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A FRESH ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF LADY MACBETH

Jayakanta Mishra

Ordinarily Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* has been assessed as Malcolm has described her at the end of the play — the "friend-like queen"[1] — and like Macbeth's own estimate of her as fit to "Bring forth men-children only" (I.vii. 72). But later critics began to work out how Lady Macbeth reveals her feminine nature in words like "sweet remembrancer" (III.iv. 37), "dear love" (I.v. 58), "I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me" (I.vii. 54-55), and shows the tender feelings of a daughter for her old father, etc. In other words, her story is one of a tragic woman who seems to have failed to achieve her end.

A little more than this she appears to me the story of a woman who fails to carry out her role as an ideal wife and loses the sympathy and love of her husband and dies as an example of a tragic wife. Her tragedy is the tragedy of a woman whose brains are weak and petty. So Ellen Terry declares:

> I can only see that she is a Woman — a Mistaken Woman and weak — not a Dove — of course not — I do not think herself so at first (about Macbeth's character) but oh dear me how quickly she gets steeped in wickedness beyond her comprehension![2]

Shakespearean critics by the third quarter of the 18th century and in the early 19th century such as Franz Horin (1823) and Ludwing Tieck (1826) in Germany, and Mrs. Jameson (1832), William Maginn (1837) and George Fletcher (1843) in England — one and all speak of Lady Macbeth's womanliness and particularly of her devotion to her husband, her affectionate and gentle character, her role as a loving daughter and as a tender mother. Thus, today we have come from the concept of Lady Macbeth as a glamorous tragic heroine to that of Lady Macbeth as a tragic and pitiable woman. Even in this concept, however, she continues to be regarded as an ambitious lady. Ellen Terry goes on to observe:

> It is ambition that is the true ruling motive... ambition first... and the feeling that when all is accomplished, they (Macbeth and herself) shall be free — free to rule and to govern, free from all restraints.[3]

And the tragedy of Lady Macbeth continues to be considered

primarily as that of a woman who is the victim of excessive and unnatural strain on her nerves. In other words, she is considered as a tragic character in much the same way as Macbeth — only in addition to it her feminine nature revolts and her pursuit proves too strong to be borne as a consequence of which she faces a nervous breakdown. Her conscience revolts and her apparently iron-strong will breaks and she becomes so imbalanced, upset and irrational that she is touched with madness, turning into an object of pity and horror. In a way, she continues to have a glamour and apparently draws her grandeur from a strong will, a high ambition and a terrible assumption of the role of greatness which is exploded by the awakening of the voices of conscience or for that matter by the tender womanliness that had been suppressed or artificially kept in abeyance for some time.

My reading of Lady Macbeth's character is, however, defferent. Far from being a terrible woman and a tragic heroine as well as far from being just an essentially tender and sweet woman whose womanliness revolts and destroys her, she is more a wife, a devoted, dutiful and admirable wife who sacrifices herself for the sake of her husband and suffers silently the pangs of rejection. In other words, Lady Macbeth is neither a tragic heroine nor a tragic woman but a tragic wife.

I am fully conscious that those who emphasised Lady Macbeth's womanliness were also conscious of her role as a wife. Even Ellen Terry afirms that she is "a mistaken woman... and weak.... Not a Dove... of course not... but first of all a wife."[4] But this idea is only to emphasize an aspect of her womanliness and no more. I have read the play several times and have found the key to her characterization in the wifely qualities rather than merely the womanly qualities. Indeed, the impression is so strong that I have often wondered why other readers and spectators have not attached to it the importance it deserves. In this paper I propose to examine this proposition at some length.

An old Sanskrit verse decribes the attributes of an ideal wife thus: "In dealing with the affairs of state and matters of public importance an ideal wife should stand by her husband like the minister

of a king; in carrying out orders and going on errands an ideal wife should serve her husband like a maidservant; when a husband is taking a meal an ideal wife should act as a mother; in sexual enjoyment an ideal wife should satisfy her husband like Rambha the proverbial courtezen of the gods; she should fall in with the views and interests of her husband; and finally an ideal wife should have the capacity to understand, sympathise and forgive her husband like Mother Earth. An ideal wife with these six qualities is difficult to find in this world." If we examine Lady Macbeth from these angles, I have no doubt we will discover Lady Macbeth more accurately. Let us first see her as a loving wife.

Lady Macbeth has been quite frequently described as a "loving wife", but it is a mistake to attach this concept to the archetype most common in western thought as a "loving woman" who tempts, viz. Eve. For, Lady Macbeth is in no sense an Eve; she did not suggest the murder of Duncan, Banquo or Lady Macduff and her children. It was Macbeth who broke "this enterprise" (I.vii. 48) — meaning Duncan's murder — when "Nor time, not place,/ Did then adhere"(I.vii. 51-52), and certainly the idea of other murders was in no sense hers.

But that does not vitiate or falsify the estimate of Lady Macbeth as a loving wife. The first positive portrayal of her role as a loving wife was reported from Germany: the actress Mrs. Rosalie Nanseul began it, and in 1823 Frans Horn gave it an emphatic critical expression in the following words:

> All our earlier critics misunderstood our poet. They interpreted the lady as an extreme example of vaulting ambition who for the sake of the crown would not hesitate to commit the most cruel crime. That is true indeed: only, not for herself, but for him, the beloved husband. It might even be said that her passionate love for her husband is the eternal impulse in the Lady's life.[5]

Eminent Germans like Goethe and Heine were not pleased with this interpretation, but it became quite popular with the actresses who played the role of Lady Macbeth. In England Ellen Terry, in France Sarah Bernhardt, in Poland Modjeska, in Russia Maria Ermolova and, above all, in America Julia Marlowe demonstrated that outwardly she might be a queen, but to her husband Lady Macbeth is just an adoring, self-sacrificing and clinging wife.

The idea of a loving wife was sometimes carried to an extreme so as to include the concept of a sensual and amorous Lady Macbeth. A French actress maria Casares played the amorous wife to such an extent that in the scene after the murder of Duncan she gave the impression that Macbeth in asking Lady Macbeth to come to bed, showed that he killed Duncan to make sure his wife would admit him to her bed.[6]

The clearest expression of Lady Macbeth's love for her husbnd comes out when she appeals to him:

> From this time,
> Such I account thy love. (I.vii. 38-39)

And though when she goes on to appeal to him to become "so much more the man" (I.vii. 51), some attraction of the female for the male may be discerned. She seems to touch the sexiest nerves of Macbeth when she appeals to him by referring to the tender smiling face and boneless gums of the babe sucking her nipples and Macbeth ends by saying that she should bring forth male children. Moreover, though the word sex did not have its modern connotations in Shakespeare's age, yet it would be idle to deny that the attempt to "unsex" (I.v. 41) herself or to sacrifice her "woman's breasts" (I.v. 47) for furthering the desires and innermost wishes of her "worthy Lord" (III.iv. 82) and "husband" (II.ii. 13) emanated from anyone but a most passionate mate and wife.

But it would be a wrong concept of an ideal wife, if she were shown simply as a loving wife. Lady Macbeth's characterization is not shown in the play with any completeness, nor does the story of the play permit any passionate love-making. Still, there is ample evidence to show how Lady Macbeth takes deep and keen interest in matters of public importance in which her husband is involved. She receives Duncan with proper decorum. Duncan realises it and addresses her again and again as "our honour'd hostess" (I.vi. 10) and "fair and noble hostess" (I.vi. 24). Later, when Macbeth becomes King and she welcomes the guests to the Royal banquet, Macbeth describes her:

> Our hostess keeps her state; but, in best time,
> We will require her welcome. (III.iv. 5-6)

And she is prompt in replying:

Pronounce it for me, Sir, to all our friends;
For my heart speaks, they are welcome. (III.iv. 7-8)

In time she reminds him:

My royal Lord.
You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold,
That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making —,
'Tis give with welcome.... (III.iv. 33-34)

And she warns him again and again that he is failing in his duty:

a) Are you a man?... (III iv. 57)
b) What! quite unman'd in folly? (III.iv. 73)
c) Fie! for shame! (III.iv. 73)
d) My worthy Lord,
Your noble friends do lack you. (III.iv. 83-84)

And, finally, she tells Macbeth:

You have displac'd the mirth, broke and good meeting
With most admir'd disorder. (III.iv. 108-109)

It is equally worth recalling how she manages the situation by inventing a lie:

"Sit, worthy friends. My Lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought
He will again be well. If much you may note him,
You shall offend him, and extend his passion;
Feed, and regard him not. (III.iv. 52-57)

Or, again when she tries to confirm the lie:

Think of this, good Peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time. (III.iv. 95-97)

She dissolves the banquet when she finds Macbeth persistently unnerved and precariously giving out "state" secrets:

I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;
Question enrages him. At once, good night:—
Stand not upon the order of your going,
But go at once.
....
A kind good night to all! (III.iv. 117-120)

She knows also how to be discreet, and does not interfere in the affairs of state where the ladies — the queen — ought to be quiet. The second scene of Act III in the palace is remarkable from

this point of view. Lady Macbeth, who could use the valour of her tongue and who could advise the king and the lords, remains a silent spectator. She seeks the king's permission to speak a few words to him:

> Say to the king, I would attend his leisure
> For a few words. (III.ii. 3-4)

And it is to be noted how quietly she advises him when he needs her advice. She asks him to leave brooding over the behaviour which a false king has to put up with, and as regards his fears from Banquo and Fleance she suggests:

> But in them Nature's copy's not eterne. (III.ii. 38)

And this comforts Macbeth and yet he would not divulge to her his plans. He says:

> Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
> Till thou applaud the deed. (III.ii. 45-46)

Macbeth drops enough hints about the nature of this "deed" when he says:

> Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill. (III.ii. 55)

Yet Lady Macbeth keeps a discreet distance and does not try to find out anything which her husband wants to keep to himself as a "state" secret.

Since Lady Macbeth herself mentions that she would chastise Macbeth with "the valour of [her] tongue" (I.v. 27), it has been felt that she is a veritable shrew and a "terrible" influence on her husband. This is, however, corroborated by the subsequent use of strong language now and then. For example, the speeches — "Was the hope drunk? ..." (I.vii. 35) and "What beast was it, then ...." (I.vii. 47) — show her to have been made as those of a termagent wife. But then these speeches are meant merely to screw up the courage of Macbeth. "The valour of her tongue" is, however, active once again in the banquet scene: "Shame itself! / Why do you make such faces?" (III.iv. 67), or again, "Fie for Shame..." (III.iv. 72). Even when she hears an alarm bell on the death of Duncan, she cries out:

> What's the business,
> That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
> The sleepers of the house? speak, speak? (II.iii. 81-83)

But then, this valour is deliberately and temporarily assumed by her

for specific purposes. She clearly shows that she intends to "chastise with the valour of [her] tongue" (I.v. 25) "All that impedes thee [Macbeth]from the golden round" (I.v. 26-27), and to make Macbeth see his "infirmness of purpose" and drive away his "flaws and starts / Imposters to true fear" (III.iv. 62-63). Once the purpose of her speech is over, she assumes normal tone, imploring and solicitous. There is a wonderful understanding which she shows of Macbeth's helplessness. She stops scolding him completely. Once the banquet has been disturbed she completely stops scolding him or speaking harshly and assumes the mellowed quietness of an obedient and understanding wife. See the quiet tone in which she answers without any show of anger or irritation during the conversation which follows immediately upon Macbeth's mental disorder:

> Macbeth: ...What is the night?
> Lady Macbeth: Almost at odds with morning, which is which.
> Macbeth: How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person,
> At our great bidding?
> Lady Macbeth: Did you send to him, Sir?
> Macbeth: I heard it by the way; but I will send.... (III.iv. 125-129)

Obviously, once she has understood Macbeth's pitiable condition and appreciated his line of thought there is no attempt to use the "valour of [her] tongue." All that she says shows her deepest understanding and sympathy with him:

> Lady Macbeth: Come on:
> Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
> Be bright and jovial among your guests to night.
> Macbeth: So shall I, Love; and so, I pray, be you....
> Lady Macbeth: You must leave this.
> Macbeth: O! full of scorpions in my mind, dear wife!
> Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.
> Lady Macbeth: But in them Nature's copy's not eterne....
> Macbeth: There's comfort yet; they are assailable....
> Lady Macbeth: What's to be done? (III.iii. 26-44)

Lady Macbeth's most trying comments are when she is ignored completely. She is summarily asked to leave along with all others in the court:

> We will keep ourself till supper-time alone:
> While then, God be with you: (III.i. 43-44)

Or, still more, when she asks him:

> How now, my Lord? why do you keep alone...? (III.ii. 8)

and Macbeth bids her:

> Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
> Till thou applaud the deed. (III.ii. 45-46)

She does not show any annoyance or anger and uses no strong language, and no words of protest are uttered against Macbeth even when she is neglected. She is constantly shown to follow the wishes of her husband. If she does something it is only at his behest. From the very beginning we find her like a good wife clearly working as he directs her: "'... Lay it to thy heart, and farewell," (I.v. 13); "Away, and mock the time with fairest show" (I.vii. 81); "Go, bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready" (II.i. 31); "Let your remembrance apply to Banquo (III.iii. 30); "She strike upon the bell" (II.i. 32); "Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue" (III.ii. 31); "So, pr'ythee, go with me (III.ii. 56); and "Come, we'll to sleep " (III.iv. 142).

She is in no way going to do anything which she knows to be against Macbeth's wishes. Far from being a shrew and a termagent wife, she is obedient, self-sacrificing, dutiful and quite frequently even docile, as is evident from her following utterances:

> ... and you shall put
> This night's great business into my dispatch.... (I.iv. 66-67)

> Leave all the rest to me. (I.iv. 74)

> Who dares receive it other,
> As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
> Upon his death? (I.vii. 77-79)

> ... I have drugg'd their possests,
> That Death and Nature do contend about them,
> Whether they live, or die. (II.ii. 6-8)

> Give me the daggers....
> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal.... (II.ii.52-55)

As a motherly and affectionate wife, Lady Macbeth deserves serious consideration. The Indian view supports a motherly affec-

tion and protection of a wife. The banquet scene shows it in full and one may even be reminded of the motherly anxiety to feed her child properly when she declares:

> You lack the season of all natures, sleep. (III.iv. 140)

Earlier, during Duncan's murder Lady Macbeth says:

> He is about it. (II.ii. 4)

> Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,
> And 'tis not done....
> Confounds us ....
> ... Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done't. (II.ii. 10-14)

> Consider it not so deeply. (II.ii. 29)

> These deeds must not be thought
> After these ways; so, it will make us mad. (II.ii. 33-34)

> ....Why, worthy Thane,
> You do unbend your noble strength, to think.
> So brainsickly of things. Go, get some water,
> And wash this filthy witness water from your hand.
> Why did you bring these daggers from the place? (II.ii. 43-47)

Rightly Lady Macbeth is satisfying her need to speak to Macbeth as to a child. Macbeth turns to her when in fear and frustration; he needs after Duncan's murder to be comforted and soothed in her embrace as she would to a terrified child.

As pointed out earlier, Macbeth keeps her later in the dark almost about everything, but she does not retaliate or rebel and does not even show her annoyance and simply acquiesces it. Moreover, there is no queenly glorification in Lady macbeth's behaviour. One can appreciate her self-denying and unassuming role as a queen best if one understands that she shows nowhere her own worry — her own fear of hell or evil. Obviously she also has some fear of hell and of the consequences of a sin (and their quiet indications here and there of these) but she suffers more for what has happened to her husband and the consequent neglect to which she is subjected.

Let us study this problem in some depth. Throughout the earlier scenes Macbeth shows utmost regard and concern for her — more so when he needs her words of support and solace, but even as such though he shows nowhere that he relies upon her for turning evil, whether he is good or evil he is constantly owning up his own responsibility. Lady Macbeth comes to support him for his sake out of a mistaken understanding of his real interests and real nature:

> .... Thou wouldst be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
> And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries "Thus thou must do," if thou have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
> Than wishest should be undone. (I.v. 19-25)

She knows that Macbeth's nature "is too full o' th' milk of human kindness, / To catch the nearest way" (I.v. 17-18), but then Macbeth through his soliloquies and through his arguments shows that moral considerations are really not very great for him.

My point is that when Macbeth addresses Lady Macbeth as his "dearest partner of greatness" (I.v. 11) who may not "lose the dues of rejoicing,/ by being ignorant of what greatness is promis'd thee" (I.v. 12-13), or as "My dearest love" (I.v. 59), "Love" (III.ii. 29), "dear wife" (III.ii. 36), "dearest Chuck" (III.ii. 45), "Sweet" (III.iv. 37), or eagerly admires the "natural ruby" (III.iv. 114) of Lady Macbeth's cheeks, Macbeth is not merely using conventional terms of endearment to placate her help or support in an evil design. He is genuinely in love with Lady Macbeth and sincerely responds to the appeal of a dearly loved wife.

And enjoying this love and affection of her husband, Lady Macbeth is happy and agog, full of spirits and activity, alive and kicking. It is quite clear that he continues to have concern for her even later on, but very distantly and very quietly; it is first manifest when he does not take her into confidence partly in the murder of Banquo and Fleance and wholly in that of Lady Macduff and her children. And note his quiet words about her — no more dear love or any such other terms — and later on almost wholly impersonal:

How does your patient, Doctor? (V.iii. 37)

Cure her of that: (V.iii. 39)

She should have died hereafter; (V.v. 17)

As Macbeth becomes lukewarm, even cold towards Lady Macbeth, she seems to become sad and lonely. See how anxiously she is worried about her husband:

> Nought's had, all's spent,
> Where our desire is got without content:
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
> Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (III.ii. 4-7)

See how anxiously she asks Macbeth:

> How now, my Lord? why do you keep alone...? (III.ii. 8)

And when Macbeth leaves her and neglects her, she loses all. She is all the time now surrounded by women — see her death is announced by the cry of women. She loses wholly even the companionship of her lord and husband. Macbeth does not seem even to visit her.

I have a stong feeling that she loses her peace of mind by brooding as much upon the crime as upon her husband's fall and her own consequent neglect. Once Macbeth leaves her and neglects her, she loses all her balance and breaks down. Her breakdown is therefore due to the loss of her "Man", her "Husband", her "Lord". Her nervous breakdown is not so much due to the strain of "unsexing" herself or due to touching the chords of filial sentiments of a daughter or even due to the awakening of the voice of conscience in her as from the loss of her husband — the neglect and abandonment by her dear husband —, for whose sake she was prepared to do anything or go to any length of sacrifice and suffering. No doubt she too is gnawed by a sense of sin and guilt also. Unconsciously in her sleep walking she maintains that "Hell is murky" (V.i. 35) and keeps continuously a light by her and earlier she mentioned that the murder of Duncan was an unholy act. Moreover, even the doctor ironically comments on people suffering from somnambulism and dying holily in their beds, and Macbeth himself describes her as with a diseased mind wherein "a rooted sorrow...

[is] stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff" (V.iii. 41-45). But my contention is that she knows how to get over such foolish, useless, irremediable thoughts, which should indeed have died with them because

> .... Things without all remedy
> Should be without regard: what's done is done. (III.ii. 11-12)

Even earlier she chides Macbeth:

> A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight. (II.ii. 21)
>
> Consider it not so deeply. (II.ii. 29)
>
> These deeds must not be thought
> After these ways: so, it will make us mad. (II.ii. 32-33)
>
> .... Why, worthy Thane,
> You do unbend your noble strength, to think
> So brainsickly of things. (II.ii. 42-44)

She is not like Macbeth — dreamy and fanciful immersed in useless thoughts. True, she echoes "What's done is done" in the sleep walking scene. But that echo is merely re-living the lawful experiences. These words do not represent the unconscious emergence of the voice of conscience. She could have successfully got over her own mental strain — she is so practical and her concern for her husband is so strong. Indeed, there is positive proof that she did succeed in keeping herself balanced when her filial feelings had upset her or when the whole night's business had been too much of a strain on her mind and she had fainted. For, all her subsequent behaviour in the banquet scene shows that she had overcome her temporary breakdown and regained full control over herself; no qualm of conscience pricks her even as it pricks Macbeth or Banquo. There is no trace of it in the banquet scene She is so much in love with her husband that her concern for him is so great that she is willing to forget all this. She knows that the murdering of people is unholy but loving her husband and working in his interest is so good that the end justifies the means. She is not upset by the voice of her conscience or the emergence of her womanliness, but is shocked by her loss of her husband's love, affection and companionship. She is upset by the loss of her husband for whose sake she had

unsexed herself. This was too much and she loses her mental balance completely. The longer this continued, the greater was the breakdown. It is the deep and long sense of this loss that makes her sick and

> ... she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,
> That keep her from rest. (V.iii. 37-38)

She lives for her husband and dies for him.

To sum up, I have attempted to emphasise in this paper the fact that the tragedy of Lady Macbeth is not the tragedy of overambition or unnatural strain on her womanliness but it is due to overfondness for her husband. We tend to ignore that she is first of all a wife. Love for her husband is her guiding passion. Her tragedy is that she loves her husband only too well. Her wifely qualities are taken for granted and not taken into account as fairly and as fully as they deserve. The entire sleep walking scene may not be medically sound but psychologically and aesthetically it represents in detail the pathetic (not pitiable) picture of a deeply devoted wife who recalls step by step how she had obeyed her husband, how acutely she desired to fulfil his wishes, how deeply concerned she was in seeing him successful and protected him from all his fears and dangers. Her one concern is her husband and that explains her character best. I wish to repeat therefore that her story is more than that of a tragic heroine and a tragic woman; it is one of a tragic wife.

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[6]*The Masks of Macbeth*, p.179.

THOMAS PARNELL'S 'THE HERMIT': A WAY OF JUSTIFYING THE WAYS OF GOD

S. Viswanathan

The problem of theodicy, of justifying the ways of God to men, or probing these, has been a concern, in implicit or explicit fashion, in several major works of literature, some of them central ones such as, in English literature, Milton, Shakespeare's and other dramatists' tragedies and some works of fiction. A curious and in some ways intriguing minor example of such an attempt at theodicy is to be found in Thomas Parnell's poem 'The Hermit'. Parnell, a minor, early eighteenth-century poet, a friend of Pope and Bolingbroke, had a considerable vogue with his poetry and prose works, well into the later part of his century; Pope edited and published his collected works. Parnell's poetry had an influence on later poets such as Johnson and poets of the age of sensibility like Gray, Collins and Goldsmith. The curstomarily anthologized 'The Hermit' is the poem that the poet is generally known for.

Parnell's way of justifying the ways of God to men and thus asserting Eternal Providence is what provokes critical thinking. The genre of the poem is that of a moral tale or fable which is meant to be parabolic in its tenor but adopts a straightforward didactic tone. It is cast in the mould of an apologue, the kind of moral discourse in the fictional mode which had a certain currency in the eighteenth century as in Addison's essay, 'The Vision of Mirza' or Johnson's *Rasselas*. 'The Hermit' has, besides, the elements of a *conté*, a moral tale which centrally employs the motif of a journey or quest, especially with a companion, the understaking of an adventurous pursuit leading to encounters. It is a derivative and modification of medieval romance, the most intriguing modification being Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

The outlines of the basic story are borrowed by the poet from the collection, the *Gesta Romananum* which source many writers including Shakespeare drew material for their plots from. What is interesting is Parnell's development of the story for his purposes of the assertion of God's Providence. It may be convenient to recall

the outlines of the story of the poem. A hermit who has lived upto his ripe old age in isolation in a secluded wood is all on a sudden seized with the troubling question about the justness of divine dispensation, the question why

... vice should triumph and virtue obey.

That is, in Hamlet's words, 'virtue itself should beg pardon of vice'. In order to resolve his doubt of 'providence's sway', he undertakes to go into the world for a first-hand investigation. He is met, early on his way, by a handsome and impressive-looking youth who volunteers to be his companion of the road. The two stay the night at the palace of a wealthy lord who offers them luxurious hospitality, but as they leave in the morning, the shining youth purloins, as the good hermit notices to his utter dismay, the golden goblet in which the host had served them wine. The hermit is stunned into silence over this.

On the way, overtaken by sudden stormy weather during day, they seek shelter in a rich miser's mansion where they are accorded a grudging halt-welcome; while leaving, the youth presents the niggardly host with the golden cup he had earlier filched from the first lord. The hermit is totally bewildered, but remains silent. For the night, the two find a spontaneous welcome, lodging and board in the mansion of a genuinely generous, god-fearing lord. This time the horrid and totally scandalizing parting act of the youth is to strangle to death the host lord's sole infant son asleep in his crib, a moment before leaving. The hermit almost flees in horror, accompanied by a servant sent by the good lord to show him the way, but is soon overtaken by the youth.

As the three cross an open bridge over a flooded stream, the youth trips the escorting servant into the swirling water below to be drowned. The hermit could not hold his silence any longer and bursts out 'Desperate wretch'. At the very moment, the youth transforms himself into an angel of God, and expounds to the hermit the justice of his acts as a minister of God's punishment and reward. The first lord's vanity and thirst for glory through extravagant hospitality has been duly punished and the man taught a lesson. The miser has been rewarded for his single redeeming act of

strained goodness in spite of himself. The good lord's only son has been taken away from him as his fond doting on his child had taken him away from God. And the servant met his cruel fate as punishment for his design to rob his master of all his riches on the night of that day and the lord has thus been protected, in a mingled yarn of punishment and reward together. The explanation resolves once and for all the hermit's doubts of divine justice.

As we go on to take a brief look at some details in and around the poem, we may begin by noting that the figure and motif of the hermit and his life of retirement, withdrawal and contemplation (one of the 'public themes' in poetry, as Bonany Dobree called it long ago) recurred in eighteenth-century verse, partly an expression of the fascination of the Gothic for the age. In later medieval England, hermits did exist such as Richard Rolle of Hampole who turned one somewhat like Arnold's Scholar Gipsy after being an Oxford scholar, and wrote a body of mystical poetry.

The poem starts with a brief sketch of the state of life and mind of the contemplative hermit and his unperturbed equanimity. As Parnell conceives it, it is at once an angelic and all but prelapsarian, paradisal state of existence.

> Prayer all his business and his pleasure praise.

The doubt that overcomes him about the apparently unjust happenings he had come to know of through books and swains' reports causes him total perturbation of the mind which Parnell renders in terms of a long-tailed simile of the halcyon waters of a brook with vegetation on the banks being ruffled by a single falling stone. It is much in the Miltonic mode; Parnell resorts to the Homeric simile at least two times in the poem. The simile at this point ends with the striking lines.

> And glimmering fragments of a broken sun,
> Banks, trees, and skies, in thick disorder run.

In his portrayal of the hermit-pilgrim's progress on his exploratory journey, Parnell's details about locale and mansions carry certain sociological implications, alongside of their moral and religious thrust. The hall and board of the three lords including the miser indicate partily a nostalgic throwback to the 'great house' of

the seventeenth century on the poet's part, and partly the process of change, an important social shift, from the old, 'open' hall culture to the more 'closed' room culture and way of living and sharing of hospitality; such a change was in process in Parnell's day. The first lord's ostentations and prodigal hospitality in his hall, a sign of his cultivation of self-glory, is, among other things, quite unlike the spontaneous hospitality in Penshurst (Jonson's poem). The miser's grossly stinted hospitality is at the opposite pole. In a synecdoche, Parnell makes the ground of the miserly lord's seat

> ...unimproved around,
> Its owner's temper, timorous and severe
> Unkind and griping, caused a desert there.

The third lord's hospitality suggests an ideal in this regard, though on quite another ground punishment is visited upon him in the poem's dispensation.

Parnell's poem is, naturally, reminscential in places of Milton, Dryden and the poet's friend Pope. The simile of the serpent sighted used to describe the reaction of the hermit to his companion's stealing of the cup is a Miltonic simile, and it moreover enforces associations of evil, the serpent in Eden and the problem of evil which has been troubling the hermit besides conveying the basic emotion of panicky fear. Also, in the overall context of Parnell's thinking in the poem, the image of the serpent and the suggestion of the visual impact it makes may bring to an Indian mind the serpent and the rope idea, as in the resolution of the poem, it is only a rope, what the hermit has seen and taken it to be. When Parnell makes the angel-youth towards the end tell the hermit that his virtues had the power to

> ... force an angel down to calm thy mind

The poet's memory of Dryden's line in his 'Ode on St. Cecelia's Day' is at work. In the line

> And paid profusely with the precious bowl

Parnell resorts to 'apt alliteration's artful aid' and assonance in accordance with Pope's counsel. We may also note that the poem suggests a sort of very early eighteenth-century crypto-Gothic, prefiguring the Gothic novel, in Parnell's account of the cradle death

of the sleeping infant; it will also remind us of the scandalous scene in Edward Bond's play *Saved* of the strangling of an infant in its pram, in the twentieth-century theatre of violence.

It is relevant that Parnell came of Puritan stock; his grandparents, loyalists of the Cromwellian Commonwealth, migrated to Dublin after the Restoration. But after his education at Cambridge, he stayed on in England. Through his association with Bolingbroke, and the Roman Catholic Alexander Pope, he seems to have adopted a good deal of early eighteenth-century Deism. So much so that Parnell's 'The Hermit' appears to be undergirded by an uneasy amalgam of certain Puritan convictions about the 'special providence' of God and the deistic outlook on the world as God's clockwork in perfect running order so much so that in this reckoning once the clockwork is set in motion there will be little need for intervention by God. Such traces of intermingling ideas of the absence and presence of the deity in the temporal can be found in the lines which occur centrally in the final exhortation of the angel to the hermit.

> The Maker justly claims that world he made
> In this the right of Providence is laid
> The sacred majesty through all depends
> On using second means to work his ends.
> It is thus, withdrawn in state from human eye
> The power exerts his attributes on high
> Your actions uses, nor controls your will,
> And bids the doubting sons of man be still.

However, in response to the poem one may well ask "Is it the President of the Immortals sporting with mankind?' or is it a case of 'God is in Heaven and all's right with the world'. Neat equations between sin and punishment are made in the poem to establish the justness and 'fit' as it is called between the two. It is measure for measure, suggesting, again, an intermixture of justice and mercy in government divine; such a 'fit' and lever-like balancing also carries something of the mechanistic orientation of deism. God does not play dice, according to the message of the poem, but chance seems to play a role. What Parnell means to suggest is that the hermit's doubts and agonizing question are resolved through a trial by or-

deal, as it were, an ordeal of faith. It is a cure by deliberate excess or a series of shocks, much like fire driving out fire through a lurid laying it on. The poem does not claim to offer any deep moral, inward exploration as great works of theodicy do. The resolution is through a *deus ex machina* used for direct homiletic exhortation and assertion.

Moreover, it is interesting that this particular poem of Parnell's appears to have had a minor vogue for itself and a certain appeal among Indian readers of a much earlier generation who found favourite reading also in works such as Johnson's 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' if not his *Rasselas*. The poem has been translated into Hindi and several other Indian languages. The similarities, though only broad, between the idea that governs Parnell's poem and the doctrine of Karma may have attracted readers. But the dispensation that Parnell envisages, unlike the operation of Karma confines its function within the span of a single individual life, besides the separate question of its eschatology, in it; the question of rebirth or its earlier births does not arise in Parnell's context. But the idea of metempsychosis, Pythagorean and Platonic, was not unavailable to the English mind, and was used by poets like Henry Vaughan, a close predecessor of Parnell.

VICTORIA'S "LITTLE WARS ATTRACT FAR LESS ATTENTION": INDIA AND HENTY'S *THROUGH THREE CAMPAIGNS*

Leonard R.N. Ashley

> The fighting on the [northwest] frontier [of India] continues very severe, and causes the Queen much pain and anxiety.... As we do not wish to retain any part of the country, is the continuation and indefinite prolongation of these punitive expeditions really justifiable at the cost of many valuable lives? (Queen Victoria in a letter to the Viceroy of India)

In articles in the *Henty Society Bulletin* (UK) and my book *George Alfred Henty and the Victorian Mind* (1998) I had addressed the novels for boys by George Alfred Henty (1832-1902) into their historical and cultural contexts. I considered, for example, his *With Clive in India*. Here I examine the structure and background of another subject which required Henty to bring to life equally numerous and different situations and call upon an interest and to some extent a little knowledge on the part of readers of Victorian overseas adventures. The events so fully described in *Through Three Campaigns* are of more recent date though not at the time of publication, for most Britons, quite as enthralling. Still, they took the young readers, as does science fiction these days, to what the American critic Richard Poirier called "worlds elsewhere," though as even with science fiction there is always a kind of comment on the real world of now. Interest in India as exotic continued after Henty's death even past the Delhi *durbar* of George V as Emperor of India and right upto the independence of India the British schools often featured amateur pageants with Indian content and costumes.

Henty begins the Preface to *Through Three Campaigns* with his reasons for the choice of subject in this book published near the end of his long list of some 70 examples of historically-based juvenile fiction:

> Our little wars attract far less attention among the people of this country than they deserve. They are frequently carried out in circumstances of the most adverse kind. Our enemies, though ignorant of military discipline, are, as a rule, extremely brave, and are thoroughly capable of using the natural advantages of their country. Our men are called upon to bear enormous fatigue and endure extremes in climate; the fighting is incessant, the peril

> constant. Nevertheless they show a magnificent contempt for danger and difficulty, and fight with a valour and determination worthy of the highest praise. I have chosen an illustration of this, three campaigns, namely, the relief of Chitral, the Tirah campaign, and the relief of Coomassie.

Henty got his historical backgrounds not only from his own experiences, but from books borrowed from the London Library. Henty says he used Harold C.J. Biss as source more than he did other accounts of the other campaigns here, and his reliance on military rather than political documents or journalistic accounts naturally gives a degree of detail and a color to his narrative and puts the emphasis on what soldiers did in India rather than why they were there. Henty defeats both the *belles-lettres* approach and the text as pretext. He offers unremarkable prose and a straightforward narrative, not a puzzle for pedants. At the same time, his novels, simply dedicated to teaching readers themselves, have not received the critical attention and acclaim they deserve (not for the prose but the pedagogy). With articles such as this one, that is not like (say) *The Key to the Key to Finnegans Wake,* nonetheless there is much to be discovered about the *effect* of the text and the place of the author within the context of cultural history, for Henty incidentally, as Rebecca West says of Sir Noel Coward, "took a serious historical interest in the social changes of the time." That happens to be, to my mind, the most significant aspect of the currently, critically popular reception theory.

Each historian Henty used livened up factual reports with colorful details, and many such gems were available. The Kumasi/ Coomassie action, for instance, was full of shocking violence, the discovery of corpses of those who died of starvation, the British burning of the ju-ju house (place of worship) and the chopping down of the natives' sacred grove, and many other striking things. For India, I do not know if Henty had a look at any of the sober papers and publications of George Frederick Samuel Robinson, Earl Grey de Ripon and Marquis of Ripon, who was governor-general and viceroy in India 1880-1884. I see no evidence that Henty consulted those documents nor any other government documents, for background. Henty does seem to have been considerably helped by the illustra-

tions and plans and maps in such books as those by Beynon, Murray and Eliott. Henty's recounting of the tactics of three campaigns is overloaded with minutiae, which makes for hard reading sometimes, but in this book the historical events and the leading players in those events inevitably and often have to push Henty recurrent and central boy hero into the background. It is always useful to keep in mind the relationship of the "little wars" to the "big picture" of the British *Raj*. In fact, the big picture is not the prime interest of Henty in writing of warlike action. He focuses when he can on his boy hero proving his mettle. In this paper I examine what Henty's works convey about the Victorian imperial mindset, what was in the slang of the time and that lasted for a number of decades thereafter, "all Sir Garnet," the British ideal as reflected in dealing with the far-flung empire and its discontents. Expeditions abroad filled the long reign of Queen Victoria, which began with an insurrection in India in 1837 and ended with still another Ashanti War (1901) in the area which had been troubled for well over a decade before Victoria came to the throne. This article focuses on the typical Henty lad's participation in the campaigns of Chitral, Tirah, and Coomassie. However, the officer class, into which Henty's boy contrives to get without purchase but by courage alone, Henty likes to stress is meritorious, not rich dilettantes in fancy uniforms who are more at home in the officers' mess than the mess of battle.

Let me now begin with the relief of Chitral. One battle took place in Chitral, a stategically placed province much wider than (say) Bengal. Chitral lay in an area which even today is difficult for any outsider to control whether from Pakistan or Afganistan or from Washington or elsewhere in the so-called Coalition. It was then as now inhabited by people who answer only to their own tribal and religious leaders. Theirs were the almost impossible fastnesses and hide-outs for what we liked to call fanatic residents, fiercely independent and armed with good rifles that were about the only firepower that one could easily get up into the mountains to control the narrow passes. There as Henty's Preface says "passes had to be scaled [*sic*], torrents to be forded, and deep snow to be crossed." Henty outlines why the first campaign in his book had to be undertaken.

He drops extensive exposition into his second chapter:

> Old Aman-al-Mulk had died in August, 1892. He had reigned long and had by various conquests and judicious marriages raised Chitral to a position of importance. The Chitralis are an Aryan race, and not Pathans, and have a deep-rooted hatred of the Afghans. In 1878 Aman placed Chitral under the nominal suzerainty of the Maharajah of Kashmir, and Kashmir being one of the tributary states of the Indian Empire [in the First Sikh War the British took Kashmir and sold it to the despicable Gulab Singh, so there had to be more war soon after, but the British managed to annex the Punjab and cart away great Riches, including the huge diamond called Koh-i-Nur or Mountain of Light], this brought them into direct communication with the government of India....

When Aman died his eldest son (Nizam) was away. The second son (Afzul) seized power but was soon murdered by his uncle, who then had to flee to Kabul as Nizam arrived on the scene. Nizam requested British help. Capt. George Younghusband was sent with some Sikhs to Chitral. Then Nizam was murdered by a younger brother (Amir) whom the British wanted out of Chitral. Amir stood fast. Henty fills pages with name after name and incident after incident leading to something of a disaster for the British. So troops from Peshawar had to be moved north toward Chitral and with them went, of course, the Henty lad, ingeniously finding an underhanded way to accomplish that. This brave Henty lad is one Lisle Bullen, just about 16, and fluent in several native languages because his father, Capt. Bullen, who had lost his wife and other children, had kept the boy with him in India and educated him. Lisle's further education was not to be in any school but was to be in the field, and, staining his skin to disguise himself, off goes young Lisle, soon to be orphaned and put to the test of manhood, marching with the Pioneers of the expeditionary force headed to Chitral, firmly believing that "a good fairy must have presided over his birth" and that he will be alright. In fact, Henty assumes that being born British was Lisle's great privilege and the surest guarantee of success. Lisle would become the "fighting boy" of the regiment.

By Chapter Three he is in "The First Fight," always reliable when what Henty called "the coolies" might not be. He is disguised as a native private in the advance party that, waist deep in snow,

still manages to get their two big guns through treacherous passes and into position. Lisle's rifle fire kills an enemy leader at 900 or 1000 yards. Still in disguise as a native under the pseudonym Mutteh Gar, he receives 20 rupees from the colonel, who says he will get the "native" lad a promotion. Lisle slips and speaks English and so has to confess to Lt. Moberley that he is the son of "Captain Bullen, killed in a native raid," falling in a fight for a hill fort. Lisle becomes "a young gentleman at large" in civilian clothes and will march with the officers "on the way down" with "the rank of lieutenant." He becomes officially an officer soon after. Though he is still "only a little past sixteen but I don't suppose the War Office knew that." It is just because the War Office could not always know what was going on that such indomitable fellows as our hero could get into the fight and make a name.

Chitral is not a game but a serious matter. The small fort is under siege but lacking a Union Jack, so they make a pretty good facsimile and put up a dogged, very-English fight. After certain difficulties the siege is broken. I can spare you the details, but rest assured that Henty's book in these first four fact-crowded chapters is loaded, or overloaded, with details and tactics and fast action. It is hoped that "the punishment that has been inflicted will keep the tribes quiet for some years." Don't count on it. What is won by force can be lost by force and what is acquired by diplomacy backed by force may have to be defended by force. In the long run, the British Empire would never have enough force to stave off dissolution once disillusion took root among the colonials. Naturally the change of heart or mind of the imperialists themselves also contributed to The End.

Lisle, gazetted lieutenant, is not a doubter but a doer. He is transferred to 103rd Punjabi Regiment stationed at Rawalpindi. A hero of the Chitral campaign, he is "the right sort" and probably the youngest officer in the army. He even helps out a fellow officer who has run up quite a large debt to an officer called Sanders. Also, he is the pet of officers' wives and as an expert cricketer he "several times did efficient service by his bowling in the matches between the regiment and the others cantoned with them."

The tribes are always "troublesome" and now the Pathans are acting up. The garrison at Chadakra is hard pressed. Something must be done. We are at page 127 of the book's 383 in my undated Blackie & Son edition, and now we have a whole new adventure. One adventure, or various actions in one large movement such as depicted in Henty's novel of a lad caught up on the reign of terror of the French Revolution, might have been sufficient to present a boy hero in action. What is patent from the boys' history book as we have it is that Henty takes up a great deal of space with sometimes small details of the tactics and military personalities involved in the events while Lisle, the hero, does not get as much attention as one usually expects from Henty, who is writing not for military historians but for boys.

That "small fort" of Chakdara which was under siege causes Henty to speak of battles at Thobal (1891) and Ahmed Kayl ("seventeen years ago"). "At any rate, the stories I have told you will give you some idea of the work we have before us," says a character before the "Tales of War" chapter ends and Chapter Eight, "The Dargai Pass" commences. In heavy fighting, just seven men with Lisle hold off about 200 of the enemy, spectacularly good marksmen. Lisle is shot through the shoulder. Later he is shot in the leg and captured. He is laid up for 10 days, dresses in borrowed clothes and escapes. He makes his way, with great difficulty, back to the British, having donned a dead Pathan's dress and stained his face brown still once more. When told he may soon be a captain he says he hopes not: "I do not wish to gain steps by the death of my friends." There is more action in "the Mahmund country," and there is an expedition to punish a couple of hostile tribes and put down the "robbers" called Chamkannis. Lisle is chosen by the eminent Gen. Lockhart to be his aide-de-camp. Almost immediately, saving his colonel from capture, Lisle is taken prisoner. Those who captured him are soon assailed by another tribe, and Lisle undertakes to fight with and for the tribe that had treated him well. Thus Lisle becomes "no longer a prisoner but a friend." It turns out that the chief of the tribe knew Lisle's father. "Truly it is wonderful!"

Two months after Queen Victoria's Jubilee (June 1897), one

month after Col. Warburton had retired from the post of British resident or "King of the Khyber Pass," rebellion broke out in Swat and went south all the way to Beluchistan. A "Mad Mullah" had fired up the locals. The rumour was that Christianity was faltering and imperial power, at that time Britain, was on the skids. The British lost the Khyber Valley. They had to quell disorder in the Maidan Valley, in Swat, in the Tochi Valley, among the Mohmunds, the Afridis, the Orakzais, and still more tribes. The very idea of Britain holding sway over India or any empire at all was in question. In a lot of this young Lisle shows his mettle and he has not only the luck to get to where the action is but most of the time the luck and the power to be able to turn it to his advantage. It is a wonder how resourceful and successful he is. He is an inspiration, a wonder of a model.

Lisle exemplifies the rewards of virtue. The colonel whose life he saved adopts him and makes him his heir. Then he is awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest soldier's honor. He also gets sunstroke playing cricket and so heads off to England to recuperate, accompanied by Col. Houghton whose life he saved and who adopted him. However, there is not England yet but still another Ashanti War, the famous relief at Coomassie, and much else. So, that Coomassie problem behind him, to Col. Houghton's estate in England goes the manly Lisle Bullen, VC and also DSO, and he still is only 21 years of age. The only thing he really dislikes about England is fox hunting. Fox hunting actually proves the end of Col. Houghton as he misses a fence, the horse falls on him, and he dies of his injuries. Lisle inherits a lot of money which he invests in "first-rate securities." He is a good marital catch, but he is not caught — yet. His friend Hallett marries his Miss Merton, but Lisle, as a brevet major, returns to India. He is completely ready in India for a fight if Russia acts up, willing to react as violently as he has always said the Afghans would if Russia happened to push into their territory. The book ends with this sentence: "At present Lisle is with his regiment, and the prospect of a war with Russia is no nearer than it was."

Obviously, the plot of the book is of a jam-packed report on three different campaigns, held together by a typical, successful

Henty boy hero. It is a good yarn for boys even though Henty may have stretched credulity a bit and put in too many other soldiers and situations and small skirmishes, sieges, expeditions and wars. As for narrative structure, the boy holds the yarn together.

As regards Henty's style, it is somewhat overstuffed Victorian style which does not detract much from his tales of action. In this book there is quite a bit of military parlance, as might be expected, and an unexpected amount of local-color vocabulary. Words such as *Sahib* and *sepoy* and *tiffin* may have been familiar to Henty's readers, but what is a *nullah*? The Oxford English Dictionary calls that Anglo-Indian and identifies it as a water course or river bed or ravine. What could an English schoolboy make of the names of certain ranks? Some are *havildar* (sepoy sergeant) and *risaldar* (didn't make it into the *OED* but is some kind of native officer) and *subadar* (correctly *subhadar,* which can mean a provincial governor but here means the commander of a company of sepoys). Occasionally Henty helpfully tells us that mullahs are "priests" and writes "posteen or sheep-skin coat," and from the text anyone can guess that pice are small coins and *doolies* must be some paraphernalia. The officers who relate their experiences use the proper language for their class ("fancy that!") and there are the usual cliches ("the bullets whistling round me") and, most notably, no one engages in any language stronger than "beggars" (euphemism for "buggers" or "bastards"). On the whole, despite certain redundant expressions and a general Victorian "now I take my pen in hand" formality, the style is genteel. It does not stand too much in the way of a rapid narrative.

The principal problems with *Through Three Campaigns*, which is entertainment and not politics fundamentally, are that there is inadequate description of the spectacularly wild scenery of the mountains or the clash of conflict that the ground made so difficult there and, secondly, that we so often have people recounting their experiences rather than being seen to live them. Moreover, questions for everyone linger after we close this book, because Henty was so much the spokesman of his era's Establishment, conservative, sometimes reactionary, paternalistic, materialistic. Henty had such a tremendous impact on the impressionable youth of his time

that they grew up to march off to The War to End War and, in defese of that Establishment, they inadvertently toppled the whole British society as Henty had known it.

To conclude, *Through Three Campaigns* has more historical information and, frankly, less attractiveness than your average Henty book. That is not, however, to say that collectors will not seek it out for its rarity nor readers be disappointed in it if they happen to find an edition of it in the library. The independence of India is far enough back in time that these "little wars" against various tribes and killing them or fining them and taking away their rifles have lost much of their power to annoy anti-imperialists. Henty's works must be seen as both politically motivated and politically influential. They are much more than mere diversions for Victorian boys. And they have modern relevance. It is worth recalling that the *pax britannica* of the nineteenth century was at least as war-torn as the *pax americana* is in this century. This book puts an emphasis on arms, but though it does show the weapons of war, toys for boys, that have insidious appeal, its basic subject is superior soldering. It lauds self-sacrifice and personal responsibility. It plays down the "three or four" wounds that the somewhat over-the-top hero receives and it plays up what Farwell, whom we noticed at the start, mentions as he concludes *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, which is that success in arms depended not so much on western technology or the professional training of officers at Sandhurst or on the horoscopes or hardiness of commanders but on "the spirit engendered in all ranks by the regimental system" (p.362). *Esprit de corps* is in *Through Three Campaigns* the real reason for such success as the British and their native allies had in India and Africa — and elsewhere. Lisle Bullen, boy hero, succeeds most of all when he never loses sight of the love of the regiment that he learned at his father's knee. This sentimental, but very practical, attachment, this valuing of camaraderie that did much to recruit and to make forces cohere, this "band of brothers" source of strength that goes back even farther than Shakespeare's *Henry V*, is to be found perhaps more forcefully in *Through Three Campaigns* than in other Henty novels. All his books get very much involved in the maps and maneuvers far more than the motives of

the military. They have, down deep, nonetheless, or at least they all inevitably cause us to look for now, a much more important message. That message has less to do with escapist literature or serious military historical narrative than with the indoctrination and the triumph of the individual within the limits of the terms and traditions of the tribe.

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"LARGE LOOSE BAGGY MONSTERS": HENRY JAMES'S RADICAL CRITIQUE OF LEO TOLSTOY'S FICTION

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A born American and a naturalized English man, Henry James is one of the rare literary phenomena in whom we perceive a happy coalescence of critic and creator — Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot —, and who have given a new turn and direction to the genre to which they have contributed creative and critical writings. Thus, besides producing a fairly good number of fictional masterpieces between 1880 and 1914, Henry James has given us a solid body of criticism embodying his literary opinions steeped in the vision of a grêat theorist of fiction. A voracious reader, a prolific writer, and perhaps the most outstanding scholar of fiction, he read almost all the notable fictionists of Europe and America, and expressed his definite views on them. Obviously, a great contemporary like Tolstoy could not escape his attention[1], though he was deeply fascinated by the great French fiction masters and was most enamoured of Turgenev of all Russian writers. In his stupendous corpus of expository writings — critical essays, fairly long prefaces to his creative writings, portraits, reviews, letters, conversations, etc. —, we find Henry James referring to Tolstoy many times, directly and indirectly, thus offering us a radical critique of his fictional genius, best expressed in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* Since James was a fictionist first and foremost with his fixed concept of the art of the novel, he could not be truly impartial and detached in his assessment of Tolstoy's fictional art and his masterpieces. As a matter of fact, in his cogitations on Tolstoy and his works, he is usually governed and guided by his theory of fiction, propounded mostly under the impact of the French novelists like Flaubert, Balzac, Stendhal and others. Thus, it is not surprising if his critical statements about the great Russian writer are often seriously flawed.

The youthful, fastidious and truly cosmopolitan James, with an

exceptional sense of proportion and form, refused to take Tolstoy seriously in his initial contact with his works. Though *The Cossacks* appeared in New York first in 1878 and before that in 1862 the translation of his early autobiographical work reached the English-speaking public, he was first introduced to the English people in 1880s when Henry James had leapt into eminence with the publication of *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1881. It was in 1886 that the first English version of *War and Peace*, translated from the French language, was available to the people of England. Henry James, who had settled down in London by that time, perhaps would have got the opportunity of perusing Tolstoy's *magnum opus* at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, though we do not have any definite evidence as when he first lay his hand on *War and Peace*. As he was a very serious reader, writer and critic of fiction, he must have taken immense pains to read this epical novel as closely as possible. It was in 1897 that James, for the first time, passed his judgment on Tolstoy when he wrote a brilliant short critical essay entitled "Turgenev and Tolstoy." Though this article is primarily concerned with Turgenev whom Henry James unequivocally admired throughout his life, it contains some very interesting and incisive observations on Tolstoy and his two great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

James, while admiring Turgenev, admits the greatness of Tolstoy because his favourite Russian, Turgenev, who was Tolstoy's senior by ten years, had pleaded, towards the end of his life, to the latter to resume his literary activities which he had abandoned for quite some time:

> "I am on my death-bed; there is no possibility of my recovery. i write you expressly to tell you how happy I have been to be your contemporary, and to utter my last, my urgent prayer. Come back; my friend, to your literary labours. That gift came to you from the source from which all comes to us. Ah, how happy I should be could I think you would listen to my entreaty! My friend, great writer of our Russian land, respond to it, obey it!"[2]

James's observant eye could see it clearly that Tolstoy was gaining fame gradually and steadily, and that after the death of Turgenev he could ascend great heights on account of the growing popularity of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* throughout the world. He ac-

cepted him as a great writer, and felt that he was mainly for "home consumption," though his masterpiece, *War and Peace*, was more popular in Europe and America than Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk, On the Eve* or *Smoke.* James had unreserved praise for Turgenev and called him "the novelists' novelist"[3] because of his extraordinary influence on contemporary fictionists, but he could accord only restricted, rather partial, praise to Tolstoy's novels because he could discern in them only a presentation of the vastness of life with lamentable indifference to the method of delineation. To quote his own words:

> The perusal of Tolstoy — a wonderful mass of life — is an immense event, a kind of splendid accident, for each of us: his name represents nevertheless no such eternal spell of method, no such quiet irresistibility of presentation, as shines, close to us and lighting our possible steps, in that of his precursor (Turgenev). Tolstoy is a reflector as vast as a natural lake; a monster harnessed to his great subject — all human life! — as an elephant might be harnessed, for purposes of traction, not to a carriage, but to a coach-house. His own case is prodigious, but his example for others dire: disciples not elephantine he can only mislead and betray.[4]

As is evident from the extract, quoted above, James, despite his strong dislike and rejection of Tolstoy-like fictional genius, cannot afford to ignore his astonishing power of re-creating almost the entire human life. Perhaps, Tolstoy is the only novelist whose subject matter is the whole mass of life, and this seems to be the primary reason of Virginia Woolf's or E.M. Forster's unrestrained admiration for his works. Indeed, his novels are an amazing attempt at projecting, and reflecting on, life in all its vastness. If he cannot have disciples and imitators, it is because he is too great to be followed in this regard, and James is correct when he affirms that he cannot be a safe model for others and to follow him is to run an excessive artistic risk. Tolstoy evinces a rare skill in portraying the innermost as well as the outer life — the skill which is the hallmark of Turgenev's genius that James eulogized throughout his life. While Turgenev wondered at this side of Tolstoy's genius and pleaded with him not to stop writing fiction when the latter decided to do so, James could not appreciate this unique feature of Tolstoy's mind and art which fascinated Turgenev, "the novelists' novelist" in James's

considered opinion, and could only care for the delineation of "a fine conscience," to quote Joseph Conrad's words.[5] In fact, James miserably failed to comprehend the greatness of Tolstoy simply because the latter was not as much consciously concerned with technique as James was, though he was no less a laboured artist than James as is evident from the fact that he revised and rewrote *War and Peace* several times to give his presentation of the mass of life as much meaningful and artistic a shape as he could.

In his article on Emile Zola, written in 1903, Henry James, again, refers to Tolstoy and his *War and Peace.* He admires the French naturalist's *La Debacle*, and to show its greatness he places it beside the eminent Russian's masterpiece. While he admits that Zola's novel is not as universal as Tolstoy's, though the former work is better shaped and more compact than the latter. Apropos of this, James observes:

> As for *La Debacle*, finally, it takes its place with Tolstoy's very much more universal but very much less composed and condensed epic as an incomparably human picture of war.[6]

Thus, by implication, James points to Tolstoy's epical and universal genius. He does not find any other author but Tolstoy and his book to demonstrate the essential greatness of Zola's *La Debacle* which he considers remarkable and hence puts it beside *War and Peace.*

While admitting Tolstoy's greatness, James, a votary of form, method and technique, warns a practitioner of the art of fiction not to separate method or manner from matter of which the Russian litterateur is a supreme example, for in him there is all stress on matter — the mass of life — and little attention to form and technique. His epical, inimitable genius could paint a wonderful picture of society and could produce in *War and Peace* a novel with matchless length and breadth. James's article titled "The New Novel," written in 1914 just a year before his death, offers a piece of advice to the younger generation of English fictionists, influenced by Tolstoy, that they may learn the art of presenting artistically life in all its vastness and the social milieu, but they should not follow his example of the estrangement of subject matter from method:

> We should have only to remount the current with a certain energy to come straight up against Tolstoy as the great illustrative masterhand on all this ground of the disconnection of method from the matter — which encounter, however, would take us much too far, so that we must for the present but hang off from it with the remark that of all great painters of the social picture it was given that epic genius most to serve admirably as a rash adventurer and a 'caution', and execrably, pestilentially, as a model. In this strange union of relations he stands alone: from no other great projector of the human image and the human idea is so much truth to be extracted under an equal leakage of its value. All the proportions in him are so much the largest that the drop of attention to our nearer cases might by its violence leave little of that principle alive; which fact need not disguise from us, none the less, that as Mr. H.G. Wells and Mr. Arnold Bennett, to return to them briefly again, derive, by multiplied if diluted transmissions, from the great Russian..., so, observing the distances, we may profitably detect an unexhausted influence in our minor, our still considerably less rounded vessels.[7]

Besides the unbridgeable gulf between matter and manner, between subject and technique, which, according to James, makes the monumental fictional works of Tolstoy faulty and bad models to be followed by others, what the American-cum-British fictionist-critic laments most in the Russian artist is the lack of a controlling idea or the centre of interest or the central theme and the sense of the whole. James holds that notwithstanding the extraordinary length and breadth of the vision of life, the picture of the world, painted in *War and Peace*, the book wholly disappoints a discerning reader in search of the commanding idea or the effect of wholeness in a great work of art. Patently, James seems to fail miserably in perceiving the thematic grandeur and the artistic excellence of the greatest novel of the world — *War and Peace* (E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham and several others consider it so) — when he asserts that anyone can mark the conspicuous presence of the central idea and the structural wholeness in such little known works as Hugh Walpole's *Duchess of Wrexe* and Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street.*[8]

In many of his thousands of letters, Henry James refers to, or comments directly or oblongly on, Leo Tolstoy. It is essential to analyse some of them here. In the letter written to his widely known

brother William James on 1 October 1887, he condemns one of Howells's critical pieces, which appeared in the magazine, *Harper*, because of his poor critical faculty as shown in his statement on the delineation of life in the novel illustrating from Tolstoy. Since James as fictionist was too much interested in form and comparatively a little in life, he could not bear Howells's observations in this connection with special reference to Tolstoy. He was so much disgusted with, and annoyed by, Howells's critical piece on fiction with instances from the celebrated Russian novelist that he wanted him to stop writing critical essays and devote himself only to fiction writing. He wrote:

> He (Howells) seems to me as little as possible of a critic and exposes himself so that I wish he would "quit," and content himself with writing the novel as he thinks it should be and not talking about it: he does the one so much better than the other. He talks from too small a point of view and his examples (barring the bore he makes of Tolstoi) are smaller still. There is, it seems to me, far too much talk around and about the novel in proportion to what is done. Any *genre* is good which has life — which of course is perfectly consistent with the fact that there are some that find it mighty hard to have it and others that one very much prefers to some. But I am sprawling into quires and reams.[9]

A fairly long letter, written by James to Mrs. Humphry Ward on 26 July 1899, also merits some consideration here. It sets forth his belief that a writer usually cannot afford to delineate a subject or a person without presenting himself behind it. He admits that he is "always behind with everything," but it should not be taken as an expression of "an opinion" of his, and this is true of even the most illustrious fictionists of the world like Tolstoy, Dickens, Balzac, Thackeray and others. But a great writer has to be very cautious and particular about the choice of subject and the limits of his presentation. He illustrates the point from some of his well-known novels published upto the year 1899 when this letter was written.[10] Furthermore, this letter is important because in it James points out that Tolstoy and Balzac, perhaps the two greatest fictionists of the world, often make a mistake in resorting to disorderly and indiscriminate shifting of standpoint or centre in their books. Inevitably, they present a confused heap of material without lending it proper order and clear

meaning due to want of commanding centre or constant standpoint. Small wonder they fail to achieve as much as they should or could. James avers:

> The promiscuous shiftings of standpoint and centre of Tolstoi and Balzac for instance (which come, to my eye, from their being not so much big dramatists as big *painters* — as Loti is a painter), are the inevitable result of the *quantity of presenting* their genius launches them in. With the complexity they pile up they *can* get no clearness without trying again and again for new centres. And they don't *always* get it. However, I don't mean to say they don't get enough.[11]

In 1901 James, who had by then established himself as a writer and critic with the publication of several of his fictional masterpieces (*The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Princess of Casamassima, The Tragic Muse, The Spoils of Poynton, The Awkward Age* and *The Sacred Fount*) and twelve of the fifteen critical pieces collected in *The House of Fiction,* was rightly approached by the famous critic and editor, Edmund Gosse, to write three thousand words about Leo Tolstoy whom James called "our friend." But the novelist-critic declined the offer by saying that he had read only two or three of his "great novels" and that he had no time to peruse his "later incarnations a list of ten or twelve volumes." This is followed by a remark, which obliquely evinces his disinterest in, and concealed aversion to, the Russian novelist's works. It is painfully surprising that James, the indefatigable reader of fiction, writes to Edmund Gosse: "... I haven't at present *time* to read all or any of his stuff...."[12] This clearly exhibits his dislike of Tolstoy's fiction which does not illustrate his fixed notions of the art of the novel, and this also accentuates his lack of objectivity (to which he attaches utmost importance) with regard to Tolstoy. Unfortunately, James makes several negative observations about Tolstoy, even though he, as he admits, has not read whole of him.

In a significant letter written to Hugh Walpole in 1912, just four years before his death in 1916, James articulated his staunch belief that form is all-important in a work of art, and hence Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are to be accused of the degradation of art because of their complete, blatant disregard for form. He states that the older he grows the more "do picking and composing" become sacred to

him, and that only duffers can say that "strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form is [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it."[13] Stressing the all-importance of form in a creative work, he asserts that it is this alone which "holds and preserves" the subject matter and protects it from "the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding," which is nothing but the degradation of art of which an artist should be ashamed. He debunks Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, despite their great minds and souls, for creating this kind of rather base writing as they neglect the architectural side of art, and cram a work indiscriminately with all kinds of material without caring to impart it a meaningful shape. The core of the letter/ his argument is cited below:

> Tolstoi and D. (Dostoevsky) are fluid pudding, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives in savour and flavour, thanks to the strong, rank quality of their genius and their experience. But there are all sorts of things to be said of them, and in particular that we see how great a vice is their lack of composition, their defiance of economy and architecture, directly they are emulated and imitated, *then*, as subjects of emulation, models, they quite give themselves away. There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a *leak* in its interest; and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form. Its opposite, the *found* (because the sought-for} form is the absolute citadel and tabernacle of interest.[14]

Yet in another letter written to Hugh Walpole the very next year on 21 August 1913, James talks about Tolstoy in almost the same vein. He avers that even a close reading of *War and Peace* has not brought about any change in his opinion about Tolstoy's fiction; its abominable formlessness and looseness cannot and should not place it above/ beyond downright condemnation. Undoubtedly, he has a wonderful grasp of life, but the presentation of the vast life in utter shapelessness is nothing but a colossal, ugly and vicious waste which can be appreciated only by fools, and not by a connoisseur of art. James concludes the letter with these strong, derogatory observations:

> He doesn't do to read over, and that exactly is the answer to those who idiotically proclaim the impunity of such formless shape, such flopping looseness and such a denial of composition, selection and style. He has

> a mighty fund of life, but the *waste* and the ugliness and vice of waste, the vice of a not finer *doing*, are sickening. For me he but makes "composition" throne, by contrast, in effulgent lustre.[15]

What I feel is that James does not see eye to eye with Tolstoy; they are poles opposite of each other. The reason is quite apparent after the above discussion: technique involving total presentation and form, based upon careful and tireless selection and rejection of the material, is all-important to James, while all this has never been of much/ major concern to Tolstoy. Whereas James attaches too much significance to technique and presentation, Tolstoy seems to give only a little consideration to them. This is the reason why James's *The Ambassadors* is perhaps the only book among his later novels in which technique and life are truly blended. When we peruse a novel like *War and Peace*, we find it as long as life itself, and go on reading it as we go on living. Tolstoy's novels are, as George Saintsbury remarks, "'pieces of life'... but in a strangely unlicked and unfinished condition. One constantly finds touches, not of talent so much as of genius."[16] Thus, James, despite his bias against Tolstoy, appears to be fair in lamenting Tolstoy's lack of architectural competence and craftsmanship for which he almost adores Tolstoy's fellow Russian writer Turgenev. Apparently, he, who considers the novel essentially a work of art, holds that Tolstoy cannot be a model for other writers, as Turgenev, whom he calls the "novelists' novelist," is. James's wrongful rejection of the "large loose baggy monsters"[17] like Tolstoy's *War and Peace* can be understood in the light of his firm view about the true nature of life and art, lucidly explained in the following extract from "Preface" to *The Spoils of Poynton*:

> Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection, the latter, in search of the hard latent *value* with which alone it is concerned, sniffs round the mass as instinctively and unerringly as a dog suspicious of some buried bone. The difference here, however, is that, while the dog desires his bone but to destroy it, the artist finds in *his* tiny nugget, washed free of awkward accretions and hammered into a sacred hardness, the very stuff for a clear affirmation, the happiest chance for the indestructible.[18]

In a word, James regards Tolstoy as "the great illutrative masterhand

on all this ground of the disconnection of method from matter."[19] Nevertheless, it may also be said in this context that though James has not written as much about Tolstoy as he has written about Turgenev, his critical observations on him are valuable to understand the essence of his writings because of the quality of James's mind and the insightful seriousness with which he deals with the subject.

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"FUNNY" OR "IRONIC": COMIC VISION IN THE POETRY OF W.H. AUDEN

Niranjan Mohanty

"For who can bear to feel himself forgotten"
("Night Mail," *Collected Poems:* 113)

Despite uneven responses to Auden's poetry, and mixed reactions to the paradoxical and ambivalent situations that he lived through, Auden's genius as a great poet after Yeats and Eliot, or rather, as the greatest in the group involving Stephen Spender, Louis McNeice and C.D. Lewis, has earned a homogeneous acceptability even today. A sensitive poet, who stood witness to the catastrophic consequences of the Wars, and whose thoughts were steeped in the contemporary issues of evolving political ideologies, of religious orthodoxy and pragmatism, of island existence of individual, of poetry and its relevance, is likely to remain relevant in all the centuries because of his undaunted views, thoughts and ideas underlying his works which are so fascinatingly diverse, strikingly thought-provoking and meaningful. A poet who deserves our salutation today is because of his continued effort not to make poetry a handmaiden of religion or any political party. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the importance of the comic vision underlying his poetry, more particularly, in his later poetry, besides alluding to the increasing relevance of his poetry.

From our perspective here in India, and from the perspective of countries which experienced colonization, Auden's poem, "Partition", written in May 1966 (*Collected Poems*: 406), is not merely relevant but important. The poem records how hastily India was divided without even accurately taking into account the Census report and the country's geographical boundary. The irony is directed towards the way British India had to digest partition because of the shrewd and unsympathetic attitude of the British rulers. Auden's sarcastic depiction of the helplessness of the Britisher, invited by the Viceroy, draws our attention:

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day,
Patrolling the gardens to keep assassins away,
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate

> Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
> And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
> But there was no right to check them, no time to inspect
> Contested areas. The weather was slightly hot,
> And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot.
> But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided.
> A continent for better or worse divided. (*Collected Poems*: 604)

Auden's sympathies with the people are not without irony. He depicts sharply the differences between the Hindus and Muslims who were "fanatically at odds/ with their different diets and incompatible gods" (604). The juxtaposition of the serious matter like partition and the ludicrous like "a bout of dysentery", complemented by a deliberate rhyme of "hot" and "trot", makes the irony poignant. The irony comes full circle with the concluding lines:

> The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot
> The case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,
> Afraid, as he told his club, that he might get shot. (604)

The partition of a "continent" has been reduced to the status of mere case in the court; and the agent who executed the partition completely forgot the case except a tangential reference to it in a club, not for the partition but for his own privileged safety. The poem is remarkable in its handling of irony and in revealing the astuteness of the poet's attitude to the partition.

A potent reason why Auden's poetry bears relevance today is his comic vision. I think such a vision was a necessity, both personal and historical. It was a personal necessity because such a vision allowed him to overcome tensions caused by ambivalences and dichotomies embedded in his own self. A paradox lies at the very nature of Auden and this paradox governs his poetry and his poetic vision. What George T. Wright observed is relevant and meaningful:

> For Auden's own nature appears to have been divided along lines that his poems reflect it, between personal disorder and an exaggerated intellectual clarity, between a neurotic untidiness in the spaces where he lived and a compulsive punctuality, between his own sense of himself as quicker and cleverer than almost any one else in the world and his sense of himself as unloved, unattractive, lonely, fat and faulty. There are other oppositions — between the one-night sexual stand and his enduring life with Chester

> Kallman, in the division of his life into a European spring and summer and an American autumn and winter, between his English youth and his American maturity, between a professional that enabled him to meet and influence great numbers of the world's, and especially New York's artists and intellectuals and a personal life of sordid encounters with barmen, drifter and call-boys. (Wright, 1991: 191)

The burden of such paradoxes within, thankfully, did not elicit an escapist fantasy but caused flowering of a vision which enabled the poet to locate and accept the truth, to look at things as they are. Such a vision enables him to declare in "Bucolics: 3 Mountains":

> I'm Nordic myself, but even so
> I'd much rather stay
> Where the nearest person who could have me hung is
> Some ridges away. (*Collected Poems*: 429)

With such a vision at the heart of his perception of the world, in "Their Lonely Betters" Auden makes a comparison between human beings and birds and vegetables. Interestingly the poet discovers that the birds do not have Christian names and that flowers and birds of his garden are incapable of lying. He defends the birds for having no language but sound (444).

For historical reasons too Auden was left with no other choice but to adhere to a comic vision. The burdens of a decentered civilization, of a godless world, of the sterility governing the waste land, of the two Wars fought and the possibility of yet another to be fought, of the Depression, of the fissures within self, of the political power games, of the increasing 'isms', of the magnifying loneliness of individuals, of sins and our unwillingness to be redeemed, of uncertain, unsettling relationships, of our island existence, of machines dehumanizing men and women, of our distrust and disbelief, historically speaking, became so unbearable that Auden had to endear such a vision. He was left with no other choice but to view and accept the world as it was, to live a life as it came to him until he died a lonely death in a hotel room of Vienna after offering a public reading of his poems. But the willingness to embrace such a vision was not without any logic nor without any distinction. The distinction can be realized from his essay "The Globe" (published in *The Dyer's Hand*, 1962. New York: Random House) in which Auden makes a

distinction between the Classical comedy and the Christian comedy:

> Classical comedy is based upon the division of mankind into two classes, those who have *arete* and those do not, and only the second class, fools, shameless rascals, slaves are fit subject for comedy. But Christian comedy is based upon the belief that all men are sinners; no one, therefore, whatever his rank or talents, can claim immunity from the comic exposure and, indeed, the more virtuous, in Greek sense, a man is the more he realizes that he deserves to be exposed. (177)

Later in 1973, with the publication of *Forewords and Afterwords* (New York: Random House; and London: Faber and Faber) we come to know about Auden's concept of the carnival as the unfailing manifestation of the comic. Auden observed:

> Carnival celebrates the unity of our human race as mortal creatures, who come into this world and depart from it without our consent, who must eat, drink and defecate, belch and break wind in order to live, and procreate if our species is to survive. Our feelings about this are ambiguous. To us as individuals, it is a cause for rejoicing to know that we are not alone, that all of us, irrespective of age or sex or rank or talent, are in the same boat. As unique persons, on the other hand, all of us are resentful that an exception can not be made in our case. We oscillate between wishing we were unreflective animals and wishing we were disembodied spirits, for in either case we should not be problematic to ourselves. The Carnival solution to this ambiguity is to laugh, for laughter is simultaneously a protest and an acceptance. During Carnival, all social distinctions are suspended, even that of sex. (471)

His choice of the comic mode has been made implicit in his rejection of the Symbolist and the Imagist. It is evident, therefore, that Auden's comic vision was not devoid of any theoretical basis. Both the concepts, i.e., of the Christian comedy and the Carnival, moulded Auden's comic vision.

Let us now examine how Auden creates laughter in his poems and how, in the absence of an alternative, he persuades us to accept things as they are, While examining the poems, let us not forget that laughter is both a strategy to sharpen protest and to prepare us or indirectly force us to accept things as they are. In a poem "The More Loving One" (written in 1957), the poet creates a situation, both to laugh at and accept:

> Admirer as I think I am
> Of stars that do not give me a damn.

I cannot, now I see them, say
I missed one terribly all day.
Were all stars to disappear or die,
I should leam to look at an empty sky,
And feel its total dark sublime
Though this might take me a little time. (*CP.* 445) (italics mine)

The master of puns and irony, Auden is prepared to accept the sublime dark in the possible absence of the stars from the sky.

In "The Truest Poetry Is the Most Feigning" Auden not only displays his capacity for verbal musings, but also enables irony to assume its most lethal form. If one looks into the axiomatic and ambivalent title one would be inclined to verify how meaningfully Auden subverts great poetry, including his own. Possibly Auden alludes to the inadequacy of language to capture the intensity of the experience. Language fails because it is a medium, a feigning device to capture the meaning of experience. The poem begins with an attack on poets who celebrate love:

By all means, sing of love but, if you do,
Please make a rare old proper hullabaloo:
When ladies ask *How much do you love me?*
The Christian answer is *cosi — cosi* ;
But poets are not celibate divines:
Had Dante said so, who would read his lines?

....

As though the Muse preferred here half-wit sons,
Good poets have a weakness for bad puns. (470)

In the next stanza Auden amusingly critiques the love poetry tradition as he found it most feigning:

Suppose your Beatrice be, as usual late,
And you would tell us how it feels to wait,
You're free to think, what may be even true,
You're so in love that one hour seems like two,

....

That quarry where Endymion's love was torn;
From such ingenious fibs are poems born.
Then, should she leave you for some other guy,
Or ruin you with debts, or go and die,
No metaphor can express
A real historical unhappiness;

> Your tears have value if they make us gay;
> *O Happy Grief* ! is all sad verse can say. (470)

The entire poem stands testimony to Auden's originality in the use of irony, pun, satire, and humour which contributes to the comic perspective.

In poems like "Secrets" (472), "Numbers and Faces" (473), "Objects" (473), "Words" (473-74), "The Song" (474), and "One Circumlocution" (474-75), one is often fascinated by the verbal play, ironic sting and display of wit — all contributing to the comic perspective that the poet intends to create. What is striking and significant in Auden's later poetry is his polemical views on poets, poetry and people who have drifted away from certain values set by tradition. Auden exposes the hypocritical nature of men in "Secrets". Similarily, in "Objects" he exposes the pretentious nature of human beings:

> There are people who in "sight, cry",
> but they are far from mourning.
> "Tearless, their surfaces appear as deep
> As any longing we believe we had". (473)

The next poem that deserves our attention is "Horae Canonicae" — a sequence of seven poems. Taken together the poems reveal Auden's meditation on the significance of crucifixion. The irony has been most successfully used in the third poem of the sequence entitled "Sext". The poet not only expresses his resistance to authority but also exposes the authority's proneness to violence. At the back of Auden's mind is the Crucifixion — and Christ's flawless sacrifice. Yet we worship the authority of judges and Auden most sarcastically writes:

> You may not like them much
> (who does?) but we owe them
>
> basilicas, divas,
> dictionaries, pastoral verse,
>
> the courtesies of the city:
> without these judicial mouths
>
> (which belong for the most part

to very great scoundrels)
how squalid existence would be. (478)

In the absence of these judges "there would be no authority to command this death (479).

In the third poem "Sext", it is still more interesting to observe how Auden differentiates between a crowd and an individual. At the heart of such differentiation lies the focus on the comic, particularly through the images evoked and the tone:

The crowd stands perfectly still
its eyes (which seem one) and its mouths

(which seem infinitely many)
expressionless, perfectly blank.

The crowd does not see (what everyone sees)
a boxing match, train wreck,

a battleship being launched,
does not wonder (as everyone wonders)

who will win, what flag she will fly,
how many will be burned alive,

is never distracted
(as everyone is distracted)

by a basking dog, a smell of fish,
a mosquito on a bald head:

the crowd sees only one thing
(which only the crowd can see),

an epiphany of that
which does what ever is done. (479)

The sentences in the brackets, which act as 'asides', make the contrast sharp and ironic.

In poems like "Academic Graffiti" (written in 1952, 1970: *CP.* 510-18), " Shorts —I" (written between 1959 to 1965: *CP.* 539-41), "Shorts — II" (written in 1969-71: *CP.* 639-45), "Shorts" (written in 1972-73: *CP.* 665-67), "Profile" (written in 1965-66: *CP.* 581-83), and

"Marginalia" (written in 1965-68: *CP.* 589-602), one is made to laugh full-thoated until one is forced to realize the irony and the comic perspective that augments it. I cite here a few lines from these poems to illustrate how a real picture can do justice to laughter but at the same time laughter can only "degrade sorrow" (*CP.* 631).

In "Academic Graffiti", Auden picks up important literary figures and exposes their peculiar traits:

> Charles Dickens
> could find nothing to say to chickens
> But gossiping with rabbits
> Became one of his habits. (512)
>
> ....
>
> Henry James
> abhorred the word *Dames,*
> And always wrote 'Mommas' (513)
>
> ....
>
> T.S. Eliot is quite at loss
> When clubwomen bustle across
> At literary teas,
> Crying: 'What if you please
> Did you mean by *The Mill on the Floss?*(517)
>
> ....
>
> To get the last poems of Yeats,
> You need not mug up on the dates,
> All a reader requires
> Is some knowledge of gyres
> And the sort of people he hates. (517)

In "In Praise of Limestone," one discovers how Auden creates a comic perspective, partly by making his imagination wild, bordering fantasy, and partly by evoking the frivolous. Eden is viewed as a limestone landscape — a world of pure fantasy. But the poet is sure that the limestone landscape can take any shape, can accommodate all, the serious and the frivolous, the extraordinary and the ordinary. Auden's acceptance of frivolity as a unique quality of an individual comes very close to his comic vision. Weaknesses of an individual are very much unique to one's self, and they can not bear semblance in other individuals. Auden does not take the 'frivolous' seriously as it is not acceptable to Christianity.

What, to my observation, is significant as a pattern in Auden's

poetry, is to look at the real world through the fantastic, or the imagined, to unearth the difference between them and then turn to the real for a more meaningful acceptance of it. He achieves this effect by splendid juxtaposition of the two worlds. I think herein lies Auden's greatness as a poet to love life in all its variety and tentativeness.

"Thanksgiving for a Habitat," a poem in twelve parts, is remarkable for its tone which at one stroke can offer an encyclopaedic information and expose our narrowness, our pride, our nakedness. The poet can view the 'immortal Commonwealth' from his window but he is not happy as it does not have architects to "take umbrage at death" (518), even if it is full of masons, carpenters, heretics or bounders. The concluding lines of the 'prologue' evoke laughter and irony. When a stranger would pass the poet's tomb, he must have to be friendly because he would have to experience the same plight. If he fails to be so, the poet warns:

> Stranger, unless with bedroom eyes
> I beckon you to fraternize,
> Beware of rudely crossing it:
> I have no gun, but I can spit. (519)

In the second part, Auden not merely mocks at his own plight as an immigrant but also subverts his own pride, because he knows that the self in death would become "a non-entity/ dumped on a mound of nothing" (523), and that a life disintegrates "into/ smaller simpler one's" (642). But his pride and helplessness have been subverted in the concluding lines of this part in which the poet is humbled down to articulate honestly what his needs are:

> Territory, status
> and love, sing all the birds, are what matter,
> what I dared not hope or fight for
> is, in my fifties, mine a loft-or-croft
> where I needn't, ever be at home *to*
> those I am not at home with, not a cradle,
> a magic Eden without clocks,
> and not a windowless grave, but a place
> I may go both in and out of. (521)

If in "Recitative by Death" (542) Auden, through the voice of death, critiques our material progress and achievements, in " Change

of Air" (543) he draws our attention to his own living elsewhere, other than his native land. His subtle handling of irony makes these poems remarkable. In "Recitative by Death" he appropriates the voice of Death to exemplify the futility of what we know as material progress. In "Change of Air" he names his own age as having "a stone-age culture", besides critiquing his own migrating identity. In many of his poems tangential references to his own sense of isolation make one accept that despite the apparent comic perspective, his poems retain a strain of unspeakable grief caused by his displacement. His ironic motif surfaces even in a poem like "On the Circuit" when the poet offers his prayer:

> God, bless the lot of them, although
> I don't remember which was which:
> God bless the U.S.A., so large,
> So friendly, and so rich. (549)

"City without Walls" is yet another poem that registers Auden's use of biting satire and irony. The poem slowly unfolds a grim picture of the city through the images which dampen one's spirit. The juxtaposition of the serious and the casual remains one of the devices of Auden to overcome the burden of reality. The city abounds in "fantastic forms, fang-sharp/ bone-bare" (562). Its "unpolicied" spaces have become dwelling places of dragons and demons, colonized only by ex-worldings, penitent sophists and sodomites. Its hotels house "corrupted guests", and in its factories are mass-produced "the functional/ Hobbesian Man" (562). Its streets are full of convicts. Lawlessness and deceit rule over the city. People do not have any connection with neighbours. All experience an island existence. It is a doomed Megalopolis where everyone suffers from cancer and thinks either he is a Christ or a sinner. Auden calls this age as "Gadget Age". He believes that the future is even worse for this Megalopolis. The poet's compilation of negative aspects of the city helps him constructing the image of a hell with all seriousness. But the concluding lines in a single stroke brush aside this seriousness with the suggestion from the "third voice":

> 'Go to sleep now for God's sake!
> You both will feel better by break-fast time.' (565)

The suggestion of the third voice is important because through this

voice Auden sums up the essence of his comic vision With this vision he pronounces his 'ownhood', for he believed, as expressed in "Natural Linguistics", that "Every created thing has ways of pronouncing its ownhood" (636). His poetry does not leave one with the slightest suggestion of escaping the burdens of the real. In "The Geography of the House" he declared: "Face with all our courage/ what is now to be" (527). Similarly, in "Doggerel by a Senior Citizen," Auden reasserts his continued involvement with the affairs of life and living in spite of the Generation Gap:

> Me alienated? Bosh! It's just
> As a swom citizen who must
> Skirmish with it that I feel
> Most at home with what is Real. (639)

Being 'at home with what is Real,' Auden both critiques and depicts the sordid limitations of human beings. The tone and the depiction often remind one of the comic vision with which the poet comprehends the real:

> unique as we seem, we too, are
> shovelled out into the cold, poodle-naked, as male or as female,
> grab at or gobble up proteins, drop dung, perform the ungainly
> brute-with-two-backs until, dared and doddered by age, we surrender,
> lapse into stagnant stuff. (637)

Auden demolishes the proud vault of our egotism of being 'unique' by exposing us to our ultimate condition of stagnation in death. He neither romanticizes our pride of being unique, nor attempts to overcome the burden of the ultimate reality. With such a vision he could eminently define death in "Shorts — II":

> What is Death? A Life
> disintegrating into
> smaller simpler ones. (642)

In "A Shock" Auden shows the irony of a situation that he experienced when he was "frisked by a cop for weapons" (649). From the beginning the poet presents a rapidly worsening world. He portrays himself as an upper-middle class person. But the cause of his shock was that he was held by a cop for weapons. In poems like "Talking to Dogs" (650-51), "Talking to Mice" (651-52), and "Talking to Myself" (652-54), Auden displays his rare talent both in retaining

a tone that is sympathetic, analytical, exploratory, insightful and ironic. The irony is always directed towards the self, the age, the world, but not towards mice or dog. In dramatizing the difference between the human beings and the innocent pets, he exposes the pettiness of human beings.

In "Talking to Dogs" (In memoriam Rolfi Strobl, run over June 9th, 1970) Auden draws our attention to a dog's habits in detail. A dog wants "gristly bones"; wants to be "led through exciting odorscapes" with a chance to chase a rabbit, or to meet "a fellow arse-hole to snuzzle at" (650). He informs us that neither Goethe nor Lear had dogs, even if they were good people. He compares the qualities of dogs with those of human beings and calls the latter as "social retards". He makes an interesting observation on the people who like to keep dogs. The way he depicts the intentions of people crazy for dogs creates humour:

> It's those who crave
> a querulous permanent baby,
> or a little detachable penis,
> who can, and often do, debase you. (651)

A dog can laugh heartily with its full body involved in it whereas human beings don't. But the poet finds something common between dogs and human beings and presents it through a remarkable irony: "Let difference/ remain our bond, yes, and the one trait/ both have in common, a sense of theatre" (651).

"Talking to Mice" can cause a full-bellied laughter because of its tone and the comic perspective, flanked by irony. The poet draws our attention to mice "who impinge on our lives, for our smell doesn't seem to alarm them/ visitors whom we can jump with, co-agents it does not seem honey/ we should endow with a You" (651). He uses force to catch mice and kill them. What is ironic is the way he defends his own sinful act of killing mice:

> We had felt no talent to murder,
> it was against your pluck. Why, why then? For *raisons d' Etat*. As
> householders we behaved exactly as every State does,
> when there is something It wants, and a minor one gets in the way. (652)

"Talking to Myself" is exemplary in the use of irony and comic perspective. The poet in his visits to the islands of his own self has

discovered many traits, both of the self and the world. The clear-cut division of territories between the inner and the outer self, and the relationship between them, convince one with the poet's decisively ironic stance. The poet calls his inner self as the "strange rustic object" (652) that maintains its "poise" in spite of the season. The outer self is not prepared to be subservient to the inner. He then defines the territory of the outer self:

> My mortal manor, the carnal territory
> allotted to my manage, fostering too,
> I must earn cash to support, my tutor too,
> but for whose neutral instructions I could never
> acknowledge what is or imagine what is not. (652)

The outer self is practical, earth-bound. The inner self exists physically beneath the outer and hence the poet calls it "Random my bottom" (653), "the Injured Party", "short-sighted", "short-winded as/ cigarette addicts are" and "instinctively passive". The outer self is more powerful, who, as the "pusher", could "hook" the inner self. The comic element is presented in the bracket:

> Had we been both a bit younger,
> I might well have mischiefed you worse with a needle. (653)

After such a verbal play, the poet honestly reveals his ignorance of the inner self:

> I'm always amazed at how little I know you.
> Yours coasts and outgates I know, for I govern there,
> but what goes on inland, the rites, the social codes,
> Your torrents, salt and sunless, remain enigmas:
> what I believe is on doctor's hearsay only. (653)

The poet seems to have been humbled down by the mysterious sea of the inner self. Yet the outer is wedded to the inner; their marriage is "a drama, but no stage-play" (653). Indirectly, the poet privileges the inner over the outer. However, the eulogy for the inner self is over as we approach the concluding part of the poem, where, even if the poet is conscious of a divorce partly because of his knowledge of what happens in the states, and partly, because of the fleeting nature of time, he willingly seeks a divorce from the inner. The manner in which he seeks a divorce epitomizes Auden's ironic stance and comic vision:

> Time, we both know, will decay you, and already
> I'm scare of our divorce: I've seen some horrid ones,
> Remember: when Le Bon Dieu says to you *Leave him!*
> please, please, for his sake and mine, pay no attention
> to my piteous *Don'ts*, but bugger off quickly. (654)

The way in which Auden constructs 'I' and 'You' and defines territories of both and dismantles and redefines such territories makes us strikingly aware of the poet's comic vision.

"Thank you, Fog" (657-58) is yet another remarkable poem that summarily brings to clear focus Auden's sense of the real and his acceptance of the real. The poem at once reminds one of his optimism so explicitly expressed in "The Geography of the House": "Face with all our courage/ what is now to be" (527). In "Thank you, Fog", Auden introduces the New York fog which reminds him of his native winter. In New York, his "cosmos" has been contracted "to an ancient manor-house/ and four selves, joined in friendship/ Jimmy, Tania, Sonia and Me" (627). From this private world, the poet takes us to the world outside where the fog has created "a shapeless silence", and the tree-tops condensing the fog to "damp and definite drops". Then from the world outside we are taken to the cosy comfortable 'indoors', full of reminiscences, reading, cross-words, fun, supper and wine. The poet registers his gratitude to the fog for having given him at least this comfort, this ease at his manor house, even though he is sure of the "global gloom":

> No summer sun will ever
> dismantle the global gloom
> cast by the Daily paper,
> vomiting in slip-shod prose
> the facts of filth and violence
> that were too dumb to prevent:
> our earth's a sorry spot, but
> for this special interim
> so restful yet so festive,
> thank you, thank you, thank you, Fog. (654)

A poet who has the courage to expose the influences of poets and intellectuals at different stages of his creative career in "A Thanksgiving" (671), — say, from Hardy, Frost, Thomas in his early period to Brecht, Kierkegaard, Williams, Lewis in his middle period

to Horace and Goethe in his later years — and a poet who has the spirit to endear the "global gloom" with utmost ease, and a poet who can readily say 'No' to Plato, while celebrating what is ordinary, earthly-can-become relevant to us at a time when we are constantly haunted by the global gloom of terrorism. I would like to draw attention to "No, Plato, No" (669), in which Auden not only celebrates his earth-bound vision but also alludes to his 'ownhood' of viewing the world. He does not like to be a disincarnate spirit. He is happy to be here on this "sub-lunar world" and he has his own reasons:

> No, God has placed me exactly
> where I'd have chosen to be
> the sub-lunar world is such fun,
> where man is male or female
> and gives proper names to all things. (669)

I would like to conclude this paper by quoting a short poem "The Question" (668), in which Auden mingles both fun and irony to substantiate and illustrate the uniqueness of his comic vision:

> All of us believe
> we were born of a virgin
> (for who can imagine
> his parents copulating?),
> and cases are known
> of pregnant Virgins.
> But the Question remains:
> from where did Christ get
> that extra chromosome? (669)

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DEATH SENTIENCE IN THE POETRY OF EMILY DICKINSON AND PHILIP LARKIN

Kaniz Khwaja Ahmed

Death is a traditional and influential concept for discourse and an *idée fixe* for scrutiny with artists and academicians. Though intellectual and philosophical exegesis into the nocturnal mystery may have begun with the existentialists like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre, but the eon old fascination for the dark esoteric bewilderment at its inevitability remains. Confronted with death's opaque density, intellect has in the absence of a consensus arrived at multiple explications. Peter Koestenbaum observes:

> Death is not an experience but either a felt anticipation or a sorrowful loss. In any event, death is an influential self-concept. And it is this certainty about our eventual death and that of all other human beings that is the key to understanding human nature.[1]

He further cogitates that the incidence of annihilation reveals the homogenized mortal and cosmic segments of being engaged as participants in earthly encounters. In corporeal manifest ephemeral existence is destructible but antithetically the inherent immutable soul-module proffers it a transcendental or eternal compass. Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus endorse human finitude in atheistic existentialism. Marcel, Jaspers and Kierkegaard support the appraisal of infinite prospects in Being. Persistent interaction, encounters, correspondences of the divergent though equally dynamic fractions of the perishable and eternal constitute the human matrix. The polemic of death evinces infinite possibility and unspoken challenge for deeper exploration. From the plethora intrigued by this abstruse phenomenon two significant poets, Philip Larkin and Emily Dickinson, are being singled for comparative illustrative inquiry.

Dickinson was born in a patriarchal, orthodox, puritanical and dogmatic community. Highly individualistic and candid despite her puritan conditioning, she did not adhere to any specific school and her poetry conforms to no single distinct formula. Though spirited, animated, witty and sociable early in life, in her mid twenties she inexplicably retreated into a private inner sequestered space. One cited reason for this disconnect and fetish with recondite unfathom-

able premises lies in biographical detail. Sofia Holland, an intimate friend, died when Dickinson was very young. Her father's demise and mother's extended invalid existence accentuated further grief. Deaths of several close associates and preceptors underscored despondency and loneliness. But bereavement for the tragic decease of her eight year old nephew Gilbert was most incapacitating. Consequently death, along with nature and immortality, became Dickinson's "flood subject."[2]

Philip Larkin was born in 1922. Though nurtured in comfort because Larkin senior was City Treasurer in Coventry, prosperity failed to emancipate him from a hapless and beleagured childhood. Andrew Motion refers to this aspect of his early life in his biography. Emotional oppression, tension, boredom and inadequacies, suffered during his adolescence scarred, the poet's psyche and biased his attitude to life. A pronounced stammer increased Larkin's self-consciousness. He tried to overcome the disability by ersatz, mimicry, lampooning people, and assiduously endearing himself among friends. Though imperfect eyesight prevented enlistment into active war service, in November 1943 the poet relocated to Wellington in Shropshire as Librarian in the Public Library. *The North Ship* preceded *The Less Deceived* which appeared in 1955. It was followed in 1964 by *The Whitsun Weddings* and in 1974 by *High Windows*. Though the poems in all the volumes have marked preferences and thematic connects, they subsume existential riddles of choice, identity, chance, death, alienation and agnosticism. With a distressing personal life, failure and isolation, Larkin died in much the same manner with the same ailment as his father.

Contrary to Larkin's agnostic predilections, Dickinson is a devout Christian steeped in the Bible and Holy Scriptures. Early in life Dickinson had been introduced to the tenets of Unitarianism which advocated the principle of God as single entity and not a Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit. Transcendentalism was yet another ideology gaining precedence. Secular and liberal, it asserted primacy of spiritual over material. In some measure influenced by Emerson, the nineteenth century French Symbolists and the Metaphysical poets, she jettisoned the transcendentalist doctrines which regarded

man as fountainhead of all moral law. As a result, she wrote poems on conventional premises of death and immortality infusing novel semantics and significations employing her strategy of conceit and paradox. All around her in the mortal and natural world the poet perceives mutation and metamorphosis. She despairs to comprehend the phenomenon of change or mortality the human mind encounters periodically and with which it is perpetually surrounded. Salamatullah Khan observes: "She lived in a world where the lengthening shadows of sorrow and death shadowed her personal universe.... As a defence against a chaotic and hostile world, she founded the community of the one – the poet in the act of creation."[3]

Dickinson probes the recondite and formidable mystery of death displaying concurrent interest in the levels of consciousness before and after the event. Persistent flux inside, around and outside human perception, caused great concern and the poet rationalizes this concept through tangible and manifest image patterns, wit and metaphysical conceits. The pain and sense of loss in such cases are counterbalanced with equally indisputable verities which her own skeptical mind could ratiocinate and decode, even though the subject defied definition. Her literary activity becomes an exercise in reassurance against the certainty of dying or life's final exit. The quest for answer, factuality and emotional emboldening directed her to seek refuge in faith, and Dickinson regularly reaches out to her belief in immortality for solace, security, buttress and mitigation of pain. The poet perceives that the finite human mind, circumscribed in time, fails to grasp the notion of the perennial constant which is expediently ratified by belief in immortality.

Dickinson's poetry is also concerned with the quality of pain, its genesis and myriad precipitants. In a deliberate posture, almost clinically, Dickinson appraises pain-related issues. Changes wrought, the time and manner of suffering, the intensity of shock and stasis, are described with the precision of a medical practitioner. In poem 341 Dickinson states:

> After great pain, a formal feeling comes —
> The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs —
> The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,

And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The feet, mechanical, go round —
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought —
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone —

This is the Hour of Lead —
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow —
First — Chill — then Stupor — then the letting go —[4]

The poem is an exposition of the 'formal feeling'. The dictionary meaning of the word 'formal' explains it as: relating to, or involving etiquette, ceremony, or conventional procedure; or stiffly polite in addition to precise, organized, or strictly right. Though the phrase 'formal feeling' in itself invites elucidation but juxtaposition with 'great pain' converts the burgeoning purport. The 'formal feeling' becomes a portmanteau phrase coalescing within its compass conceits such as 'nerves sit ceremonious like tomb', the 'stiff heart', 'feet mechanical' 'wooden way' 'quartz contentment' and 'hour of lead'. The emergent signification strengthens the effect of inertia, numbness, intense suffering, weariness, emotional depletion and an absolute dehumanizing where gestures become automatic and limbs are virtually willed into movement. Time sequence ceases to have any import and acute insensitivity paralyses responses. In this 'moment of lead' the palisade between the living and the dead crumbles. The misery of the survivors which Dickinson discerns as 'the formal feeling' is also registered in human consciousness in a manner approximate to death: "First chill, then stupor, then the letting go." Poem 241 reiterates:

I like a look of Agony
Because I know it's true —
Men do not sham Convulsion,
Nor stimulate, a Throe —

The Eyes glaze once — and that is Death —
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forhead

By homely Anguish strung.[5]

In Dickinson's poetry allusions to misery, oppression, the 'autumnal slant of light', or the 'last communion in the haze' are coupled to the factuality of man's mortality, because despair as in the above-mentioned poem cannot be pretended, shammed, simulated, or feigned. The glazing of the eyes and the beads on the forhead are ample testimony of anguish, fear and foreboding. In this respect one often feels that the poet employs death and pain as interchangeable tropes. However Dickinson in reversing the wonted delineation of death as a marauder detracts much from its correspondent anathema to make the phenomenon less abhorrent, scary and appalling. Though intensification and an almost parallel benumbing of senses through pain and privation lend singular distinction to her poetry, death is paradoxically dispensed and yet welcomed. She refrains from reducing the occurrence to ludicrous, or even converting her poems into conventional elegies. They are instead fantasized advance images of the spectre of death. The victim is either poet herself or an individual emotionally close to her.

In poem 1624 she writes:

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy Flower
The Frost beheads it at its play —
In accidental power —
The blond Assassin passes on —
The Sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another Day
For an Approving God.[6]

The 'accidental power' of the 'blood assassin' when 'it beheads' any 'happy flower' is 'no surprise' as the Sun proceeds on its appointed mission executing errands for an approving God. The poet's intellectual and sceptical bias proved a deterrent to her belief, but death was daunting in its certitude, actuality and universality. Mortal sensibility impeded by time and logic fails to apprehend the abstract premise of the everlasting because Heaven exists in the mind of the devout and can be attained on privation only after death. But the promise of immortality was adequate to persuade Dickinson through the chaperoned journey by chariot traversing the hyphen of mortal-

ity connecting life on earth to life in Heaven.

Death spells the end of temporal existence as the soul journeys from time into the timelessness of eternity. Its factuality despite the correspondent unexplained mystery becomes an essential rung for the attainment of immortality. The polemic consoled the poet into an awareness that the perplexing death is not a complete termination. Thus she surmounted over her insecurities and fear but submitted herself to the event's inevitability.

In Larkin's instance the concept of death was the outcome of his generation's preoccupation with a 'death sentience'. The World Wars, subsidence of moral and social standards, mindless killings and blood bath, pandemic weariness, spiritual debility, ennui, futility, disillusionment, rejection of religion-engendered languor, the enlarged and growing significance of serious thought, logic and intellectual appeasement in place of earlier stoic surrender to dogma and principles, together contributed to the exigency of unmasking the inscrutable labyrinth of life's cessation. Larkin too detected a yearning for incremental knowledge and information about the remote mystery of death. The casualty in the death segment poems is preyed upon by circumstances, predicament, social constraints, stress and environment. Condemned to decrepitude the victim's torment is both internal and external. However, regarding death as an equalizer the poet countervails the sensibility prior to and consequent to the event.

The poet eschews from conceptualizing death as parallel to immortality. Often bewilderment at its onslaught appears as pervading consciousness in his poetic oeuvre. Larkin scrutinizes the phenomenon, with anticipation, experiencing the loss entailed. Yet in an otherwise transient mortal universe, shackled within space and time, death is the only permanent. Like Dickinson he too perceives its constant. The poem 'Ambulances' from his collection *The Whitsun Weddings* seemingly portrays an 'oppressive funereal movement' of 'the opaque closed confessionals' 'threading through streets', stowing white-faced victims on 'red stretcher blankets'. The numbness, vacuum, and emptiness is 'so permanent and blank and true'. The sick individual is transported to an indeterminate fate by the

receding vehicle and the poet laments 'Poor soul'. The ambulance's cold summons routinely, evident in the arrested movement of the sympathetic bystanders, also betray apprehensive and nervous perturbation in the crowd. Startled into anxiety over their individual and private mortality the poem transmits them momentarily from the mundane and banal to life's ultimate futility: "They whisper at their own distress." The closed door of the ambulance becomes a crucial reminder of termination of a former vital, animate and breathing extant. The composition, according to Swarbrick, embodies "dissolving death."[7]

In yet another poem 'Old Fools' which commences on a bristly, fractitious, belligerent note of contempt and revulsion Larkin is frighteningly conscious of declining years and senility. These he supplants with death:

> What do they think has happened the old fools,
> To make them like this?
> Do they somehow suppose
> It's more grown-up when your mouth hangs open and drools.[8]

Though Larkin recoils from generic decrepitude, abjectness, the chagrin is self directed. Smarting against the plight of old people he exclaims bitterly: "Why aren't they screaming?" The riposte to the query supervenes in the next stanza "At death you break up" in dismembered, severed 'bits' that 'speed away' to 'oblivion'. Even the palliative to feign ignorance is futile and senseless. Recognising the unnerving symptoms Larkin concludes the clinical diagnosis objectively with chilling symptoms:

> Not knowing how, not hearing who, the power
> of choosing gone. Their looks show that they're for it:
> Ash hair, toad hands, prune face dried into lines-
> How can they ignore it?[9]

Shorn of compassion and pathos the poem brutally dissects human predicament prior to death inviting readers to participate in the poets' cruel, "bad tempered language, urgent directness and disturbing intensity."[10] Fear of death generated into a baffled Larkin a sense of defiance because the phenomenon denotes a nullity that makes life ineffectual. In order to depict it the poet employed a private code of unpoetic, audacious, atypical, unorthodox images and symbols.

These singular configurations render his poetry abstruse. The death-image-cluster revolve around semblance of darkness, nothingness, extinction, furtive, unwelcome phantom-like visitors, night, loads, fetters and stealthy surreptitious movements. Though commonplace, the language connotations are woven in a symbolic system promoting the irrefutable certainty of the death phenomenon.

'Traumerei' which is a part of *In the Grip of Light* collection has unfortunately not been appraised or even descried through critical annotation or exegesis. However, in this poem Larkin very nearly defines death, but stops short, retreats from the verge of final disclosure stemming from dearth of virtual knowledge about death experience. The dead rarely return to divulge secrets of the biggest mystery of human life. Though the opening of the poem is mundane, an apparent vision filters from a dream sequence:

> In this dream that dogs me I am part
> Of a silent crowd walking under a wall
> Leaving a football match, perhaps, or a pit
> All moving the same way. After a while
> A second wall closes on our right,
> Pressing us tighter... when I lift
> My head, I see the walls have killed the sun,
> And light is cold. Now a giant whitewashed D,
> Comes on the second wall, but much too high
> For them to recognize: I await the E,
> Watch it approach and pass. By now
> We have ceased walking and travel
> Like water through sewers, steeply despite
> The tread the going on ringing like anvil
> Under the striding A. I crook
> My arm to shield my face, for we must pass
> Beneath the huge decapitated cross,
> White on the wall, the T, and I cannot halt
> The tread, the beat of it, it is my own heart,
> The walls of my room rise it is still night.
> I have woken again before the wórd was spelt.[11]

The cramping walls, the voiceless mute crowd, the impinging darkness, the receding sun, and decline in temperature are manifest images of grave. Comprehension of the death-phenomenon originates with the appearance of a giant D. 'E' approaches rapidly

and passes, and 'A' strides ahead pursued by the decapitated cross or 'T'. But just as Larkin's consciousness prepares final assault on itself in complete cognition with the final letter 'H' the dream ends. The poet is yet again deprived of complete perception. The disappointment is palpable as the tangible walls of his room rise to reconstruct the palisade protecting the mystery of death.

The perception of death in the poetry of Larkin and Dickinson is occasionally approximate and analogous, yet individualistic and discrete also. The affinity between them can be traced to the significant compass of craftsmanship. Both the poets experimented with words and created their personal poetic vocabulary. Larkin's symbolic system consists of unconventional images, reiterated contrasts, juxtapositions, antithesis, colloquial idiom, banal rhymes and a singular code of phrases, language and connotations. Death is often referred to as 'nothingness' or 'void'. Though not an agnostic like Larkin, Dickinson also coined a humane, domestic system of genial images, similes, and metaphysical conceits to control the immense, inscrutable subject and render it in a non-serious and bagatelle fashion. It aided her in coming to terms with the mystery. Dickinson perceives death as a window to another promised life, but Larkin's death sentience is a terminator of the extant.

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POSTMODERNIST *SPARAGMOS*: VIOLENCE AS DEMONIC AESTHETICS IN JOHN HAWKES'S *WHISTLEJACKET*

K.B. Razdan

In the novels of John Hawkes, one of America's most exciting, challenging and thematically innovative writers, violence comes as a direct corollary of the author's quarrel with his own self. Physical, psychological and emotional assault constitutes the mournful hybridized aesthetics of Hawkes's fiction. Projection of a demonic human cosmos of anarchy, dismemberment and collision between dream landscapes and the unsettling terrains of reality: this is the linguistic, imagistic and surrealistic grammar of Hawkes. Interplay, conflicts and ironic juxtaposition constitute the narrative weapons of the Hawkesian novel. Death, sex, intrigue, murder, infidelity and adultery, all these become the end products as well as the stepping stones of violence. Other attending factors related to violence are presented to the reader in the garb of obsessive voyeurism, sadistic pleasure and grotesque mix of dream-world and the world of reality. Hawkes's men and women inhabit a neutral territory, no man's land between dream and awakening.

In *Whistlejacket* (1988), virtually the last novel of Hawkes, the practice of violence constitutes a decreative commingling, an unnerving juxtaposition of the human and animal worlds. The image of a horse becomes central and repetitive in every novel, *Whistlejacket* being no exception. As in the earlier novels like *The Lime Twig* (1961), *The Blood Oranges* (1971), *Death Sleep and the Traveler* (1974), and *The Passion Artist* (1979), to name only a few, in *Whistlejacket* (1988), the reader is treated to a feast of demonic imagery, a nauseating parody of man-woman relationship effected through the total dismemberment of the institution of marriage as a comforting existential sanctuary.

The plot in *Whistlejacket* centres around a fashion photographer Michael who becomes the adopted son of a wealthy aristocratic family, the Van Fleet family. The Van Fleets are an upper-echelon family wrapped in generations of intrigue, mystery and

murder and consumed by a fascination for and an obsession with horses. The important characters in the book are: the head of the family Harold Van Fleet, his wife Alexandra or Alex, their two daughters Virgie and Toots and a family friend Barbara or Buse. The narrative gets an inexplicable push when Harold Van Fleet dies rather mysteriously, in all probability murdered at the behest of Alexandra. The photographer-cum-adopted son, Michael attends the funeral of the Van Fleet supremo and narrates the event in these words:

> "My mentor Hal or Handsome Hall but formally Harold O Van Fleet, dead at young age, all things considered, sixty-two.
>
> The four of us pitiful number, advanced so slowly into Van Fleet cemetery and toward the waiting grave and casket that I thought the living scene might cease altogether and become the still picture from which we'd never escape and in which the casket would never find its way from the straps that supported it to the bottom of the waiting grave."[1]

Description of the Harold funeral generates a macabre ambience that continues to encapsulate the Van Fleet family throughout *Whistlejacket.* Four months after Harold's demise, Alex desires Michael to work out a biography of her husband: "I want you to do this biography in photographs" (38). Some "dark secrets" get unravelled when Michael begins to work on Hal's photographs. Mike learns that Buse was Hal's mistress and Alex knew all along about her husband's infidelity. Michael's wizardry with photographs confirms the truth about the murder of Harold Van Fleet, contrived and got executed by his own wife. A hybrid amalgam of sex, violence and death confronts the reader when the narrative in *Whistlejacket* reveals the further events, culminating in Michael becoming the lover of his stepmother Alex, stepsister Virgie and in all probability of Buse as well.

An interesting sub-plot complicates matters further with a postmodernist re-enactment of the Orpheus-type image of dismemberment of a dead body, invoking the imagery of *sparagmos.* An eighteenth-century painter George Stubbs is portrayed as working on an ideology that says: "... never to paint from any thing but nature and never to paint what he saw from the outside unless he had seen the inside first" (73). What we now get are two artists from two divergent eras: Michael and Stubbs with divergent objectives. Michael

creates a parallel world out of his photographic exploits and lives in this world to realize his diabolic designs. To practice their respective arts, both work in a similar fashion and their artistic paradigm evolves as demonic aesthetics, the aesthetics of fission and fracture, disjunction and dissolution. In the very beginning of the narrative of *Whistlekacket*, Mike defines and specifies his art of photography, an art resting upon and flowering through his voyeuristic and incestuous leanings. A mishmash of these addictions is conveyed by Mike in his own words when he says:

> Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, as they say, but in the lens of the camera. The eye of the camera is the only eye that sees true beauty, which is to say the beauty of woman. Woman is a field of vision, woman is her own landscape. Through the thick, transparent lens of my camera-cameras I mean to say ... I see woman. Not women. Woman. Although I see both.....
>
> Who am I? Only a twenty-eight year-old fashion photographer. But I am also a horseman and fox hunter.... I love horses. I love woman. Not women. Except perhaps for Virgie ... Virgie's mother, Alex, is a different matter. Alex is a woman. Pure woman. And horse-woman. And now a widow. So I love Alex. (3)

These words constitute the literary symbolic ore of a 'metal', rather a hard metal, called violence, besides presenting an ironic juxtaposition of love and lust, aestheticism and eroticism, and certainly of heterosexuality and incest. Mike's camera — vision anatomy of a woman's beauty becomes reminiscent of famous words in *Zorba the Greek*, a novel by Kazantzakis: "A woman is a spring, you kneel, you see your reflection and you drink."[2] These words of Zorba along with those of Mike become symbiotic in defining woman as "her own landscape," a landscape, a problematic terrain riddled with uncertainty, danger, lust, love, violence and voyeurism. The demonic mix of the human and animal worlds reveals Mike's abnormal fixation with woman, animalistic lust, when he compares Alex to a mare and declares his passion for her:

> "Lady Diana, or Lady Di as she is known, and as such a horse means blood, hot, in heat, an aspect of Alex's nature I discovered only on my most recent visit to Steepleton." (5)

Naming a female horse as Lady Diana, the late wife of Prince Charles of England, further enlarges and makes abnormal the demonic

human-animal syndrome. The entire narrative in *Whistlejacket* transcreates the image of a horse as a personification of lust, strength, passion and violence. Ironic juxtaposition of love, sensuousness, lust, sex ,violence and death constitutes the main weapon in the armoury of Hawkes, simply to depict the grotesque hybridization of man-and-animal as an all-dominating syndrome.

Mike during his stay with the Van Fleets, as the foster son of Harold, eventually feels encapsulated by the irresistible magnetism of engulfing violence. Harold's death happens in an uncouth, gruesome and bizarre manner: he gets murdered at the hands of a big horse called Marcabru:

> And finally Harold had died because of Marcabru. Not riding him, not in a high fatal accident while jumping, as he would have wished, but on foot, alone trampled under the hooves of his favorite horse as the light began to fade in the stall. (118)

Actually, Harold Van Fleet's death is planned by his own wife Alex as a corollary of adultery and infidelity. Hawkes creates a world where "sex and death are made to coexist,"[3] along with unhappy failed marriages. The arrival of Michael at the Van Fleet household complicates matters further. Mike is no ordinary human being. Violence, fantasy, lust and longing rule his mind and soul completely. He fuses the world of his fantasies with the actual world in his day-to-day living. As a "carnivorous watcher," Mike "tears" the bodies of females to gratify his perverted sexual desires and voyeuristic fantasies. An existential silence fills Michael's inner self, and this "silence" has its components as void, madness, outrage and ecstasy. Normally, humans do like to entertain and enact their fantasies in real life with violence, more often than not, coming as the end-product. The sexual algebra of need, desire, longing and fulfillment, finally triggers the fuse only to create brute violence in the form of forcible rape, murder and dismemberment.

An ironic calendrical juxtaposition of two artists — Mike the photographer and Stubbs the painter — presents demonic aesthetics as a product of violence. The psychotic, diseased and deconstructive mind of Stubbs makes this painter follow a diabolic ideology of anatomizing or dissecting animals to study and analyze

their inner organs and body parts before painting these: " At the age of five he began to draw and soon he was dissecting cats and dogs for the sake of his art" (73). Dissecting animals after murdering the innocent creatures for the sake of an artist's art, can simply be termed as the brutalization, vandalization and assassination of art itself. In order to practice their artistic fantasies, artists like Michael and Stubbs unleash violence in its most horrendous and brutal form. It is at an early age that perversity pollutes the psyche of Stubbs, taking deep roots as he grows. In his "young manhood" (73), Stubbs begins to anatomize "human cadavers and dead horses" (73). A gruesome account is given when Stubbs buys a young horse called Nan and kills the poor animal in a brutal fashion with the help of his wife Mary, just to paint the animal's inner parts. A long nauseating account of this inhuman act is given in the narrative. After weeks of decomposition, the carcasses of the anatomized horses would be disposed off by Stubbs, with the help of his wife. The following words come as an epilogue to what Stubbs did for the sake of his 'art' and how his wife felt about the same:

> "She could not say which was more oppressive to her, the animal's panic, scrutiny of a lateral view of a horse with only portion of its skin and subcutaneous fat removed, fear of disease, or the signs of carnage in which they spent their days. But the more their work continued through the third horse, the fourth, the more she marveled at her Stubbs, who drew exactly what he had dissected and whose only emotion in their outbuilding was the pleasure of concentration." (91-93)

Brutal satanic killing of helpless dumb animals can only be defined as cruel, monstrous, and a dehumanized act of bizarre violence. Stubbs possesses such a sick mind that he derives extreme pleasure and feels totally fascinated by his artistry when he thinks that he has converted "...debris into design."[4] The grotesquerie attains great heights when Stubbs decides to dissect a human cadaver, a woman who dies in the eighth month of her pregnancy and strangely is the namesake of his wife:

> "... the anatomization of Mary Dyer was all but complete and ... Stubbs having satisfied himself as to the full situation of the enlarged uterus, its relationship to the stomach and its compressing effect within the body as high as the lungs, he knew which veins and arteries were fullest and what

distortions had been imposed on the bladder ...." (84-85)

Stubbs, in the Hawkesian parlance, may earn the label of a devoted artist, yet his morbid obsession for dissecting dead animals and even a dead pregnant woman, redefines the conceptualization of what is termed as the modern. With Stubbs and Michael, the very quintessence of what constitutes the modern degenerates toward "destructive, not constructive labour."[5]

The climactic vortex of violence in *Whistlejacket* comes when Michael himself gets crushed to death under the hooves of a celebrity horse, a prize animal called Whistlejacket. The portrait of Whistlejacket drawn by Stubbs "dominated the main salon" (18) of the Van Fleets at Steepleton. Harold Van Fleet claimed that "Marcabru looked like Whistlejacket" (117). As horses, Marcabru and Whistlejacket totally dominate the thematic, symbolic and imagistic structure of the novel, weaving the texture of a human hell man creates on earth.

The two artists portrayed in *Whistlejacket*, Stubbs the painter and Michael the photographer, fully represent creative aesthetics in a deconstructive, demonic and disturbing form. Michael's photographs can be defined and studied as "a form of dissection, with their emphasis on body parts and objects as opposed to the living personalities ...."[6] George Stubbs gets great pleasure out of what can be categorized as cannibalism of art and from the reader's perspective he "has hardly left the animal level."[7] The inner anatomy of a cadaver thrills, excites and inspires Stubbs. His horrendous passion for dissecting dead animals creates a kind of sepulchral animalistic 'surgery' which juxtaposes in mishmash fashion "antagonism and nihilism, agonism and futurism, antitraditionalism and modernism...dehumanization and iconoclasm, voluntarism and cerebralism ...."[8] *Whistlejacket* becomes a study in the psychotic mind, churning out a tapestry of absurdity, chaos and malevolence. Hawkes in this novel displays his novelistic art as a postmodernist cry of anguish from a world of fantasy, dream and displacement and above all a creative matrix weaved out of animality and grotesquerie, atrocity, terror and cruelty.

The credo of dismemberment as applied to both humans and

animals in *Whistlejacket*, thanks to "artists" like Michael and Stubbs, extends implicitly to decipher the role-playing matrix of violence in contemporary society. Hawkes in *Whistlejacket* succeeds in impregnating the plot with deeds and actions culminating in "an erotic retreat from existence, from the flesh of reality, a dark prayer of transcendence under."[9] The application of the *sparagmos*-syndrome in *Whistlejacket* not only subscribes to a demonic aesthetics, but also transcreates fictionally the concept of transcendence as an endless fall into a gorge of nothingness.

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THE SPECTRUM OF ABSURDITY: VIOLENCE AS THE KAFKAESQUE DRUMBEAT IN JOSEPH HELLER'S *CATCH-22*

Ashu Vashisht

Before talking about Joseph Heller's classic work *Catch-22*, it would be pertinent to point out that violence is not just an undesirable human action. Violence germinates in the mind; real wars are fought in human minds. Psychic and psychological violence has proved very dangerous for mankind. We are now in 21st century but sadly enough the catch-22 situation continues to be as relevant and realistic as it was when Heller wrote his famous masterpiece. These days we are living in times of upheaval and turbulence and human beings feel assaulted physically, emotionally and psychologically from all quarters and all agencies. Yet we do survive and carry on the battle called life and living.

Catch-22, published in 1961, has been regarded as Heller's *magnum opus*. A paradigm of absurdity and futility is imbued with Kafkaesque ambience in this novel. *Catch-22* has been categorized as a book of "enormous richness and art, of deep thought and brilliant writing."[1] The action in the book is related to a group of American bomber-pilots with their operational base as Pianosa, a far flung island in the Mediterranean sea. The island itself, as a geographical entity, becomes an existential metaphor with each of the American pilots as an island unto himself, grappling with an awesome lack of affirmation, unnerving anomie and alienation. Even the turbulent waters of the Mediterranean become synonymous with the violent, restless and anarchic minds of the bombardiers, with sea water as a demonic force "that could gulp down a person with a cramp in the twinkling of an eye and ship him back to shore three days later, all charges paid, bloated, blue and putrescent, water draining out through both cold nostrils."[2] This sepulchral image of the sea coheres with the overall nihilistic and deconstructive ambience of the entire narrative.

The fictional world of *Catch-22* is a world cocooned and spun by war-mongers, monomaniacal hawks whose only obsession is to

by war-mongers, monomaniacal hawks whose only obsession is to keep the bombardiers air-borne on meaningless missions. Such a lacuna echoes Heller's own deep insight into the barbarism and futility called war. Heller in *Catch-22* holds the institution of war and military bureaucracy responsible for all the cynicism, disillusionment and ruthlessness. He debunks the romantic aspect of war and questions the sacrifice of young lives. He shows how war demoralizes the individual and how reason and commonsense are shaken in a world dominated by "war, violence, pain and confusion."[3] Joseph Heller moans that this "vile and muddy war" (90) has reduced the individual to the level of an animal killing all fine emotions:

> ...foul black tiers of flak were bursting and blooming and billowing all around and above and below him in a climbing, cracking, staggered, banging, phantasmagorical, cosmological wickedness that jarred, and tossed and shivered, clattered and pierced, and threatened to annihilate them all in one splinter of a second in one vast flash of fire. (66-67)

Heller shudders at the dreadful and destructive power of war as the "whole goddam world smells like a charnel house" (143), and he views with a sense of shock and dismay the enslavement of mankind by the tyranny of evil. Living life in such an atmosphere, Heller says: "I deal with disintegration in American society in my books."[4] The theme of *Catch-22* revolves around absurdity, irrationality, and nightmare of a disordered universe, a universe in which violence, fantasy and the grotesque are indistinguishable.

A compulsory execution of Kafkaesque action is dictated by a set of US Air Force officers whose only justifiable rationale becomes the mandatory completion of a fixed number of bombing missions for each bombardier. These American air force bombardiers find themselves entrapped in an isolated locale in the Mediterranean, totally at the mercy of obsessive, eccentric, trigger happy war-lords like Colonel Cathcart and his cohorts. As in an allegorical fairy tale, Colonel Cathcart is the eerie ogre, who has imprisoned innocents like Yossarian and the other bombardiers. He keeps them perpetually on the leash of perversity riddled with tension and uncertainty, totally divorced from normal family life. This dichotomy between the self and the world outside leads to the state of chronic anxiety and anguish alienating man from his own inner reality, a

reality regarding the impoverishment of the mind and soul.

Violence is not only pictured as the thoughtless brutality of certain crack-pots but also a kind of psychological deformity, a form of personal aggrandizement at the cost of *Pharmakos* figures like Yossarian and his colleagues. The central protagonist in *Catch-22*, John Yossarian, becomes the recipient of national catastrophe envisioned through the perverted perspectives of chauvinistic warmongers.

Joseph Heller himself admits that the fictional cosmos of *Catch-22* is "a world boiling in chaos in which everything was in proper order."[5] Obviously, Heller makes it a real existential paradox by amalgamating 'chaos" and 'order' into a hybridized whole which determines the epicenter of Colonel Cathcart's military trap for victims like Yossarian and other bombardiers. The unfortunate denizens of Pianosa "thirsted for life" (427). The surrounding breeze becomes the breeze of "nothingness" of "distress and deteriorating spiritual values" (*22*, 56), of dissolution, angst and anomie. As an atomized but not indifferent human being, Yossarian finds it horrendous to negotiate the existential vacuum around him because of the awesome absurdity all around.

Catch-22 by design and texture epitomizes the web of absurdity and meaninglessness within which the chief characters are trapped like flies in a spider's web. The height of demonic perversity is demonstrated in the assertion that it is the sane who have to die and any bombardier like Yossarian, who asks to be grounded, is labeled as sane and entitled to punishment. Not only this, the sane ones have to fly the bombing missions and get killed, simply to become scapegoats on the altar of sheer irrationality hovering on the brink of madness. The sterility and the ennui of Yossarian's situation on the island of Pianosa becomes at times crippling and all engulfing, bringing to the reader's mind the Kafkaesque dismemberment of human identity. The real enemy is not the chaos of war, but the deadly inhuman bureaucracy of the military-economic establishment. It is the rnilitary establishment which breeds, perpetuates and programmes violence, infusing all around a feeling of insecurity.

Violence, in the garb of compulsory action, emanates from the

narrative of *Catch-22* as a dominant factor. It is the bombing missions which form the rock-bed of meaningless and mindless violence rendering helpless bombardiers like Yossarian and his colleagues as pathetic puppets, whose controlling strings lie in the hands of schizophrenic hawks totally divorced from humanity. Yossarian becomes the anguished witness to the ghoulish slaughter of his crew members and the destruction of all his closest friends. The death of all his friends, the continual raising of the number of missions, the readiness of a colleague to testify against him, the morality of the "deal," all contribute to Yossarian's realization that he cannot be happy outside the hospital, as the war is still going on.

As the novel progresses, the victims, increasingly aware of the menace posed by this system, carry their gestures of rebellion to the point of open defiance. Yossarian is the most blatant in this regard. Every time he approaches the number of missions necessary to complete a tour of duty, his ambitious commanding officers increase it. Yossarian tries a number of ploys to avoid combat. He sees his life threatened not only by the Germans who try to shoot him out of the sky but also by his superior officers who seem just as intent to kill him off. "The enemy," he concludes at one point, "is anybody who's going to get you killed, no matter which side he is on" (166) and "it does not make a damned bit of difference, who wins the war to someone who is dead"(161).

Violence obliterates every thing in *Catch-22,* and leaves no chance for anything to blossom and evolve in a healthy and productive manner. The dismantling, dismembering, environmental ethos becomes so repugnant and bizarre that even the most important relationship gets reduced to the level of sexual calisthenics. The hero Yossarian has affairs with some women out of whom females like Luciana and Nurse Duckett come pretty close to being his life partners. But thanks to the man-made Sisyphun bombardments, the hero's dealings with opposite sex got awfully deconstructed and are made to look as mere recreational in stifling atmosphere created by war-related violence. The rest of the women become mere cannon fodder for Yossarian and his fellow bombardiers.

All the same Joseph Heller has different ideas when he makes

women in *Catch-22* as the agents and perpetrators of violence against men. A good instance of this is in the form of Nately's whore or Scheisskopf's wife, but it is the former who unleashes brutal and murderous violence against the hero Yossarian. Nately's whore gives Yossarian a run for his money. Yossarian conveys the news of Nately's death to his whore who starts believing that Yossarian is responsible for her man's death and she must avenge it. This woman attacks Yossarian with the ferocity of a wounded tigress, nearly killing him with a kitchen knife and the description of this scene at the fag end of the novel presents a near chimeric and totally animalistic fracture of the man-woman equation. The demonic climax to this monstrous fight comes when Yossarian gets "stirred by the thoughts of sex" (499). As a counter strategy to attain her objective of killing Yossarian for revenge, Nately's whore pretends to soften as if surrendering sexually. What follows is a bizarre, turbulent and atrocious depiction of female identity in its most virulent form: "... she still wanted to kill him! He was shocked and astounded by her depraved subterfuge as he tore the knife from her grasp and hurled it away" (499). A different type of feminine violence is witnessed when Colonel Scheisskopf's wife starts boxing Yossarian's head with both fists, when in true atheistic parlance Yossarian labels the Christian God as a "mean stupid God" (231). Scheisskopf's wife may not be as violent and menacing as Nately's whore, yet she also contributes to the complete dismantling of an identity called the woman.

As an antidote to the boredom and listlessness infused by the meaningless bombing missions, Yossarian and his colleagues occasionally go to Rome to have sex with women of easy virtue. Even while providing themselves sexual relaxation and entertainment, these bombardiers also resort to inhuman violence against these poor, helpless females. Heller's conundrum of violence and absurdity breaks all barriers when "the mean tall soldiers with the hard white hats and clubs" chase the poor prostitutes "away into the cold" (22, 513). The conversation between Yossarian and the old woman reflects a kind of collective schizophrenia.

Even the splendor of Rome gets ground to dust with the feroc-

ity and obsessiveness of violence. The screams of the child being beaten, the sympathetic weeping of a woman in crowd, the "snarling inhuman voices" (523) of the spectators, the cries of the woman being raped begging " please don't" or in drunken variation "pleashe don't"(522), the scream of a man being clubbed by the police, all create the mournful music of inhuman violence. Even a natural occurrence like rain is made to look demonic as if further contributing to the images of catastrophic violence.

Violence crosses even the limits of animalism and barbarity when one of the fellow bombardiers of Yossarian named Aarfy rapes a poor, innocent and gullible servant girl Michaela, and after raping her kills and throws her dead body out of window. Aarfy's contention is that raping a servant girl and pushing her to death through the window matter little when "many thousands of lives are being lost every day" (528). Yossarian's absurd hope that order will be restored to the chaos, gets blasted when "two large brawny M.P.'s with icy eyes and firm sinewy unsmiling jaws" (429) appear and act in perfect harmony with hellish logic of 'Catch-22':

> They arrested Yossarian for being in Rome without a pass. They apologized to Aarfy for intruding and led Yossarian away between, gripping him under each arm with fingers as hard as steel menacles." (529)

And he realizes that "mobs with clubs were in control every where" (525) and mere "anarchy is loosed upon the world" (525).

In this world of violence, dehumanization and death, Yossarian finds a pervasive sense of pain and tragedy. The modicum of fear, insecurity and uncertainty gripping Yossarian's mind comes to the surface with Snowden's death. He has moment of truth about the nature of war in a flight over Avignon:

> Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out.... Here was God's plenty, all right, he thought bitterly as he stared — liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes Snowden had eaten that day for lunch....Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out of a window and he will fall. Set him to fire he will burn. Bury him and he'll rot like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage.... (554)

The scene depicted in the preceding lines surpasses even the limits

of nightmare and simply becomes pure grotesquerie. Such end-products of violence fill Yossarian with dread and he, metaphorically, hovers on the brink of an apocalyptic precipice which at any moment may engulf him. Things attain nightmarish proportions when Yossarian realizes the prevailing malaise as "the corruption, that greed and envy have brought in their wake, but he can do nothing save run away."[6]

As a climax to the narrative, the hero's escape becomes an open-ended escape, a non-redemptive foray into an existential Adamic prerogative. Yossarian becomes an ironic American 'Adam' lost in the wilderness, without any hope of redemption. Violence can never provide any kind of resurrection for any human being, leave alone a meaningless and absurd warfare.

It would be befitting to conclude with the observation that it is the turbulence of the times that becomes responsible for the production of violence-related literature. What could be more destructive than a global war and all of us know that in the aftermath of the Second World War, an entire gamut of literature, regarding war and the violence generated by war, came to be written in the United States. This literature possesses a celebrity status among Contemporary World Literatures even today, highlighting the subject of violence in times of conflicts and tensions.

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[3]Marcus Klein, *The American Novel Since World War II* (Connecticut: Fawcett, 1969) 160.

[4]Joseph Heller, "America's Inhuman Callousness," *U.S News & world Report* (1979) 73.

[5]Narendra K. Jain, "*Catch-22:* New Light on Some Characters," *Indian Journal of American Studies*, 27, 1 (Winter 1997) 20. These words actually appear in Heller's personal "Notes" in his own hand on a published copy of *Catch-22,* kept in the Special Collection Division of the Brandes University Library, Mass., USA.

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THE INFLUENCE OF HARLEM RENAISSANCE ON ANN PETRY'S *THE STREET*

Saroj Bala

Harlem Renaissance, an African American movement of the 1920s and 1930s, was centered around the Harlem neighborhood of New York city. This movement was also known as the New Negro Movement, the New Negro Renaissance, etc. It was during this movement that the mainstream publishers and critics took African American literature seriously. Harlem Renaissance emerged amid social and intellectual upheaval in the African American community of the 1920s. A black middle class had emerged. During the Great Migration, thousands of black Americans moved from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North to take advantage of employment opportunities created by World War I. As more and more educated and socially conscious blacks settled in New York's neighborhood of Harlem, it developed into the political and cultural center of black America. They were advocating social and political equality, and "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" (NAACP) was also founded in 1909.

In the 1920s, three events launched Harlem Renaissance formally. Firstly, on March 21, Charles S. Johnson of the "National Urban League" hosted a dinner to recognize the new literary talent of the black community because the League was founded in 1910 to help black Americans in economic and social problems which they encountered as they resettled in the urban North. As a result, *The Survey Graphics* published an issue devoted to black literature and art. Secondly, *Nigger Heaven* (1926), written by the white novelist, Carl Van Vechten, was published which was a spectacularly popular exposition of Harlem life and was responsible for making black art and culture popular among the whites. Thirdly, a black literacy magazine *Fire* was launched. As a result, there emerged a whole new generation of black young artists and writers like Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman and Zora Neale Hurston.

Harlem Renaissance was not defined by any common literary style or political ideology. What united the participants was their commitment to giving artistic expression to the African American

experience. Some of the common themes were: an interest in the African American experience in Africa and the American south, a strong sense of racial pride, and a strong desire for social and political equality. While the focus of many black writers at the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance was on poetry, they increasingly turned their attention to fiction later on.

To say that the "Harlem Renaissance is limited to the 1920s would be a mistake. It might be that its effects were still being strongly felt and thus it was still figuratively alive as late as 1970."[1] Though the writers writing in the 1940s and 1950s never associated with the movement, their works reflected Harlem and its life at the fag end of the Renaissance capturing the dilemma of the African American as to which way to go. The significant authors writing during these decades were Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Ann Petry and James Baldwin.

Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946) depicts the life of her female protagonist in Harlem and the effects of dismal conditions all around her. With the arrival of the Depression, Harlem was no longer 'the home of happy feet' but a walk down the mean, hard streets. It is in one of many such streets of Harlem that Petry has the setting of her novel. The novel is a powerful psychological study of the plight of poor black women who want a decent life for them. As the economy plummeted, the nation suffered and the blacks all the more. Overcrowded, rat-infested, and crumbling buildings covered the landscape, and the poor, unemployed blacks were caught in a hostile game of survival. The cry went out among the black intellectuals that no decent life could be lived under such conditions, and Ann Petry was the foremost African American woman to concentrate upon the social protest in her novel *The Street*.

The Street presents a harsh and cruel environment where there is no escape from dim ways, rancid smells and horrid congestion. The competition for survival is fierce and Petry paints a picture of the alienated, disturbed people. It tells the story of Lutie Johnson, a young, respectable African American woman and her struggle for a better life. Lutie works as a live-in domestic because her husband is out of job. But soon she loses her husband to another woman and

she goes to Harlem with her son in pursuit of better future and her belief in the American Dream: "The belief that anybody could be rich if they wanted to and worked hard enough and figured it out carefully enough."[2] She gets a small apartment in the 116th street about which she observes: "It was a bad street.... It wasn't just this street that she was afraid of or that was bad. It was any street where people were packed like sardines in a can. And it wasn't just this city. It was any city where they set up a line and say black folks stay on this side and white folks on this side, so that the black folks were crammed on top of each other jammed and packed on top forced into the smallest possible space until they were completely cut off from light and air" (130). Poverty and race are inextricably linked to the dirty, dark and filthy place where the characters live and die. It was street like the 116th that drove the protagonist's father to drink and the mother to her early grave. It was the same combination of circumstances that "had evidently made Mrs. Hedges who sat in the ground floor window, turn to running a fairly well-kept whorehouse...." (40).

Lutie Johnson is determined that none of these things would happen to her because she would never stop fighting back. She is full of hope and aspiration which is the result of change that has taken place among the blacks. There is a hope to improve their lot and they want to work hard. But soon her will to succeed is ineffectual against the relentless economic and racist forces that Ann Petry sees as the direct cause of streets like the one in which Lutie lives. Lutie works very hard in order to earn money and have a respectable position in the society. But wherever she goes, she is perceived as a potential whore by everyone. The rich white family, the Chandlers, for whom she is obliged to work as a domestic maid, regard her as a workhorse and as a sexual threat to the women, who believe that all black women are promiscuous sluts ready to jump in bed with any white man.

When Lutie fails to get a well paid job, she wanders into Junto's bar and grill in the corner of the street. Boots Smith, the black henchman of Junto, proceeds to trap her. Boots dates her and offers her a singing job with a bar he manages. Junto wants her for himself.

Her son is taken into custody in a case of breaking mail box. This is done by Jones, the superintendent, who spoils her son because she refuses to stay with him. Now Lutie needs money to get her son released and Boots offers to take her to Junto. There Boots attacks her and she strikes back in full anger. Her anger for Boots is symbolic of the anger at all the forces that keep her down all the time and make her helpless. Petry describes her state of mind thus: "A lifetime of pent up resentment went into the blows. Even after he lay motionless, she kept striking him, not thinking about him, not even seeing him. First she was venting her rage against the dirty, crowded street. She saw the rows of dilapidated old homes, the small dark rooms; the long steep flights of stairs; the narrow dingy hallways; the little lost girls in Mrs. Hedges's apartments, the smashed homes where the woman did drudgery because their men had deserted them. She saw all these things and struck at them. Then the limp figure on the sofa became in turn Jim and the slender girl, she'd found him with; became the insult in the moist-eyed glances of white men on the subway; became the unconcealed hostility in the eyes of white women; became the greasy lecherous man at the Crosse School for Singers.... Finally... she was sticking at the white world which thrust black people into a walled enclosure from where there was no escape.... He represented all those things and she was destroying them" (430).

The irony is that Lutie sees, yet fails to act on, the price that Chandlers pay in spiritual and personal alienation for their material success. In blind pursuit of the American Dream Lutie loses her family and her hope for happiness, but not her self-respect. When she fails to get the singing job, social reality begins to displace her dream world. She concludes: "The trouble was with her. She has built up a fantastic structure made from the soft, nebulous, cloudy stuff of dream. There has not been a solid, practical brick in it, not even a foundation she has built it up of air and vapour and moved right in. So of course it had collapsed. It had never existed anywhere but in her mind" (191).

The tension between the blacks and whites and how the whites are prejudiced against the blacks and the scenario in Harlem are

projected by Petry through a white school teacher who has been teaching in Harlem for the last ten years and has the feeling that in such a school they are not expected to do much because the black children are hopeless. The blacks are considered only as a threat to them: "She thought of every person she passed as a threat to her safety .... Waiting for the train was a further trial. She searched the platform for some other white persons and then stood close to them, taking refuge in their nearness — refuge from the terror of these black people" (331).

Although the story is told by a disembodied third person, omniscient narrator, Petry allows Lutie's consciousness to dominate the narrative. The action and setting are subordinated to Lutie's impression of their impact on the black women and the black family, thus encouraging our sympathy for her and other black women, who incredulously have no contact with the black church. Except for the denouement, the author explores the social evils of segregated communities, the white and black, with objectivity. But nowhere does she blame the black men for the broken homes, poverty, and hopelessness that characterize too many urban black communities. The cause of these social problems is not black men like her alcoholic father and adulterous husband, not black women like Mrs. Hedges, but white people like Junto and the Chandlers whose prosperity is based on the economic exploitation of the blacks.

The novel opens symbolically with the November wind, cold, dirt and filth of 116th street overpowering the Harlem pedestrians, including the apartment-hunting Lutie. It closes with her leaving the city by train killing the man who assaults her, the snow falling symbolically, gently obscuring the grime, garbage and ugliness of the street. The setting and the theme of the novel are indicative of Petry's intimacy with the black inner-city life of New York and Harlem.

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FROM ETHNIC NOSTALGIA TO MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY: A STUDY OF THE POEMS OF CYRIL DABYDEEN

Hemalatha. K

Cyril Dabydeen, the Guyana born South American, migrated to Canada in 1970. He is able to perceive that he is being visualized as "Other" by the mainstream society, and that he is a hyphenated immigrant trying to establish himself in a host environment. The consciousness of not belonging to the mainstream either in terms of power relationships or in social and cultural activities leaves the poet in a state of loss, but he overcomes it to laugh at the face of intense anguish that he exeriences as a result of immigration in a new land. Not only does Dabydeen recreate the mythical and delightful world from where he has arrived, but he also expresses the transformations which he undergoes as an immigrant in the land which he has adopted, i.e., Canada. There is an acceptance in him which resists ethnic nostalgia to become part of the multicultural identity. The polarities between the "archetypal sun-man" and the haven of snow in which he lands himself, transport him into a state of shock which crystallizes into excellent poetry.

In a poem entitled "The Hidden Sun," Cyril Dabydeen, highlighting the pathetic suffering of a foreigner, exclaims:

> I am rolling within, body
> Crumbling like falling snow. (Dabydeen 1990: 3)

These lines reveal the internal suffering of the poet who has to remain an introvert, "rolling within" and then there is no identity — "body crumbling like fallen snow." Ironically the cold and lousy winters trigger the survival instincts of even the birds who readily leave Canada and are off on their South bound flight to South America:

> they must leave the north
> and head for
> South America
> to survive the winter's
> onslaught (Dabydeen 1982: 40)

Unfortunately, it is only human beings who are left with no other option but to stay on and learn to withstand the onslaught of the

wintry cold. So Dabydeen seems to be depressed at his own condition, and he is at a loss for words to depict his condition, and feels that newer metaphors have to be created to do so:

new ones have to be created
while I too continue
to nourish
the sun
in my midst
and thinking
of rain forests
from time to time
in the poem's winter (Dabydeen 1982: 51)

Moreover, Dabydeen had gone to the extent of feeling that even the dream of going to Canada as immigrants was an impossible dream and those, who made it, had sometimes to suffer the fate of Icarus. In a poem entitled "Lady Icarus," he presented the story of a lady, Maria, who came seeking a new life in Canada from Ecuador. Held in Strathcona, she tries to escape deportation, but

Your rope
Of sheets and blankets
Broke
No sun now melting wax
Your hold snaps
As you plunge
To sudden death
We stand on guard for thee
Oh so glorious and free
O Canada, 0 Canada (Dabydeen 1977: 6)

The "melting wax" alludes to Icarus and Lady Maria gets her due punishment for over aspiring by the snapping of her hold on Canada. It is ironical that the "free" and "glorious" Canada was not for people like her. In another poem Dabydeen depicts the pathetic condition of the world where

men tear limbs
in the dark
women groan
all resound
a rape world
defies
causal analysis (Dabydeen 1982: 42)

The strong adjective attached to the world, defining this world of ours as "rape world" where each one is ready to disturb the privacy of the other to achieve his own ends is a succinct description of the ruthless behaviour of man on earth. Actually man on earth is playing a game

> of eating hearts
> always eating
> them out. (Dabydeen 1982: 43)

Despite all these observations regarding the social condition of Canada, in Dabydeen there is a positive note which can be traced in his poem "Exiles" in which he discusses the plight of the immigrants but ultimately ends up with the hope that one day the immigrants shall also secure a representation for themselves. So even though the voices of immigrants are not heard right now, the day is not far when they shall be heard.

The scenario in the political field is none the better. In political meetings where members of Parliament gather to decide on the fate of the common man, Dabydeen is astounded by the nonchalant attitude of the politicians. He attended the meeting as a commoner and there were enquiries as to who invited him, how he managed to sneak in and so on. The common folk dare not attend as they have no place in meetings where their fates are decided. In another party of bureaucrats and dignitaries Margaret Trudeau was to arrive. All the Ladies of the Empire Club of Canada, the Deputy Ministers, the TV anchorman, all seemed excited about nothing. Dabydeen was also excited that he as the chosen one to drive her back home in his battered Honda civic, instead of the handsome fellow who imagined himself in love with her.

This poem "Party" is about meetings in high places where supposedly important people meet indiscriminately to discuss insignificant, unimportant and immaterial things. Even though they make elaborate arrangements for the meetings, ultimately all such meetings turn out to be a farce. Assuming an air of importance with backlog spread largely on the table, they just

> pile up paper work,
> or just recline;
> swivel your chair about

and breathe hard;...
mahogany will put you to rest (Dabydeen 1990: 6)

There is absence of any qualms of conscience in them. With an easy going attitude they indulge in ego-boosting of powerful people. There is talk of great policies, programs which are to be priorized and operationalized, but it is all pretence or rather a game of words and nothing more:

truly I begin
to understand the dilemma of words
making meaningful dialogue
as I am alone...
Another round
Of conversation
All dialogues
Follow the same (Dabydeen 1982: 44)

Dabydeen is able to perceive the pangs and isolation of being treated as "The Other" by the mainstream society, and being an immigrant to Canada from the Carribean he has a doubly displaced feeling. The outcome is a painful awareness of the loss of a familiar world, and a nostalgic longing to be back in the land left behind. As a traveller he misses his family badly and when he receives letters from home, he professes:

...how I miss togetherness
I continue to gather
Them under the ribbed
Layers
Of my travelling self (Dabydeen 1982: 45)

Dabydeen elaborately recreates the mythical world from which he has arrived in poems like "The Forest." The dense tropical forests with their colourful fauna and flora have made an indelible impression on his mind:

I've come from that ridiculous forest
Where things grow waywardly,
Jaguars snarling on tree-tops
As I an amazed Looking distantly at you,
My heart pounding (Kudchedkar 1996: 230)

From such a colourful world, his homeland, he has travelled far and wide exploring newer pastures and encountering newer experiences and he is wondering as to what would be his next destination:

Across the ocean we travelled next,
The smell of molluscs, crabs in the air,
History calling us again
Where do we go from there?
To wheat fields? Orchards?
Groves of plenty? (Kudchedkar 1996: 82)

As is usual in all immigrants, there is an intense longing in him also to be back in his native place, and experience the joy of the woods:

The same dream....
.... As I am febrile in sleep
My heart deep deep in the woods;
The snarl and shout.... (Dabydeen 1982: 47)

The nostalgia does not last long as his do or die fighting spirit takes over and he is able to resist ethnic nostalgia to become a part of the multicultural identity:

We inhaled the scent of the new place,
Reaching out because of the fire searing,
Our skins febrile, we thrashed about...

....
How we laughed, we really laughed
At death. (Kudchedkar 1996: 82)

Thus Dabydeen is able to accept the laugh at the troubles and tribulations which the new land offers him as an immigrant. He does not take to the place blindly. Dabydeen knows that to be a hero in an unknown land is unworthy, as is revealed in the following poem:

To be a hero
In undiscovered
  territories
Is to be obscure:
  These territories
And their songs
  Are lit only
By the most
  Anonymous
  Blood
And by the followers
  Whose name
Nobody
  Knows (Dabydeen 1982: 38)

It is equally unworthy to be an influential person in a big city like

New York where there is loot and murder (Dabydeen 1982: 26-27).

Not only in New York, there is violence and lust for power all over the globe. So in another poem entitled "Archipelago," Dabydeen says:

> The islands are small
> Yet the violence
> The shouts of murder
> I look around
> Uncomfortable; human nature
> You say, grimacing. (Dabydeen 1982: 25)

The truth is, everywhere there are selfish, self-centered and destructive human beings as in New York, or Archipelago, but that is only one side of the picture. On the other hand,

> There's a man who knows the seasons
> At his finger tips
> Who holds the sky
> At a tilt..
> He's in the bone marrow
> Beating in the blood
> He's enshrined
> In us all.... (Dabydeen 1982: 34)

Obviously, Dabydeen is aware that the world survives only because of such worldly wise, sincere and hardworking labourers. The spirit of that man is there in all of us, so if all of us were to become more productive and commercially viable then there would be less of violence, loot and murder. Dabydeen feels that New York is for influential people, and for simple and honest people, who believe in earning their own bread, Canada is their home. So we find that from an initial feeling of total displacement and cultural shock, Dabydeen has matured to accept things as they are and be assimilated as part of the multicultural environment of Canada.

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EDWARD SAID ON THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

Anita Singh

The writers have since ages discussed their writings and their role as intellectuals. The prime purpose of Socratic dialectical method was to stimulate thought and not indoctrinate. Camus saw the writer as a rebel. For Sartre, literature was not a sedative, a feel good pill or a subdivision of the entertainment industry. It was purported to be an irritant that would provoke men to change the world in which they live and in doing so change themselves. By adopting this role the writer would ensure that the context of his work would avoid sterile dogmatism. Ralph Waldo Emerson considered the meaning and function of the intellectual in his essay, "The American Scholar" (Address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1887). Emerson's intellectual preserves great ideas of the past, communicates them, and creates new ideas. He is the world's eye, and he communicates his ideas to the world, not just to his fellow intellectuals. Public action is part of his being the one man, the whole person.

A more political tone to the concept of the public intellectual was suggested by Edward Said in a series of six essays called *The Representations of the Intellectual* delivered on the BBC as the prestigious Reith Lectures in 1993. Said addresses the ways in which the intellectual can best serve society in the light of heavily compromised media and of special interest groups who are protected at the cost of larger community concerns. Said suggests a recasting of the intellectual vision to resist the lure of power, money and specialization. In these pieces Said eloquently illustrates his arguments by drawing on such writers as Antonio Gramsci, Jean Paul Sartre, Regis Debray, Julian Benda and Theodore Adorno. He discusses current events like the Vietnam and gulf war, and celebrated men in the world of science and politics as Robert Oppenheimer and Henry Kissinger among others. Said sees the modern intellectual as an editor, journalist, academician or political advisor or a highly specialized professional who has moved from a

position of independence to an alliance with powerful corporate, institutional or governmental organization. The intellectual, for Said, is an outsider, an amateur and a disturber of the status quo.

The writers and thinkers who have mattered most to Said have all stood on the edges of their cultures. His sense of never quite being at home drew him to an unlikely canon of thinkers and writers — Conrad, Adorno, Vico, Swift, Orwell, Auerbach among others. Intellectual outsiderhood is for Said an ambivalent position; on the one hand it indicates a critical dissociation from the institutions of power and on the other hand it proposes an organic relationship with the communities of resistance in society.

Said's childhood sense of being always 'out of place' as a Palestinian exile was never entirely lost, but was rather transformed into a powerful intellectual spirit of criticism. His intellectual project is profoundly guided by this sense of 'otherness' or outsiderhood. Most of his own works greatest strength and insights result from this position of marginality when he reflects on the intellectual advantages of being an outsider. Exile is mainly a condition of profound creative empowerment and it also introduces us to a plurality of vision because as Said says: "Exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation" (1994: 44). He regards the exile as both the paradigm for secular criticism and anti-identitarian sense of being an intellectual in the world. He affirms clearly in *The Representations of the Intellectual:*

> ... the patterns that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty familiar world inhabited by natives... exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement constantly being unsettled and unsettling others. (1994: 30)

For Said it is the exile immigrant, the expatriate, the amateur who must uphold the traditional role of the intellectual as the voice of integrity and courage, able to speak out against those in power.

Said situates his intellectual attitude in the line of Goethian and Auerbachian concept of 'Weltliteratur'. According to him,

> ... the main requirement for the kind of philological understanding Auerbach and his predecessors were talking about and tried to practice was one that

> sympathetically and subjectively entered into the life of a written text as seen from the perspective of its time and its author... thus the interpretative mind actively makes a place in it for a foreign other. (2003: 650)

Said's model for a secular and humanist intellectual is marked by the coupling of Gramsci's committed intellectual with Julien Benda's 'learned scholar' in search of disinterested principles of justice and truth. Gramsci speaks about two kinds of intellectuals: the organic intellectual and the traditional intellectual. A traditional intellectual is somebody who sees himself/herself as essentially maintaining status quo, and the examples that Gramsci gives are people like priests or teachers in school, who essentially recirculate the same type of orthodoxy from generation to generation. The organic intellectual, first of all, thinks of himself as organically connected to some movement, to some class or party or association or group that has an interest in changing the current social and political scene. Working on Gramsci's line of organic intellectual, Said defines the intellectual as

> ... neither a pacifier nor a consensus builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or readymade clichés, or smooth, ever accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or the conventional have to say, what they do, not just passively unwilling, but actively willing to say so in public (1994: 102).

Criticism locates the intellectual in the world; Said's worldliness is primarily related to intellectual concerns in civil and political culture. In this sense, his approach is formulated by a deep conviction of the locatedness of the intellectual activity of the critic. The critic, like the text, is constantly shaped by the complexity of his or her being in the world. Said does not endorse the notion of totally disengaged, other worldly, ivory towered thinkers, intensely private and devoted to abstruse, perhaps even occult, subjects. Indeed, he holds that there is no such thing as private intellectual. Rather, the life of an intellectual is a complicated mix between the private and public, "since the moment you set down words and publish them you have entered the public world"(Barghoutti 2006:16-22). Said's very life embodied the involvement of the intellectual.This was characterized by an amazing blend of dedicated discipline and an unrestrained love for scholastic freedom and quest for truth, regard-

less of where this might lead him. These very qualities are what led him to the Palestinians democratic opposition.

Said was one of the leading oppositional intellectual of his time who was dedicated, in his own words, to "speaking truth to power." Power in his work was not just military, political or economic power but, drawing on Foucault, the power to produce knowledge, images, versions of other people which became accepted as the truth. This relationship between knowledge and power lies at the heart of Said's work. Part of his intellectual restlessness was the search for a better way of thinking about this relationship: how political or imperial power be connected to cultural power. The ultimate function of an intellectual is to "speak truth to power." Speaking truth to power, says Said, "is no panglossian idealism. It is carefully weighing alternatives, picking the right change" (1994: 102).

Society is managed around consent, consensus, majority opinion and manipulations of opinion. Said writes: "it is easy to repeat collective formulas, stock phrases, and popular metaphors for 'us'and 'them', dealing with this stereotyping is a major question for the intellectual today" (1994: 32). For Said, one of the important roles played by the intellect is therefore that of critical of power. His role is to keep troubling that consensus constantly, to introduce a kind of critical and political reflection that is too often lost. Said writes: "the intellectual must be involved in a lifelong dispute with the guardians of sacred vision or the text" (89). In his book *Orientalism* (1978) he does exactly that. Here he has shown how the whole world system of ideas about the orient was created out of the need of the western society to portray and depict another part of the world that Said terms as an "imaginary geography" that would function as a kind of permanent other.

Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* writes:

> There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain (1973: 258-9).

Said's contrapuntal reading has a comparable force to Benjamin's

formulation. A reading which is against the grain thus brings to light such concealed social guilts and responsibilities. Said's term 'Orientalism' has tended to involve an exposure of the hidden colonialist or imperialist presence in canonical literature. He suggests that cultural identities need to be analysed not as God given essences but "as contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions: Greeks always require barbarians, and Europeans Africans, Orientals etc" (1993: 60).

Said's postcolonial theory provides the basis for the method of contrapuntal pedagogy. His basic argument is about Asia that has been produced in the European countries. During centuries since European imperialism first began to take hold, there has been produced a discourse about Arabs, Indians, Chinese and Japanese culture and that this discourse has eventually come to assume a reality of its own. Postcolonial deconstruction of literary representation involves much more than recognizing and dealing with psychological prejudices. They involve deconstructing texts to show how literary and other representations serve political purposes and support the maintenance of the economic power for neocolonial interests. The aim of this teaching strategy is to allow "the adjunction of other texts to generate metaphors, to reveal absences, to expose the scribal power [of neocolonialism] even when it denies or deprecates its control of utterances" (Tiffin & Lawson: 1994: 234).

As an intellectual in the capacity of a teacher in the university we are empowered, validated and mandated to teach great works of past. As teachers of literature we should try to show how literary works exist not in some abstract sort of utopian place, detached from the world, but as part of the world. Said takes some great works of the nineteenth century novelists like Dickens, Jane Austen, Flaubert, and Conrad to show how the context of such a work depended upon knowledge. These texts cannot be reduced to the level of text but has to be shown in its historical context, namely as the context between Europe and the rest of the world which is being imperialized and conquered. What we can do as teachers is to show that the view of the world in Dickens or in Conrad led to the

revolt, resistance and oppositions of the natives. It has not only produced movements of rebellion against imperialism, but in fact nationalist movements that produced new states and new literatures.

A similar kind of attempt has been made by Gayatri Spivak to bridge the gap between theory and practice by bringing philosophy into the classroom and applying it to pedagogy in *Outside the Teaching Machine* (1993). Spivak talks of a need for pedagogy that would critically look at the role of essentialism in the politics of identity and culture and alert us to true value-coding operating in any system. As teachers we must train ourselves in deconstructive thinking so as to avoid being trapped by the authority of "concept metaphors" such as origins, national identities, citizenship, democracy or constitutionality. We need to view teaching as a question of strategy rather than theory, in a double sense: by choosing what we teach and how we teach. We can help our students see that knowledge like a strategy, far from being disinterested, universal and good for all cases, often suits a situation. So, for Said as for Spivak, our job as an intellectual, as teachers is to change the perception of students who think literature is a thing of the past; we should put it in the context of a continuing contest over values, perceptions and ideas that we are involved in.

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NISSIM EZEKIEL'S HOMEWARD PILGRIMAGE

S. Bharadwaj

Nissim Ezekiel's poetry and plays show two distinct and identical images. His creative endeavours are marked by an inward tendency, but there is also a parallel effort to project his self into other identities. While it is true that his poetry records his deepest personal anxieties, the readers can note at the same time his keen interest in dramatic literature:

> I act to end the acting,
> not to be known but to know,
> to be new, to become a form and find
> my relevance. (*Collected Poems* 151)

His poetry in general and his poem "Enterprise" in particular would throw some light on this aspect of his artistic intention. T.S. Eliot's dictum that all great poetry is dramatic (*Selected Essays* 51) can be applied to Ezekiel's poems. A close study of "Enterprise" brings out Ezekiel's anxiety and his commitment to explore the possibility of an extension in his artistic consciousness, to determine the "exact name" of his sensibility, and to find his own place in the post-Independent Indian English literary tradition.

Ezekiel had before him three norms: amplitude and largeness represented by the romantic poets, Shelley and Wordsworth; the poetry of Yeats that probed the human heart and conveyed the mystery of existence; and the dramatic ideal represented by Auden. The first stanza of the poem, "Enterprise," gives an exposition of the first. His attitudes to life and art do not coalesce; they clash. The result is hesitancy, incoherence and inconsistency. And this explains his virtual repudiation of the Romantic poetry:

> Exalting minds and making all
> The burdens light. The second stage
> Explored but did not test the call.
> The sun beat down to match our rage. (*CP* 117)

Autobiographical poetry that records personal experience and views is emphatically rejected in favour of width and objectivity.

The word "burdens" becomes increasingly associated in Ezekiel's mind with pilgrimage. "Making all the burdens light" is to relax in comfort which is bound to deaden one's sensibility. Ezekiel observes

in "A Time to Change":

> Words, looks, gestures, everything betrays
> The unquiet mind, the emptiness within.
> Sunlight swarms around him and the summer
> Evenings melt in rich fatness on his tongue
> But he is rigid, barricaded from
> The force of flower or bird by what he reads. (*CP* 8)

There is a further implication that to confront reality fearlessly one must be prepared to volunteer for more burdens: "I would rather suffer when I must" (11).

The poet is to probe the inner mind, not the trivial and ephemeral aspects of personal experience; and to explore the inner reality is to confront the "uncouth physical realities." This concern with subjective experience is not to be confused with egotism. Ezekiel responds to the "creative flow":

> Then we set to work as we had planned,
> Not for us the dream, the dark illusion,
> Relying only on the skilful hand
> To guard us from an abstract love's diffusion. (*CP* 32)

An egotist imposes his own pattern on reality; but the poet's task, as Ezekiel envisages it, is "a pilgrimage" and he in this "enterprise" is to confront "all the burdens" and not to attempt to explain it.

Ezekiel, who harshly censures romantic vagueness and diffusion, is full of praise for the poetry of W.B. Yeats. Yeats's poetry, Ezekiel notes, articulates the perplexities in human experience, and the perplexities are all related to the central question of man's place in the universe and his ultimate destiny. It is Yeats's poetry that offers a hope and direction to Ezekiel's activity as a poet:

> We stood it very well, I thought,
> Observed and put down copious notes
> On things the peasants sold and bought.
> The way of serpents and of goats,
> Three cities where a sage had taught. (118)

Attention is focused chiefly on the inward states of the pilgrims, and this inner drama takes place against a background into which varied contrasts — ignorance and knowledge, life and art, past and present, blood and wisdom are woven. Yeats possesses the spiritual power of "a sage" that tends to purify his animal nature and that distin-

guishes him from creatures of the lower order. All great poetry is personal in the sense that all observations and experiences before they become fit subjects for poetry must pass through the transforming process of the poet's imagination. Ezekiel's censure of the Romantic poetry and his praise of "the human balance humanly ... acquired" (40) bears the unmistakable stamp of Yeats.

If the predominant effect of Ezekiel's first volume, *A Time to Change*, is romantic and narrative, the succession of events and images marks the progress of an artist; it started as 'a pilgrimage.' In the next work, *Sixty Poems* (1953), unlike the first one, his characteristic method is exploration that involves and includes questioning, debate, oscillation, and consequent shifts in attitude and mood. He finds a way to win:

> Of life uprooted by a sudden storm
> And what he did to set it right again,
> The company he sought to keep him warm
> And why it failed him — what, how, why, where, when. (*CP* 44)

Ezekiel seldom narrates; he unfolds the process of "transmutation" in its totality and complexity, and this enactment of the process of becoming provides a sense of dramatic immediacy. "He talks less and listens more as a poet, that is, he subordinates his ideas and feelings to the spirit of his art" (*Selected Prose* 15). Ezekiel as a result of his "sense explosions," his "agitations of the mind and marrow," after dissolving "all the equipage of doubt and dissipation," attempts "the enterprise" in *Sixty Poems* and asserts "in the common dance" to merge "into a wider, warmer meaning." His "change of heart requires this transmutation" (56).

In the third stanza, the most dramatic of all the stanzas in the poem "Enterprise," the situation is more complicated. It posits two alternative choices both of which are partly valid, and each attitude by itself gives a distorted view of reality. Ezekiel seems to emphasize only the negative aspect of each side. Though the impression persists that each side is right within limits, it appears that Ezekiel's vision is ironic rather than tragic:

> But when the differences arose
> On how to cross a desert patch,
> We lost a friend whose stylish prose

> Was quite the best of all our batch. (*CP* 118)

He, while censuring Yeats's preoccupation with the metaphysical self, aspires to the wider horizons of Eliot's poetry, the craftsmanship of *The Waste Land.* His anthology, *The Third* (1958), implies his considerable departure from Yeats, and his approach is both a defence and a repudiation of his great "friend". "The friend denied, the unanswered letter, / Through winters of desire like ghosts appear (*CP* 90). But when Ezekiel comes closer to Eliot, the distance between him and Yeats becomes wider.

The ideal of dramatic objectivity as represented by Eliot also has only a limited significance for Ezekiel. Ezekiel's remark in the poem "Enterprise," "A shadow falls on us — and grows," shows the nature of his response. Eliot appeals to him increasingly as a poet of contemporary reality of perplexity and futility, not as a poet of impersonal art. Ezekiel always remembers his commitment to the enterprise of Yeats, "Open, warm, and planned to give/ A truly bird's-eye view of things" (103). For he is sure that "profusion only comes with patient wings" (90). His awareness of the Yeatsian art "as a masquerade of friendly mortality," of his own image of the transparent self, "spasmodic and repetitive," his knowledge of the Eliotian "rough-textured certainties," "damned impertinent ironic view of things," (45) his own limitations and self-doubts forced him to abandon the unattainable pursuit of Eliotian model of poetry.

In *The Third*, Ezekiel, having turned poetry as "prodigious music of our silences," turns to prose as the "natural language" to "act again the ritual of mortality," to find "a time to change himself by play," (87) and hopes to create problem plays:

> I must define myself, the place
> And time, the starting line or tape,
> To mirror for the seeking face
> What love of self distorts its shape. (*CP* 112)

It is implicit that Ezekiel would endeavour to write plays reflecting the same theme of his poetry, "dry throated suffering and helplessness," "the emptiness of loud existence" (80) to live "beyond his death."

Till now Ezekiel had sought to emulate one poet after another, but this period also marked a ceaseless quest for his own identity.

The need to find his own individuality was felt more urgently in *The Unfinished Man* (1960), an anthology of ten poems. In the fourth stanza of the poem "Enterprise," Ezekiel examines with remarkable perspicuity the relevance and the relative significance of the leader of the poets of the nineteen thirties, Auden, and also his own place in the Indian English literary tradition:

> Another phase was reached when we
> Were twice attacked, and lost our way.
> A section claimed its liberty
> To leave the group. I tried to pray.
> Our leader said he smelt the sea. (*CP* 118)

What inspires Ezekiel to accept Auden as his "leader" is the idea that it is not enough for a modern poet to follow in the footsteps of the older masters; he must, if he is to find his own bearing in an evolving society, discern the laws of change and the shifting patterns of ideas and norms, and express the deepest urges of the contemporary epoch. He welcomes Auden's intellectual, "urban" soul:

> The city like a passion burns.
> He dreams of morning walks, alone,
> And floating on a wave of sand.
> But still his mind its traffic turns
> Away from beach and tree and stone
> To kindred clamour close at hand. (*CP* 117)

The phenomenon that strikes Ezekiel most in the contemporary culture of Auden is the shifting of interest to the inner reality of the human heart behind "the city's lights" (*CP* 120).

In the last stanza of "Enterprise," Ezekiel records his final attainment to "patient love relaxing on a hill" in which he ignores the journey of the Surrealistic poet, Dylan Thomas. His affirmation that the Post-Modernist Thomas is deeper than the modernists Yeats, Eliot and Auden, implies a value-judgement; the inner reality of the human mind, with its groping in darkness for light, for self-realization, is richer in depth than the more imposing actions on the cosmic plane that Yeats, Eliot and Auden considered their appointed mission to render. Thomas sets himself to the task of exploring the inner world of man relieved of the trappings of theology, dogma, and

social realism. Moreover, he brings in an enlightenment and liberates Auden's contemporaries from anguish and anxiety. They understand that their commitment to Dylan Thomas's poetry would mean "a certain happiness." Ezekiel says:

> The fog is thick, and men are lost
> Who wanted only quiet lives
> And failed to count the growing cost
> Of cushy jobs or unloved wives. (*CP* 121)

But in the process Dylan Thomas also creates his own dogmas and set of beliefs.

The historical sense of English poetry of Romanticism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism gives Ezekiel an insight into the past and the present, throws light on the distinctiveness of each epoch and also the continuity of movement, and clarifies the task of the poet in a specific context. The pursuit of poetry, an "enterprise", is identical to a pilgrim's progress, and even the most powerful minds are subject to the conditions imposed by historical necessity. These conditions change continually as one phase of history gives place to another, and there are corresponding changes in the realm of thought and poetry. He finds:

> The landscape in its geologic prime
> Dissolves to show its quintessential slime.
> A million stars are blotted out. I think
> Of each historic passion as a blink
> That happened to the sad eye of Time. (*CP* 129)

The evolutionary progression as Ezekiel envisages in the poem "Enterprise" is from amplitude to depth, from comparative simplicity and innocence to increasing complexity, from elementary consciousness to greater degrees of self-consciousness. This self-awareness does not take away the burden of the journey of the poet-pilgrim, Ezekiel. The home-truth forces him, on the other hand, to face reality:

> Our deeds were neither great nor rare.
> Home is where we have to earn our grace. (*CP* 118)

The journey sharpens his perception, and to his waking mind the spectacle of reality reveals itself in all its naked terror. The stress is on the moment of final illumination but the poet has also a vision of the dark night of the soul straining for light.

Ezekiel's task is to render this journey of the searching mind; and if his rendering is to gain in depth, he must undergo the whole journey himself as a dramatist and assimilate the universal experience into his own personal consciousness. Reality, more specifically, the human situation, may be consuming but it is futile to conceive of the ultimate paradisiac bliss, "grace" without completing the whole journey through hell and purgatory. The last stanza of the poem is in the nature of a prayer; the poet asks for a new birth and hopes that the resurrection would prove meaningful.

That Ezekiel was quite aware of his own ineptitude as a poet is evident from his poem "Enterprise." He knew that his poems, narrative and lyrical, show little dramatic skill. Undoubtedly, one of the things that distinguishes his poetry from that of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors is this dramatic power. The essence of dramatic action lies in conflict, and the clash of opposites ensures both complication and development. One significant aspect of Ezekiel's art is that the action in poems is built up more on contrast than on conflict, and it is interesting to note how this determines and affects the structure of his poem, "Enterprise." The first stanza apparently centres on the opposition of the actual and the ideal, "the sun" and the "rage". In the second stanza, the contrast of stillness and noise, life and death, ancient arcadia and modern cities, and of innocence and intelligence produces little complexity of effect. In the third stanza, tragedy may ensue out of a collision between right and wrong, light and shade, and moral good and moral evil. But the tragic action may also involve two contending loyalties, the clash of two forces each of which has spiritual value and can rightfully claim human allegiance. The clash of generations offers a scope for dramatic conflict in the fourth stanza. The hope of the "leader" and the hopelessness of "a straggling crowd" in the fifth stanza, and the emergence of darkness and light, the setting sun and the rising sun in the last stanza allow of meaningful opposition. The pilgrimage-pattern in the poem "Enterprise" gives it a symbolic character, and the drama is shifted to the interior region. The poet-pilgrim journeys from bafflement to sad wisdom, and the framework of the poem does not permit any conflict on the physical plane;

conflict in the usual sense is here replaced by spiritual tension generated by perplexity, awe and ambivalent intention. Ezekiel's art of characterization reveals that his major characters in the poem — the aspiring youth, the visionary, the self-exiled, the lover in exultation and agony, the lonely wanderer in search of truth — are all partial projections of his own personality. These characters are all in a sense pilgrims in quest of an ideal.

The poetic manner of "Enterprise" is indicative of not merely the quality of Ezekiel's craftsmanship but also of his attitude to life. In his own life and work he is a pilgrim as well as a quester who distrusts dogma and certitude. He journeys across darkness carrying the burden of anxiety. The creative disturbance and uncertainty are reflected in the shifts of mood, and this inward debate, a poetic analogue of conflicts, gives his poem "Enterprise" a dramatic character. The creative quest also points to the kind of drama in which Ezekiel could excel and attain salvation. The poet-pilgrim as a dramatist hopes to explore the inner reality of human experience and aspires to a world beyond this temporal order in quest of salvation. The evolutionary process as revealed in the poem "Enterprise" is marked by a progressive enrichment of the human mind that looks inward and releases itself gradually from the external reality. Ezekiel's spiritual journey as a poet becomes at the same time explorative of his destiny as a dramatist.

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POSTCOLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE POETRY OF NIRANJAN MOHANTY

Sudhir K. Arora

Don't take away my tongue
whenever I shall be born, I shall
taste the fruit and interrogate you, Oh Lord. (*Prayers*: 53)

I hunted words; wounded them and tamed them
to my basic need of articulating my silences. (*Game*: 63)

Grant me an eye to see things
as they are. (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*: 99)

These are the excerpts from the poetic collections of "a master poet in Niranjan Mohanty" (Nayar: 81) who has already published six remarkable collections of poems. The poet in Mohanty explores the postcolonial space, establishes his identity, articulates his silences, interrogates to eradicate his doubts, reveals his concerns for contemporariness, becomes angry with God on certain issues and finally seeks solace in Indian spiritualism that opens the way to 'Love' for Him.

Indian literature in English, particularly poetry of the post-Independence era, is replete with the crucial issue of establishing identity, which is the core of Postcolonialism, as the colonized, after getting freedom from the colonial rule, raised their voice against the past exploitations and oppressions and attempted at establishing their identity. Niranjan Mohanty thinks that one of the most interesting, intriguing and disquieting anxieties of the postcolonial literatures is the question of identity whether it is of the writer or of poet, of the nation or of region, and of the national or regional literatures (Mohnaty: 16). Niranjan Mohanty the poet is very conscious of the identity question and believes that "no order of things obfuscate / my identity" (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha:* 154). No doubt he is "a frail, common human being, born here" and is "naked to the bones," yet he is proud of being what he is. To explore his identity, the poet learns "how to begin a dialogue / with none but myself" (*On Touching You and Other Poems:* 64). He feels: "It's perhaps, time to learn / what makes me myself" (*Life Lines:* 40). He associates himself

with the world and tries to locate it in himself. He makes an inward exploration in order to reach the core of his identity: "Every moment I live, I try / to locate the world in me: / its dust, debris and dung / its noise, nutrine and song" (*Life Lines*: 32). Even touching the beloved does not let him lose his identity but rather makes him realize his own self: "On touching you / I begin to touch myself, / and all that makes me myself" (*On Touching You and Other Poems*: 59). The protagonist asks his wife to learn the intensity of love and states that he is not ready to die with her as he wishes to have his own way and allows her to have her way: "Learn the alphabets of love and living, together / but certainly not to die together; for I never wish / you to prove yourself a *sati*, this way. / You shall have your way, and I mine" (*Oh This Bloody Game!*: 41). He likes to be lonely in order to explore his 'Self' in him: "How am I to know what flows within, / what makes me myself, what saps my song / if I'm not alone?" (*Oh This Bloody Game!:* 5) He identifies himself with the native landscapes that provide him a sense of belongingness. Again, the same touch is in 'Ants' where he epitomizes his feelings of identity. He offers his prayers to be known and begins his "dialogue with ancestors here" (*Life Lines*: 47).

It was the conspiracy of the colonial rule to introduce English with the intention of converting the colonized into mimic men, but this tool proved to be the nail in their coffin as the Indians learnt how to pay them in the same coin. But today the situation is different and now it is not the language of the English only. It has become a global language, and has become a medium to represent the east to the west in an emphatic manner. Through it, our endeavour is to retrieve the indigenous culture. Niranjan Mohanty is well aware of the language question, and hence thinks that it is only through language he can find a link to tie the other members of his tribe. He ponders over it, asks God to teach him "how to begin my lesson with this / talkative machine called language" (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*: 38) and finally concludes: "Perhaps language is a river now / where I can swim and float any way I like / only to get a feel that I'm a part of the tribe" (37). Therefore, he chooses to write in English with the intention of introducing the orient to the occident.

However, he is conscious that his English is not purely English, "It's half-Orissan, half-Indian" and gives him "the flavour of watered rice, / the fragrance of plough-shared and soil" (75).

Being a postcolonial poet, Mohanty is not blind to the contemporary Indian landscapes which reflect their original colour. The poet weeps over the pitiable condition of his countrymen. He opens the windows for light but they show him the true picture of the country. Very candidly he expresses: "here it is my country / burning, and every instant falling apart, / Terrorists, their tempestuous uproar / everywhere. / Bears and tigers lolling out thirsty tongues / like the tropical summer. / In the temples, blood bath. / In the streets, bomb blast / In the house, frozen-necked fears. / And a godless emptiness / everywhere. / What hell my country has turned into!" (*Oh This Bloody Game!:* 79). In this global world when we are talking of progress and technology, the farmers are committing suicide, the girls are being raped and human flesh is being sold for the sake of bread. He becomes so emotional that he interrogates God: "How could you bear such sights, Oh Lord, / when stones in your temples melt away?" (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*: 18). It is hunger that is responsible for misery and pain. The poet feels that this hunger "lingers infinitely, in belly and loin" (*On Touching You and Other Poems:* 79), and is found everywhere. On account of hunger, the father, "fatigued and frightened, sells away / the only daughter merely to know that / her tongue feels the taste of bread" (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*: 56). The poet is also conscious of the ecological imbalance which causes the natural calamities. To avoid such natural calamities, he asks us to plant more trees and very humbly appeals: "Don't denude the forest. / Don't disturb nature. / Ecology would be imbalanced / Nature's beauty never fades" (*Life Lines:* 68). The poet's heart is bruised at the demolition of the mosque. He mentions Jalianawalabagh tragedy, the Kalinga war, partition, the killing of Mahatma Gandhi and the murder of Indira Gandhi by her own guards. These tragedies make his vision tragic and dark. The frank and honest sketches of Indian contemporary landscape make him a poet of social reality.

The pollens of globalization, a new brand of colonialism, are

blowing with the pure Indian air, and this is weakening the immune system of the Indian culture. Only the indigenous yoga can restore the health. This yoga is the traditional rich Indian culture. The need is to imbibe the Indian spiritualism which can save us from the after-effects of the pollens of globalization. The poet in Mohanty is quite sentient to the change that has come and yet to come. It is the change that has come in all the spheres of life. The colonialists had to retreat their steps because of the change that came in the attitudes of the colonized towards their indigenous culture. The colonized for the colonialists were no better than stones. "All must change, must beget a change" (*Krishna*: 77). The poet makes the stones lively and gives them an identity of their own. The postcolonial stance can be traced in such lines: "What you believed to be stones, / are not exactly so. They wear / a humid heart: lively, throbbing, feeling. / And words whose meanings betrayed you / once, become an open book; a brook / that reflects your image" (*On Touching You and Other Poems:* 2). Not to talk of stones, seasons are also treated in the light of the occidental globalization and the orient spiritualism. The monster globalization has gripped winter and injected its poison into its veins. Now the winter has become a mimic or the representative of the western culture. Through its global allurements, this winter has taken the people in its grip slowly and slowly without their knowing. The poet states: "I never knew / that the slow winter / would make me its humble prey / some day" (*On This Bloody Game!:* 19). Under its impact, the poet feels rich physically; it can please the body but the soul remains unsatisfied. Hence he feels like a fish out of water and longs for summer that will restore his emotional health through the yoga of spiritualism. It is summer, i.e., Indian culture that makes him sing song of love and life. Now he sings the song of summer forgetting winter: "It's summer once again. / And my tongue, ready / for its song: / mangoes, pineapples, / watermelons / yellow lemons. / Sandalwood paste / on my sun-tanned back / and jasmines' twilit faces" (*On Touching You and Other Poems*: 1). He realizes that he was wrong, and hence does not wish to speak of winter, the occident. His roots are in Indian soil and hence, will not think of the western winter: "I begin to realize

that / the less we speak of winter / the more is the glitter / of summer or any other season / that sustains us , trains us / to face the stings of pain, / in a night without rain" (32).

The poet is depressed and feels isolated when he sees the commercialization not only of commodities but also of relationships. As he lives in an age of globalization, he talks of trade and finds even God a trader who runs Bliss bazaar: "When will you make me a harlot / in your Bliss bazaar, Oh Lord? / When will you taste my warmth?" (*Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*: 126). Expressions like 'Bliss bazaar' and 'my warmth' are quite penetrating and have layers of meanings with commercial and devotional implications. When the poet wishes to be a harlot, he intends to be redeemed. Sublimation is the concealed goal he yearns for. Like Mirabai, he surrenders himself to Lord Jagannath. The intensity in emotion emerging from his devotional intimacy with his Lord can be felt in his poetry. The postcolonial effect is evident in his treatment of God. As he treats him as a buyer, he asks him not to "take away my tongue / whenever I shall be born, I shall / taste the fruit and interrogate you, Oh Lord" (53). But at the next moment he becomes submissive and asks for forgiveness. He begins and ends his day with God's name. He says: "Forgive me, Oh Lord of the language / of my prayers! Be not infatuated / by my teasing. I seek your blessings" (114).

Mohanty's postcolonial consciousness can be seen in his treatment of Indian culture which he has imbibed in his life, and accordingly he lives and feels satisfaction within. Indianness seems to flow in his veins. He is a typical Indian who believes in fate and is superstitious to the core. No wonder this is the very feeling that makes him optimistic and joyfully he bears the miseries and sorrows of life: "I'm bound by *karma* and *dharma* / I believe in fate. I believe in / horoscope and palmistry / And at times I'm superstitious" (143). His faith in God is unshakable and he knows the plan of God who creates, cares and kills. One is haunted by the flavour of these lines: "Mythology my granny told me / years ago under the lamplight / still rings in my ears and impels me / to believe that you create us, / care for us, rear us in rain / and in the reptiled hours of dusk, / only to kill us. Aren't you great / this way, oh my leased

Lord?" (62) In the tradition of Bhakti-cult, he asks God to make him a flower and choose him to be his bride: "Will you not make me a flower / in your garland? / Choose me to be your bride?" (5)

Love is the key that can open the locked hearts that have buried the spiritualism under the impact of materialism, an offshoot of globalization. Mohanty cannot tolerate this mental attitude of the people who are running after the western culture forgetting their own culture in the hope of glamorous life meant for bodily comforts and pleasures. He makes even Krishna a common human being who feels like a common man and pleads for the path of love as suggested by the ancestors. It is Krishna who says: "We shall read the mysteries / sleeping beneath the graves / of our white-clad ancestors / who know nothing but love, / who only bless us to be happy / and live beyond time's talon (*Krishna*: 69). For him love is the religion that shows him the way to eternity. Even in his love for Radha, Krishna remains human and lets her know the fact that "meeting you is the same as meeting myself" (39) and "without you, I'm nothing (60).

As regards poetic technique, Niranjan Mohanty makes a journey that starts from *Silencing the Words* and is still in progress with the milestones like *Krishna* and *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha* in which he succeeds in developing his own idiom that reflects Indian cultural heritage to a great extent. However, in the beginning of his poetic journey, the poet is "enchanted by the rhythmical quality of Eliot's lines" (Interview: 27). In his later collections like *Krishna* and *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha,* he gets over the Eliotian flavour, though sometimes the touch can be felt. To illustrate it, two extracts are cited below, one from his early collection *Silencing the Words* and the other from *Krishna*:

> The factory siren hoots.
> You always think
> of squeezing the month to a week.
> The factory siren hoots.
> A cup of tea and a smoke intimate you
> a lonely heaven. As if it were fated so.
> As if this hour is for remembering the drams.
> As if this hour is for ignoring the durable pains,

for emancipating the helpless wills concealed. (*Silencing the Words*: 29)

If you disbelieve me and my words,
white or blue I shall wind up this game from the earth
and roll this universe into a paper ball
and throw it out though the window
of your eyes. (*Krishna*: 49)

Phrases and figures speak of the poetic genius of Niranjan Mohanty. Images stick on the mind and open their layers with meaningful picture. What strikes me in these figures, phrases and images is the revelation of cultural heritage that reflects the intensity and dimensions of life. Phrase like 'the Ahalya of silence' (*Silencing the Words*: 52), 'reading the Gita of silence' (66) and 'chewing betel-nuts of pain' (*Life Lines*: 46) are the instances that exhibit the myth and spirit of India. The use of alliteration, personification, transferred epithet, metaphors and above all similes make the readers feel the inventive quality of Mohanty's creative medium. Simile in "Like cursed stones, / we wait the touch of a miracle / to save us from the crazy eagle" (*On Touching You and Other Poems*: 10) creates an image of the colonized who are cursed like stones and waiting for a man like Gandhi or any miraculous man for a touch in order to save them from the crazy eagle which is none other than the colonialism in the shape of globalization. Alliterations like "the green grammar of my grief" (*Oh This Bloody Game!*: 13) and "hurtles my heart's hurly house where uneven fears hut in" (18) are effective and surprise us with their sense and sound. The poet is very careful in constructing the structure of his lines refreshingly free from grammatically lapses. Ezekielian syndrome is absent in his poetry. Synthesis is the proper technique that is responsible for accuracy. The use of synthesis can be traced in almost all his poems. Mark the lines for the poet's craziness about the rules of grammar particularly synthesis: "My words have worn wings / and fled away, leaving me / aquiver in a fog -white down, / keeping me a wake to the might / that crawls irredeemably / to my blood's fables" (80). This is the idiom that he has developed and it reflects his own identity. His poetry is purely postcolonial in texture and structure. Form and content are properly interwoven in order to create an

authentic and original voice to articulate. Through technique, the poet succeeds in his mission of preserving the rich Indian heritage. I quite agree with Padhy when he says: "The poet is rooted to the traditions ad cultures he lives by, and that his vision is one of preserving the values which lie embedded in such traditions and cultures" (Padhy: 90). It is hoped that with his forthcoming volumes, *A House of Rains* and *Tiger and Other Poems,* he will go on with his poetic journey that he started as 'The outsider' in *Silencing the Words* and touched the poetic milestone as 'The Insider' in *Prayers to Lord Jagannath.*

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BOOK REVIEWS

S. VISWANATHAN, *ESSAYS IN INTERPRETATION*

(New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2007), pp.236, Rs. 550.00

Suresh Chandra Dwivedi

Essays in Interpretation contains twenty-four scholarly essays published by S. Viswanathan from time to time in various journals and anthologies. The book is divided into three sections. The first section contains six essays on Milton, the second eleven essays on various authors like Spenser, Marvell, Dryden, Sir William Jones, Shelley, Keats, Eliot and Yeats, and the third seven essays on currents in contemporary critical theory and practice. This is an indispensable book for students, teachers and scholars alike. The author examines certain poetic and dramatic works, and covers a wide range of historical-critical interpretative approaches and methods. I have no doubt that the essays sharpen our perception of the works analyzed and interpreted by him.

Visawnathan is a distinguished critic who wishes to understand the past out of his serious concerns with the present. He is studying Milton and other authors for contemporary reasons (See the seven seminal essays included in Section C). The essays uncover many facts which lie buried in the body of the text. There are six brilliant essays on Milton in which the author uses the tools of Indian aesthetics and Western criticism. He refers to many sources which are necessary for the better understanding of Milton. The short essay an Milton's treatment of seasons in *The Paradise Lost* is perceptive. He writes: "Besides changing his habits of composition according to the seasons, he is said to have suspended composition altogether during certain parts of the year" (26). Here Viswanathan excels as a biographical critic and throws light on the self-contradiction of Milton on the basis of his study of the poet's life. Viswanathan is fond of telling the truths as brilliantly as he can, and is deeply tied to the historical, social, cultural and literary changes. The article on *Paradise Regained* is profitable and shows the evolution of Christ's idea of himself and his sacred mission. Then there is a remarkable essay which compares and contrasts Abdiel by

Milton and Vibhishana by Valmiki. The author is well-versed in the poetry and poetics of the East and the West and all the essays of this book are proof of it. He is committed to comparative literature and comparative poetics and moves from one text to another, from one culture to another. All the six essays on Milton highlight many new features of Milton's poetry for the first time.

There are eleven essays in Section Two which offer us a close study of different authors like Spenser, Marlowe, Marvell, Dryden, Sir William Jones, Shelley, Keats, Eliot, Hopkins and Yeats in the light of Indian and Western poetics. The first essay entitled "A Context of Spenser's Episode of Despair" scrutinizes Spenser's depiction of despair in *The Faerie Queene,* Book I. Viswanathan's own words clarify his position: "At the very least, an appreciation of how Spenser draws upon the Morality figure of Despair, directly or indirectly, and, still less directly, on the debate of the Four Daughters of God would bring home to us the preoccupations and the processes of mind of the poet in the classic episode of Despair" (56). The next essay "*The Jew of Malta*: Elizabethan and Caroline" in which the learned critic has successfully probed the possibilities of reaction and response to the *Jew of Malta* in the light of the changed theatrical, socio-cultural and political atmosphere of the Caroline Age. He re-examines all the issues concerning this play and constantly compares both the Elizabethan and the Caroline responses to Marlowe's great work. The nineth essay titled "On Marvell's 'Garden'" begins with an analysis of the poem, but soon it is transformed into an incisive study of the whole, leaving the emphasis on the parts. He also concentrates upon the central aspects of the poem which have not been touched earlier. The essay demonstrates the qualities of scruplousness and accuracy. "Dryden's Music Diptych" is another natable essay which is quite informative and interesting, and is concerned with "the-end-of century sense of the close of an era, which transpires from the poems and makes the lyrics at once a gathering-up of the ideas of music and at the same time a half-nostalgic and half-realistic odes to the departing ideas" (xvi). This essay is very well-written. The next essay of Section II is entitled "The Hymns of Sir William Jones". It goes to the credit of Prof. Viswanathan to

have brought these hymns to light by offering a perceptive interpretation of them. These hymns remind the reader of the Homeric and Orphic hymns and Indian Hymn Literature.

An interesting paper in Section II is devoted to Keats's concept of 'Negative Capability' as a sign of the poetic sensitivity. It is a short paper aiming at probing the idea of 'Negative Capability' in respect of backgrounds, premises and implications. Another good essay in this section of the book lays bare the antiphonal patterns in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"; it says many a new thing about Shelley and his poetic practice. We are told that Shelley visited Italian places of worship and was deeply influenced by Christian and Oriental Hymns. The critical piece that follows it is "Eliot and Shelley: A Sketch of Shifts in Attitude," which focuses on Eliot's changing views on Shelley and his assimilation of Shelley's influence. Viswanathan has ably applied the Rasa theory to Eliot's play *The Cocktell Party* in the next essay. The author, like Sanskrit critic Mallinath, amply shows his belief in the dictum "Namulam Likhyate Kinchit, Non Apekshit Kathyate" (A critic should not pronounce judgments on the works of arts without basis and he should not utter unnecessary things on an author or a work of art). He throws sufficient light on Hopkins's "'The Windhover': 108" in another piece. The last essay in Section II is on Yeats in which Viswanathan utilizes the primary and secondary sources; he quotes extensively from Yeats and other critics to establish his point.

Section III of the book consists of seven critical pieces which deal with different aspects of contemporary critical theory and actual practices. They examine the important trends like material bias of cultural politics, colonial-linguistico-cultural transcations, Post-Colonial perspectives on English literature, feminist critical discourse, cross-cultural dialogic correspondence, and theories of dramatic Illusion both Western and Eastern. All these essays are marked by rare scholarship and critical sharpness.

Viswanathan has definitely enriched Indian literary criticism by this book. It is astonishing that he knows so much about Indian and Western art and ideas. The book under review is illuminating; it is, indeed, an outstanding contribution to criticism.

BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, *LIGHT IN THE HOUSE*

(Bangalore: CVG Books, 2006), pp.152, Rs.200.00

O.P. Mathur

Basavaraj Naikar's works have solid bedrock of individual morality, social ethics, nationalism coupled with cosmopolitanism, and religion based not on meaningless rituals but on spirituality — one or more of which directly or indirectly pervade almost all his works. His short stories highlight the tragic consequences of the absence of individual morality and social values. But the religious and spiritual perspectives, which pervade his social ethics, clearly illuminate his works about saints and religious leaders either written originally in English or translated from Kannada into English. His *Light in the House* is a work on a saint significant in itself, for it has been originally written by Naikar in English. This biographical, rather hagiographic work, a 'novel' as he himself calls it in his 'Preface', allows him complete freedom to choose his subject, interpret the chief character Mohammad Sharif, a Hindu-cum-Muslim saint like Kabir, and embroider as he likes the biographical material with other major or minor characters, real or imaginary, and with natural or supernatural events.

Apparently, perhaps the term 'biographical novel' may be regarded as self-contradictory, for while a biography is based on the real events in a real person's life, a novel is mostly a piece of fiction — its world being a creation of the author's imagination. In this respect, a biographical novel is somewhat similar to a historical novel with a well-known background of history but with partly real and partly imaginary characters, like Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* or with almost wholly imaginary characters like Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities.* Naikar brilliantly creates imaginary characters and also events, specially supernatural ones, in this hagiographic novel so as to yield unquestioned enjoyment elevated into sublime spirituality, which should, as the title indicates, illuminate 'the House', i.e. our body, and through it all our thoughts and actions. The novelist makes the saint, Mohammad Sharif, say: "All of you lit only oil in your physical houses. But nobody cared to light the lamp of awareness in the house called your body" (*Light in the House,*

p.130). This message of Sharif Saheb, bursting out impromptu in various forms on every occasion through his countless songs, forms the axial basis of the work.

Examined as a novel, *Light in the House* is an authorial narration in which the novelist seems to be a presence everywhere describing in minute details whatever he observes with a glow of realism and credibility thus developing the whole novel. Even the supernatural phenomena like the birth of Sharif Saheb, his blessings, curses or forecasts, clairvoyance, walking in the air, the disciple's sufferings reflected in his guru's body and felt by him, etc., like other events which do not flow from character, are thus made acceptable in a hagiographical novel. The narration of a biographical novel is, of course, chronologically linear. But in this novel it never becomes monotonous and is often full of suspense which makes it unputtable. The major characters like Sharif Saheb and his guru Govindabhatta look rounded and three dimensional in the beginning, but are soon elevated into two-dimensional spiritual beings. It is rather the minor characters like Sharif Saheb's young wife and the villagers with their discordant responses who are more human and interesting.

Naikar's choice of the subject deserves high appreciation, for it embodies a fervent appeal not only for communal harmony but also for liberalism in social conduct and religion as against rigid mortifying orthodoxies, the equality of man and his merit as against the caste-system, and, last but not the least, the message of universal love and peace conveyed by Sharif Saheb through his numerous songs bursting out of his soul. Emphasizing the unity of all religions, Sharif Saheb says, "Any action done without a sense of ego happens to be *namaz*" (p.51).

The saint, Mohammad Sharif, is a living embodiment of all the virtues so relevant to the Indian society of today. His message conveyed through his life should be translated into as many Indian languages as possible, especially into Hindi and Urdu. Will some charitably minded translators and organizations come forward? In future editions the press too should not tease the reader's imagination by leaving here and there a few pages unprinted.

CHARU SHEEL SINGH, *KASHI: A MANDALA POEM* (New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2007), pp.xii+92, Rs.150.00

O.P. Budholia

Kashi: A Mandala Poem begins with the metaphysics of the cosmic seed (*bindu*) for the creative process of the universe. According to this metaphysics, the one attributeless God (Shiva) assumes two forms which can be styled thus: *Dharma* and *Dharmin.* Again the form of *Dharma* divides itself into male and female. The female becomes consort of the supreme Shiva *(Dharmin).* The male form, that is, Vishnu becomes the material cause *(upadana)* of the universe. The association of these three becomes the Absolute form of Shiva. Fortified with the four presiding deities along with their female emanation – Kal Bhairava and Kamakhya in the East, Nata Bhairava and Gauri in the West, Rudra Bhairava and Bhuvneshwari in the North and Bhuta Bhairava and Kali in the South — Kashi becomes symbolic of the creative process. These deities along with their female emanation become the source of all arts, creativity, the aesthetic experience and finally the realization of *Shiva-tattva.*

It seems at the beginning of the poem that the poet, having engrossed and immersed in his yogic experiences, seeks and finds the essentialness of Kashi on the "foliopages of cremation." All rasas coalesce together for the genetic production of *Veebhatsa rasa* — the dominant emotion of Kashi itself. *Mahashmshan* becomes the generative process of all the texts. Ganga along with the sisterly flow of Saraswati, Mandakini, Varuna and Assi becomes the text for the salvation of humanity. Charu Sheel Singh makes the essence of Kashi and the narratology of the poem obvious in the following lines:

> .... *Carnivals of desire's*
> claims to nothing map a territory
> that is the crematorium of our souls
> Shiva wedded the city on the funeral
> pyres where Parvati bore the silken
> gems of salvational goals.

With the *sthayibhava of Veebhatsa (Jugupsa)* the poet works out the essentials of the historicity of mythology and the folk motifs in the thematic contents of *Kashi.* He reveals the formative manifolds of *Shiva Linga* such as folk culture, Vedic folklore, hieroglyphic

sagacity, the text of all texts, intertextual zone, transcendental genealogies, infinite imagination and the folk tale of seasons. In addition to these forms, Shiva Linga, with the medical metaphor of pitutiary glands, symbolizes the linguistic shrine of verbal repertoire. Thus linga with folk motifs becomes suggestive of the oral tradition of epistemology. The varied mythopoeic essentialities merge into one and this coalescence becomes the folk tale of seasons. Amidst such seasonal origination, the flow of the Ganga symbolizes the epistemic motifs of life and beyond. Even the mythological ruler of Kashi, Devodas, has been shown as the folklore king of Kashi.

Shiva tattva becomes the visionary nucleus of Kashi. With the mandala chorus and *Hans-mudras*, Lord Shiva's incarnation becomes suggestive of the theory of time and space and the generic manifolds of the specific territories. Thus *shiva tattva* includes inside its cricle all the theories and beyond them. Shiva's victory over desire makes him an unconditioned Cosmic Being and His residence becomes the existential motif of Kahsi itself. The yogic experiences are explained through the process of *Kumbhaka* (inbreathing) in the form of Parvati and *rechaka* (outbreathing) in the form of Kashi. These two selves of Shiva bridge the gap between inbreathing and outbreathing, soul and body and the interority and exteriority of human life.

The ambient dimensionality of Kashi leaves the cultural traces which are to be followed by Rama and Krishna. The spiritual union of Parvati and Shiva (*Prakriti* and *Purusha*) weaves a kind of semiotic text. Parvati with the metaphor of "well-carpeted grass" becomes the source of all arts, music and aesthetic experience. Parvati and Kashi as the projections of *Shiva tattva* become the symbol of the well being. The application of the mythic world to Kashi weaves a complex world of intertextuality. Vishnu persuades Shiva to stay at Kashi. With the dominance of *veebhatsa*, the nine fold Kashi linga symbolizes the process of creation. Kashi

> ... is the flowing song
> of cternity called akul
> the unorganised innocence found
> in countries beyond script or
> consciousness in an incarnated being.

The linguistic competence of the poet in the use of myths and

symbols and their application to the inner regions of human psyche shows the range of his poetic imagination. The flow of Ganga as the narrative beyond eternity, Jyotirlinga as the sign of *Panchkosha* and the concept of a *bhuvana* bring forth such signifiers that exhibit the inner quest of being for realizing the essence of *Shiva-tattva.* Kashi with its manifold structures symbolizes the nocturnal bliss for its inhabitants.

Charu Sheel Singh makes some definitive innovations in form and language. The expressive mode of the poet, with the use of images, metaphors and symbols from the Vedic rituals, Puranic tales, Upanishadic teachings and hermeneutic allusions, makes it an encyclopaedic poem. The oft-repeated metaphor of crematorium and the intersecting of mandala triangles successfully work out the essence of *bindu* which transcends "savage civilities into lotus inbreathings of grammatical ideas." The poem as such reinvents a new poetic genre.

JAYDEEP SARANGI, *INDIAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY*

(Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2005), pp.154, Rs.175.00

O.P. Mathur

In the broad spectrum of the criticism of Indian English literature, close analysis of the language of a work as emitting the fragrance of the soil and the pervasive influence of cultural dynamism is a new approach, a breath of fresh air. Jaydeep Sarangi is obviously well-equipped for such a study. Hudson's well-known definition of Sociolinguistics as "the study of language in relation to society" has a converse side also — the study of society in relation to language — which is equally true, perhaps more so in the case of literary studies. I am glad to notice that Sarangi has largely adopted the latter approach, basically pragmatic and not linguistic as mentioned by him.

Sarangi has studied the socio-linguistic dimensions of quite a number of Indian English novels from Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie* to Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The omission of Salman Rushdie's

Midnight's Children seems to indicate that Sarangi has reserved it for an independent study which it so richly deserves. The introduction reveals not only his laudable objectives but also his technical equipmet of the principles of socio-linguistics which he has so ably applied in his studies of the novels. His approach, however, seems to be generally more inductive than deductive, though the two approaches meaningfully converge, as in the case of Anand's *Untouchable*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Dream in Hawaii* and Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* in which the confrontation and / or harmony of classes, civilizations and tradition and modernity have been so well explored through linguistic devices. The analyses of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* depict solutions of the problem of transcreating Indian rural dialects into English, while Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* shows how well the philosophy enshrined in an ancient language like Sanskrit can be made to find a voice in a foreign language. In the absence of equivalent words, new words and expressions like 'isness' or linguistic deviations like "*All brides be Benaras born*" or "Round, as the rose of Notre-Dame was love" are employed. Characters like Bakha, Raju, Geeta and the Punjabi and Malayali characters have been graphically portrayed through their speeches. The portrayal of the traditional Rajasthani ambience, with which I was personally familiar in my childhood, is indeed very truthful.

The study made by Sarangi brings out the juxtaposition of the Indian and Western cultures through their linguistic encounters and fusions, sometimes leading to a living 'circus' of language as in *The God of Small Things*. In it she has played with language in many ways like coining of new rhyming words like "viable, *diable* age" or writing eight one-word lines starting with "Nictating" and dropping the first letters in successive lines, making the last line "ing". It looks like linguistic acrobatics as a process of "decolonizing", as suggested by Sarangi.

Jaydeep Sarangi's book is not only a definite contribution to linguistic studies but is also, being a sociological statement, a contribution to a better understanding of the characters and the socio-cultural ethos of the novels discussed.

SUNNY SINGH, *WITH KRISHNA'S EYES*

(New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2006), pp.ix+293, Rs.300.00

Sushila Singh

Sunny Singh's first novel, *Nani's Book of Suicides* (2000), is a tragic tale of the young generation, and her second novel, *With Krishna's Eyes* (2006), in a sense, is a continuation of her first novel. The novelist is especially gifted in bringing to focus the incongruities between the stories of the past and the real life in India now. Almost always there is an element of sadness in women writing and Sunny Singh's novel is no exception. *With Krishna's Eyes* is a tale basically about the identity question both at personal as well as collective levels. The novel is also a memory novel, based on the childhood memories of the protagonist — Krishna — Krishnakali, the well-known heroine from the pages of Shivani's much celebrated novel of that name. Naturally, the narrative pattern is studded with anecdotes, stories, myths from India and Indian past trying to concentrate on the cultural history of Rajputana, the region belonging to the ruling clan of India in the past. The novel is also heavily autobiographical — family members and friends, shaping the characters in the novels. The change is, perhaps, in the name only. It is interesting how young generation is frequently challenging the mother figure and seeking a surrogate mother in the grandmother — the nani of Sunny's first novel reappears as Dadi in her second novel carrying the legacy of the same name — Abha.

Actually, the story is about the young narrator's — Krishna's —, encounter with her Dadi — her grandmother — at every juncture in her life. After Krishna's grandmother is gone, memories play tricks on her — everyone sounds like Dadaji to her, everywhere she turns, her grandmother flies past, her sari trailing and her gait tinkling heavily with keys secured around half her waist. Krishna is her Dadi's miracle, "wrought by her hands, demanded and received from the gods by her will alone." Krishna says that her mother might have borne her from her womb, but Dadaji believed that souls with great *karma* had daughters, on the flip side souls with awful deeds in a previous life were born as daughters. Krishna returns to India, to her village, feudal, almost medieval in its ways. Krishna's Dadi, even after her

death, directs Krishna to enact her *dharma* which is to document on film the last days of Damayanti who is a strong minded lawyer, who upon the death of her husband, will commit *sati.* The novel deals with sati in an astonishing manner. Krishna could not believe that Damayanti has joined the legions of women who are worshipped as sati *matas.* After the incident, villagers thronged at the site to seek her blessings; thousands and thousands came there to carry off handfuls of the ashes from Damayanti's pyre. Women travelled for hundred of miles to the spot simply to offer prayers. The policemen cordoned off the area and shoot off anyone who came there to pray; still people came from all over, sneaking to rub a pinch of dust on their foreheads because the mother earth was sacrificed. The policemen looked the other way allowing people pray. At times, some journalist would come and the devotees were pushed away by them. The scene is straight from Roop Kanwar episode. It is strange that Krishna, a rebel, has to confront the fact that her *dharma* is an act as conforming and backward as it is subversive. In the documentary that she has filmed Damayanti does not seem like divinity. She is very human, dark, with delicate face lined with age and worry. In ultimate analysis, it surfaces that the novel deals with the rhythm of love, coming to a full circle through Krishna's urbanity, her acceptance of tradition, Damayanti's committing sati and through the dreams and aspirations of Krishna 's Dadiji. Krishna reminisces her Dadi's words: "When you see the sun in June, you will know it's me smiling.... You see, *beta,* the June sun burns the brightest, full of all the passion in the world. And because of its brightness, June sun can make dreams seem as real as life." The June sun metaphorically makes one see the world clearly or as one would want to see it exactly.

CHARU SHEEL SINGH, *ETCHING ON THE EDGE*

(New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers, 2007), pp.x+68, Rs.85.00

Rajni Singh

Man is a victim of temporality and he creates or recreates this temporality consciously/unconsciously assuming it as the permanent. In this process, every moment a history is etched out only to be disfigured any time. Singh in his foreword to the book says, "All of us begin history even while we lose it"(p.vii). The poems in the present volume reread Indian history in terms of mythical figures, characters and culture "with the interpretive web that might just inaugurate a new beginning"(p.vii). Out of the thirty-two poems of this volume, five are based on mythical figures, fourteen on historical characters and the rest dwell on diverse subjects. Through sumptuous narrative, Singh re-narrates the mythical figures with contemporaneous idioms and juxtaposes India's great past with its agonizing present.

In "Bee-hive", Singh ponders over the degeneration of man. In the poem the human body is compared to a hive, a storehouse of oozing *rasas*. Singh says:

> the purgatorial corridors open
> close as we generate bee hives within. (p.32)

It is very unfortunate that man's 'reasoned galaxy' has killed honey-bees with intellectual arrows. He does not participate in the game of 'sucking' and 'plucking' which is a game of blissful trance. The poet questions:

> Could our bodily-hives arise
> to the call of innocent
> life's floodgates? (p.33)

Singh strongly condemns the modern man's practice of commodifying even Gods and festivals:

> Dewali is
> not a marketable festival that
> sells it piety on the Dalal streets
> of London. Ram crucified Himself even
> as we celebrated Dewali. Sita became
> the earthen lamp burning tears into
> the candles of night. ('Deepawali' p.30)

The change in spelling from 'Deepawali' to 'Dewali' brings in a change in the pronunciation of the word that suggests the loss of devotion and reflects on the glamorization of the festivals.

> It
> Was Sita who burnt Herself
> in the Deepawali earthen pots;
> She gave away Her tearful
> songs to a society that
> knew not piety and love. ('Sita' p.37)

In the poem 'Holi', Singh not only 'states' the grossness of the present times but also makes an attempt to 'suggest':

> Prahlad was eternal fire
> who consumed temporal ones. The
> colours combine to cleanse and
> purify the dross that is often
> our self's pitiable cross. (p.31)

And the pious souls that Singh enlists in his volume are Prahlad, Baba Neem Karori and Gandhi. On the pages of history we have characters like Duryodhana "stripping Draupadi/ naked into the jungle desires"(p.17), and on the other hand there are pious figures like Baba Neem Karori, who "wove blanket songs of love/and selflessness"(p.18). This juxtaposition between the good / bad, vice / virtue, Godly / demonic runs down through out the volume.

In its first impression the poems appear obscure and ostentatious, but on a careful and responsive study of these poems one finds that they manifest not only the nobility of the poet's thoughts but also his mastery over the poetic genre. Singh with his narrative art lengthens and shortens his verse paragraphs according to the length of thought unit.

On the whole, *Etching on the Edge* is a rich and valuable addition to the corpus of Indian English poetry. At the very outset, Singh makes it clear that "Indian English Poetry is yet to see its full bloom for it is still searching for a Raja Rao or an Aurobindo." It is quite true in the sense that many of our talented poets could not deviate from the Eliotesque track or shake off the influence of Bombay poets. Still there is need for an honest experiment with truth, a need to give a creative worldview of India's great past. Singh's *Etching on the Edge* is a stepping-stone in this direction.

R.K. SINGH, *TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: AN EVOLVING EXPERIENCE*

(Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2005), pp.xii+289, Rs.725.00

Rajni Singh

Teaching English for Specific Purposes: An Evolving Experience by R.K.Singh is a useful resource material for scholars and teachers, particularly in technical institutions where English is both 'a reading language' and 'teaching language'. The book is a compilation of the author's 18 research papers followed by 22 review essays that have been already published in reputed national and international journals. The first section which comprises research essays is a blending of theory and practice that should help the readers to understand the role of ESP in India and its future prospects in the ever-changing socio-linguistic scenario, whereas the second section of the book should help in taking the readers to the larger domain of language learning, in particular ESL, EFL and ESP.

The research essays are the outcome of the classroom experiences of the author as a teacher featuring the ESP approach at ISM, the role and the responsibilities of the ESP teachers and effectiveness of ESP programmes in techno-savvy modern society. The first two essays throw ample light on the role of English in the educational system of India. The third essay raises a pertinent question: 'Whether teaching of English should be for communicative competence, or for performance?' The author advocates 'Communication' as the aim of English teaching and asserts that communicative competence and performance cannot be viewed separately.

In the two essays "Exploring Possibilities: Why Technical English?" and "Exploring Possibilities: Why not General English?" the author sounds self-contradicting given to his performance for EST. Perhaps he intends to show that like most teachers of English with literature background, he too had reluctance for content-based Technical English teaching. But it is also true that he views his 'retrospection' as part of a teacher's evolution as an ESPist. The next article, "Reading Development: Some Questions", deals with

the significance of reading.

In the seventh article Singh shares with the readers his experiences at ISM to suggest that a language teacher along with his literary sensibility and nuances of technical and scientific writing should develop skill-oriented syllabus to cater to the needs of his students. The tenth and the eleventh articles, "ESP: Communication Constraints" and "ESP: A Sociolinguistic Consideration," expose the problems of ESP teaching in Indian technical institutions where the students are from varied socio-linguistic backgrounds.

The article, "Some Reflections on Terminology," stresses the need to tackle with the terminological difficulties which is the by-product of rapid advancement in varied academic disciplines. The next article, "ESP in India: Developments in 1984-1985," carries a profound investigation into the development of ESP in India in a single year. However, despite an awareness of the students' specific needs, language teachers could attach only peripheral importance to ESP. As the essay on "Communicative Teaching in Technical Institutions: A Needs Assessment" indicates, Indian School of Mines is possibly the first institution to have gone in the ESP approach to the English language teaching. The essay on "Interactional Process Approach to Teaching Writing" is R.K. Singh's major contribution to ELT/EST practices in the world.

The second section of the book under review provides readers with the alchemy of English and its different aspects. The essays of this section that concentrate on the tools of language, communication skills, intercultural and intracultural communication, teaching translation and translation and power will help teachers and researchers to become aware of what is new in language and literature practices.

In short, the book is the author's journey through his career as well as his academic research from EGP to ELT and finally to ESP. The book is a store of experiences and even an ordinary reader can correlate himself with the practicing teacher's evolutionary phase. The readers will find themselves with the author questing, analyzing, establishing and re-establishing his ideas on language teaching and finally firmly grounding his belief in ESP.

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