the ritualistic sacrifice, does have a Kathartic function as envisaged by all pagan civilizations. Butcher's explanation of *Aristotlean Katharsis* may well apply to a blood-sacrifice at the altar of fertility gods :

Tragedy excites the emotions of pity and fear — kindred emotions that are in the heart of all men — and by the act of excitation affords pleasurable relief. The feelings called forth by the tragic spectacle are not indeed permanently removed, but are quieted for the time, so that the system can fall back upon its normal course.<sup>3</sup>

There is little doubt that *Bali*, or ritual sacrifice can perform a similar Katharsis of emotions, restoring a healthy balance.

*Bali: The Sacrifice* begins with a choric song emphasizing the multiplicity of religions and rituals where one man's piety is another man's sin. The Vedic and Islamic rituals glorify blood-sacrifice, the

Jains and Buddhists abhor the same rites as barbaric sins. The song also hints at the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* aspects of human personality — a constant schizophrenia.

As the world is divided  
 into two orbs  
 one lit up by the sun  
 the other hid in the shade.  
 So also the human soul,  
 the habitation of gods,  
 is split into two realms  
 one of the spirits that adore  
 the blood and gore  
 of the bright, shining blade  
 slicing smoothly  
 through the lamb  
 and the other  
 ruled by the spirits that bid  
 you pause  
 before you use  
 the knife on a sapling  
 or clap in the air—  
 lest you harm a life. (73)

Simply put, Karnad is asking questions about the existence of God and the multifarious ways designed by awe-struck man to please Him. The religions — animistic, ritualised or revealed — have their answers but none can be fully endorsed as final or definitive. In the play we see the lite, represented by the Queen and the Queen-Mother, split into ritualists and pacifists endlessly fighting about the proper way to please Him. Rather strangely, the only man who lives in the shadow of Living God is the illiterate outcast Mahout. He is a tribal unspoilt by speculative debates and doubts, unfettered by rational, moral or philosophical *shastras*. His personality is not fragmented or alienated, the *Apollonian* music of discipline and the *Dionysian* passion of orgistic sex are, for him, one and the same. He has no guilt-complex born of body-soul divide, and hence a complete man. He is confident of the supremacy of his God, the totem stone under the banyan tree, and has full faith in His benevolent power:

Mahout: But believe me, there is God. I talk to him. In my village, outside the village limits, there's this banyan tree—enormous—hundreds of years old. And there's our God. A stone. But not on the ground. The hanging roots of the banyan have taken hold of Him and actually lifted Him up. (81)

The Mahout is comfortable with his ugliness, ignorance and poverty as he has faith, a simple faith in God's omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. He has no past regrets or future fears as, for him, God knows what is best for His children — Our Peace In His Will. Not a leaf falls without a plan, he says, and out of all evil there rises the lotus of good:

Do you believe in God? Of course not. Stupid of me to ask. But if you did, then you would have had someone to talk to now. To ask for guidance, if you see what I mean. You can't dictate to Him, or demand things of Him. But you can ask. And if I were you, I would ask: 'God .... Surely you had a design —' And God might say to you — 'Might', mind you, I am not saying He will — you never can say what God will answer, that's what makes Him what He is, doesn't it? But I reckon God might say: Look at the benefits!' (116-117)

Apparently, this rustic faith scores over the quibblings of the more evolved minds who indulge in endless shastrarthas. So much for anthropological evolution !

However, the most fascinating aspect of *Bali: The Sacrifice* is the fact that the fable has been enriched in translation. Generally, a translation reduces the impact of myth, as myth is incorporated in language itself. Yet in this fable the translation adds a whole new dimension to the theme. The word cock — just a sacrificial bird in India — is in English also a colloquial term for the male genital organ. The King's sacrifice of the dough-cock has definite echoes of his impotence, the flaccid dough-limb that cannot satisfy his sensuous Queen. She has tasted the nectar of orgasm with the rough and steely Mahout and there is a definite suggestion that she may have been impregnated with a child by this bout of coarse love-making with a rustic, where as her more refined lover has failed. There are the benefits of God's actions, as mentioned earlier, that may make the Queen a mother. The Mahout derisively comments

about the King's dough-cock:

I'll tell you what, if you want to hang me by the tallest tree — make an example of me, you know — why don't you make an image of me with dough — (He giggles)

... with dough and string it up. After all, if you find it fit for gods, I don't see why dough shouldn't be good enough for you. (Pause).

Would a man of dough satisfy her though? Goodnight. (118)

This remark of the Mahout brings us to another major theme of the play — female sexuality. The theme of unsatiated female libido has earlier been tackled by Karnad in two of his major plays— *Hayavadana* and *Nagamandala*. The *Abhisarika* (love-lorn *Nayika*) in *Hayavadana* is Padmini who is unsatiated and sexually deprived by her Apollonian husband — Devdatta. She is hugely tempted by the steely frame of his Dionysian unlettered friend, Kapila, and thirsts for a sexual union of fulfilment. She broods about Kapila :

How he climbs—like an ape. Before I could even say 'Yes', he has taken off his shirt, pulled his *dhoti* up and swung up the branch! Such a broad back — like an ocean and with muscles rippling across it — and then that small feminine waist .... He is a celestial being reborn as a hunter .... No woman could resist him.<sup>4</sup>

No wonder getting an opportunity she joins Devdatta's head to Kapila's muscular body. That her plan does not work is another matter, but the libido-motivated transfer of heads is there for all to see. Rani in *Nagamandala* is another love-starved woman whose sexual fantasies call forth a Naga who enters her private chamber at night, satiates her desire and finally makes her pregnant. Her husband, Appanna, is humiliated publicly and at the end she unlooses her long black hair to provide a permanent refuge to her lover, the Naga. Patting her flowing tresses, she addresses her Naga-lover: "This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, forever."<sup>5</sup> The *Abhisarika* in *Bali: The Sacrifice* is the Queen (Rani, again!) who flies to her love-tryst with the ugly-sturdy Mahout drawn by his magnificent magnetic song in a deserted temple. There is a bout of savage love-making that leaves Mahout exhausted and scratched, "bleeding all over" (p.78). As her husband, the King, arrives, he tries to make love to her in his own civilized way, foreplay and all. She rudely repulses the advances of her own husband, as

he is evidently incapable of providing her orgasmic climax:

(He kneels in front of her and pulls her down, gently, almost pleading to her knees. Then as she kneels in front of him, he begins to undress her. Takes off her pallu.)

(He loosens her hair, kisses her shoulder : Caresses her bosom. Kisses her gently in the cleft. She shudders, He tries to untie her blouse. Suddenly the Mahout moans in his sleep and she reacts. Tries to get away. But the King has anticipated that. They struggle. The Mahout sits up with a start). Queen (viciously): Get away from me .... (120)

The King knows that he has been compared unfavourably with the Mahout and shouts at the Queen:

Yes go back to that savage ape — that ugly beast — (121)

The Queen looks back to her glorious moment of orgasm and tells her King:

I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn't plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful. (119)

However, his obnoxious behaviour enrages her and she finally mocks her husband with a mention of the dough-cock:

Queen: And so the cock scared even our elephant man. Did it? I suppose now I have only this cock to make love to — (122)

That she is sexually starved is again suggested as she desperately tries to feed the dough-cock that has supposedly been made alive:

The cock's crowing!

(Kneels in front of cock. Picks a palm full of grains from the plate and holds it up for the cock.)

Here. Have some. Come on. Eat. Cluck ... cluck .... (124)

Poor Queen ! She does not know that the arousal of the dough-cock is an illusion and all her efforts to feed it shall be in vain. As the illusion fades, as fade it must, she is furious at her husband — after all he too has just an illusion of manhood — and tries to stab him:

It's dough. Plain and simple ! Dough.

(The Queen looks up at the King in sudden hatred, picks up the sword and lunges at him to stab him. She freezes). (124)

Still, the Queen's curtain song celebrates her orgasmic love-bout with the Mahout that has possibly made her pregnant. For a woman sex is not just a physical need but an emotional fulfilment that may make her a mother. Look at her song:

The orb in the shade

Opens itself to the light

And warmth of the sun.  
 Night gives in to day.  
 Death yields to life.  
 Like monsoons piled on monsoons  
 So life follows life. (124-125)

The Queen's song revives the memory of Vijay Tendulkar's love-lorn heroines, seeking fulfilment in pre-marital or extra-marital sex, like Leela Benare in *Silence ! The Court Is in Session* and Rama in *The Vultures*. Female sexuality, always a taboo in a patriarchal society like India's, is brought to the fore in *Bali: The Sacrifice* with the leitmotif of the dough-cock. The Queen's song celebrates life-fulfilling and life-giving sex with the Mahout, not the refined, sterile debauchery of her delicate king-husband.

Intended or not, there is little validity of the authorial intention in the interpretation of a work of art — there is also a historical dimension of *Bali: The Sacrifice. Ahimsa* — non-violence in thought or deed — is a noble ideal, but the world alas! is ignoble. India's decline and defeat at the hands of foreign tribal marauders is definitely linked to the doctrine of non-violence that decapitated militant Hinduism. Ashoka's renunciation of war and embracing Buddhism may be a glorious act, but it led to the decline of India's martial power and ultimately to defeat, humiliation and disintegration. Karnad knows that here he is on thin ice and treads warily so as not to hurt the sentiments of Jains or other pacifist religions. He has given a few sarcastic words to the Mahout who is apparently his mouthpiece in the play. He tells the king:

Mahout: Of course, how could I forget? You are a Jain. You can't indulge in violence. You aren't permitted to shed blood. Ooh! I forgot that— (88)

And again:

Yes, one more thing why do you carry that sword around if you aren't going to use it? Eh? I mean, it's like fangs in a sparrow's beak, isn't it? Pretty useless. (118)

The King is in his full regalia and the rustic Mahout is unarmed, but for a stick. But the Mahout is virile and confident, taking no nonsense from anyone, even his own king. As the King provokes him, he loses his cool:

Mahout (roars): Enough!

(Gets up).

Enough, I say. I've had enough. I won't put up with any more. The insults. The abuses — no more. I've had enough Now pick up that toy of yours and get out of here. Out! You may be the royalty. You may cut me to pieces tomorrow. But tomorrow's tomorrow. But now I tell you what to do. Pick that up and get out of here.

(The King's hand automatically reaches out for his sword. But there's no sword round his waist). (121)

Though the Mahout refrains from manhandling the King — afraid as he is of holy rituals and black magic — there is little doubt that the King is a weakling waiting to be pushed over by any adventurous militant, and history has proved how the Indian Kings in their pompous armies were always humiliated by the barbarous hordes of determined horsemen who poured in from the North, unhampered by any scruples of morality, piety and non-violence. There is a definite suggestion here that too much emphasis on morality and non-violence made India a weak nation, her citizens guilt-ridden and her army in disarray. The play ends with the Queen's song longing for assertive manliness, sexual strength and violent virility:

And through the day  
through endless rainy nights  
Throughout our lives  
we hear the cock crow. (125)

These were the very virtues drained out of ancient India by the speculative faiths expounded by the Buddhas and the Tirthankars.

Altogether *Bali: The Sacrifice* is literally a fabulous play working over and around an ancient ritual to create a plethora of meanings — anthropological, psychological, religious and historical.

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<sup>4</sup>Girish Karnad, *Hayavadana* (Madras: O.U.P. 1975), pp.25-6.

<sup>5</sup>Girish Karnad, *Three Plays* (New Delhi: O.U.P., 1975), p.64.

## THE NOVEL AS A BED OF PROCRUSTES: KHARES' *PASSIONS' CREATION*

H.C. Gupta

The novel trilogy *Passions' Creation*<sup>1</sup> by Ranu Khare and Anand Khare is a unique piece of literary art — a fictional montage. The three thrilling novels are: *Strange Powers*, *The Gates of Time* and *Princess Takhmina*. It makes an interesting and gripping reading to readers who stand at or have crossed the threshold of youth. The novels are full of numerous tales and episodes of “fantasy realism” (to use Khares’ term) — reminiscent of fairy tales narrated by grandmas to youngsters lying in bed before sleep. Both the matter and the manner contribute to the effective charm on the readers who would first finish the trilogy and then return to their normal routine. The duo Peeping Toms (the Khares) have x-rayed the Present, sketched the Past and conjectured the Future of mankind — its journey from monarchies to democracies and from democracies to enlightened democratic republics, from autocracies to welfare states. The plots are strange, complex and complicated having more themes than one and having personalities larger than real-life persons. The three divisions of time — Past, Present and Future — like the three worlds of Zero Environment, Environment 1 and Environment 2 in *The Gates of Time* are adjacent. The overall project is the establishment of democracy even if the end is all contrived, particularly in the case of *Princess Takhmina*. The three novels have a family likeness — dealing in sex, genetic engineering, science, technology, Mathematical fallacies, physics, biology, anthropology, psychiatry, history, geography, hypnotism, telepathy, psychology, politics, diplomacy, dancing, singing, mating and some other things.

*Strange Powers* narrates the life-long fight of Professor Alan against tyrannical autocracy and injustice and his mission of establishing democracy at any cost. Driven out from his own land, he reaches the fabulous land, Zari, ruled by Princess Roma. They see, meet and fall or rather rise in love. As Protector of Zari, Alan makes a number of schemes, projects and experiments. The Khares skillfully spin the two lead-themes of the visionary Professor and dictatorial inheritor. Princess Roma is very popular as a good ruler but

she experiments Alan's theory that she couldn't win elections, if she ruled Zari with an iron hand before the elections. During the Emergency, she makes her loving people her enemies and loses elections to Jacky, her own Minister for Security. The second novel *The Gates of Time*, 'fantasy realism' as the authors have defined it (293), is physics, mathematics, logic and biology, metaphysics, natural and supernatural working together to "produce a living combination carbon and fiber" (293). It is a tale of necromantic life-long pursuit by Robin — a spirit of Zero Environment — and of Sinduri, a living haunting beauty of Environment 1 and 2. In Professor Parker Smith's laboratory in Zero Environment, Sinduri's dead body lies preserved, and the team of doctors ultimately succeeds in reviving her here, but she has to die in Environment 1 and 2. Zero Environment is reminiscent of black-space which as per Indian metaphysics is the abode of spirits before getting rebirths. The novel full of references to rebirths, transmigration of souls, renting of bodies for having issue, hypnotism, necromancy, duels, cloning, disguises, scientific research reads like a fairytale and requires willing suspension of disbelief all through. *Princess Takhmina*, the third novel, is a fabulous tale of a fairy Susan who after being named Takhmina becomes revenge-and-sex hungry. Her parents and those of her lover Peter have been imprisoned by Trisco the usurper ruler of Ponte. Lucia, the ruler of mighty Saunte kingdom, having Vivian, ruler of Sontak as his sub-ruler, the commander of Sheba married and poisoned Takhmina. Takhmina superimposes Susan's body and seeks revenge and succeeds in overpowering Vivian, Trisco and Lucia. Susan living as Takhmina turns a vamp. Princess Rosa-Rue of Goldsberg, the only virgin of the three novels, an unacknowledged daughter of the ruler of Saunte, supports Susan and comes to the throne of Saunte: but she would like to be its elected Prime Minister. Rosa-Rue, the consort of Peter, is Susan's girlhood-friend who not knowing Susan as Takhmina fights against her a lost battle, as the Worshiper had foretold Takhmina's victory over Vivian and Trisco. Thus the tale also shows the fulfilment of the Worshiper's prophesy made at the beginning that Susan will be a princess and Peter a commander. Additionally, it dramatises the love of Sally, the

daughter of the Dean, Archimedes' (name given to Peter in Sontak) prison-mate who says, "I'll be quite happy to share the bullet with you." (p. 499). Thus lovers' games are played on the playfield of politics.

Nudity and exposure, often sex in the name of modernity and science-fiction, are, no doubt, best-sellers as they feed our basic instincts. And yet there is something foul in this so fair game of sex. Though their daughters have become famous — rather notorious — for their bold hot scenes on screens, yet their parents at best approve their glamour with qualms at the best or to use a trite cliché: "What cannot be cured, must be endured" at the worst. All the three novels are three-pronged so far as their thought - contents are concerned; democracy, feminism and cloning genetic engineering. Herein, I study the novel vis-a-vis our culture and Khares' treatment of sex in them, and some related issues.

Generally speaking, the novels are science-fiction, romance and fantasy skilfully knit together to give the pieces an impression of shot-silk. Passions spin the plot and researches in governance, cloning, sex-enjoyments, make the novels interesting, gripping and captivating. The Khares have all the advantages of an author-couple: twofold knowledge, twofold life vision, dreams and their realization, bisexual authenticity of sex. The novels are like waving oceans under passions' storms, the waves following each other, but not equidistant, rhythmic or spontaneous nil the shore is reached.

The trilogy may well be read as practice in experiment of the creative theory given in detail by the authors in the "Introduction" (23-33). As such a bird's eye-view of their observations regarding creative rapture will not be out of place. Their technique of having 'failure fuse' and 'failure arresting devices' (25) is easily acceptable: "Creative writing, creation," rightly observe the Khares, "gives a tingling joy, brings out all the magic that's within — surfs out a feeling otherwise experienced rarely. Filling heart, mind and soul with enthusiasm, excitement, thrill, energy, vigor. Creativity is a state of everlasting joy, vision and service to all" (24). They also speak of removing faults, sticking out as they say, "like cactus thorns", when "first instance" is followed by "second instance". And they speak of "an occult factor" — "a sixth sense" — "a look into the supernatural,

occult, mysticism, transcendence, hypnotism, clairvoyance, ESP, prophecy and spiritualism" (30). In their words:

The objective of this text is to inspire, take the reader through an experience, feel the creative forces within, spin his frame of mind and link it with those real and fictional characters — their ways and styles, problems and solutions.

Problems are tough and the methods to solve them are usually simple especially in retrospect. This book is a bottle of juice, the nectar of knowledge, vision — when one would look forward to the unexplored. (33)

What is said about the effect of *Strange Powers* in the "Author's Note" is largely true of the other novels as well: "But the mystery, suspense and romantic aspects of the fairy tale would, the author hopes, grip the reader into believing what he reads and providing him a vision of the past, present and future" (35).

Ironically what the Khares know is too true: "Having successfully resolved many tough scientific problems, one may think, writing a work of fiction is trivial. Trivial it isn't" (32). "Robin, Alan, Parker Smith are the fiction characters but face real time problems which they solve just as real life scientists" (23). As a matter of fact, pseudo scientific problems, just welfare governance have been fantastically presented in a Utopian ambience. The hot-stuff and the sex-manna-dew is so overpowering that the reader does not mind proof-reading nods such as: "sometime" (132 and 207), "grined" (193), "when your were my age" (199), "queens Forces" (294), "queens guards" (256), "queens Palace" (260), "Heinel" (290) and "Hienel" (291).

The novels comprise breath-taking wonders of science and bewitching, haunting, voluptuous sex-scenes, authenticated by the bi-sexual experiences of the couple, as though they were after a post post-modern *Kamasutra* for the globalised mankind that derives vicarious pleasure on T.V. games, sports, heroism and group performances. One of the many charms, perhaps the greatest, is the treatment of sex-galore in these novels. It is an open secret that many of our gripping jokes are sex-play games. To substantiate the observations a few of the copious scenes, fulsome, sensual, voluptuous, arousing, vulgar, lurid and repulsive, are given below:

Women of Zari prefer group-sex. "You're a miracle of beauty," Alan said. "I'm yearning to be loved," Roma expressed breathlessly. "Tormented by passion, Jacky whispered and sighed. "Love-play unceasingly... Drive",

Jacky moaned, coming into action, jiggling about. "Qui-Sue-Zi... hye-reh... mama... yes, oh, yes". The words come out in a jerky gasp. "Burst into bloom... oh, my budding youth!" Roma whispered, relaxing. "Deep naval, exquisite curvature", said Alan, squeezing the orbs of her breasts. Passions kindled his imaginations: his limbs entangled rubbing tenderly blowing the bud to bloom, mixing heat and perfume; sending sweet tremble to the root like rustling bamboo ....

Their pupils dilated, breathing increased and nails sharpen, heads tossed right and left. They yearned.... There was silence for sometime. Winking at Jacky Roma said, "I think we have covered all aspects of the debate thoroughly. I mean thoughtfully. And there's nothing more that the floor can now contribute... Sipping the wine Roma asked naively, "I wonder how the commoners do it." "Do what ? Fuck — you mean," asked Jacky innocently, " that's what -how they say is?" "Directly of course. Fuck me. Fuck you," Said Jacky. "I didn't mean that. I meant the debate during fucking." Jacky laughed. "It's not called debate, Roma, darling — whatever else you may call it." (139-40)

There are sandwich dances, belly dances, vibrant maidens and psychedelic nights, cloning, mating charts and rehearsals under super-computer control, in a word, sex manipulations of all sorts, "Fanny was the first to sleep with Wyeman to conceive Wyemanson. Berdict and Carol slept with Alan. Carol was shy and stiff. She was stimulated and Jacky and Roma held clipped to Alan.... Once in the mood — she gyrated with uncontrolled vigor" (177). Seeing Roma and her maidens-in-waiting, Alan imagines: "...their breasts heaving, tops rapidly enlarging. As if trying to pierce a hole in their tight bras" (105). In *The Gates of Time*, Princess Suziana, half sister of Sinduri, has "killer looks" (347). Here is Robin lying sideways moving his hands over Champa's body: "...gently he squeezed her thighs , her breast and tongued her nipples.... Champa pulled him over her: "Quench the fires that ignite my desire, Robin be hard on me. I have the strength of a tigress — still harder. Yeah..., bite... wait, let me on top." She turned Robin on his back. Her tall slim figure cast a shadow on Robin for a long time. Then she shrieked "aha - ah"(341). Stretching herself, an ecstatic Suziana cried out: "Oh! How I love the hardness of your muscles. Never before have I exhausted myself in the totality of love. Oh yeah. Totality, I enjoyed — emptying out every drop of my accumulated love-energy." She gripped Robin tighter. And then

Tina, the commander of Suziana beats her Princess in the game. She has sex with voluptuous Bobby till he is taken for dead. Robin tells Suziana that he will revive with "love-treatment." Arousal, love arousal. Revival through sex energy. She's not quite dead. Biologically, I mean. She spoke grimly "never mind. Do what you want. Fuck her if you -" 'no just arousal". Robin interrupted. He stretched himself beside the body, then pressed his lips over hers and began to breathe gently. At the same time, he moved his hand slowly over her body.

Immediately, the girl started to shiver. And a little later she turned to her side and clasped Robin. She murmured: "once more, darling." "Silly bitch. She wants more!" said Suziana angrily. (362 363)

The plot standing on the four pillars of conspiracy, suspicion, treachery and tyranny can never make an insightful in-depth study of human warmth, compassion and love. A story that presents fantasy-realism is meaningless *vis-a-vis* the stark realities of life. The feministic bias is all but clear that women beat men, even challengers and autocrats, in karate and sword-play as well. They are busy doing this or that, dancing and singing, as their leisurely activities and in matings. Besides, as illustrated earlier, characters indulge in abnormal sex without knowing what true love is. There is animalistic treatment of love in this trilogy..

If sex, rather over-sex, is the bane, the content riches are laudable in their own way. The Khares who are so scientific, precise and exact in their observations and experimentations are well-read. Their imagery, and the echoes of great plays and playwrights, novels and novelists, poems and poets, and mythological references bear testimony to this statement. The use of the "medicinal bud with cloning effects" (p. 400) is reminiscent of Shakespeare's love-juice in *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream* and the "apple" given by Suziana to Robin of the "Amarfal" given by Bhattrahari's queen to her lover. Bobby, Ulysis and Robin accept Sinduri as their reward at the Sports-meet at Sinduri's village keeping in with the strange custom there, as the Pandavas had Draupadi when their mother said unawares to share their victory award. The speech that Alan makes is reminiscent of King Magnus's in G.B. Shaw's *The Apple Cart* and of Antony's and Brutus's in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Alan's words — "We do care for Roma but liberty more" ( 271) — remind one of Brutus's:

"Not that I loved Caesar less but that I love Rome more."

For one thing the Khares have poetic imagery at their command, and they make considerable use of that. Most of the passages quoted above are illustrative of their power. To take just two more examples: "The crowds moved like a storm swept sea" (259); "Bijili reared up on her hind legs and whinnied" (378). And they have also wielded sharp-edged irony superbly. Alan says to Jacky: "who can tell the difference between a thief? I mean — before you showed your identity I could have easily mistaken you for a robber" (72). The protagonists have to face internal strife, too. Alan finds himself at his wit's end: "Am I doing the right thing? On one hand is my family whom I have, on the other, my principles. What must I chose? (235). Jacky's heart becomes a battlefield for her faithfulness to Roma against her compassion for her when she is asked to contest election for Premiership against Roma.

To put the whole in few, the writers are mavericks — avid scientist-cum-fictionists: two as one acting the role of the symbolic *Ardhanarishwar*, the creative God of our mythology. For one thing the author couple stand out singularly as never before two beings of opposite sex have ventured a joint literary work. No wonder they play sex, gay and cruiser games accurately with pitch-perfect details. Authenticity being the work's forte, here is a bonanza of vicarious pleasure for pornographers. Disregarding the traditional Indian spiritual and moral value-based rich heritage, the Khares seem to attempt in their sex-scenes a modernistic adapted edition of *Kamasutra*. Aesthetic treatment of love as we have in Kalidas, Shakespeare, and a few other writers ensures immortality. Such theatrical play and display of sex in the name of love as we have in the Khares, for all its subtle engineering skill and genetic compulsion, stands out as something obnoxious and shocking.

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**ART AND ACTIVISM: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY  
OF ARUNDHATI ROY'S FICTIONAL AND  
NON-FICTIONAL WRITINGS IN THE LIGHT OF  
GAYATRI SPIVAK'S THEORY OF  
SUBALTERNITY**

**Shibu Simon &  
Sijo Varghese. c**

Arundhati Roy enters into the realm of literature with her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). The novel won the prestigious Booker Prize for literature in 1997. Roy is the first non-expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to have won this prize. The novelist and human rights activist, Arundhati Roy, has recently been awarded the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize for her work in social campaigns and for her advocacy of non-violence. She has been recognized for her courage in campaigns for human rights and for her advocacy of non-violence. The weapon that she has got in her armory is the weapon of peace with justice. The novel *The God of Small Things* exposed the social, political, racial, religious and Christian hypocrisies (Tripathi, 23). The novel is about atrocities against the small things — childhood and youth, women, young and old, and the untouchables (Bhatt, 44). In *The End of Imagination* (1998), Roy speaks out against the nuclear tests conducted by India and in *The Greater Common Good* (1999), she denounces the effect of dams on human life and the environment. *The Greater Common Good* is the saga of the pathetic plight of tribals, displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam. In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Roy pokes fun at wars, as she says, "people rarely win wars, governments rarely lose them" (242).

Arundhati Roy's artistic creativity is displayed in *The God of Small Things*. The Booker Committee has described Roy as "an architect in literary circle moulding language in all shapes and sizes as was never done before at least in the Indian literary context (Surendran, 50). Roy tries to imitate and hate the colonizer with the use of English language in her novel, as she says, "For me language is a skin on my thought and was thinking of a way of telling ... I wrote it ... the way an architect designs a building" (Surendran,

51). Roy seems to be artistically iconoclastic in *The God of Small Things*. The stylistic innovations make the novel unique and this imparts vitality and exuberance to it. The stylistic innovations include the use of words, phrases and even sentences from vernacular language, use of italics and upper case letters, subjectless sentences, faulty spellings, topicalization, deviation from normal word order, "single word sentences, change of word classes, clustering of word classes and a variety of other techniques" (Surendran, 51). Shomit Miller, Roy's close friend and author, says that the book uses language in a way that is rare (Surendran 51).

Arundhati Roy severely criticized the validity of the 2:1 split verdict of the Division Bench of the Indian Supreme Court on 18th October 2000 in favour of the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam. Roy had to face the contempt of Court for having staged a dharna outside the Supreme Court and shouting slogans against the judiciary and judgment in the Sardar Sarovar case. She is not the sort of writer who engages in an armchair journalism. In order to understand the life that Narmada sustains, she takes the pains and joys of travelling extensively on it, visiting its banks and valleys and seeing the tribals' "airy fragile homes and their fields and the forests behind them" (Roy: *The Greater Common Good*, 1). Roy points out 'the absurdity' of "the tender concern with which the Supreme Court judges in Delhi had enquired whether tribal children in the resettlement colonies would have children's park to play in" before vacating the legal stay on further construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam (Ibid., 2). She went on even to question the validity of our democratic government, "What is the issue now is the very nature of our democracy. Who owns this land? Who owns its rivers? Its forests? Its fish?" (Ibid., 3). Roy is convinced of the fact that big dams will never help the progress of a country like India, even though our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru deemed dams as "The temples of modern India" and this he himself regretted later (Ibid., 7). In "The People Vs the God of Big Dams", Arundhati Roy says, "We must be the only country in the world that builds dams, uproots millions of people (56 million people in the last 50 years according to the *India Country Study*), submerges forest and destroys the environ-

ment in order to feed rats" (33). She substantiates her arguments by citing the report submitted by the India Country Study done for the World Commission on Dams. It says that ten percent of India's food grain is produced by big dams, that is, twenty million tonnes. The Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies says that ten percent of India's food grain is eaten every year by rats. And that's twenty million tonnes. So, Roy recommends the construction of better warehouses more than big dams (33).

Spivak proposes a theory of subalternity in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In 1983, she threw a challenge to the race and class blindness of the western academy, asking, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (283). By 'subaltern', she means the oppressed subject that generally has no history and cannot speak; the subaltern as female is more deeply in shadow (Spivak, 287). She concluded her provocative essay by categorically insisting that the subaltern cannot speak (308). They can speak, but they are not able to have transactions between speakers and listeners. Their muteness is created by the fact that even when women utter words, they are not properly interpreted. It is not so much that subaltern women do not speak, but rather others do not know how to listen, how to enter into a transaction between the speaker and the listener. Hence, the silence of the female as subaltern is the result of a failure of interpretation, and not a failure of articulation (McLeod, 195).

Spivak's theory of subalternity is relevant to the fictional and non-fictional writings of Arundhati Roy. Roy makes a distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed in her novel *The God of Small Things*. The third chapter of the novel is entitled as the "Big Man Laltain, Small Man, the Mombatti". By the term 'Laltain', she means the high class people and 'Mombatti' refers to the weaker sections of the society. The two central characters of the novel, Velutha and Ammu, stand for the mombattis in the novel. Velutha, 'the God of Small Things' in the novel, was punished by the police for an unknown reason. He was accused of murdering Sophie Mol and molesting Ammu. The false story was fabricated by Baby Kochamma to take revenge upon Velutha for his relationship with Ammu. Since Velutha was a subaltern, the police turned a deaf ear

to his plea. Velutha approached Comrade Pillai for help, for he was a card-holder of the Communist Party. Pillai refused to help him and reminded him saying, "it's no in the party's interest to take up such matters. Individual's interest is subordinate to the organization's interests. Violating party Discipline means violating party unity" (Roy: *The God of Small Things*, 287). When Velutha was in the police custody, Ammu rushed to the police station and appealed to the police that Velutha was innocent. But Ammu was humiliated in the police station by the police Inspector Thomas Mathew. The subaltern has no scope for convincing things. They are suppressed by the Laltain.

In *The Greater Common Good*, Roy takes the role of an activist and tries to speak for the subalterns. The subaltern in this book consists of people from three different states of our country. The people, who were affected by the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam, appeal to the state and central Governments to listen to their petitions. But all their aspirations go in vain, when the Supreme Court continues to give orders for the further construction of the dam. It means that the government can afford to neglect studies on a project before it is launched and that citizens have no right to question it once construction begins.

Roy's great novel artistically portrays the subaltern and their problems. Velutha, the God of Small Things in the novel, is a carpenter Mammachi recognizes his extraordinary ability in creating wonderful things. Mammachi often said that "If only he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer" (Roy: *The God of Small Things*, 75). When Velutha was appointed as a carpenter in the factory, there was a lot of resentment among the touchable workers, who held the view that Paravans were not meant to be carpenters. In order to satisfy the touchable workers in the factory, Mammachi paid less to Velutha and discriminated Velutha from other touchable workers in the factory, as he was a subaltern. The illicit relationship between Velutha and Ammu was disclosed by Velutha's own father to Mammachi. The relationship between the touchable and the untouchable was condemned by Ammu's family. Whereas they encouraged Chacko to flirt with the poor women of the factory to satisfy his "Men's Needs" (295), Ammu's relationship with Velutha

was termed as illicit, unnatural and sinful. Thus, the double standardness of the society is revealed through the family. Chacko and Ammu committed the same mistake, but the punishment for Ammu was severe and relentless. Ammu loved a Paravan and his unorthodox relationship initiated problems for her and Velutha. The caste system is rigid in our society and disapproves all kinds of intercaste relationships. Here again, the rules are different for the Laltain and Mombatti, and the case of Mombatti woman is even more pathetic.

The novel clearly paints women as subaltern. Ammu becomes unwanted in her own home after her love marriage fails with a Bengali man. She has no other option, except to come back to her home with her two children. Women have no right to family property after their marriage. When Ammu came back to her home, Chacko asserted his position by stating that the house belonged only to him. He said to Ammu, "What yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (57). Ammu was not given higher education by Pappachi, while Chacko had been sent to Oxford for higher studies. She had to live in a patriarchal society where the right to live was under threat for women. She had to leave her husband when he asked her to sacrifice her honour for an unknown person. The views of the patriarchal society are reflected in the words of Baby Kochamma, who

Subscribed whole heartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter — she had no position any where at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage — Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (45-6)

Ammu had to suffer a lot under the cruel hands of patriarchy and society. She was tormented severely by her family. Ammu had been humiliated by her father, ill-treated and betrayed by her husband, insulted by the police and rendered destitute by her brother. Each of them voiced the patriarchal ideology which commanded that she should have no right anywhere as daughter, wife, sister and citizen. She was no individual but just an object, a role necessarily submissive.

Roy deals with the problems of the Dalit Christians in her masterly fictional work. The Christians in Kerala observed untouchability just like the Hindus. The Paravans and Pulayas joined

the Anglican Church to escape the "scourge of untouchability" (74). They received a little money and food as an added incentive. "They were known as the rice-Christians. It didn't take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Parish Bishop. After independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians and therefore casteless. Mammachi recalled the rigid cast system that existed in our country, "Paravans were not allowed to touch anything that touchables touched. Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their footprints. Paravans like other Untouchables were not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed" (73-4).

*The Greater Common Good* and *The God of Small Things* focus on the same oppression and persecutions, which are experienced by the subalterns. *The Greater Common Good* portrays the sufferings of a vast number of people, who are rendered destitute by the Government in the name of national development. The tribals of the Narmada valley live under threat and they are forced to move to safer places. The right to live is totally denied to the subalterns. The tribals are assisted by a group of social activists in their plea to appeal to the authority to stop the further construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam. The judgment passed by the Supreme Court on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2000 was a major blow in the lives of the people of Narmada Valley. But they are not discouraged by the Supreme Court's verdict, and are determined to fight the life-long battle. The tribals are right in their articulation, but the authorities fail in interpreting the realities. In *The Greater Common Good*, it is the men and women who are the subject of oppression, whereas in *The God of Small Things* patriarchy confines women. There is a confrontation between the 'Big' and the 'Small' in the fictional and non-fictional writings of Arundhati Roy. The 'Mombattis' are often exploited by the 'Laltain' for the vested

private interest. The 'Laltain' upholds the theory of the 'Survival of the fittest' and it is trying to become the order of the day.

Obviously, Arundhati Roy's fictional and non-fictional writings reflect Spivak's theory of Subalternity. The Mombattis in *The God of Small Things* and the displaced tribals of *The Greater Common Good* become the fitting symbols of subalternism as envisaged by Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The artistic and activistic manifestations of Arundhati Roy inspire people to fulfil their dreams with visions and actions. In *The God of Small Things*, she has taken the liberties of an artist to break all conventions of society. Art and Activism meet in the right ratio, and this integration seems to be her forte. Arundhati Roy is now an active member of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. In her activistic role, she just follows the footsteps of her own mother Mary Roy, who fought against Christian Inheritance Law and won the landmark Supreme Court Verdict that granted Christian women in Kerala the right to their parents' property. *The Greater Common Good* expresses solidarity for the 'Dalit' and the deserted.

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# HISTORY FROM A SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY OF SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN'S *WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS*

C.N. Eswari

Postcolonial writers fuse imaginative creations with historical facts to subvert the accepted notions of history — history as conceived by European Enlightenment scholars as a 'grand narrative', which called for a general view on the whole history of mankind. Representatives of this orientation view historical events as an evolutionary process happening according to a prior plan. This totalizing paradigm of history was an important ideological tool in the construction of colonial historiography. Postcolonial nations with their different cultures seek to subvert such linear and evolutionary conceptions of a universal history. In their discussion on the treatment of history in postcolonial fiction, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins write: "Received history is tampered with, rewritten and realigned from the point of view of the victims of its destructive progress ...the perspectives change to that of the 'Other'."<sup>1</sup>

Indian novelists too have attempted to reconstruct the Indian past from indigenous perspectives. One of the chief aims of the literary reconstruction of the Indian past has been to contest "the positionality of history as the 'master narrative' to demystify and dis/mantle it to situate the historical in the political, social, cultural and economic life of a community."<sup>2</sup> Among Indian novels Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* positions itself against history. Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* makes use of Indian myth for the purpose of parody. Salman Rushdie's novels dismantle history with the help of postmodern narrative techniques such as magic realism, parody and allegory. In subverting history, the novelists do not change the information, but place it under a different description and thereby identify a different sequencing on which the interpretation of the past could be constructed. When facts become events in a novel, they acquire a new definition according to the lived experiences of the writers. Vijay Mishra, while analyzing Rushdie's fiction, makes a general statement on how narratives disrupt history. He writes: "In

these readings, time is turned back against itself in order that alternative reading, alternative histories, may be released."<sup>3</sup>

*What the Body Remembers* is a debut novel by Shauna Singh Baldwin, who was born in Canada, raised in India and currently living in the US. Set in undivided India under colonial rule, it chronicles the history of the subcontinent from the subaltern perspective, thereby subverting its hegemonic structures and ideological thrusts. Baldwin employs family gossips, discussions among peers and political conversations to interrogate the official version of history and also to present her viewpoints. The introduction of Vayu, the wind god, to link the past with the present and the personal with the historical is an illustration of her novelistic inventiveness.

The huge and complex canvas of pre and post Indian independence is encompassed within the narrative that traces the lives and struggles of two Sikh women in a polygamous marriage. Sixteen year old Roop, from a modest village called Pari Darvaza and belonging to debt-ridden family agrees to marry Sardarji, a forty year old Oxford educated engineer and wealthy landowner to avoid the stigma of being unmarried. Sardarji's decision to marry a second time infuriates his first wife, Satya, who is childless. The tense relationship between the two women, locked in a perpetual tussle for the custody of the children and the affection of their husband, poignantly mirrors the communal riots that polarize the subcontinent.

Even at the commencement of the novel Baldwin encapsulates the entire recorded history of India which had been marked by periodic invasions. Beginning with the arrival of the Aryans, Vayu proceeds to outline the attacks by Persians, Alexander the Great, Huns raiders, Afghan traders and Ghazni, the idol breaker. Finally, the Moghuls conquer India and rule over her until the advent of the British on the Indian political scene.

Through this brief outline, Baldwin seeks to highlight that though invasions and conquests had been a recurrent and widespread feature of India's past, British colonization is different in that it is not an enterprise carried for purely economic gains, but an ideology, a hegemonic cultural venture, which leaves behind a debilitating influence on the Indian psyche. In contrast to other invaders, the British,

believing themselves to be members of a master race, create hierarchies between themselves and the colonized subjects, viewing them as their binary opposite. Postcolonial writings and theories seek to deconstruct this tendency of the colonizers to marginalize the natives as their inferior 'other'. Baldwin too engages herself with the task of demolishing the myth of Western superiority.

It is through Satya, the speaker of blunt truth and always locked in arguments with her husband, Sardarji, who has his moorings in Western thinking that Baldwin makes precise assessment of the situation. Exhibiting the acumen of a postcolonial theorist Satya comments:

Yes it *is* different. Other invaders became part of India – we gave, they gave. Can you tell now from looking at anyone's face today who is Muslim, who is Hindu? These people you work for though you need not work at all, these men only take, take, take.<sup>4</sup>

This statement then is an accurate interpretation of the negative qualities of dominance and exploitation inherent in the European colonial ventures. Whereas the Moghuls had assimilated into the Indian culture, fostering mutual understanding between the rulers and the ruled, the imperial rulers establish a relation of dominance over the Indians and cripple their economy. Moreover, the British colonizers project themselves as agents of progress and modernization within the primitive, barbaric and undeveloped Asian civilizations. Thus they justify and legitimize imperial rule as a civilizing mission. Sardarji, whom Baldwin has created as an effective representative of that class of English educated Indians, who had internalized the colonial ideologies, endorses this view, while expressing scepticism regarding the future of independent India. He says: "Yet Mr. Gandhi and the Congress Party would evict the Empire completely take us back to village life" (256). He spares no effort to impress on Satya the superior knowledge that the British possessed, and on one occasion to substantiate the intellectual prowess of the English he explains to her Darwin's theory of evolution, reducing it to her level of comprehension. Satya's instant retort to his explanation that Darwin is an Englishman who discovered that all humans are descended from Hanuman, the monkey god: "Eng-

lish sahibs discover things that are already known, that way they appear infallible"(242) is a telling comment on how Indian knowledge systems have been fragmented and appropriated by hegemonic forces. Even the Western concept of 'zero' has its origin in 'sunya', an Indian invention. Thus Baldwin deflates the West's exclusive claim to knowledge by reconstructing the Indian past as worthy to be proud of. Satya's observation, "Everywhere they tramp across our land, they see and remember only themselves"(293) is an appropriate remark on colonialism, which has been widely acknowledged as an imperialist, expansionist enterprise carried out for economic and political gains.

Baldwin elaborates on these vital issues in an impassioned speech by a representative of the Ladies Picketing Board who addresses a gathering at Lahore. The speech exposes the deception that underlies the imperial rule in India. The British not only make false claims to power, but also turn their governance into a profit making enterprise. The Indian raw materials are shipped to England and the finished products brought back and sold to the Indians at high prices, filling the English coffers with huge profits. Baldwin writes(94). The woman, then urging the crowd to burn their foreign garments as a sign of protest, herself removes her *chunni* and throws it into the fire. This incident not only critiques imperial rule, but is also mediated by gender issues. Roop is drawn towards this woman, who seems to hold the attention of men with her loud talk. She, emulating the woman, casts her own *chunni* into the flame. This incident, establishing the subaltern's capacity to speak, challenges Western theories of feminism, that situate the third world women in a monolithic category and view them as their 'other'.

Whenever history enters the novel, it is personalized and humanized to subvert the Eurocentric notion of history as an objective and scientific recording of the past. Historical moments are sun-dered to retrieve voices that had been muffled and silenced by the dominant forces. The official version of history is interrogated. While re-presenting the Jallianwala Bagh incident, one of the worst massacres in Indian history in which thousands of civilians lost their lives, the novel shifts the focus from a mere recording of fac-

tual details to a study of the antagonism that the British rulers exhibited towards their Indian subjects. Bachan Singh's observation, "If they were English people, you think he would have fired? Only Indian lives are so worthless to them"(63), highlights the racial hegemony underlying the British rule in India. On that fateful day thousands of people, mostly Sikhs had gathered there to celebrate the Baisakhi fair, when General Dyer marched his army through the narrow and only pathway leading into the ground and gunned them down. General Dyer had justified his act claiming that the people had assembled there in defiance of a government order. Bachan Singh questions the validity of his claim: "The General said he had forbidden people to meet – how he did his forbidding, who knows? If he wrote it down on his leaflets, how does that mean everyone knew it? No. How many people are there in this world who knows how to read?"(63) By introducing such queries into the narrative, Baldwin inserts into history the voice of the subaltern interrogating the British authority. In a similar fashion the novel recounts the incident where General Dyer ordered the Indians to crawl down a lane in Amritsar because an English woman got beaten by ruffians there.

The novel's chief concern is with the partition riots, one of the worst tragedies in the history of mankind and yet another disastrous outcome of the colonial ideology. In order to consolidate their power in India the British introduced the policy of divide and rule which sowed the seeds of difference in the mind of various religious groups that had earlier lived in amity. The novel successfully traces how India, undivided and whole, became the victim of the colonizers' greed for power.

Baldwin succinctly presents the religious amity that pervaded among the Indians through Roop's family. Roop grows up in a household where the divide between Hinduism and Sikhism is very thin. Roop's father Bachan Singh himself is not a born Sikh but was made one by his father, who, unable to produce a male heir even after three marriages, takes a vow in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib that if he is blessed with a son, he would make him a Sikh. This is how Bachan Singh came to be a Sikh, while his half brother Shyam Chacha and his cousin Revati Bhua remain Hindus. Revati Bhua, who stays with Bachan Singh's family to tend to his three

motherless children, is a devotee of Goddess Lakshmi and takes delight in visiting the temple regularly. Gujri, their maid, was born a Hindu but raised a Sikh.

Religious tolerance characterizes the relationship between the Muslim and Sikh neighbours of Pari Darvaza too, as becomes evident when the men of both communities gather to witness a bird-fight and indulge in betting. Roop watches her brother, Jeevan, among the Sikhs cheering her father's black partridge, while the Muslims goad the brown partridge belonging to their Pir, Abu Ibrahim, to win. The harmony is disrupted by the British who, in order to facilitate their rule, introduce separate electorates for Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. As Sardarji rightly observes, "The Hindu and Muslim faith were tools, the instruments by which the British divided India"(425). With the imminent departure of the imperial rulers initiating a protracted struggle for power among the various communities, this picture of communal harmony undergoes a change. People, who had earlier thought of themselves collectively as Punjabis, begin "manufacturing differences"(141) and retreating into their respective ghettos or, as Baldwin puts it, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, they are like three strands of hair, a strong rope against the British but separate nevertheless(16). Sporadic incidents of religious intolerance mar the spirit of togetherness. Fanatic Hindus of the Arya Samaj, believing the Sikhs to be "strayed Hindus" forcefully cut off their hair with the intention of bringing them back into the fold, which to the Sikhs seem a religious aberration. Events such as these provoke Bachan Singh into firmly declaring that no member of his family should either visit a temple or perform Hindu ceremonies, much to the consternation of Revati Bhuva, to whom her religion is the only source of consolation. He stiffly warns Gujri against allowing Muslim meat from entering the house, not even goat meat sent by Abu Ibrahim, for the Sikh Guru forbids killing animals slowly and painfully. When Roop has her name tattooed on her wrist, she is paranoid that her father would be angry because the bangle-seller writes it in Urdu, the language of the Muslims. Minor instances of religious intolerance such as these develop into a prolonged conflict culminating in the volcanic eruption of passions and bloodshed during the partition.

Doubts and suspicion begin to saddle the minds of different religious groups and even Gandhiji, who advocates religious brotherhood, is not spared of the mistrust. Though the Sikhs align themselves with the Hindus in their struggle against Muslims, it remains a tenuous relationship. The Arya Samaj Hindus, trying to force the Sikhs back into the Hindu fold, comes in for criticism. Bachan Singh sums up the Sikh resentment:

... each religion, each community should be represented in the legislature of each province according to the number of its people. So now Muslims need more Muslims, Hindus need more Hindus, and we Sikhs need more Sikhs. Mahatma Gandhi is a Hindu. He doesn't need to stop the Arya Samaj movement – he just needs more Sikhs to cut their hair and say they are Hindus next time the census people ask.(65)

The Muslims too harbour a similar kind of a resentment against the Hindus. They fear that the Hindus, who were suppressed during the Moghul rule, would retaliate against them once they take over reigns from the British. Not wishing to exchange one autocratic ruler for another, they conceive of a separate Islamic nation as the only solution to the problem. So the differences, triggered by the British, culminate in the partitioning of India. It was no peaceful process, but was accompanied by bloodshed and riots on both sides of the border.

Baldwin, in describing the acts of kindness indulged in by the people of both the communities during the partition that transcend all barriers of religion and culture, draws the reader's attention to the futility of the partitioning of India.. She introduces into her novel minor characters who play significant roles in reinforcing the concept of cultural pluralism. Revati Bhua, Roop's Hindu aunt, who despite Bachan Singh's orders not to visit the temple or worship Goddess Lakshmi, retains her basic Hindu orthodoxy and sprinkles their house with cow's urine to sanctify it whenever a Muslim guest visits them. Yet, during the partition, she agrees to convert to Islam, a price which she pays to save Bachan Singh and his grandsons from the fury of the Muslims. Likewise, their maid Gujri, who uses only water fetched from the 'Hindu well', opts to remain in Pakistan so as not to impede the family's flight across the border into India. Yet another act of kindness comes from the most unlikely person, Burhan-e-din, the doorman at Faletti, a restaurant frequented by

Sardarji. Sardarji had often eyed this Pathan from the North Western Frontier with suspicion, but during the communal riots it is he who escorts him through a Sikh enclave and saves him from a possible attack by the Muslim mob. At the climactic episode in the novel, when Roop is threatened by Islamic extremists, in order to protect herself she assumes a Muslim identity. What authenticates her pretence is her name tattooed in Urdu. Moreover, it is the Muslim maid, Joriman, who abets Roop's impersonation and helps in her escape. Through these characters, Baldwin presents a glimpse of human solidarity which cuts across national and cultural borders. Sardarji, who must make recommendations to the Punjab Boundary Commission for partition borderlines that may tragically affect his life, is shocked by a simple truth, "Maps lie" ( 436).

*What the Body Remembers* captures the cultural, economical, political and emotional depravity caused by colonialism. While the other invaders melded into the Indian culture, colonial rule, characterized by hegemonic tendencies, has left behind a demoralizing effect on the Indian psyche. The brutality that underlay the imperial rule has been highlighted. Baldwin holds the British policy of divide and rule responsible for the devastating riots that accompanied the partition of India. Thus, by presenting the subaltern version of history, the novel casts doubts on the factuality of Western history, particularly colonial history. Baldwin has split, cleaved and pried open sealed and discrete moments in history to reinstate the subject that had been excluded and silenced in the master narratives.

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<sup>2</sup>Om P. Juneja, *Postcolonial Novel: Narratives of Colonial Consciousness* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995), p.58.

<sup>3</sup>Vijay Mishra, "Postcolonial Differend: Diasporic Narratives of Salman Rushdie," *Ariel*, 26, 3 (July 1995), p.9.

<sup>4</sup>Shauna Singh Baldwin, *What the Body Remembers* (London: Black Swan, 2001), p.4.

All Subsequent citations are from this edition and the page numbers have been given in parenthesis.

# THE RELEVANCE OF AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN AMERICAN STUDIES

A Namasivayam

.... America has stood for three and a half centuries as a "city upon a Hill." Its Puritans and philosophers, Daniel Boones and George Babbies, frontiers and market places, mobility and abundance continue to make the United States a laboratory of national character...<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly, American Experience is distinct, unique and singularly well-known. The world is the beneficiary if the parameters governing American Experience become the national experience of all the nations. With the New York identified, established, and globally accepted as the capital of the world, and with America exerting positive influences on all the nations of the world, there is need to know the limits and potentialities of American Experience in an integrated manner. American Experience is a way into the great issues of American Mainstream Culture, and the national character of America. It is lively and creative exercise, for it offers an understanding of the social, economic, political, cultural, moral, spiritual forces that have shaped the American nation into what she is today. American Experience is based on equality, candor, self-reliance, individualism, liberty, freedom, democratic processes, and readiness to confront all the hardships and challenges of life.

America and Democracy are convertible terms right from the days of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. The Americans' faith in the American Constitution is supreme and sovereign; it is next to only their faith in *The Holy Bible*. Another significant factor, which ought to be stressed and borne in mind, is that American Democracy balances individualism against the territorial integrity and the unity of America. In fine, the best interests of the individual and the best interests of the nations are well balanced.

All Americans immortalize America as the land of freedom. American Experience argues for independence of mind and deed. American Experience upholds capitalism, savings, free enterprise, and privatization. There is the sustained focus on the equality of opportunities and the equality before law. American Experience underscores the fact that diplomacy is the first line of defence and mili-

tarism is the second line of approach to solve problems. Americans view economic rather than military power as the most significant measure of global strength. However, Americans are alarmed by violence at home and abroad. They support measures to thwart terrorists, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and keep defence strong, but shy away from deploying American troops on foreign soil.

American Experience accentuates the fact that the twenty-first century marks a new era of fundamental change. It argues that the United States of America cannot shield herself from the effects of globalization. Moreover, American Experience emphasizes the fact that basically all Americans must accept both the unity in diversity and diversity in unity and then resolve them.

All aspects governing American Experience gain in significance, relevance, and consequence only because America is the land of freedom. And as such all Americans enjoy the equal opportunities to put into effectual practice the parameters governing American Experience. No wonder all intellectuals extol America as the land of freedom, and have immortalized America in their writings. They have eternalized America as God's country and the world's richest nation. They enjoy complete artistic freedom in America to express their mind and art with perfect candor.

Indeed, it is a fact that in no other land is the artist allowed freedom of art to the fullest extent as in America. Therefore, the writers down from Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, through William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Edward Estlin Cummings, Robert Penn Warren, Flannery O' Connor to John Barth, Alice Walkner, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Toni Morrison, Saul Bellow, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Norman Mailer, Luther Luedtke pay their debt to America by naming her as the leading nation of freedom, the foremost ally of democracy perpetually dedicated to an unconditional defence of all oppressed people and the sworn enemy of authorization.

The American writers are conscious of the fact that their eulogy of the country that they love is not unfounded. They realize in their lifetime that American democracy provides the best environment for the individualist to grow, expand, and rise to his full stature.

Yet again they understand America as the land of equal opportunities to all. In fact, through their democratic literature, the intellectuals have vitalized America and American democracy. In their candor, in their handling of the theme of love, sex and violence they have established their American ingenuity and American character. But each has his own way of projecting America and underscoring American Experience as the staple of American culture.

Incidentally, one notices the fact that America as the land of freedom gives unrestrained scope and liberty to the American artists to examine sex, raw and deep, in their works. For example, Cummings studies all aspects of it in many of his poems, and one such classic example is quoted below describing the sex act unabashedly:

her  
 flesh  
 Came  
 at  
 meassandca V  
           ingint  
               oA  
 chute  
           i had cement for hr,  
           merrily  
 we became each  
 other humped to tumbling  
 garble when  
 a  
 minute  
 pulled the sluice  
           emerging  
 concrete....<sup>2</sup>

Cummings describes the sex act with the male remaining the passive spectator, while the female plays the role of the active participant. What took several pages for Byron to describe in the poem, "Isabella" Cummings does through typography where the letter "V" stands for the female reproductive organ and the word "cement" by extension refers to "semen".

Yet again, it is because of America being the land of freedom, the American intellectuals voice their protests against the injustices

and ills of the American Establishment in the spirit of the *Old Testament* prophets. They cry against the social wrongs perpetrated by the society. However, it is their mature sensibility that guides their mind and art, and disciplines their denouncements and strictures. It should be recorded here is that no writer of any other nation indicts either the Left Wing Authoritarianism or the Right Wing Authoritarianism as the American intellectuals do. In voicing their protest against the Left Wing Authoritarianism or the Right Wing Authoritarianism they never mince words. They denounce collectivism.

In the following poem, Cummings expresses his wrath against war, and castigates warmongers in these words:

"next to of course god America i  
 love you land of the pilgrims' and so forth oh  
 say can you see the dawn' early my  
 century 'tis of centuries come and go  
 and are n more what of it we should worry  
 in every language even deaf and dumb  
 thy sons' acclaim your glorious name by gory  
 by jingo by gee by gosh by gum  
 why talk of beauty what could be more beautiful  
 than these heroic happy dead  
 who rushed like lions to the roaring slaughter  
 they did not stop to think they be mute?"

He spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water...<sup>3</sup>

The speaker is the warmongering politician. He tries to justify war as it is caused for the sake of patriotism. War offers the best opportunity to the young men to display their valour and to acclaim the honour of their family. The warmongering politician finally raises the question whether one can allow the voice of liberty being silenced by talking against the soldiers' participation in war. The whole speech sounds hollow. In fact, the poet makes the warmongering politician mouth empty phrases — "by jingo, by gee by gosh" — to prove the hollowness of his speech. After speaking in this manner, he hurriedly drinks a glass of water to wash down his throat all the empty words. Terence Hawkes makes an interesting observation on the poem's reliance on visual iconic signs to convey the message:

...on an auditory level, the "poetic" form of the poem is of course the highly structured arrangement of rhymes and rhythms traditionally recognized as

a sonnet. The message "this is a sonnet" emitted in the symbolic mode is thus effectively seen to be overwhelmed by the message concerning formlessness (i.e. "this is not a sonnet") emitted in the iconic mode just as — and this, presumably, is the "total" message of the poem — inherited, traditional social forms are overwhelmed and muffled by the mouthings of the politician. The ultimate degradation brought about by war, it seems, lies in the disintegration language's powers; the body of the poem's content is made up of the wreckage of patriotic songs and slogans....<sup>4</sup>

Thus, American writers write with candor about the problems and issues confronting the modern man in the society. The American intellectuals are deeply and acutely aware of the going-on in the society. The pithy and poignant statement of William O' Connor is very significant in this context and is worth quoting: "Society becomes the work of art...."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, American Experience puts accent on the individual safeguarding his separate identity, even though he is of different racial origin. Moreover, candor is a distinct and significant characteristic of American Experience. The pithy and the pointed assertion of Walt Whitman is worth citing here:

How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor [My Emphasis]....<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, it may be stated that a careful consideration must be accorded to all the parameters governing American Experience which serve as so many learning experiences to developing nations. American Experience is, indeed, constituted of freedom, equality, candor, self-reliance, individualism, liberty, democratic processes, constructionism, and a definite preparedness to face all kinds of challenges of life.

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## THE POLITICS OF CULTURE-CONFLICT: AN ANALYSIS OF SAUL BELLOW'S "THE OLD SYSTEM"

Lovelina Singh

The much-neglected, extremely important short story "The Old System"<sup>1</sup> ranks as Bellow's most unified and concentrated treatment of the problem of Jewish assimilation within America's prevailing capitalist, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture. The story focuses on the waning of the "old system" of Jewish manners in early twentieth-century America. It dramatizes the cultural conflicts between Jewish and Anglo-Saxon manners. Bellow considers here the replacement of Old World Jewish manners by New World restraint on the one hand, and on the other, a sort of "opera" that has emerged out of the "old system" of East European civility. John Murray Cuddihy has analyzed this sociological process in his controversial book *The Ordeal of Civility*.<sup>2</sup> He argues that history exacted a high behavioral price on emancipated Jews as, throughout the nineteenth century, they left the communal society of the *shtetl* for the fragmented one of the city in order to blend into European and American society. Robert Alter is quick to correct Cuddihy's misperception that "early modern Jews" were "tribal" primitives. Instead, he points out that "many of them had grown up with a code of civility different in its particulars from the one prevailing in Gentile Society."<sup>3</sup> What makes "The Old System" one of Bellow's most important short works is his presentation of the cultural conflict between Jewish and Anglo-Saxon manners as illustrated by the principal character who is caught between the new code of CASP restraint and the even newer code of behavioral "opera".

Isaac, one of the main characters in Bellow's great work, is an Eastern European Jew, a Russian *Ostjude*. According to the stereotype, the *Ostjude* is loud and vulgar and rather obnoxious. Interpreting the social history of Jewish assimilation, Bellow both rejects and relies on ethnic stereotypes. Thus in portraying Isaac, Bellow, himself descended from Russian Jews, looks beneath the stereotypically crude *Ostjude* and finds a kind and civilized man.

In dramatizing the clash between CASP and Jewish manners, he attends mainly to three basic behavioral patterns rather than to the innumerable degrees of assimilation. In general he is concerned not so much with overturning stereotypes as he is with examining the moral implications of the passing of the old system.

Mindful of both ethnic stereotyping and the moral dimension, Bellow portrays Isaac as a man in the direct Old Testament sense, a man whose "oid-country Jewish dignity was very firm and strong" (46). Although Isaac came to America as a child, "he had the outlook of ancient generations on the new World, Tents and kine and wives and maidservants and man servants" (46). In his maturity, Isaac headed a household based on the old system of *ostjudische Kultur*, "an ample plain old-fashioned respectable domestic life on an Eastern European model completely destroyed in 1939 by Hitler and Stalin ... who saw to the eradication of the old conditions, made sure that certain modern concepts became social realities" (64-65). Even as he succeeded in his business ventures, "Isaac's orthodoxy only increased with his wealth. He son became an old-fashioned Jewish paterfamilias" (54-55). In terms of his personal style, Isaac's old-fashioned manner amounts to a certain attractive expressive power, recalling that of Father Herzog, another Russian Jew, who did everything quickly, neatly, with skilful Eastern European flourishes. As for Isaac, "Upstate women said he gave out the positive male energy they were beginning to miss in men. He had it. It was in the manner with which he picked up a fork at the table, the way he poured from a bottle" (60).

Isaac finds it necessary to embrace a code of self-restraint which is favored and enforced by CASP America in a shady real estate deal. The scene of this transaction, "Furnished in old goy taste and disseminating an old goy odor of tiresome, silly, respectable things ... the pork-pale colors of gentility" (59), confronts Isaac directly with an alien culture and its characteristic behavioral reserve. Since Isaac is culturally unaccustomed to such conspicuous restraint, it is not surprising that he "felt lost — lost to his people, his family, lost to God, lost in the void of America" (59). A few days later, however, the deal is made and Isaac soon made a fortune.

Many years later Isaac, by now a prominent building contractor, again confronts the embodiment of CASP behavior in his meeting with Ilkington's son. Isaac also understands, from the young boy's behavior, that he recognizes him as the source of the pay off in the shady deal. At this moment of great public embarrassment, Isaac once again benefits from a code of behavior so different from his own. Ilkington's son, though reserved, is certainly not rude to Isaac. On the contrary, he "behaved with courtesy. For which Isaac, filled with thankfulness, would have liked to show gratitude. But what you showed, among these people, you showed with silence. Of which, it seemed to Isaac, he was now beginning to appreciate the wisdom. The native, different wisdom of Gentiles, who had much to say but refrained" (72). Even though Isaac in his personal behavior is unrestrained, he knows that in doing business with Gentiles such as Ilkington Junior, "Silent impressions would have to do. Incommunicable diversities, kindly but silent contact" (72).

While Isaac conforms to CASP behavior in his business deals, in his personal life and in his religious attitudes he remains properly orthodox. However, his sister Tina in adjusting to the Gentile culture develops an exaggerated, hyperbolic style by imbibing American boastfulness. Tina's capacity for excessive, overbearing, and tyrannical gestures is evident early in the story. Tina violates both codes of manners: civilized Old World Jewish manners and the restrained, reserved CASP style. She develops instead a hyperbolic, operatic code that Dr. Braun finds reprehensible.

For some time, it is true, Tina accedes to the CASP code, as she "Became thinner, more civilized" (51). Over the years, however, she has reverted to her former style: "Hyperbole was Tina's greatest weakness" (62). Her most excessive hyperbolic gestures can be seen in two deathbed scenes; her mother's and her own. First, at the bedside of her dying mother, she "took from her hand the ring Isaac had given her many years ago .... Tina took it from the corpse and put it on her own finger" (54). The ring, adorned with a jewel and fraught with sentimental value, "was supposed to go to Isaac's wife, Sylvia, who wanted it badly" (54). Isaac was understandably incensed. But Tina brazenly "Outfaced him over the body of Aunt Rose. She

knew he would not quarrel at the deathbed" (54).

Later, Tina opts to stage a parodic, absurdist deathbed scene. Bedridden with cancer, she discovers that "one need not be found by the old rules of civilized behavior (69). She decides to exploit Isaac's grief and to charge him twenty thousand dollars to visit her in the hospital. In Dr. Braun's opinion, his cousin Tina has seized upon the force of death to create a situation of opera, which at the same time is also a situation of parody. Even before she is hospitalized, Isaac is agonized about how to make up with her. Much to his credit, in his suffering he comforts himself with much dignity. He consulted his rabbi. "Striking breast with fist in old-fashioned penitence" (67), he expresses remorse even in his innocence. The rabbi, ironically, "with his Madison Avenue public-relations airs" (67-68), favors the "new way... the way of understatement. Anglo-Saxon restraint" (67). In direct conflict with the new code of Anglo-Saxon understatement, Isaac "ground his teeth and wept near the ark." (68). From the rabbi's Americanized point of view, these tears seem excessive: "he did not go for these European Judaic, operatic fist clenchings" (68).

Isaac responds to Tina's demand by agreeing to pay up. The rabbi who advises him to do so believes that his compliance might secure a reconciliation, which indeed it does. Tina, wasted by cancer, refuses to take the money and also gives him the ring she had taken from her mother's corpse. Her demand, in fact, is just a test of Isaac's love. Thus Tina's opera which has threatened to pervert the old system, fortunately serves to restore it instead, The hospital room becomes a setting of forgiveness and compassion.

As the day wears on, Dr. Braun seethes with emotions that his memories have roused. He wonders if the cold eye was better on "life, on death." Then, significantly, he demurs, thinking that "the cold of the eye would be proportional to the degree of heat within. But once humankind had grasped its own idea, that it was human and human through such passions, it began to exploit, to play, to disturb for the sake of exciting disturbance, to make an uproar, a crude circus of feelings" (82). Dr. Braun, therefore, objects to both a Yeatsian stoicism and its opposite, an operatic sensationalism.

Whereas stoicism suppresses essential emotions, the opposite style exaggerates emotions to the point of distortion.

Nearly everyone of Bellow's novels focuses on Jewish protagonists, but their Jewishness is seldom the defining feature of their existence. Saturated as Bellow's fiction is with Jewish culture, for the most part he does not treat his Jewish protagonists as particular ethnic types. He is more interested in the human condition than in the Jewish condition; nor does he see any fundamental differences between the two. True, his Jews suffer under conditions that have less to do with Jewishness than they do with the larger business of living in the world. However, "the Old system" recalls a family of immigrants whose Jewishness is crucial to the very theme of the piece: the waning of the "old system" of manners in early twentieth century America. Bellow claims in a *Salmagundi* interview to have taken special pleasure in comprising "The Old System". His joy is apparent in the story's affectionate tone. By detailing the memories of Dr. Samuel Braun, an eminent scientist who spends a writer Saturday remembering his aunt, uncle and cousins, Bellow is able to evoke very powerfully the particular look and feel of the period, its "Victorian undervests, camisoles, bloomers" (53), its "Coolidge-era sedans" (59). What is more, he embodies his characters with a customary flair; old Jews just like Uncle Braun, who "had a small, pointed beard, like George V, Like Nick of Russia" (47), and domineering Aunt Rose, with her "large bust, wide hips and old-fashioned thighs of those corrupted shapes that belong to history" (48).

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*<sup>5</sup> which was published three years after "The Old System", Bellow reiterates the opposition of CASP and Jewish manners. In this novel he contrasts the behavior of two very different *Ostjuden*: one who has assimilated versus one who has abided by the old system. Artur Sammler is an Ostjude who has, by his own admission, adopted a restrained Anglicized style (302). He is well acquainted with the excesses of German manners, and with the worst sort of political opera. Sammler was buried with his wife in a mass grave from which he alone escaped. Later he witnessed first hand the carnage of the Six-Day War. However, despite the considerable authority with which Bellow invests the old and

very reserved Mr. Sammler, the novel's real hero turns out to be Elya Gruner. He is Sammler's terminally ill nephew, who has located Artur and his daughter in postwar Salzburg through the refugee lists and who continues to aid them right up until his death. Artur observes that Elya is "on an old system" (302). By that he means that Gruner, who is devoted to ideas of discredited conduct, lives by the old code of civilized behavior that Isaac Braun and Father Herzog observe and that barely survived the Holocaust. Elya marries "a German Jewess who has cultivated the WASP style, but he steadfastly resisters her attempts "to refine" him (302). He gives importance to fundamental virtues such as "Feeling, outgoingness, expressiveness, kindness, heart" (303). Although Elya is businessman-physician, he is not governed by business considerations. Blake Nevius regards Gruner as Bellow's answer to how a good man ought to live. According to Nevius: "Elya's legacy to Mr. Sammler... is to reaffirm the human bond... by vindicating ... the reality for the individual of such currently debased or outworn concepts as dignity, honor, courage, compassion — in short by imparting new substance to the 'forms' available to our humanity."<sup>6</sup> Sammler comes to think that it is essential to "choose higher representations" (149) such as those codified by the old system and embodied by Elya.

In a word, both "the Old system" and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* are centrally concerned with presenting the cultural conflict between Jewish and Anglo-Saxon manners.

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## THE DISMEMBERING LANDMARK: HUMANITY AS HALLUCINOGENIC BLACK HOLE IN WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS'S *NOVA EXPRESS*

Ravinder Singh

To encapsulate the literary persona of William S. Burroughs within an easy definition can anytime be a daunting task. Hermetic scholar, eccentric experimenter, adventurer and a reformed drug addict remains the least known figure of the Beat Movement. He emerged on the American Literary cosmos as a landmark with the publication of the *Naked Lunch* (1959). On Sep. 5, 1951, while leading the life of an anonymous drug addict and criminal, he killed his wife accidentally in a drinking party. Death of his wife gave him a literary vocation, he says, "I have had no choice to write my way out". In Feb, 1957, Jack Kerouac, an active member of the Beat Generation, visited him at Tangiers and began to type the hundreds of handwritten pages of Burroughs into a book that Kerouac titled *Naked Lunch* (1959). In the context of the writing of this novel, Burroughs remarked that he was shitting out his Midwest background once for all. For him, it was a matter of catharsis, where he said the most horrible things he could think of. His first novel is *Junkie: Confessions of an Unredeemed Drug Addict* (1953). As Burroughs's first and most explicit autobiographical book, *Junkie* records the events leading up to his drug addiction and explores the sub culture of the junk world in New York City, Lexington, Texas, New Orleans and Mexico during 1940's and early 1950's.

*Naked Lunch* is followed by the Nova trilogy, *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticked that Exploded* (1962) and *Nova Express* (1964), Burroughs's most extensive and radical experiment with narrative form. In these novels Burroughs employs the cut-up method in which existing texts, including Burroughs's own writings and writings by other writers were physically cut into pieces of variable lengths and reassembled in random order to generate unexpected juxtapositions and new syntactic relationships. Burroughs's cut-up technique is synonymous with the present social ethos in which humans have lost sense of existing pure relations especially man- woman

one, and practise incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, gayism etc, not to talk of father- son, mother- daughter, employer- employee and teacher – student relationships. Burroughs developed the cut-up method in collaboration with the Anglo- Canadian painter and novelist Brion Gysin, who derived it from Dadaist and Surrealist techniques of visual collage and film montage.

Burroughs's intention as a writer, beginning with *Naked Lunch* has been to show how certain word combination produce specific effects on the nervous system. By "cutting the word – lines", he believes he can find clues to the nature and function of words as well as anticipate, suggest and predict future events. As such, the cut-up threatens what Burroughs calls the Control Machine: any political system that through repression and social stratification ensures the power of the few and the subjection of the many, reinforcing the situation with such institutional means as police, religion, education and political indoctrination through mass media.

The overall narrative of the trilogy focuses on the uncovering of an ancient, secret invasion of the earth by parasitic aliens who now control human minds and bodies through language, which Burroughs calls, "a virus from outer space" and on the struggle of the human partisan groups to throw off the alien yoke by "cutting up word lines" of linguistic control through cut-up method. Tony Tanner makes a deft use of military analogy to explain how the cut-up method works: " If an army is planning to take you over, by adopting the principal of random action, you make yourself less vulnerable and elusive. Armies move in organized routines; saboteurs can strike at random. If we regards normal linguistic habits as bridges and roads into the human consciousness, we can see that Burroughs is trying to do. He is sabotaging the main lines of communication which the occupying army will otherwise use."<sup>1</sup> In *Nova Express*, Burroughs says:

What scared you all into time? Into body? Into shit?

I will tell you ; " the word"..... imprisons "thee"

In Time, In Body. In Shit." Prisoner, come out.<sup>2</sup>

In *The Soft Machine*, the novelist tells us that the virus generates artificial identities, thereby isolating each person in his/ her physical body (the ' soft machine' of the title) and obscuring the

path of transcendence by limiting the expansion of human consciousness. Tanner feels that Burroughs regards the cut-up methods not only "as a way of destroying language"<sup>3</sup> but also, "as a way of revivifying and refreshing and expanding consciousness."<sup>4</sup> The aliens are described in terms of Nova Mob. *The Ticket That Exploded* offers the initials account of the actual conflict between The Nova Mob and the Partisans. Burroughs never really specifies the origins of the inter-galactic evil that consists of agents planted by other galaxies to foment clashes on earth. Thus, evil in the creative cosmos of Burroughs's novels becomes a macro-cosmic phenomenon invading humans and penetrating their psyche with an awesome finesse of extra-terrestrial power.

*Nova Express*, as the very title suggests is Burroughs's most explosive, anarchic and apocalyptic novel in which visions of the explosive and disturbing manner. "Nova" is an astronomical word signifying the explosion of a star in outer space, a *supernova*. A star in a galaxy, when its life span is over scientifically, suddenly expands, acquires manifold its brilliance and heat, explodes and goes finally converted into a black hole. The novel becomes a warning-cum-prophecy about the world being on the verge of explosion or collapse because it is given to the perverse and demonic addiction of drugs, drug control, nuclear extinction, a dehumanised use of scientific technology and above all the incidence of omnipresent and syndicated crime.

*Nova Express* finds its setting in Burroughs's mindscape that recounts the hallucinatory visions as seen by him during the addiction days. He makes these visions vehicles for unfolding the never ending gimmick of control addicts and police to monopolise the cosmic consciousness. The cosmic conflict between the Nova Mob and the Nova Police constitutes the focal point in the guise of dominating metaphor. He also uses the drug *morphine* as the metaphor of the conditioning tactics of Control Addicts and stresses the production of "*apomorphine*", a drug known for its deconditioning properties. The cosmic conflict in the novel is given the metaphysical emphasis, as opposed to the social and psychological one of the two preceding novels. He returns to the gangster vampire

imagery, the addiction metaphor and the carny world of *Naked Lunch* for the dominant motifs of *Nova Express*, subordinating his previous analysis of body and mind control and their image clusters to his own pseudo-science of addiction and the accompanying junk imagery. All these characters assume carny world identities and voices, and all are versions of Burroughs's actual identities, past and present, for example, Uranium Willy (the reformed addict), the Subliminal Kid (the rebel technician of the cut-up), Inspector Lee (the observer who exposes the truth, the alter ego of Burroughs), Hassan-i-Sabbah (the prophet whose visions come from drug and linguistic experiments) and Mob members (Burroughs as drug hustler and creator of his own victimization). All these nomenclatures in *Nova Express* symbolize the author's own drug-induced images of junkies, personages from his real life who now supply Burroughs with a concrete platform for a creative enhancement of actual experience. It becomes a perfect 'mix' of autobiographical fabulation and apocalyptic fabrication.

*Nova Express* reveals a system of values that the metaphors represent. In his mythic conflict between good and evil, Burroughs maps out a system of equations and opposites. Virus is equated with equals cause-effect, equals control, equals reality/fact, equals time, equals order, equals repetition forms, boundaries, and conventions. And the following values are equated with each other and opposed to the preceding list: Immunisation, apomorphine, silence, cut ups/ juxtaposition/ field, randomness, spontaneity, autonomy, space, chaos, innovation, disintegration, merger, etc.

The conflict of *Naked Lunch* becomes a cosmic conspiracy of *Nova Express*, pitting the forces of 'time' 'body' and 'shit' – the Nova Mob against the forces of 'space' – the Nova Police. *Nova Express* is not a simple state of war, but the more complex guerilla warfare in which there are no allies, only accomplices, no victories, only temporary gains. Burroughs's previous concerns with drugs, power addiction and preception of reality are augmented by his use of word/ image virus as the villains of the book which control the reality studio.

The Control Addicts claims of serving "The Garden of Delights Immortality cosmic consciousness" (12) by providing us with bodily

pleasures. But Inspector Lee, the alter ego of Burroughs, says, "Their Garden of Delights is a terminal sewer .... Their Immortality Cosmic Consciousness and Love is second run grade B shit – Their drugs are poison designed to beam in Orgasm death and Nova Ovens – stay out of the Garden of delights – It is a man – eating trap that ends in green goo.... They are poisoning and monopolising the hallucinogenic drugs .... All that they offer is a screen to cover retreat from the colony they have so disgracefully mismanaged"(13).

Even Nova Police is listed as accomplice in the control conspiracy. Nova Mob tries to produce a *nova* by aggravating existing forces and the Nova Police aims at arresting them through "total exposure". Both forces are trying to seize control of the reality film governing the earth. The novel uses the repeated refrain "Word falling – Photo falling – Breakthrough in the Grey Room" to signal the disintegration of the present reality. "Breakthrough in the grey room mean that Nova is imminent", and in order to prevent it, the opomorphine formula must be discovered, which will deactivate all verbal units and blanket the earth in silence thus counteracting the Nova formula. Apomorphine is defined as no word and no image and "anti-virus". In this context Ihab Hassan says that Burroughs seeks to liberate man "by making him bodiless and silencing his language."<sup>5</sup>

The references in *Nova Express* to the drug world lead Byrant to conclude that drug addiction, to Burroughs, "is both a literal example of human imprisonment and thought control and a figurative representation of similar forces at work in human society at large."<sup>6</sup> He also says that Burroughs's work fits Northrop Frye's definition of satire, "as a genre which depicts reality as a demonic underworld, pervaded by execution and emasculation, in which man is helpless victim of diabolic forces."<sup>7</sup>

The Nova trilogy ostensibly represents Burroughs's most intensive effort to "rub out the word." Despite its difficulty, the trilogy remains a significant achievement of literary postmodernism in its paradoxical struggle to break free of the prison house of language by language itself. *Nova Express* describes a situation, not an action: the criminal conspiracy is but a metaphor for the human condition. It is a prophecy presenting intense visions of what is, not prediction of

what will be.

As the title of my paper suggests, the very name, *Nova Express* symbolizes Burroughs's is urgent message to the earth lines that mankind is shining intensely like a supernova, it is the brightness of evil which will suck the human race into its ambit like the intense gravitational pull of a cosmic black hole (or on exploded extinct star) which doesn't allow even light to escape. Synonymous with the image of the cosmic Black Hole Burroughs puts the contemporary human race on the edge of an abyss, the abyss of massive corruption, addiction and dehumanized brutality. Need less to say that *Nova Express* becomes for and average reader wedded to tradition and conformity, an explosive signal, a blinding and befuddling work, steeped in the visions of sociological dismemberment and apocalyptic dissolution. As an innovative hybridized expression *Nova Express* not only amalgamates the fantastic and the actual but also sounds the drum – beat of extinction for mankind, provided humans heed the warning and take urgent remedial measures to retrieve humanity from the edge of the precipice. For that Hassan, the novelist is an “obscene idealist, satirist and visionary, lacing scientific jargon with poetic hallucinations. William Burroughs finally denies not only the word but also the Flesh.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950 – 1970* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.140.

<sup>2</sup>William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p.12.

All further references to this novel are indicated in parentheses in the text.

<sup>3</sup>Tony Tanner, “The New Demonology,” *Partisan Review* 30 (Fall 1966), p.549.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.250.

<sup>6</sup>Jerry H. Bryant, *The Open Decision: The Contemporary American Novel and Its Intellectual Background* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), p. 211.

<sup>7</sup>Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.228.

<sup>8</sup>Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, p. 249.

## ECOFEMINISM IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S *A BIRD IN THE HOUSE*

Neera Singh

The term Ecofeminism was first coined by Francoise D'Eaubonne in 1974. It became popular in the context of a number of protests, peace-marches, environmental and animal liberation movements, as well as world hunger activism, sparked off initially by the recurring ecological disasters. The meltdown at Three Mile Island prompted a number of women in the USA to come together in the first ecofeminist conference, "Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Ecofeminism in the Eighties" in March 1980 at Amherst. It was here that connections were traced between feminism, militarization, healing and ecology. The numbers demarcated the scope of Ecofeminism to be a "connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice," and asserted "the special strength and integrity of every living thing" (King p.10).

A range of theoretical positions has emerged from this movement, resting on the assumption that there are critical connections between the domination of nature and of women. Ecofeminists particularly attack patriarchal society's dualistic thinking, wherein one side of the dualism reflects the "self" or the subject, while the second side represents the "other" or the object. Ecofeminists address such dualisms as male/female, culture/nature, and mind/body wherein the former embodies all that is good and the latter embodies all that should be denounced or conquered. Therefore, ecofeminists seek to overcome this dualistic worldview. They hope to replace "power-over" relationships with consensual and life-affirming relationships. The movement wants to create an interconnected community, void of hierarchies, where all beings — human, non-human as well as members of the organic world — have their own intrinsic value.

A couple of definitions here would serve to define the framework of my study. According to Zabinski, ecofeminism is a postmodern movement that "abandons the hard headed scientific approach... in favour of a more spiritual consciousness" (Zabinski, p.319). More specifically, according to Warren, "ecological feminism is the position that there are important connections — historical,

experiential, symbolic, theoretical — between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an understanding which is crucial to both feminism and environmental ethics" (Warren, p.11).

Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House*, a set of eight interconnected stories that constitute the fictional biography of Laurence, provides an insight into a world that oppresses and dominates both femininity and nature. It reflects the politics and issues of a postmodern patriarchal society. The narrator Vanessa unmasks the dualities and inconsistencies in both her personal life as well as in the patriarchal society. She goes through a psychological journey which leads her directly into the natural world. Strong and unmistakable in this 'sequence novel', the ecofeminist theory establishes itself in three ways: through the references to patriarchal reasoned dualities between the masculine and feminine world; through the domination and oppression of the feminine and natural world; and through Vanessa's own internal struggle and re-embrace of nature.

In fact, not only in *A Bird in the House*, but in most of Laurence's novels nature plays an important and vital role. Whether it be a desert in Africa, a wilderness in the Canadian prairies, the inviting waters of the West Coast, the rugged hills of the Scottish Highlands, or the mystic river in rural Ontario, nature provides distinctive physical backgrounds to her stories and novels, as well as reflects the internal worlds of her various fictional characters.

I have chosen *A Bird in the House* to explore Margaret Laurence's view of nature by analyzing the description of natural environment in each story in relation to the main character involved. The dichotomy of wilderness/nature versus civilization/town is obvious from the very first story "The Sound of the Singing." Grandfather Conner's brick house is compared to "some crusader's embattled fortress in a heathen wilderness" (*BH* p.11). The screen of "spruce trees whose green-black branches swept down to the earth" are compared to the "sternly protective wings of giant hawks." (*BH* p.11). The "wild blue violets" which dared to grow on the lawn suffer frequent beheadings from the lawn mower. The wilder spruces embody the spirit of Grandfather Conner who himself resembles wild and untamed nature whereas Grandmother Conner is reflected in the

blue violets and mauve flowered Creeping Charley which tentatively throw out "weak looking tendrils up to the very edges of the flower beds" (*BH* p.12). With the "upright" conquerors of the wilderness like Timothy Conner are juxtaposed "downright" failures like Timothy's brother uncle Dan, an outcast from the orderly town, living a poor but carefree life in the midst of untamed nature. Vanessa herself, an offspring of the town and civilization, is unwittingly drawn to this vagabond uncle, though she would not let herself be seen with him publicly. Thus the very first story sets the tone of the book, wherein it is made all too clear that the natural environment is very subtly connected to human emotion and actions.

In another story entitled "The Loons" Vanessa is led to witness a tragic conflict between nature and civilization embodied in the poignant case of the Metis girl Piquette. The Tonnerres who were French half-breeds, a totally marginalized community, were, to put it in Grandmother MacLeod's words, "neither flesh, fowl nor good sait herring" (*BH* p.109). They are symbolic of the fading out of the flora and fauna of the Canadian prairies. Similarly, even the Loons are a diminishing breed of birds, fast becoming extinct. Piquette's indifference to the dying out of the Loons can be forgiven since she herself belongs to an ethnic community which is facing extinction. The angst that Piquette's story reflects is amply reflected in the ululating sound of the crying of the Loons. "Plaintive, and yet with a quality of chilling mockery, those voices belonged to a world separated by aeons from our neat world of summer cottages and lighted lamps of home" (*BH* p.114). Again, we can see the juxtaposition of wild untamed nature, gradually being overtaken by signs of civilization. The aggressive and defiant manner which is displayed by Piquette is merely a façade of bravado that she hides behind. In an unguarded moment, Vanessa is able to see that "in her eyes there was a terrifying hope" (*BH* p.117). The hope, perhaps, is of there being someone who would care for the marginalized groups who are now forced to become strangers in their own land. Therefore, Piquette is not only a woman being oppressed, but she is representative of a whole community which is facing hierarchical domination — just as the Loons are facing extinction.

A glimpse of a darker world of wilderness and chaos is seen through the lives and environments of such characters as Vanessa's cousin Chris, who comes to stay with them for three years. A solid bond of friendship develops between the two and Vanessa is absolutely charmed and rivetted by Chris' description of his home beyond Galloping Mountain: the lake "where monsters had dwelt," the horses which "flew in the splendour of their pride", the house made out of living trees" and the "grass that shone like green wavering light" (*BH* p.135). However, much later when Vanessa goes to visit Chris and his family, she realizes that the romantic picture Chris had painted of his natural surroundings was far from the truth. The lake was not "lonely or untamed" (*BH* p.138), the house was dirty with a horde of relatives living in it. In fact, "it was like the view of God... distant, indestructible, totally indifferent" (*BH* p.138). The shattering poignancy of the story is revealed when much later Vanessa learns that Chris, who had joined the army, had suffered a mental breakdown and would never be the same again. The view of nature that Vanessa encounters in this story reflects the turmoil which Chris must have been facing in his life. But to preserve some modicum of sanity, he had distanced himself from it all and clung on to "the brave and useless strokes of fantasy against a depression that was both the world's and his own" (*BH* p.143). According to Zimmerman, "the reason for man's existence is to shed all animal residue and realize fully his 'divine' nature... in the process of achieving this, man has attempted to subdue nature both outside and inside himself; he has created a substitute environment" (Zimmerman, p.30). Chris' poignant story illustrates this idea.

A similar situation is seen in the story "The Half Husky" where Harvey Sinwell constantly teases and provokes Vanessa's pet dog Nanuk, a Husky. Nanuk who represents the natural world is irritated by Harvey on a constant basis and eventually, over a period of time, develops such hatred towards the boy and all others that he becomes a savage beast, ready to pounce on everyone and tear them to bits. Now that he is proving to be dangerous, he has to be put to death, much to Vanessa's sorrow. Therefore, symbolic traces of deep ecology are seen in this story. Deep ecologists assert that "all

entities have intrinsic value and have the freedom to live unhindered by human domination. Bioregionalism is a way of living 'with' the land as opposed to exploiting the environment for human needs" (Plant, p.158) — in this case, the dog Nanuk.

While criticizing the artificiality and self-righteousness of the people on the side of civilization, Vanessa is also afraid to side with those in the wilderness, even though she sympathizes with them. By fictionalizing both worlds and turning them into creative works of art, however, Laurence has acquired a deeper insight into the truth of life. After the birth of her baby brother in the story "To Set Our House in Order", Vanessa takes a bike ride along the highway. She crawls under a fence in a wheat field and lies "stretched out on the grass, the poplar leaves . . . turning to a luminous yellow . . ." (*BH* p.60). Here she thinks of all that she has been through — her dead baby sister her brother, "who had been born alive after all" (*BH* p.61), and finally comes to the conclusion that she could sense the disarray and strangeness of all things and "I felt that whatever God might love in this world, it was certainly not order" (*BH* p.61). Therefore, it is only by being in close communion with nature, and by feeling its oneness, that the most profound truths of life are accessed, and one can see an order in the pangs, pains and pleasures of growing up.

In some of the other stories of *A Bird in the House*, a convincing background has been created, even though no exotic setting has been portrayed. Although there is only a passing reference to ecology in "The Mask of the Bear" and "Jericho's Brick Battlements", but the foregrounding of male haegemony is clearly discerned in Grandfather Conner's behaviour towards his daughter Edna, and his wife Grandmother Conner and the other daughter Beth, who is Vanessa's mother. His foul tongue and fits of bad temper are a cause of agony to the women of the household. However, it is only much later that Vanessa realizes that his acidic wit was only a façade to hide behind and that his "eyes were empty caverns, revealing nothing ... [except!] a lurking bewilderment" (*BH* p.86). Thus, one of the more common dualisms addressed by ecofeminists, i.e. the male/female binary, is clearly discerned in these two stories.

In the title story "A Bird in the House" another concern shared by ecofeminists — that of religious tradition from a feminist standpoint — is reflected. Vanessa turns into an aesthete after her father's untimely death. The phrase "*Rest beyond the river*" from a hymn which previously held meaning for Vanessa now seems totally irrelevant. According to her, "I knew now what that meant. It meant Nothing. It meant only silence, forever" (BH p.105). By returning time and again to the natural world, she undertakes a psychological journey through which she unmasks the dualities and inconsistencies in both her personal life and patriarchal society. By a change in perception and by learning to embrace the natural, she moves from struggling with the oppression and domination of the male world (represented by Grandfather and Grandmother MacLeod) to associating with various feminine principles and motifs, including the marginalized Piquette as well as the Loons.

Thus, we see that the binary polarities of two very defined, contradictory and dualistic worlds, i.e. the feminine and the masculine, definitely exist in society. Vanessa's final epiphany is when she realizes that human beings are not radically separate from nature. Finally, Vanessa embraces the ecofeminist ideal — that of the inseparable relationship of the individual and the environment, which is the ultimate reality. Apparently, the book *A Bird in the House* successfully establishes the ecofeminist theory.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM, *THE LIFE TREE: POEMS***

**(New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005), pp.92, Rs.250.00**

**R. K. Singh**

*The Life Tree* is the latest addition to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's megabytes of fame. His twenty-six poems, originally composed in English and / or translated from the Tamil original by Mani Darshi, fuse a formidable discourse, which is personal and public at the same time. In *The Life Tree*, the scientist's vision intersects the poet's, as Abdul Kalam deciphers his own humble past and relates it to the nation's great future. While the cause of the nation dominates his consciousness, he presents a humanist view of his personal, technological and social domains as 'mirror of the soul' to underscore resurgence of a potent Indian identity in the world.

The poet's aesthetic focus relates to nation building, through a celebration of Indian science and technology, secular culture, human values, and love for nature. He asserts his conviction that the act of creating, be it poetry, science or engineering, is a basic human capacity which needs to be nurtured. Integrative and interdisciplinary as his genius is, he maintains the dynamics of changes at various levels and links his consciousness to higher emotions, making his poetry an instance of the basic urge in human beings to create aesthetic significance, merging arts, nature, and sciences.

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam indicts unthinking, mindless adherence to fundamentalist, religious, casteist, and narrow social systems that disrupt harmonious relationship. His poems of love, faith and optimism in *The Life Tree* bespeak his innate humanity, selflessness and dedication for transforming Indian society. He seeks to ignite every soul with dream and passion that "will keep the lamp of knowledge burning./ To achieve the vision — Developed India". Abdul Kalam, the visionary scientist-poet, is convinced:

If we work and sweat for the great vision with ignited mind,

The transformation leading to the birth

Of a vibrant, developed India will happen.

He exploits the medium of poetry, articulating subjective expe-

rience and meaning, to ensure promotion of excellence with focus on three main areas — education, research and performance — for the emergence of a new Developed India. “We want to work for our nation / With our sweat enrich the great land of ours”, asserts the poet. He assimilates new ideas from the contemporary sciences whilst embracing traditional, spiritual and artistic aspects of human experience. He celebrates innovations and indigenous knowledge just as he empathizes the miserable lot the deprived and poor.

The poet, sad to see waves of communalism and violence, sings the “song of creation” in one of his visionary moods, and feels the “divine splendour reflecting.... the heavenly answer”:

You, the human race is the best of my creation,  
 You will live and live.  
 You give and give till you are united,  
 In human happiness and pain;  
 My bliss will be born in you.  
 Love is continuum,  
 That is the mission of humanity,  
 You will see everyday in Life Tree.  
 You learn and learn  
 My best of creations.

The poet passionately voices the divine knowledge for humankind, the best of Nature’s creations, when he envisions the country as a leader in the emerging Knowledge Society. He sees the Life Tree growing with the mantra: “Learn and learn”. He reflects on “nature’s wonder”. The metaphor of Life Tree, which provides the book its name, is rich in meaning and message. The poet turns a sage philosopher and devotee, reasoning out the future of India and “the mission of human life” at the same time.

As a poet Kalam seems to be engaged in changing tastes and beliefs from within: His style of poetry seems to stress the need for implicit persuasion to reorient individual, personal, institutional, or public norms, social actions, and roles, making best use of knowledge today. He effectively proves that poetry is not only language but it is also articulation of a people’s greatness, achievements, hopes and aspirations, and of commonsense. He sets out a new poetics and himself stands out as a leader poet. His aesthetics conforms to his personal experiences, intuitions, and interior

self. With implicit presence of the scientist in him throughout, he turns remarkably creative and diverse.

As a lyrical poet with patriotic fervour at the core of his personal reflections, he evinces a firm faith in God and believes in the efficacy of prayers. He seeks God's blessings for everyone "to be with great teachers / Of high thinking" so that none have to suffer the pangs of communalism and social inequity. In the poem 'Harmony', for example, he recalls how a teacher had separated him from his close friend Ramanathan when they were students in standard fifth. As the teacher had failed to "comprehend a Brahmin boy and a Muslim boy sitting together" in the class, he asked the latter to move to the back bench: "My tears dripped; Ramanathan wept/ .... The so-called educated separate our souls, / Sowing seeds of discord and poison." The sensitive soul of the poet knew from the beginning that the Almighty has created all equal and free. He wants us to remember: "All men are equal and created alike / And the creator endowed them with inalienable rights / To life, to freedom, and to continued happiness". It is important that people used their inner faculties and brain to defeat the "Satanic temptations" within and kept from communal violence that "break the cage of peace and faith." As he stresses: "Know ye all: Khuda and Ram / Both are one, blossoming in love." The poet's compassionate heart feels the anguish of everyone, especially the poor and needy. As he recounts, he was greatly moved when Mother Teresa was hospitalized in 1991. He prayed for her recovery because "Her heart is home for those who have none."

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam also feels God-presence in the harmony of humans and nature: "Keep loving nature and care for its beings,/ Then you can see divinity all over"; "Beauty of consciousness trapped in peace / Blooms of flowers show Almighty in deed. / .... A touch of them makes all humans go tender"; and "Nature and humans were created together./ Together they can govern this world. Then only peace and bliss will be here."

He stands for "a valiant new order", "freedom from fear", communal harmony, character building, transparent honesty, self-discipline, optimism, "faith in goodness and sea-deep kindness", "love and peace of humanity", unity of minds, harmony of humans, nature and science,

and the Life Tree which is symbolic of India's power, pride and prosperity. Expressing Indianness at its fullest, the poet declares in 'Rock Walls':

I have no house, only open spaces  
 Filled with truth, kindness, desire and dreams:  
 Desire to see my country developed and great,  
 Dreams to see happiness and peace abound.

The clue to the mystery of success, as he says in 'Message', is:  
 Love for your work and faith in your dreams,  
 There is no force on earth that can shatter your dreams.

Some of the best poems in the volume that may stir a reader's soul include 'My Mother', 'The Life Tree', 'Memory', 'Tumult', 'Ancestor's Desire', and 'Rock Walls'. I find in them the genuine soul-deep feelings of the poet. A few poems, namely, 'The Life Tree', 'Harmony', 'Pursuit of Happiness', 'Gratitude', 'Whispers of Jasmine', 'I Am the Child of Bihar', and 'My National Prayer', earlier appeared in *The Lumincus Spark* (Bangalore: Punya Publishing, 2004), which is significant for contribution of half-a-dozen visual artists who illustrated these poems with their brush and colours. The verbal and visual symphony enhances the appeal of some of the poems in *The Life Tree* too. The poet's anecdotal notes preceding almost every poem facilitates an understanding of the fine relationship between verbal and visual forms of creative expression. While A.P.J. Abdul Kalam creates verbal imagery, Manav Gupta renders the poet's spirit into visual imagery with fifteen water colour paintings. Painting and poetry flow into each other, testifying to the poet's belief that both painting and writing are forms of language.

To conclude, *The Life Tree* is a poetic pioneer of the years ahead with Kalam's personal metaphors that seek to balance linguistic and cultural gaps in conveying aspirations of the new generation. With verbal and visual experimentation, the poems provide a heightened creative experience. They not only reveal the sage-scientist-poet's life, mind and spirit, but also prove that he has a strong bond between him and his tools which bespeak his inner discipline and individual mastery. His new book expands the national literary constellation, enriching the aesthetic dimension of Indian poetry in English today.

**ABDUL RASHID BIJAPURE, *THE THIRD MAYA  
AND OTHER POEMS***

(Kolkata: Writers Workshop, 2005), pp.65, Rs.160.00

**Usha Bande**

Abdul Rashid Bijapure's verses, contained in the book under review, could well be described as:

Perfect proportions,  
Curves and lines  
Exact expression.

Interestingly, these words with which he describes the chiseled beauty of the Khajuraho sculptures (p.58) befittingly describe his own verses where each poem is like a well-cut gem. Thickly structured, the poems defy facile or peremptory reading. Even the title of the book sets you thinking — What could be 'Third Maya?' I wondered glancing at the book. The metaphysical concept of Maya is well known; may be we also know a few women named Maya, like Anita Desai's heroine of *Cry, The Peacock*. That makes two. What about the third? The title poem on page 39 solved my riddle. It refers to the undiluted love of his "motherly sister." The poet tells us how the corrupt collect 'Maya' with both hands; the sages reject 'Maya' (illusion). But the love his sister poured on him as a boy is a form of 'Maya' that has no name, no form, only a deep primordial emotion. The reader cannot miss the ease with which he indicts avarice without being overtly critical. But the last stanza staggered me: "For me her intense 'Maya' / was no more than illusion." With 'no' or "more than" the line gives negative meaning. May be it is typing error. Bijapure may like to re-check or re-think. The use of the word 'Maya' for mother / motherly love is a typical vernacular expression used in Marathi.

Many of the poems exude optimism though the poet at times is troubled by greed, nepotism, and corruption rampant in the system. In "Joy and Smiles" he exhorts himself to see the beauties around and enjoy the treasures strewn all over the world. Let us enjoy these till Time is with us. "Inhale freshness, exude joy till the center holds ground" (p.38). Similarly, in "The Sceptic's Delight" the persona is puzzled by the mysteries of life and death, the fragrant flowers sprouting through the dull black earth, the rainbow in the

sky, the rise and fall of waves.

The ability to spot human goodness, love and concern for fellow beings amid all the dirt and grit of the world comes to the rescue of the poet and gives an optimistic vision. His night watchman of "A Cold Night" spends his difficult night hours thinking of the life around him. There may be the stingy rich who fail to tip him, but he feels happy thinking of the little "Pummy" beaming with joy to have a new frock. The poet is living in too disturbing an era to ignore the greedy, violent world where "Small minds think very small" (p.18) and where the clean, honest men are rare species. The masses is general suffer while the leadership connives at reality. The poem "My Cousin, Gaja" takes up the current farmers' suicide in Maharashtra and shows how with failed "monsoons", facing the "nightmare of hunger," and the ever-swelling debt with the "siphon-like" rates of interest farmers end their lives in utter desperation. Man is no longer the replica of God but a "darkened spark / of the pure flame" (p.25).

Bijapore displays humor, wit and satiric inclination in handling his themes. "That Spiritual Experience" (pp. 61-62) is a mild satire on the new-fangled women writers whose writings inject wrong and outrageous notions into the unsuspecting and innocent women readers. Sharda Rani, a happy wife, is a victim of Kamala Behn's radical writings. But even the writer Kamala Behn who propounded the theory does not know what she meant by it. One of the most beautiful, simple and touching poems in the collection is "Without Context". It is a tribute to the primordial love of a mother. Her son is "in a far off city of wealth / where hundreds go hungry" (p.57). By feeding birds and dogs and sacrificing for others in her own way, the mother hopes to bring luck to her petty laborer son.

The poems in the collection show the poet's ability to look around, cull material from his immediate surroundings and to lace it with his own sentiments. He sees the beauty and ugliness, love and hate, pleasure and pathos of life and strings them in his charming verses. The publisher's work is praiseworthy. Writer's Workshop has done, as usual, a commendable job.

**BINOD MISHRA, *EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS IN  
THE NOVELS OF MULK RAJ ANAND***

**(Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2005),**

**pp.XVI + 192, Rs.400.00**

**C.S. Singh**

Mulk Raj Anand is India's major novelist in English and critical studies on his works are far too many. The book under review is an altered version of the Ph.D. thesis that Binod Mishra submitted at L.N.M. University, Darbhanga, Bihar. The book is divided into six chapters: Introduction, Dimensions of Despair and Delight, Arrest of Energy, Struggle for Release, Freedom and Joy, and Conclusion. Chapters Two and Three are organised round Anand's early and late trilogies with slight perspectival differences in the exposition of themes. The whole book, in fact, is organised, rather structured, on the pattern provided by despair and delight. The discourse that Binod Mishra is able to generate is very well organised even though, at times, it may appear that despair and delight do not allow the discussion to grow to an appreciable range. Binod Mishra believes in growing well within limits, a humility that cannot pretend dominance.

The title of Binod Mishra's book may give the impression that the study is inspired by the thought of existentialist thinkers but the focus is not exactly that even though such thought occasionally comes for discussion. Binod's argument counters the thesis that man is thrown into the system with no choices of his own; he rightly interprets the novelist who holds that man is responsible for all that he does including the vagaries of the system. To that extent, Anand's fiction does not yield to existentialist interpretation. However, despair and delight are inalienably intertwined in human experience and it is with this that Binod Mishra is concerned.

There is another angle to this book which is no less significant. Binod is not overburdened by a large number of critical studies that have appeared on the writings of Anand. Most of these studies uphold the view that Anand is a social reformer and does have a political ideology to propagate. Binod Mishra steers clear of this line of argument by linking Anand's fiction to more universal emotions of de-

spair and delight. This is not to say that Binod has Aristotle or Bharata in mind while suggesting these emotions. There is also an under-current of the growth of thematic design in Anand's fiction with slight changes in belief patterns. The Anand of earlier trilogy is Marxist, or appears to be so, holding Indian aristocracy as a responsible body for perpetuating crime against the downtrodden. In his later works, Anand accommodates faith in his projected vision of human life. It is not only man who creates his destiny, faith in powers larger than man can also improve the lot of humanity. The book is an acceptable piece of research and is able to stand on its own given the bulk of scholarship on Anand. The book is well brought out even though the price could have been a little less.

**C.L. KHATRI (ED.), *INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH:  
VOICES FROM THE OBLIVION***

(Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2004), pp.227, Rs.525.00

**Shyam Sundar Agarwalla**

*Indian Writing in English: Voices from the Oblivion* is an impressive and exciting collection of essays on some unknown but brilliant writers of undivided Bihar. Tara Sinha's "Rajendra Prasad's Writings and Speeches in English" is a good and timely piece of literary criticism. Iyengar and Naik have only made passing reference to his writings. Tara Sinha, an insider, has disinterred Prasad's English writings from the drawer. Prasad wrote neat, elegant, simple, and incisive English in his letters, speeches and books. Another prose writer of repute included in the book is Ram Chandra Prasad. He was Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Patna University. His prose style is a model of sparkling wit and contemporary vocabulary.

Khatri has collected many articles on the poets of Bihar and Jharkhand. We get the sap of spiritual poetry in Sumirasko. Kameshwar Prasad places him beside Sri Aurobindo. Prasad writes; "The Young poet assimilated the greatest philosophical ideas into his sensibility. This combines with his sensitivity to create his unique, individual style." Shaileshwer Sati Prasad, in his article "Loyalty and Liberty", claims that Avadh Behari Lall was the first English poet from Bihar in the late nineteenth century. His poetry is made of two

colours, loyalty and liberty. Amarendra Kumar's poetic achievement, according to Parashu Ram Singh, lies more in experiment with music and diction than in themes. Prabhat K. Singh has written both the satiric and humorous poems. His themes center round tragedy, horror, sex and violence in India. His portrayal of Gaya is satiric. C. L. Khatri's *Kargil* is an anthology of 42 poems. R.S. Tiwary has made a brilliant effort to evaluate some of them. Khatri's poetry is saturated with patience, zeal, and optimism. R. K. Singh's prayer-poems acquire as much space as his poems on sex, violence, love, and social consciousness. Three teachers of English Literature — Rizvi, Chambial, and Tiwary — have written on the varied aspects of his poetry. Among the poets of Bihar and Jharkhand, he is *rara avis*.

Khatri has also collected some articles on the novel writing in Bihar and Jharkhad. Shyamala A. Narayan's "Indrani Aikath-Gyaltsen: An Assessment" analyses Indranis' novels and short stories. She was a very promising fictionist but God did not allow her to flower in life and art. I have known Ramchadnra Prasad for more then three decades and there is no denying the fact that he was one of the most gifted writers of Bihar. Therefore, his book entitled *The Mahatma* is undeniably a dispassionate and objective fictionalization of Mahatma's cult. S.D. Singh was a learned Professor of English at Patna University. Lakshmi Kumari Sharma has done full justice to his art. Ravindra Rajhans in "Introducing J. P. Singh" writes about his two novels, but the campus novel has never been a success in India. Arvind Joshi evaluates Tabish Khair's *Where Parallel Lines Meet*. Khair has written two novels and literary criticism. He is from Gaya and is one of the most promising contemporary writers of Bihar. R.B. Singh's study of B. Ahmad as playwright and prose-writer is a discovery. Ahmad, if studied seriously, can be a pathfinder for upcoming playwrights in Jharkhand. That Ahmad, living in a good-forsaken place in Jharkhand, could write so well is a matter of pride.

We must applaud the effort of Khatri for collecting critical studies of some talented little-known writers, poets and playwrights of Bihar and Jharkhand. I hope and believe that the future historians of Indian English literature will incorporate the writings of these men of letters of Bihar and Jharkhand in their books.

**S. VISWANATHAN, *EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE:  
THE DYNAMICS OF PLAYMAKING***

**(New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005), pp.XIV+286, Rs.400.00**

**K.K. Sharma**

It is, indeed, difficult for a person other than an established Shakespeare scholar to review justly a voluminous book on Shakespeare by a Shakespeare scholar of international repute like S. Viswanathan. Hence this review will be, more or less, in the mode of 'critical appreciation' with a view to highlighting the sterling qualities of the work for the specific purpose of inspiring the younger and future academics. After perusing the book twice, I feel that the author has succeeded in his aim, succinctly put in "Introduction" thus: "The studies that follow are in the nature of explorations of certain particular processes, not generally much attended to but none the less significant, of Shakespearian playmaking and dramatico-theatrical communication.... The devices considered in the studies are of several different kinds — rhetorical, topological, poetic, visual, theatrical and those of professional stage practice" (xii). The learned critic focuses, in particular, on the two patent general features of the great dramatist's use of these devices. The first may be termed as his exploratory-creative address to these resources, while the second is the playwright's use of dramatico-poetic means with several sociocultural or cultural-political connotations.

The collection consists of twenty-one essays which are put in three sections. The first section comprises eleven essays, "each of which deals with a particular convention as it operates in a cross-section of plays in the canon" (xiv). The second section has six papers, each of which examines a particular play from the standpoint of a particular process or phenomenon. The last section, containing four articles, is a study of some of Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of Indian dramatic tradition.

Section 1 begins with an examination of Shakespeare's use of the device of 'illeism with a difference' in the plays of the middle period, such as *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. The author explains the device as "one by which the drama-

tist makes a character, speaking in the first person, refer to himself in the third person, not simply as 'he', which would be illeism proper, a traditional grammatical mode, but by name" (4). To illustrate it, he cites instances from the above-mentioned plays. I reproduce one for the benefit of the readers of this review:

Othello: Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone. (*Othello*, III.iii.361)

The device has been employed not only by several minor characters in these plays, but also by Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Troilus, Cressida, Hamlet and Othello. It is used thirty times in *Julius Caesar*, fifteen times in *Troilus and Cressida*, eight times in *Hamlet* and four times in *Othello*. Viswanathan points out that Shakespeare learnt it from the medieval theatre and that it was a part of the ancient "stage convention of self-revelation, of 'direct self-explanation'" (5). It helps the playwright in accentuating the relationship between the character who uses it and his inner being. To Shakespeare it serves several purposes, but his handling of it is "stylistic and dramatic alike" (15).

The next essay deals with Shakespeare's use of another minor, but highly significant, dramatic device known as 'the scene within the scene'. It presents "one or, usually, more characters in the role of player-spectators who comment on the words and deeds of the other character or characters" (17). This category of scenes is different from the so-called 'discovery scenes' like the one in *The Tempest* in which Prospero and Alonso find out Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess and from scenes such as the 'nunnery' scene in *Hamlet* and the play within the play or masques that we come across in many plays of Shakespeare's times. This technique is a vehicle of delineating the complexities of varied dimensions of dramatic illusion. It is commendably employed by the master playwright in *Henry VI Part III* to demonstrate "a key emphasis ... at a central moment in the play" (21). Also, it is brilliantly employed in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well that Ends Well* as an integral part of the comic imagination. The best instance of it is the scene in which Malvolio is bamboozled and humiliated by Sir Toby, Maria and others in *Twelfth Night*. Viswanathan concludes the discussion with a perceptive observation: "Perhaps the greatest ad-

vantage the device brings is the evocation on the part of the spectators of a fruitful tension between a sense of reality and a sense of illusion, and between alienation and participation" (28). This article is followed by an indepth study of sleep and death as twins in Shakespeare with special reference to *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV Part II*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Viswanathan demonstrates that Shakespeare handles the hackneyed sleep-death motif so well that it "comes to life through its embodiment in actual dramatic situations" (45).

An insightful piece of criticism, "Shakespeare's Metamorphoses of Actaeon" brings to light the functional use of the famous Greek legend of Actaeon by Shakespeare. The direct use of the myth can be seen in the hunting scenes (II.ii. and II.iii.) of *Titus Andronicus*. For the indirect dramatisation of it, the concluding scene of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV.ii of *As You Like It* and I.i of *Twelfth Night* are remarkable. The myth is also effectively employed in *Hamlet* (III.ii.) and *The Tempest* (IV.i). I endorse Viswanathan's assertion: "The range of the situation, in which Shakespeare in the course of his plays, either directly or indirectly, invokes the image of Actaeon is considerably wide. More remarkable is the range of variations Shakespeare makes on the myth and on the interpretative ideas and contexts which had come to surround the legend in his day" (56-7). Shakespeare's discussion on books and bookish learning constitutes the theme of the paper titled "Books at Play". The author assiduously explores it in the dramatist's early as well as later plays to evince how the book serves as visual stage image with deeper implications. He successfully argues that like Prospero in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare "could use the book as a means of his theatre magic" (72).

The sixth essay in the volume concentrates on the dramatic significance of movement on the stage with special reference to Shakespeare. It brings out how the playwright judiciously uses different kinds of movement of actors as characters on the stage in consonance with the need of dramatic action and the stage require-

ment. Obviously, there is a lot of movement in the delineation of scenes of battlefield, swordplay, etc. in his plays. The critic convincingly concludes: "Stage movement is one of the important visual dimensions of drama of which Shakespeare is absolute master as of its verbal and aural-oral elements and constituents" (86). The next article begins with the factual statement that adequate attention has not hitherto been paid to the disappearance of certain characters in Shakespeare's plays. The most glaring instances of this are Adam in *As You Like It* and the Fool in *King Lear* besides other characters like Flavius and Marcellus in *Julius Caesar*, Bernardo, Marcellus and Reynaldo in *Hamlet*, Demetrius and Philo in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Curian in *King Lear*. Viswanathan is simply brilliant in advancing convincing reasons for this strange phenomenon in the great litterateur's dramas.

The next essay is devoted to the two categories of Shakespeare's very minor characters who were called 'single-speech Hamiltons' and 'shadows' in Elizabethan dramatic world. Those who belong to the first group only at times speak not more than a single line, while the characters of the other category just appear briefly but do not speak at all. However, they are not without dramatic significance and make an impact on the audience/ reader "by virtue of the difference they make to the course and movement of the play and of the suggestions of 'looking before and after' emerging in and through them both in their immediate context and in the play's theatrical dynamic" (98). Some of the 'single-speech' and 'single-show' characters are Mercade in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the English ambassador in *Hamlet*, Francisca and the Justice in *Measure for Measure*, Peter of Pomfret in *King John*, Jacques de Boys in *As You Like It*, the Priest in *Twelfth Night*, Leonardo in *The Merchant of Venice*, Helen in *Cymbeline*, the captain in *King Lear*, and Francisco in *The Tempest*.

The 'insets' — i.e. scenes, situations and passages which are like inserted 'performances' — as device of presenting illusion and reality forms the subject matter of the ninth essay of the book. The author analyses a number of instances of the Shakespeare inset. In this connection he discusses scenes, situations, passages, etc. from plays like *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's*

*Labour's Lost, Hamlet, and Troilus and Cressida*. The article which follows it is a sequel to it as it deals with the profession of playhouse and player in the Shakespeare inset. Viswanathan sums it up by affirming that "the Shakespearian insets may be said to afford intimations of his convictions and attitudes regarding matters and issues of the professional theatre, its ways of functioning and practices and above all its place in society and its impact on the court and on the general population from more or less the whole spectrum of which the theatre-going, though not the play-going public, was drawn" (140-41). Section 1 of the book ends with an examination of the question of censorship (on political, religious and social grounds) in relation to Renaissance British drama. Differing from several authorities on the subject, Viswanathan remarks: "... certain ways in which censorship was a factor to reckon with in the English Renaissance theatre would lead one to wonder if it is not an exaggeration to portray the situation then obtaining in this respect as one of 'art tongue-tied by authority' (154).

Of the six essays on Shakespeare's particular plays forming Section 2 of the book, the first one offers us an insightful study of the motif of 'visuality' — i.e. vision or mental picture or visualisation in the mind's eye — in *Hamlet*. The author cites a number of instances of it from the play to show their thematic and dramatic significance. The next essay discusses, in detail, the numerous connotations of the word 'question' presented suggestively in *Hamlet*. Towards the close of the essay, Viswanathan sagaciously observes: "The elements of 'dialogue or conversation', of 'discourse' of several kinds, of a 'debate, or discussion', of a 'topic for consideration and discussion', of 'a matter, theme or issue', and of 'a state of affairs which poses a challenge', all of which are connoted and sometimes denoted by the word, are, of course, all part of the rich abundance of the play" (182).

Then there is an incisive study of Shakespeare's deliberate, extensive use of *topoi* or commonplaces in *Coriolanus* in accordance with rhetorical and theatrical 'self-reflexivity'. The author particularly focuses on the workings of three *topoi*: the Fortune-Nature *topos*, the tongue-heart *topos*, and the *topos* of the world-stage.

"*Antony and Cleopatra: The Functions of Theatricalism*" is another discerning article in the volume. The author aptly asserts that the master playwright "employs the mode of detachment and distancing through fairly consistent and deliberate theatricalisation to a greater degree in this play than perhaps he does in his other late plays" (196). This is followed by a brilliant essay on theatricality and mimesis in *The Winter's Tale*. It is an illustration of the "co-presence of theatrical virtuosity and truth-to-life with an analysis of a recurring example from *The Winter's Tale*." (208). The recurring example is the 'taking one by the hand' which is used by Shakespeare as a dramatic device to represent 'general nature'. The last piece in Section 2 brings out, for the first time in detail, the influence of the popular play, *Mucedorus*, on Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

The four essays of the final section of the book, examining some of Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of Indian dramaturgy, do not emulate those of the previous two sections in profundity and comprehensiveness. Even the best essay of this section, "The Application of *Dhvani* to *Macbeth*", does not display the originality, depth and breadth which invariably characterise the critical investigations of Viswanathan. The only plausible explanation seems to be his recent interest in this area of critical inquiry. In due course of time, it is hoped, he will read, think and write more in this field, and will give us a full book on it.

In sum, the book, under review, along with his other outstanding studies on Shakespeare, ensures a permanent place for Viswanathan among world's distinguished Shakespeare critics. Without indulging in exaggeration and laudation, I genuinely believe that he is second to none of the Indian Shakespeare scholars of world fame like Amaranatha Jha, S.C. Sen Gupta, V.Y. Katak, R.W. Desai and K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. It is, indeed, a treat to peruse this book which makes the reader see the rich mines of thematic and technical excellences that constitute the matchless dramatic genius of Shakespeare. Inevitably, it is a definitive contribution to Shakespeare industry and the high-water mark of Indian English criticism.

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